

The Effect of Dynamic Assessment on Elementary EFL Students' L2 Grammar Learning

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of dynamic assessment on elementary EFL (English as a foreign language) students' grammar learning. To this end, forty six male adult elementary EFL learners in two groups, namely the experimental and control groups, participated in the study. The participants were chosen based on intact group sampling. Their homogeneity was also checked by Cambridge Michigan Test. The participants' initial knowledge of the target grammatical items (prepositions of time and place) was checked by the grammar pre-test. Then, while the experimental group underwent their specific treatment in the form of dynamic assessment for ten sessions, the control group experienced their routine classroom activities. At the end of the treatment sessions, both groups took a grammar post-test. The results of an independent sample t-test suggested that dynamic assessment has a significant effect on elementary EFL learners' learning of prepositions of time and place and the impact was high.

Keywords: dynamic assessment, grammar learning, EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

Grammar teaching has always been a controversial issue in the area of language teaching and learning. However, this controversy has led to fruitful consequences for pedagogy. In other words, the debate about the best method to teach grammar has had a significant impact on the development of language teaching practice. Until recently, different views, approaches, and methodologies to grammar teaching have been proposed by teachers and researchers to help EFL learners achieve accuracy and grammatical competence (Zain & Rohani, 2007). At the same time, although teaching of grammar has undergone major changes in the last two decades, Iranian EFL students still seem to be receiving inadequate grammar instruction. In Iranian grammar classes, grammar is still seen as a language component for supporting the learning of other

skills and it is rarely considered as a means of expression and comprehension for achieving effective communication.

If it is believed that grammar has to be valued and taught, an effective way of teaching it should receive attention. Regarding the concept of an effective grammar teaching, scholars have proposed some characteristics. For instance, Bourke (2005) mentioned the following characteristics for an effective grammar teaching:

- Truth that means conforming to real English usage.
- Clarity which is explaining and exemplifying in plain English without providing unfamiliar language.
- Simplicity that is revealing the critical features of a rule.
- Comprehensibility that means presentation of grammatical features within the learner's current competence.
- Process-oriented which means that the presented rule can be uncovered by inductive means.
- Usefulness which means having predictive value such as defining form-meaning relationships.

On the other hand, in addition to providing effective teaching procedures, assessment of the outcome is desirable. Assessment is an inseparable part of the instructional process. Testing is a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge. Therefore, it requires some performances or activities on the part of either the test taker or the tester or both. Indeed, no EFL program can be effective without testing or evaluating learner's acquisition of the target language. Any language assessment can have two purposes. On the one hand, it aims to reinforce learning and to motivate students and on the other hand, it evaluates learners' performance in the language (Jafary, Nordin & Mohajeri, 2012).

Language educators have emphasized the need to bring instruction and testing together. It was first unclear how this may best be done. One proposal in this area is a concept of test washback, whereby test serves as a guideline for language instruction (Cheng, 2005). This places responsibility on instruction to ensure that it is meeting the learning outcomes established by the tests. Another proposal was Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky had no difficulty to bring assessment and instruction together and consider them a single unified activity (Abbasnasab Sardareh, 2016; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

The ZPD theory itself was the origin of another concept that is called dynamic assessment. In fact, dynamic assessment was first introduced by Luria (1961) and then the ZPD theory provided more insight into its cognitive process. As Vygotsky (1986) put it, individuals are affected and mediated by social practices, cultural interferences, and activities. It is also the case when they work alone in their own right. Even in such situations, people's cognitive functions are mediated by their history of interaction with the world. In accordance with Vygotsky's point of view, each individual has two levels of performance. One of them is a full development and the other is proximal development.

To see what functions are fully internalized and developed, we can observe a person independent performance; however, only through external forms of mediation we would be able to see the abilities that are still forming. Based on this view, Vygotsky was against measuring one's ability based on his performance. Since the introduction of ZPD, more and more researchers came to the idea that assessment is a relative concept and individual performance is not a true representation of his real ability. Consequently, the idea of integrating mediation into assessment for a better understanding of one's ability was emerged (Abbasnasab Sardareh & Saad, 2012; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002).

It is believed that an effective instruction requires assessment because it must be sensitive to what the individual is capable of achieving when performing a task independently. On the other hand, a complete assessment requires instruction which follows from Vygotsky's argument that higher mental development finds its source in sociocultural activity. It is worth mentioning that mediation is not just a matter of giving help, but it is more a matter of giving an appropriate assistance. This type of assistance does not aim at helping the individual to solve a problem by getting the right answer, but push the individual toward independence to be able to perform what is appropriated in a given situations (Abbasnasab Sardareh & Saad, 2013; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

Since 1988 that Reuven Feuerstein advocated the use of dynamic assessment against the more traditional types of assessments, several studies such as Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002), Lantolf and Poehner (2004), Ableeva (2007), and Poehner (2008) have investigated the role of dynamic assessment in language learning and teaching. Accordingly, in line with previous research in this area and considering the Iranian EFL learners' problems regarding grammar learning, it seems desirable to investigate the effectiveness of dynamic assessment for grammar instruction. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the impact of dynamic assessment on grammar learning of Iranian elementary learners. The area of grammar that was chosen for this study was learning prepositions of time and place. The motive behind this study was the learners' grammatical mistakes in this area that is noticeable even at higher levels of proficiency. Based on Poehner's (2007) idea, in our study, dynamic assessment was based on dialogic collaboration between the learners and their assessor/teacher. As a result, the findings of this study can affect teaching views about grammar teaching and benefit language learners. The target grammatical structure was a set of prepositions of time and place. The reason for choosing these target items was that they are usually neglected or not taken seriously and Iranian learners usually encounter problems in recognizing or producing the correct prepositions. Therefore, learning them can be useful for gaining accuracy.

Hence, the present study aimed to look into the effectiveness of dynamic assessment on the learners' learning of target grammar (prepositions of time and place). In other words, the study examined how providing dynamic feedback to the learners' ZPD can attract the learners' attention to internalize the target points. Thus, the present study sought to investigate the following research question.

- Does dynamic assessment have any significant effect on elementary EFL learners' learning of prepositions of time and place?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar: Teaching and Learning

According to Swan (1998), there are several reasons for teaching grammar. First, grammar is taught because it is part of a language. However, it is important to choose grammar points relevant to the learners need. Second, grammar is taught because it is tidy and teachable. It means that grammar can be arranged in rows and displayed in boxes. It can be presented as a limited series of tidy things that students can learn. Therefore, it is a good case and easy to teach. Third, unlike some language components that cannot be measured effectively and efficiently, grammar is testable. Grammar test are simple and as a language teacher, we can easily test what we have taught. Finally, knowing how to build a specific structure makes it possible to communicate a meaning successfully. Material developers and language teachers much identify these structures and teach them well.

It is assumed that defining grammar is an essential starting point for proper pedagogy. A definition for a pedagogical grammar that is broad enough to accommodate both traditional and newer approaches is that grammar is a system of meaningful structures and patterns that are governed by particular pragmatic constraints (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). Larsen-Freeman (2001) suggested three dimensions of form, meaning, and use in defining grammar. To further clarify these dimensions, she made an example:

The passive voice has the grammatical meaning of communicating something to which something happens. Learners need to know this, and they need to know how to form the passive construction in English including some form of the "be" verb and the past participle. They also need to know when to use the passive.

According to Rutheford (1987), grammar is an essential component of any language-teaching program. However, the viewpoints about grammar teaching usually change with the emergence of teaching methodologies based on different learning theories. This change not only affects the content and the curriculum in language teaching, but also the implication for teaching grammar. This trend has led linguists and language educators to rethink the status of grammar in language teaching and learning. Accordingly, there has been a constant debate among language educators and linguists regarding the nature and type of grammar instruction, which affected the understanding of how second languages should be taught or learned (Zain & Rohani, 2007).

There are two views about grammar learning. One of them is a linear view that is based on a premise that language learners learn one grammatical item at a time. For instance, an EFL learner learns one tense form, such as the simple present, before learning another form, such as the present continuous or the simple past. Learning another language by this method is like constructing a wall. However, this view was challenged by

researchers such as Kellerman (1983) who argues that accuracy does not increase in a linear fashion and a learner's mastery of a particular language item is unstable, appearing to increase and decrease at different times during the learning process (Nunan, 1998).

There are also two different views about teaching grammar, that is, explicit and implicit grammar teaching (Howatt, 1984). The conflicting views about how grammar should be taught is generally vacillated between language analysis and language use. At the same time, the advent of communicative language teaching affected language teaching and learning. It made linguists and language educators review the role of grammar in language teaching (Celce-Murcia, 1991). The Communicative Approach to language teaching put emphasis on language use or the functional aspects of language. This emphasis leads to the implication that grammatical accuracy is less important in communication (Woods, 1995). However, as close (1991) mentioned, although one can communicate through inaccurate language, communication can be achieved most efficiently by means of grammatical sentence. This idea emphasized the importance of grammatical competency in communication (all cited in Zain&Rohani, 2007).

It can be said that researchers and language educators share the same view that grammatical competency has its important role in the development of communicative competence. Nevertheless, three issues emerged related to the role of grammar in language teaching. First, how teachers teach grammar in the classrooms without forgetting that grammar is systematically organized (Carter, 1990). Second, how teachers decide and find ways of teaching grammar and recognize appropriate and strategic interventions. Finally, how teachers can cope with the incompatible relationship of grammatical specification in a language syllabus with the nature of language acquisition (Rutherford, 1987). This is because grammatical items in the syllabus are carefully selected and ordered to reflect language items to be taught, while language acquisition is not a linear and straightforward process but a cyclic one, even a metamorphic on (Rutherford, 1987).

On the other hand, the stages and time for each learner to learn certain aspect of grammatical constructs vary with age and personality. Some of these issues and concerns led to further research in the field of second language teaching and learning. The controversial views regarding the extent of grammar instruction within communicative approach need to be resolved. Because of different views about grammar in language teaching, many methodological proposals to the teaching of grammar emerged (Zain & Rohani, 2007). There are four approaches to teaching grammar (all cited in Larsen-freeman (2009) :

- PPP approach: it is based on presentation-practice-production. In the first stage, an understanding of the grammar point is provided. In the second stage, students practice the grammar structure using oral drills and written exercises. In the third stage, students are given "frequent opportunities for communicative use of the grammar to promote automatic and accurate use" (Sheen, 2003, p. 226).

- Input processing: because EFL learners have problem paying attention to form and meaning at the same time, VanPatten (2004) has proposed input processing, whereby learners are guided to pay attention to a feature in the target language input. He also made an example to clarify input processing. According to him, English speakers use word order to determine subjects and objects. If Spanish people want to learn English, they need information about differences between Spanish and English with enough input-processing practice. Spanish EFL learners will learn to discern the difference in meaning and that distinguishing subjects from objects requires paying attention to the ends of words and to small differences in the function words themselves.
- Focus on form: it is believed that some aspects of an L2 require awareness and/or attention to language form. It seems that implicit learning is not enough for foreign language learning. Therefore, there is a need for a focus on form within a communicative or meaning-based approach to language teaching (Ellis, 2005; Pica, Kang, & Sauro, 2006) or content-based language teaching. Because EFL learners' attention is limited, focusing on form may help learners to notice structures (Schmidt 1990) that would otherwise escape their attention when they are engaged in communication. According to Sheen (2002), focus on form is drawing learners' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally during exposure. Focus on form is based on the assumption that there is a degree of similarity between the first and the second language learning and both of them are based on the exposure. Therefore, in learning a second language, because the exposure is not enough, learners' attention should be drawn to grammatical features.
- Focus on forms: it is a discrete teaching of grammatical points. It is based on the assumption that classroom language learning relies on general cognitive process and involves learning of a skill. Therefore, it is more of skill-learning type and has three stages:
 1. Providing understanding of the grammar using variety of treatments such as L1 explanation and indicating the difference between L1 and L2.
 2. Providing sufficient opportunities for using grammar in communicative context to increase accuracy, use, and automaticity.
 3. Providing exercise both in communicative and non-communicative activities for giving attention to both comprehension and production.

Dynamic Assessment

According to Naeini and Duvall (2012), discovering what a student has learned is possible through paying attention to evidence provided by observable actions such as the EFL learners' performance in grammar, writing, speaking etc. Therefore, assessment should help to interpret the observed behavior. Griffin (2009) stated that teachers can focus on the data they collect from students and understand where to initiate

intervention and more instruction. This data can provide the foundation or basis for developmental learning. Furthermore, as Freire (1970) put it, there is evidence from classrooms that EFL learners' comprehension is not related to what they have been told or what they have read. Indeed, Freire argues against the model that positions the EFL learner as a mug for pouring water and the teachers the one who fills the student. He argued that this banking concept of education transforms students into mere receiving objects rather than engaging them in dialogical activity. He feels that for the EFL learner to move from object to subject, he or she needed to be involved in dialogical action with the teacher. One of the ways that can be helpful for reaching this aim is implementing dynamic assessment in the classroom.

It is now clear in the area of language teaching and learning that feedback provided through dynamic assessment can improve learning processes and outcomes. Besides, the ways teachers choose to provide feedback can affect both students' reactions to it, their perception of the effectiveness of feedback, and the extent to which they use it in their revisions. What helps teacher to choose the best ways for feedback provision is dynamic assessment. It seems that dynamic assessment can capture and integrate features of good feedback and define prescriptions relating to its appropriate delivery. Based on dynamic assessment, good feedback should be facilitative and improve students' learning. In dynamic assessment, corrective feedback has a number of characteristics that should be considered by language teachers to be able to implement dynamic assessment in their classrooms (Panahi, Birjandi & Azabdaftari, 2013):

- In dynamic assessment, feedback is timely and task-level: feedback should provide students with specific and real-time information about a particular response to a problem or task. At the time of providing feedback, it is important to consider the student's current understanding and ability level. Feedback in dynamic assessment, is an in-process and interactive procedure. Therefore, feedback is not provided after learning but during the learning process. In dynamic assessment, feedback is similar to mediation that supports learner development and is an important component of the mediator-learner collaborative activity that occurs during the assessment itself. For reaching this purpose, language teachers should pay attention to the way language learners respond to feedback and be prepared to adjust feedback accordingly.
- In dynamic assessment, feedback is scaffolded: it means that feedback
 - 1- Should motivate the learners to pay attention to the task.
 - 2- Should make the task simple to be manageable and achievable for the learners.
 - 3- Should help the learners to focus on achieving the goal by providing direction.
 - 4- Should show the learners the differences between their level of performance and the standard of the target language.

- 5- Should bring about a relaxed atmosphere by reducing frustration and risk.
- 6- Should indicate and define the goals of the activity to be performed (Hartman, 2002; cited in Panahi, Birjandi & Azabdaftari, 2013).

It is worth adding that nowadays, a wide range of dynamic assessment activities is available. All of these activities have some characteristics in common. They rely on test-teach-test paradigm and teaching occurs between pre- and post-tests (Lidz & Elliott, 2000). It should be mentioned that some dynamic assessment use a highly standardized sequence of activities during the teaching phase. Others are more flexible and interactive and provide different kinds of mediation in accordance with the learners' specific needs as revealed by them during the assessment. The tasks for dynamic assessment should be selected in a way that they tap into more flexible aspects of cognitive functioning. However, for judging the value and effectiveness of dynamic assessment, one should be aware that any dynamic assessment which involves an element of intervention depends on the quality of mediation provided by the assessor. In means that dynamic assessment is closer to the instruction rather than examination. The instructional value of the dynamic EFL assessment hinge on the extent to which its results can be used for the development of individual learning and the learners with different learning needs. Kozulin and Garb (2002) provided some examples to illustrate this point. As they mentioned, students who display an average performance on pre-test, but insufficient learning potential should receive help by providing them with learning and information-processing strategies. Students with an average performance on pre-test and high learning potential should receive more challenging tasks and more opportunity for independent learning. Students with low pre-test performance and low learning potential need general learning and problem solving skills based on very simple EFL tasks and material. For such students, it is wiser to help them first master the basic learning skills and then continue with the standard EFL tasks that pose more challenges.

Regarding the way dynamic assessment can be implemented in the classroom by the teachers, Schneider and Ganschow (2000) made some suggestions. As they stated, during the process of dynamic assessment, teacher and student continuously learn from each other as they participate in a dialogue. The teacher is the assessor of the student's progress through individual learning stages. The student is the one who determine the speed of progress and the direction of the learning progress. In the process of learning during dynamic assessment, the student's needs are the basis for progress and development and the teacher is the facilitator of the learning process.

METHOD

Participants

Sixty male adult elementary EFL learners who studied English in a private language institute participated in this study. To select homogeneous sample, Cambridge Michigan Test was applied to choose elementary learners in order to fulfill the purpose of the

study. Hence, 46 participants were of elementary level (as it was proved by the records of the institute). Then, they were divided into one experimental (n=23) and one control group (n=23).

Instruments

The following instruments were used in the study:

Cambridge Michigan Test: this test was used to check the homogeneity of the groups. Generally speaking, the Michigan test is a reliable measure of general English language proficiency in different settings including social and educational contexts. Michigan test encompasses some sections. In other words, it can test speaking, listening, reading, and writing as well as grammar.

Grammar Pre-Test: this test that was in the form of fill-in-gap tasks included 20 items. The participants were required to fill in each gap by prepositions of time and place. The test was taken from the book *Basic Grammar in Use* 3rd edition written by Murphy and Smalzer (2011). The aim of administering this test was to measure the learners' initial knowledge of prepositions of time and place.

Grammar Post-Test: it was a 20-item multiple choice test based on the book *Basic Grammar in Use* 3rd edition written by Murphy and Smalzer (2011). This test was for measuring the participants leaning of prepositions of time and place after the treatment.

K-R21 reliability indices for pre-test and post-test were also calculated. The reliability index of the pre-test was .084 and that of post-test was .82 which were both high enough to be acceptable.

Procedure

Cambridge Michigan Test was administered to check the homogeneity of the participants. Students whose scores were within three standard deviations above and below the mean were chosen as the participants of the study and others who were not within this range were excluded from the study. However, because students were all the members of the classes, it was not possible to exclude them physically. They participated in the study, but their scores were not included in the data. At end of this part of the procedure, two elementary classes whose homogeneity were checked were considered as the control and experimental groups of the study.

Grammar pre-test was taken by the students of both groups to measure their initial knowledge of the target items (preposition of time and place). The test took about 20 minutes and the participants were required to fill in the gaps by providing suitable prepositions.

Treatment sessions were planned for the experimental group. In 10 sessions, they learned target prepositions including:

Prepositions of place: in, at, on, by, next to, beside, near, between, behind, in front of, under, below, over, above, across, though, to, into, toward, onto, and from. Prepositions of time: on, in, at, since, for, ago, before, to, past, from, till, until, and by.

Both control and experimental groups were studying English using Interchange Series third edition written by Richards (2005). Therefore, the treatment of the study was designed in a way to be in accordance with their syllabus. Interchange series includes four books designed for adult and young-adult learners of English with beginning to the high-intermediate level of proficiency. For the participants of this study who were elementary learners, the first book of the series, namely *Intro* was used. Both groups of the study, experimental and control, used the same book, however, while the experimental group received its specific treatment (dynamic assessment), the control group underwent its routine teaching and learning process.

The experimental group learned the prepositions through dynamic assessment. For dynamic assessment, each session, after teaching prepositions of the time and place, the learners took a short quiz in the form of fill-in-the gaps. The learners were required to complete the sentences with appropriate prepositions of the time and place. After the quiz, students were asked to work in pairs and comment on each other's mistakes. In fact, they had to check each other's papers in pairs, try to correct each other's mistakes and discuss the correct answers to the questions. They were allowed to check their books for searching the correct answers. Then, the papers were collected and their teacher corrected the papers as the final judge and turned back the papers the following session. Students were required to pay attention to their mistakes. On the other hand, the participants in control group underwent their routine grammar teaching. They were taught based on their syllabus without having dynamic assessment. It means that the teacher in control group explained the grammatical points explicitly and then students were required to do their book exercises without having dynamic assessment. The same as the experimental group, prepositions were taught to the control group in 10 sessions.

Grammar post-test was administered to measure any change in the participants' knowledge of target items which could indicated their learning. The participants were required to answer 20 multiple choice items in 20 minutes by choosing the correct proposition from four options.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

In this section, descriptive statistics and related tables to sample information would be presented. Recognition of sample information can help scholars to determine general features of the studied population and its general features for other scholars. Descriptive measures of the learners' performance on the two occasions of the pre- and post-tests are provided in the following.

According to Table 1, it could be found that mean value of Michigan Test in the control group is equal to 16.04 ± 2.3 and in experimental group is equal to 15.95 ± 2.62 .

Table 1. Estimating mean value and SD based on Michigan homogeneity test

	number	mean	SD	score range
control group	23	16.04	2.30	0-40
experimental group	23	15.95	2.62	0-40

As to the above Table, it can be inferred that the learners in the present study were of homogenous sample since their mean scores of the proficiency test were almost similar highlighting their same level of proficiency, i.e. elementary level. Table 2 shows the descriptive results of the learners' performance on the pre- and post-tests.

Table 2. Estimating mean value and SD based on the pre-test and post-test of grammar scores

	number	mean	SD	score range
pretest of control group	23	5.56	1.59	0-20
posttest of control group	23	6.08	1.85	0-20
pretest of experimental group	23	5.82	1.46	0-20
posttest of experimental group	23	14.13	1.91	0-20

According to Table, it could be found that mean value of pre-test in the control group is equal to 5.56 ± 1.6 and post-test is equal to 6.08 ± 1.85 ; in experimental group, pre-test is equal to 5.82 ± 1.46 and posttest is equal to 14.13 ± 1.9 . It can be concluded that the learners in the experimental group outperformed the control group, which highlights that dynamic assessment significantly improved the learners' learning of the target grammar points (i.e. prepositions of time and place).

Inferential Statistics

In order to assess normality of data distribution, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test has been applied (Table 3). This test, in one-sample state, compares observed accumulative distribution function with expected accumulative distribution function (normal distribution) in a variable in level of sequential measurement. In other words, in this test, distribution of a feature in a sample is compared to normal distribution. In regard with obtained results, if sig level is more than p-value ($\alpha=0.05$), desired distribution is normal. However, if sig level is lower than p-value ($\alpha=0.05$), the distribution is not normal.

Table 3. Normality test of distribution of variables

	K-S value	sig	p-value	result
pretest score-control	1.187	0.119	0.05	normal
posttest score- control	0.849	0.467	0.05	normal
pretest score- experimental	1.129	0.156	0.05	normal
posttest score- experimental	0.546	0.927	0.05	normal

In the table, according to K-S value and sig level, it could be found that expected distribution (normal distribution) is not significantly different from observed distribution for all mentioned variables. Hence, distribution of variables is normal and it

would be better to use parametric statistics to answer the research question of the study.

In order to determine impacts of dynamic assessment on learning propositions by learners, firstly a comparison should be taken using paired t-test between the pre- and post-tests of groups. Then, mean value of posttest of experimental group should be compared to the control group (see Table 4).

Table 4. Paired t-test of the experimental and control groups

group	mean	SD	paired t	sig	independent t	sig
control	5.56	1.59	-1.699	0.103	14.466	0.000
	6.08	1.85				
experimental	5.82	1.146	18.241	0.000		
	14.13	1.91				

According to Table, paired t value is significant for the experimental group since significance level is below 0.05 ($\text{sig} < 0.05$). Therefore, tangible changes were occurred in the post-test scores compared to the pre-test of learning propositions. Moreover, independent t value is significant for the index of learning propositions as the significance level is below 0.05 ($\text{sig} < 0.05$). In other words, learning propositions in the experimental group has been tangibly and significantly increased compared to the control group. Hence, dynamic assessment can have significant impact on learning propositions by learners.

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of dynamic assessment for grammar learning. The area of grammar that was chosen as the target was prepositions of time and place. Findings revealed that the learners in the experimental group significantly improved their grammar learning in comparison with the control group who did not receive any significant different in their performances on the test scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that dynamic assessment could provide a practical chance for the learners to learn the propositions of time and place in the context of meaningful interaction.

The result of this study is comparable with the results of the previous studies in this area. This comparison can be useful for deeper understanding and achieving wider knowledge of the impact of dynamic assessment on grammar learning. However, before making comparison, it should be mentioned that although dynamic assessment have been the focus of attention of many researchers, its impact on grammar learning has not been investigated adequately. Previous studies investigated the impact of dynamic assessment on EFL learners' vocabulary learning (Hessamy & Ghaderi, 2014), reading comprehension (Ajideh & Nourdad, 2012; Kozulin & Garb, 2002), listening comprehension (Alavi, Kaivanpanah & Shabani, 2011), speaking (Fahmy, 2013; Oskoz, 2013; Poehner, 2005), and writing (Xiaoxiao & Yan, 2010). Nevertheless, very few studies have been conducted in the area of grammar learning. This shows that the

present study provided evidence in the area that was demanding for more research studies.

To make comparison between the present study and few studies in this area, a search conducted by Barzegar and Azarizad (2014) can be mentioned. There were some similarities between their study and the present study. First, both studies have been conducted in the same context, namely Iran. Second, the designs of both studies were the same. However, the target grammatical items were different. While they considered verb tense, the present study took into account prepositions. The result of Barzegar and Azarizad's study indicated that dynamic assessment had a significant impact on grammar learning of Iranian EFL learners. In fact, it can be said that the finding of the present study are in line with Barzegar and Azarizad's study and confirmed by it.

In another study carried out by Malmeer and Zoghi (2014), they used the same design as the present study. They have found that dynamic assessment plays an effective role for grammar learning. It seems that the results of the present study were congruent with the conclusions drawn from Malmeer and Zoghi's study. Davin (2013) also investigated the impact of dynamic assessment on the learners' lexical and grammatical errors and reached the conclusion the dynamic assessment has the potential to satisfy the learners' and teachers' need and decrease the learners' grammatical and lexical errors. Although the present study did not take into consideration the learners' lexical errors, a part of Davin's study about the impact of dynamic assessment on decreasing grammatical errors supports the findings of the present study.

Finally, Jafary, Nordin and Mohajeri (2012) who compared the impacts of static and dynamic assessments on grammar learning concluded that dynamic assessment is significantly different from static assessment and is influential for grammar learning. The present study provided further supports for the results obtained by Jafary, Nordin and Mohajeri.

Based on the above-mentioned comparison, it can be said that the studies conducted in this area, unanimously supported the positive impact of dynamic assessment on grammar learning. A point that should be mentioned here is that the present study added another piece of evidence to the previous research. It investigated the extent to which dynamic assessment affects grammar learning. Previous studies did not address this point. Therefore, the present study could be considered as a complementary one for the previous research in this area.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study advocated the usefulness of dynamic assessment for language learning in general and grammar learning in particular. According to Lantolf and Poehner (2008), Dynamic assessment that was emerged from sociocultural theory is an approach that offers a diagnostic understanding of where the learner is and simultaneously promotes the learners' development by offering the learner a specific mediation during learning and assessment. For dynamic assessment to contribute to the

process of learning, it should be supportive. To reach the aims of dynamic assessment, it has to be informative (Shepard, 2000). Dynamic assessment should focus on what a learner is able to do with the assistance of a more knowledgeable peer and the type and amount of mediation needed for a learner to be able to do a task in dynamic assessment. It indicates the learner's learning potential and shows that the learner is able to cope with the performance problems by working through his/her limitations while they collaborate with the teacher. The teacher can offer mediation required to help the learner in moving forward in the given task. Therefore, it can be said that in dynamic assessment, assessing and instructional activities are brought together and it contributes to the learners' development.

The results of this study can have some implications for policy makers, language teachers, and EFL learners. First, if policy makers be aware of the value of dynamic assessment in grammar learning, they may decide to implement it in the classroom context. Policy makers should provide workshops for the language teachers to make them familiar with the procedures of dynamic assessment and inform them of the benefits of dynamic assessment for grammar learning. Moreover, language teachers can also take advantages of the findings of the present study. Because language learning and more especially grammar learning is very difficult in a context where the target language is not heard out of the classroom, language teachers always search for ways of helping learners to master grammar. Thus, language teachers can consider dynamic assessment as a response to their students' needs and try to use it in the classroom. Last but not least, autonomous learners may want to try dynamic assessment in learning grammar. They can practice it with other language learners as partners.

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