
Dynamic Assessment (DA) & Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Burcu ÖZGÜR, Yeditepe University

Murat KANTAR, Doğuş University

Outline of the Presentation

- I. Definition
 - II. Why Dynamic Assessment is used?
 - III. Procedure of Dynamic Assessment
 - IV. Listening Skill & Dynamic Assessment
 - IV. Differences between Standardized Test and Dynamic Assessment
 - V. Limitations of static tests
 - VI. Theoretical Framework of Dynamic Assessment (Vygotsky & ZPD).
-

What is DA?

- Dynamic Assessment in its simplest definition means supporting learner development actively by understanding learner abilities.
 - It is neither an assessment tool nor a method of assessing.
-

Dynamic Assessment

- Dynamic Assessment enables the assessment of cognitive processes:
 1. ongoing tactics,
 2. strategies
 3. habits
 4. modes of thinking (approaching, defining, and solving problems).
-

Dynamic Assessment

- It is also noted that DA lends itself to assessment of '*fluid*' abilities: those in a state of change, or varying in the way they are used and applied, rather than assessing '*crystallized*' abilities, that represent an outcome of learning or acquisition.
-

-
- Dynamic assessment is an alternative assessment that attempts to measure a child's learning potential and is most commonly used in conjunction with standardized tests (Caffrey, Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008).
-

-
- A variety of dynamic assessment approaches are employed as alternative types of assessment.
 - A type of dynamic assessment commonly used in the reading literature is the **test-teach-retest method**. Test-teach-retest measures a child's ability to learn after a predesigned learning opportunity rather than assessing previous knowledge. This method begins by administering a test, considered a pretest, which establishes the child's current performance.
-

Dynamic Assessment

- Dynamic assessment (DA) is an umbrella term.
 - Its aim is to assess potential for learning, rather than a static level of achievement.
 - It does this by *prompting, cueing or mediating* within the assessment, and evaluating the *enhanced performance*.
-

Dynamic Assessment

- Dynamic Assessment should examine the effects of an **awareness raising** session on students.
 - Awareness Session is any activity where the students are actively and purposefully using their minds in problem solving and reaching a concluding by the help of clues.
-

-
- A period of instruction follows the pretest, during which the child receives instruction in an area of need that was noted in the pretest. The teaching sessions, also known as **mediated learning experiences (MLE)**, provide the child with related tasks and help him to think about principles and ideas involved in the tests, such as providing labels instead of descriptions in a one-word expressive vocabulary test. The teach time is the opportunity for the child's performance to be modified while utilizing the child's ZPD. A different test, usually an alternate version of the pretest, is given during the retest period.
-

-
- The goal of this assessment is to determine the child's level of modifiability through teaching the underlying principles of the task (Peña, Iglesias, & Lidz, 2001). If the child is modifiable, the posttest score should increase.
-

PROCEDURE of DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

- The change in scores from pretest to posttest is referred to as the gain score, which is useful in differentiating a disorder from a difference. Children whose pretest to posttest scores show a significant increase in scores are not disordered because the increase in scores show that they can learn the material if provided with opportunities.
-

-
- A significant gain score is an indication that learning skills related to the task were not present due to either a culturally diverse background or lack of experience. Similarly, if there is a small gain score then two possibilities exist.
-

-
- The first option is that the child's pretest score was not significantly low and the posttest score is similar to the pretest, indicating that this child did not need to be assessed in this area. However, if the child scores significantly lower than peers on a pretest and does not show a significant gain score then a disorder may be present as evidenced by the learning that did not occur (Gutierrez-Clellen & Pena, 2001).
-

-
- Dynamic assessment is an assessment method based on Vygotsky's model of cognitive development. A key component to this model is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is the area between what a child can do independently and what a child can do when helped by caregivers or peers.
 - The purpose of dynamic assessment is to determine how much learning can take place in the ZPD during a specially designed session, or sessions, for each individual rather than a score that indicates performance at a specific point in time.
-

LISTENING SKILL & DA

- Traditional understanding of listening assessment in foreign language contexts and applies dynamic assessment (DA) to the development of learners' listening ability. DA is grounded in the Vygotskian concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and prescribes mediated teacher-learner dialog during the assessment procedure.
-

-
- DA permits to establish not only the actual level of learners' listening ability but also to diagnose/assess the potential level of their listening development, while at the same time promoting this development.
-

-
- The studies that have been conducted to date focus mainly on product-oriented investigations of listening comprehension that typically measure listening ability using quantitative research methods (e.g. Rubin, 1994; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 1998, 2007; Field, 2008).
 - In this respect, Vandergrift (2007) remarks that quantitative approaches are able to —tell us something about the product, i.e. the level of listening success, [but they] tell us nothing about the process; i.e. how listeners arrive at the right answer or why comprehension breaks down (p. 192).
 - Vandergrift claims that there is a pressing need for studies exploring listening processes through qualitative methods.
 - As Vandergrift (2007) suggests that listening processes are complex and they interact with different knowledge sources, human characteristics and other contextual factors in complex ways.
-

-
- At the level of assessment, there has been published a relatively small number of studies that consider the assessment of listening ability (e.g. Ur, 1984, Buck, 2003; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Field, 2008).
 - Alderson and Bachman, the editors of the *Cambridge Language Assessment Series*, point out that —the assessment of listening abilities is one of the least understood, least developed and yet one of the most important areas of language testing and assessmentll (Series Editors' Preface in Buck, 2003:x).
-

-
- While discussing the purposes and the types of L2 listening tests (e.g. achievement, placement tests), Buck (2003) as well as Alderson (2005) articulate the acute need for the creation of new diagnostic listening assessments that will identify specific areas where learners need improvement, and in so doing will better inform the instructional process regarding learners' listening abilities.
-

-
- Buck (2003) explains the existing lack of diagnostic listening assessments as follows: —there are currently few diagnostic tests of listening, largely because we still do not fully understand what the important sub-skills of listening are; nor are we sure what information educators need to teach listening better” (p. 97).
-

-
- Dynamic Assessment (DA) seeks to investigate the effects of DA-based instruction on the development of listening proficiency.
-

Why Dynamic Assessment?

- The dominant assessments have been a battery of standardized and norm referenced tests.
 - Advocates of DA recommend the addition of dynamic methods to the battery, making further information about processing or learning potential available, NOT the replacement or abolition of standardized tests.
-

Why Dynamic Assessment?

- Within the field of speech and language, it is only recently that research into dynamic methods of assessment has emerged.
 - Concepts and assessment materials are still being ‘borrowed’ from psychology and education, and few instruments accessing verbal skills are available.
-

Standardized Assessment vs. Dynamic Assessment

- Standardized test does not necessarily reflect individual differences.
 - It is highly questionable whether individuals with the same IQ have similar characteristics and needs that would necessitate similar treatment.
-

Standardized Assessment vs. Dynamic Assessment

- DA has been motivated by the inadequacy of conventional tests to provide precise information about individual differences of learning ability and specific learning processes.
 - In other words, conventional tests were not adequate in terms of operational translation into practice and prescriptive teaching
-

Standardized Assessment vs. Dynamic Assessment

*Practical experience shows many times that even children who are virtually identical in terms of characteristics such as age, gender, and IQ show markedly different behavior-cognitive or affective-and require, therefore, different teaching strategies.

Standardized Assessment vs. Dynamic Assessment

- The problems of standardized tests are magnified when applied with *mentally retarded* individuals or *culturally different* children who have difficulty understanding the nature and requirements of the tests.
 - Cole (1990) reached the conclusion that concrete operational thinking is influenced by the children's ability to understand the language of testing and the presuppositions of the testing situation itself.
-

Standardized Assessment vs. Dynamic Assessment

- Another problem relates to the fact that many times psychologists and educators confuse ability and efficiency in observing or diagnosing children.
 - Children might have a high level of intellectual ability BUT they perform rather inefficiently on various tasks, especially on those involving time limits.
-

Limitations of static tests

- The limitations of static assessments are considerable in the field of Socio-Linguistic Theory where the multidimensional nature of language *does not easily lend itself to single unitary measures.*
-

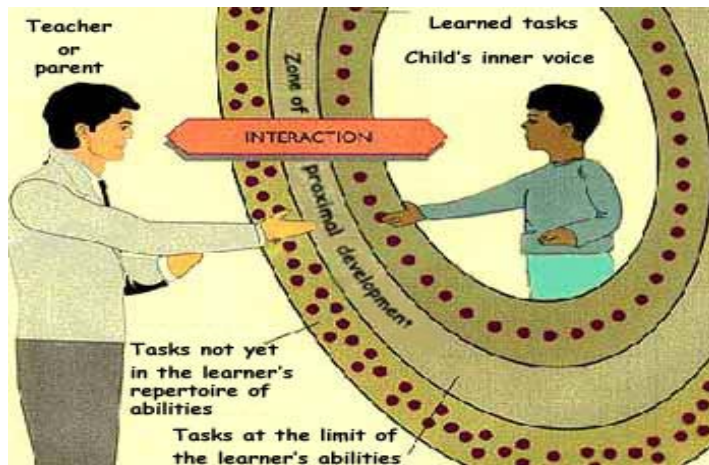
Limitations of static tests

- Performance variables such as shyness, lack of experience, cultural or linguistic differences and poor attention may interfere with the accuracy of test results.
 - It has been suggested that alternative, more creative and process-based assessments may be useful
-

Zone of Proximal Development



Vygotsky



Vygotsky & ZPD

- Vygotsky believed that the early development of understanding occurs through interaction with others.
 - In this period greater achievement is possible when a child learns through collaboration with a more experienced or informed guide.
-

Vygotsky & ZPD

- This difference between a child's own performance and his/her achievement when guided by an adult or in collaboration with a more experienced peer, reflects the child's developmental potential referred to by Vygotsky as the 'zone of proximal development' (commonly, ZPD).
-

Vygotsky & ZPD

- Vygotsky proposed that in order to understand the cognitive development of an individual one should understand his/her social, cultural, and historical background.
 - The origins of higher mental functions of the child derive from social interactions with more experienced members who guide the child towards higher levels of mastery.
-

Vygotsky & ZPD

- Any function of children's development appears twice, first at the social level and then, via an *internalization* process, on the psychological level.
 - The internalization process is gradual, starting with help from an experienced adult or from peers.
 - Gradually, children take more initiative while the adults modify their guidance until, finally, the children become independent in self-regulating the learning process, with the adults having only a supportive function.
-

ZPD & DA

- Inspired by the Vygotsky's approach, several authors have developed DA techniques such as the *learning test* and the *graduated prompt* procedure.
-

-
- **The learning test** is a diagnostic method. Examiners record to what extent individuals are able to improve their test performance, if they are provided with *feedback, prompts, or even complete training programs* between a pre-test and a post-test.
 - Similarly, the principle behind the **graduated prompt** procedure is basically to help subjects gradually until they solve the problem. The amount of aid needed in order to solve the problem is taken as an indication of the subject's ZPD.
-

Murat Kantar,
Doğuş University
Department of Foreign Languages
English Preparatory Programme
Istanbul, Turkey

mkantar@dogus.edu.tr

Burcu Özgür,

Yeditepe University

M.A. Research Student – Istanbul,

Turkey burcuzgr@gmail.com

