# Individual Dynamic Assessment: An Inventory of Teacher's Mediational Strategies and Learners' Responsive Moves for Listening

**Marzieh Emadi**
Department of English Language Teaching
Golestan Science and Research Branch
Islamic Azad University, Gorgan, Iran


**Ali ArabMofrad**
Department of  English Language and Literature
Golestan University, Iran

**Abstract:** Following Vygotsky (1978), assessment needs to be more than the only observable behavior of the learners that represents the poor performance. Therefore, based on the sociocultural theory and the notion of ZPD, the present study constructs an interactionist dynamic assessment (DA) listening framework which manipulates the listening process by providing context-sensitive feedback to elicit the mediational strategies provided by the teacher and the responsive moves exhibited by the learners. The participants included six students at lower intermediate levels. The materials used in the enrichment sessions (DA-based instruction) were listening tracks taken from Listening Advantage Book 3. The qualitative analysis of DA protocols led to the development of the mediational strategies consisting of different forms of implicit to explicit feedback. The analysis of the mediational strategies demonstrated that *replaying* was the most frequently used strategy and the frequency of mediational strategies reduced in the final session. Regarding the learners' responsive moves, the results indicated that learners tend to produce more progressive moves. Based on the findings, language teachers are suggested to use the mediational strategies and also to care about the learner's responsiveness to pave the way for developmental changes and activate their learning potentials.

# INTRODUCTION

Of the four language skills, listening is considered as the most critical for language learning and necessary in the development of other skills (Vandergrift, 1997). Following Nunan (2002), listening is a receptive skill and the manipulation of the receptive skill is both hard to achieve and needs a lot of patience on the part of the teachers. More precisely, if learners are provided with right answers to the questions, learners' listening comprehension ability seems to be well, and it is a tendency toward measuring the listening product not the process. Former forms of traditional assessment solely measure the learning product and the only feedback the learners receive is a simple mark for their performance on a single test. In fact, it is their actual knowledge and teachers fail to provide context sensitive feedback necessary for deeper understanding in learning. Contrary to traditional assessment, dynamic assessment (DA) as a process-oriented approach proposed by Vygotsky (1978) focuses on the process of learning. DA-based instruction provides the learners with the appropriate feedback which is important for better understanding and deeper learning. More precisely, teacher provides mediational strategies and learners exhibit the responsive moves. The present study explores the teacher's mediational strategies and the learner's responsive moves in a dynamic-based instruction on the listening comprehension ability.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Sociocultural Theory

Following Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural theory of human learning considers learning as a social process. The distinctive

feature of this theory is the critical role of interaction in the development of cognition. In language learning human needs to interact with others in order to have both the developmental changes and activation of learning potential. According to Lantolf (as stated in Turuk, 2008), the basic concept in sociocultural theory is that a person's mind is mediated. A person cannot act independently without tools that are symbols or signs created under specific cultural or social conditions. Tools serve as aids and without them problems cannot be solved. Consequently, a learner needs to be mediated by a mediator (teacher) in order to develop and be able to act independently. According to Pohner (2008) a person's cognition is mediated socially while interacting. In fact, human is mediated to show the developmental changes. Sociocultural theory underlines mediated relationship, and not direct relationship, between a person and the world and that is the basis for dynamic assessment (DA). Following a DA approach, a learner's abilities are the functions that are fully internalized as well as those that are in the process of developing.

**Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky, in the early 1930s, proposed the concept of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) in the last two years of his life. According to Vygotsky, the development of a child involves the active collaboration of human cultural experiences with adults and includes two levels; that is, actual level and potential level of development. The actual level reveals the independent performance of the task which is without the help of others and is in line with the zone of actual development. The potential level of development reveals adult-child collaboration in performing the task. Simply put, it is a practice of activating the potential level and needs the scaffolding of others. These learning activities are supposed to clarify the child's abilities that are in the process of maturation. The potential level is in line with the

zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1978) defines the ZPD 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" (p. 86). These concepts were also applied to explain developmental processes.

## Dynamic Assessment (DA)

Dynamic assessment was developed more than 80 years ago by the Russian psychologist, L. S. Vygosky. Studying the children's mental abilities, Vygotsky (1978) found out that what a child can do independently is solely a partial image of his/her ability because a child can do better even with a bit of assistance offered by someone else. From a DA perspective, good instruction involves assessment and good assessment involves instruction (Birjandi and Mosalanezhad, 2010). Haywood and Lidz (2007) define this approach to assessment as follows: "an interactive approach to conducting assessments within the domains of psychology, speech/language, or education that focuses on the ability of the learner to respond to intervention." (p. 1)  They believe that the distinctive feature of DA is an active intervention provided by the mediator during the testing process and the assessment of examinees' responsiveness to the intervention. Generally, dynamic assessment is an approach to assessment that is very different from previous forms of assessment. Anton (2009) found that DA has developed as an alternative to traditional assessment, and not complementary to them. DA allows observing individuals' independent performance that reveals the learners' past development. If one aims to understand the processes of development, to help individuals defeat learning difficulties and to support the ongoing development, then merely solo performance observation as a former kind of assessment is insufficient. Instead, active collaboration with individuals is needed and

can enhance a learner's development. Educationally, this means that assessment, understanding learners' abilities and instruction, and supporting learner development are viewed as an integrated activity. This pedagogical approach is known as dynamic assessment (Poehner, 2008).

## Approaches to Dynamic Assessment

Lantolf (2009) states that two approaches to DA have been developed: interactionist DA and interventionist DA. Considering both approaches, instruction as mediation and assessment are joined as a single activity with the aim of recognising learning potential and promoting development. In these two approaches, two general kinds of mediation could be available for the mediator. The latter encompasses a set of predetermined hints and clues and offered to the learner through the learning process. The arranged hints are scaled from implicit to explicit. A distinctive feature of this approach is that mediational strategies do not depend on the responsiveness of the learners; henceforth, mediation could be provided to a large number of individuals simultaneously. According to Minick (1987), interactionist dynamic assessment follows Vygotsky's preference for "qualitative assessment of psychological processes and dynamics of their qualitative development" (p. 119). Following Vygotsky (as cited in Lantolf, 2009), in educational assessment we cannot measure the learners; in fact, interpretation of learning is needed and it can be provided by interaction and collaboration within learning. Consequently, mediation in interactionist DA is in contrast with mediation provided in interventionist DA; that is, mediation is not prefabricated but is negotiated and is in accordance with the learner responsiveness.

## Corrective Feedback

Previous forms of assessment have explored the use of giving feedback and its role in language learning. Simply put, the

only feedback students received was their marks on the achievement tests and there was no immediate feedback regarding the context and the learning process. Besides, the only focus was on the learning product (the marks) and almost all teachers followed product-oriented approaches to learning. Nabei (2012) believes that in foreign language pedagogy, corrective feedback is essential in learning and it is facilitative. Moreover, it is believed that corrective feedback is a component of form-focused instruction.

According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), corrective feedback may happen explicitly or implicitly. In the form of comprehension and checking, it occurs implicitly. While in the case of providing the correct form by the teacher, or others, it may come by explanations that occur explicitly. A recent study by (Ellis, et.al, 2009) found that explicit feedback is much better and effective while the focus is on production. In a similar vein, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) proposed a regulatory scale that moves from implicit to explicit feedback. Here, the teacher encourages learners to self-correct, ask peers to help and finally teacher provides explicit feedback in the form of explanation. In the ZPD,the interaction between error correction and learning process could be analyzed during active collaboration between learners and tutors. By providing feedback, self-correction is activated, so learners have more time in rethinking and regulating their thought about the ongoing task.

Context-sensitive feedbacks are very necessary in the development of a particular task. Following Ableeva (2010), mediational strategies used by the teacher are very crucial to help the learning process and inform the learners how to come to the right responses. These mediational strategies are helpful to elicit the learner's responsive moves. As she continues, the learners' responses are very important. Simply put, the individualized responses help the teacher to plan individualized instruction.

## Assessing Listening

Following Rost (2001), listening in language teaching is a complex process that helps people to understand the spoken

language. It is very important for acquiring other skills and is very important in acquiring a new language. "Listening is the channel in which we process language in real time-employing pacing, units of encoding and pausing that are unique to spoken language" (Rost, 2001, p.7). Moreover, Morley (2001) believes that listening comprehension is at the heart of learning but receives the least attention and mostly teachers tend to spend more time on productive skills. According to Yun (2010), a person who is learning a foreign language is expected to speak in that language, but in fact listening is a prerequisite for learning other skills as seen in children who listen months before they start to talk. Particularly, listening comprehension lessons are good tools for teaching grammatical points and the new vocabularies in a contextualized context. In any language classroom, listening plays a crucial role in the development of other language skills and language learning. Listening can help students to have a better comprehensible input and a better output while communicating.

Listening is a passive activity and a complex process which puts a great burden on the teacher. Following Lynch and Mendelson (2002), traditionally, listening was a passive process, in which ears were only receivers and the listeners were to register the message. But today listening is an active process and listeners are as active as they are speakers. Listening skill could be developed by practicing when learners reflect on the process of listening without fear of evaluation. According to (Morley, 2001) "the reasons for the nearly total neglect of listening are difficult to assess, but perhaps an assumption that listening is a reflex, a little like breathing-listening seldom receives overt teaching attention in ones' native language- has masked the importance and complexity of listening with understanding in a non-native language" (p. 70). Additionally, Vandergrift (1999) explains that despite the importance of listening practice in language instruction, English language classes in Iran still emphasize only reading and writing skills more than listening. This is especially the case of an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) situation in which the English language is taught as a subject at school. Teachers consider listening as a burden and

usually there is less practice on it. Consequently, students have many problems in understanding while listening. According to Morley (as cited in Vandergrift, 2004), the image of listening instruction has been changed. Previously, listening was assumed as a passive activity with the least attention by teachers but now listening is an active process and worth paying attention to.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

According to Nunan (2002), listening is considered as a *Cinderella skill* in language learning and mostly received the least attention by language teachers. Therefore, teachers fear to use the listening skill in classes because it is a receptive skill. To manipulate the listening process, the teacher-learner interaction is very important; in fact, the teacher's feedback or different strategies and the learner's responses should be considered crucial as well (Pohner, 2005).Therefore, the present study attempted to investigate the implementation of dynamic assessment-based instruction as a type of formative assessment by focusing on teacher-learner interactions in the listening process to elicit the teacher's mediational strategies and learners' responsive moves.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The participants are six lower intermediate Iranian students studying English as a foreign language ranging in age from 18 to 25. Persian is the first language of all participants and they were selected from a group of students of Hafez English Language Institute in Tehran. The criterion for the selection of the participants was their marks in Oxford Quick Placement Test. Based on the test, those who scored 16-30 out of 40 were considered as lower intermediate learners and so were selected for the present study.

## Instrumentation

To answer the research questions of the present study and to elicit the teacher's mediational strategies and learners' responsive moves, the following instruments were used.

### *Quick Placement Test*

Quick Placement Test (QPT) is a time-saving and reliable English language proficiency test developed by Cambridge ESOL and Oxford University Press and validated in 20 countries by more than 6000 students. Considering practicality, it is quick and easy to administer. There are two versions of QPT: a paper and pen (P&P) version and a computer-based (CB) version which is an adaptive multiple-choice test marked by computer. In the present study P&P version consisting of two parts was used. Part 1 (question 1-40) was taken by candidates who are at or below intermediate level. Part 2 (questions 41-60) is taken only by those who have a higher ability. The participants of the present study took only the first part due to their proficiency level.

### *Instructional Materials*

Listening Advantage Book 3 written by Kenny and Wada was the main material in the present study. This book was considered as a supplementary book for the lower intermediate students. Some units were chosen on the basis of students' familiarity with the topic in their main course book at the institute. The tracks used in enrichment sessions and DA-based listening instruction were similar in terms of the level of difficulty and delivery speed since they were chosen from one book.

## Procedure

The following steps were taken as the procedures of the study (Table 1). First, the teacher as a mediator started the class with a warm up to bring the students into the topic. Then, the students listened to the listening track with the aim of familiarizing them with the overall theme and context. After that, the teacher (mediator) replayed the listening track, paused portion by portion and asked any individual learner to repeat. Finally, while every student tried to repeat and make guesses, the mediator provided feedback according to the student's response. These mediations are in line with the regulatory scale proposed by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), moving from implicit to explicit and varying from learner to learner.

**Table 1**  Dynamic Assessment Sessions in Experimental Group

| Assessment | Task Description | Materials | Mediation Offered |
|---|---|---|---|
| Placement test | Listening to a listening test in L2 | Texts from listening advantage book | None |
| Enrichment program: Week 2 (two sessions per week) | 1. Listening to a text in L2; 2. Independent oral text recall in L2 3. Oral text recall in L2 after mediation | A listening track selected from listening advantage book (using computers) | Flexible interaction (implicit to explicit) with the mediator |
| Enrichment program: Week 3 (two sessions per week) | 1. Listening to a text in L2; 2. Independent oral text recall in L2 3. Oral text recall in L2 after mediation | A listening track selected from listening advantage book (part-time jobs) | Flexible interaction (implicit to explicit) with the mediator |

*cont...* **Table** 1

| Enrichment program: Week 4 (two sessions per week) | 1. Listening to a text in L2; 2. Independent oral text recall in L2 3. Oral text recall in L2 after mediation | A listening track selected from listening advantage book (friends) | Flexible Interaction (implicit to explicit) with the mediator |
|---|---|---|---|
| Enrichment program: Week 5 (two sessions per week) | 1. Listening to a text in L2; 2. Independent oral text recall in L2 3. Oral text recall in L2 after mediation | A listening track selected from listening advantage book (health and body) | Flexible interaction (implicit to explicit) with the mediator |
| Enrichment program: Week 6 (two sessions per week) | 1. Listening to a text in L2; 2. Independent oral text recall in L2 3. Oral text recall in L2 after mediation | A listening track selected from listening advantage book (study after school) | Flexible interaction (implicit to explicit) with the mediator |

The list of the mediational strategies moves from the most abstract (implicit) to the most concrete (explicit). According to Alavi, Kaivanpanah and Shabani (2012) the frequency and types of mediational moves from implicit to explicit revealed the students' improvement and ZPD functioning. The assessment procedure adopted in this study coincides closely with those of Poehner (2005) and Ableeva (2010).

# RESULTS

More precisely, this section focuses on analysis of the mediational strategies provided by the teacher during the

treatment sessions and then the responsive moves of the learners. Following Ableeva (2010) and Poehner (2005), the present study analyses two types of moves: (1) the mediator's scaffolding while interacting with learners on listening comprehension and (2) the learners' reaction or responsive moves to the mediators' assistance.

## Mediator's Strategies

The mediational strategies produced by the teacher focused on diagnosing the learner's problems and helping in their listening development. Here, the teacher attempts to scaffold the learners if they have problems in understanding the spoken discourse. As a result, the students are better engaged in the learning process and can figure out how the teacher's assistance could be helpful. Following the analysis of interactions in the present study, an inventory of mediational strategies emerged which are as follows:

---

Accepting /Rejecting response
Replaying
 Asking the erroneous words
 Informing the specific problematic area with a questioning tone
 Providing metalinguistic or contextual clues
 Offering a choice
 Offering body movement
 Providing a correct pattern
 Providing an explicit explanation

---

**Figure 1** Mediational Strategies in the DA-based Instruction in the Listening Class

These mediational moves are not pre-determined but emerged according to both the mediator-learner interactions and specifically the learner's responsive moves. The mediations offered here are different from those in Ableeva (2010) and (Alavi, Kaivanpanah & Shabani, 2012). The researchers have added the *body movement* strategy which is

absent in the recent and above cited studies. On the contrary, the *translation* and *putting words together* strategies are absent in the present study. Below, the mediational strategies with on the spot examples are presented.

## Accepting /Rejecting Response

This mediational strategy is the most implicit type of feedback provided by the teacher. In the process of learning, the learner was provided an answer and it was on the part of the teacher to see whether the response was appropriate to be accepted or rejected. While providing an inappropriate answer, the mediator needs to be aware of that and involve the learner to actively engage for the right response. The *accepting response* strategy provides affective scaffolding and encourages learners to participate more in the learning process (Alavi, Kaivanpanah & Shabani, 2012)**.**

## Protocol 1

The speaker said: It is a one-year lease and it will be up by 1$^{st}$ of September.
1.  S: It is a one-year lease and it end up
2.  T: replayed and paused
3.  S: guessed "end" again
4.  T:  *no, you have problem with the verb.*
5.  S: whispered in doubt
6.  T: said "it talks about future, (points to the grammar and narrowed down the problematic area)
7.  S*: guessed correctly and repeated the entire sentence," It will be up by Sep 1st".*

In line 4, the teacher's rejecting response functioned as an encouragement to invite learner to try more and care to recall exactly what she/he has heard and the last line indicates the teacher's accepting response to reassure the learner of his/her recall. This accepting response in line 7 motivated the learner to participate actively in the learning process.

## Replaying

If a learner failed to recall what was heard, the teacher invited the learner to listen again. This could help learners to think and pay more attention to what they have heard for better decoding of the spoken discourse. Sometimes the students got the gist but could not repeat exactly what they had heard. To do so, replaying can help learners to have more time to produce the sentence. *Replaying* is done in different ways; the learners might make a request by a question or directly stated to replay. It was the most used mediation and was more implicit.

## Protocol 2

The speaker said: I need a big display and lots of memory.
1.  S: I need a big displayer and lots of memory.
2.  T: repeated loudly "displayer". (Pointed to the problem) and *replayed*
3.  S: guessed "displaying?"
4.  T: repeated loudly "displaying"?
5.  S: laughed
6.  T: *replayed*
7.  S: repeated her guesses" displayer, displaying"
8.  T: *replayed and told the correct words and explained the new word for students.*
9.  S: repeated the entire sentence.

Teacher's *replaying* strategy in this protocol was observed a number of times in lines 2, 6 and 8 and helped the learner to have more time for recalling. It helped the learner to pick up the correct part of speech and by replaying, the teacher wanted to get the learner's attention to recall.

## Asking the Erroneous Words

The teacher used this mediational strategy when the learner was not able to produce exactly what he/she had heard after additional listening. It is an implicit feedback too. Here, the teacher tried to focus more on the problem and also draw

the student's attention on the spot so the student was aware of the source of the problem and paid more attention while listening again.

## Protocol 3

The speaker said: I'm a foreigner living in china.
1.  S: I'm for living in china.
2.  T: repeated with a rising intonation and said you need anoun then replayed
3.  S: gussed quietly "foner"
4.  T: *foner? What do you mean by foner?*
5.  S: laughed
6.  T: *replayed, paused and explained. (I am from Iran and I live in Iran now but if I live in Canada, I am a … .*
7.  S: guessed foreigner
8.  T: accepted the response and replayed.
9.  S: repeated the entire sentence.

In protocol above, the learner failed to recall the exact word. The teacher's using of this strategy helped the learner focus on the erroneous word as it is seen in lines 4 and 6.

## Informing the Specific Problematic Area with a Questioning Tone

Sometimes the teacher tried to indicate the problematic areas with a questioning tone. It is in the middle ground of Aljjafreh and Lantolfs' regulatory Scale. Here, the teacher wanted to inform the learner that his/her response was incorrect and made the learner change the response. When learners knew exactly what is wrong with their recall, they attempted to move forward and avoid making wrong guesses.

## Protocol 4

The speaker said: By that time, you will be better.
1.  S: but that time? (With doubt)
2.  T: *repeated "but that time"? Do we have such a thing?*

3.  S: on that time?
4.  T: *on that time? (Questioning tone).*
5.  S: at that time?
6.  T: *said no and repeated "at that time" with a questioning tone then played again.*
7.  S: oh, by that time, you will be better.

In protocol 4, the teacher pointed to the problematic area in different lines (2, 4, and 6). Here, the learner was sure that he/she was wrong with the preposition. This, in itself is quite natural because most learners have problems with prepositions. By using this strategy, the learner could focus to guess for different prepositions or just think about this grammatical point.

## Providing Metalinguistic or Contextual Clues

Following Alavi, Kaivanpanah and Shabani (2012), metalinguistic clues help students pay attention to the linguistic information in a sentence. Such clues consist of grammatical points such as subject, verb, preposition, adjective, adverb and lexical items such as collocations, expressions, and idioms. Moreover, contextual clues are important factors in understanding the spoken language. Giving information about the context, participants and place can be a good contextual help for learners to enhance their comprehension. This type of feedback is considered an explicit feedback.

## Protocol 5

The speaker said: we should pull the cars to the side of the road.
1.  S: we should the cars to the side of the road.
2.  T: you missed a verb here, and replayed
3.  S: silent

4. T: *explained the meaning (when you have an accident, you need to move your car to the side of the road) and introduced the word "pull".*
5. S: repeated the entire sentence.

As seen above, the teacher tried to have an image of the context in the learner's mind in line 4.

## Offering a Choice

By using this strategy, the teacher provided one correct and one incorrect response that might help in the recognition of a word or a grammatical point. It is an explicit kind of mediation. Here, the learner was provided with just two answers and it was easier for them to choose the right one. Here, the learner believed that learning is a simple task and it could be motivating too. Mostly, offering a choice strategy helped to have student's engagement.

## Protocol 6

The speaker said: my landlord is going to raise my rent to seven hundred dollars a month.
1. S: my landlord is going to raise my rent to seven hundred dollars…….
2. T: replayed the segment and repeated with a rising intonation to point to the problem
3. S: guessed "of month"
4. T: said of month? (Questioning tone)
5. S: guessed "on month"
6. T: said on month? (Questioning tone) and replayed
7. S: silent
8. T: *"on month" or "a month".*
9. S: oh, "a month"
10. T: explained that a rent is paid monthly so, "a month".

In protocol above, the learner made guesses for the right response but in line 8, the teacher helped the learner to choose from the two possible offered answers. It helped the learner to just select the acceptable response that exists in his/her schemata.

**Offering Body Movement**

Body movements can convey the meaning easier or even faster. Sometimes the teacher needed to use gestures or body movements to hint at the problem. Perhaps, if it is something new it can be learned better and not forgotten easier. It seems more interesting than providing long explanations for learners.

**Protocol 7**

The speaker said: a very red throat down there
1.  S: silent
2.  T: *pointed to the throat and asked what is this*?
3.  S: a very red (in doubt) and remained silent
4.  T: replayed
5.  S: no guess, silent
6.  T: *pointed again and said "throat".*
7.  S: aha, you are right it's "throat" and repeated the entire sentence.

In protocol 7, the word may exist in the learner's schemata but the learner failed to recall  due to the speed of the speech. The body movement strategy in lines 2 and 6, used by the teacher could be a good help and even worth as a long explanation.

**Providing a Correct Pattern**

This strategy is an explicit form of mediation. The teacher might use it for giving a clearer picture of something and it is used when other kinds of implicit mediation could not help the learner to overcome his/her problem. The learner

could get the pattern and understand the problematic area sooner and better. Learners can keep in mind a pattern very easily but the teacher should be careful not to give too many patterns to students in a short period of time.

## Protocol 8

The speaker said: sometimes, it is hard for me to breathe.
1.  S: sometimes, it is hard for me breathe
2.  T: it is hard for me "breath"?
3.  S: yes, it is hard for me breath
4.  T: your verb is not simple you need "to or ing verb"and replayed.
5.  S: guessed correctly and repeated the entire sentence.
6.  T: *explained the correct pattern "It is + adjective+ to verb".*

In protocol 8, the teacher believed to help learner by providing a correct pattern as seen in line 6. Sometimes, students can benefit from patterns and follow-up task can help them to understand better. To do so, the teacher can ask the learner to make examples of the pattern to be sure of their learning.

## Providing an Explicit Explanation

This is the most explicit type of mediation. The student might need more information on the problematic area. This could help him/her to overcome the problem better. By giving explanations, it is more vivid for learners to learn something new and could foster learning. The aim here is to develop the learner's general knowledge depending on the source of the problem.

## Protocol 9

The speaker said: Are you going to call the police?
1.  S: are you will to call the police?
2.  T: are you …ok but what is the tense here?
3.  S: are you get the…?

4. T: said no and replayed
5. S: are you will call the police?
6. T: will no, you said "are you" can we bring "are" with "will"?
7. S: remained silent
8. T: *provided explanation for ways to talk about future. Will+ simple verb and Be going to +simple verb.*
9. S: repeated the entire sentence correctly.

As seen above, the teacher had to provide explanations for future tenses. In this way, the learner could get both the pattern and the use of them.


## Learners' Responsive Moves

When mediations are offered by the teacher, the learner's responsive moves are worth analyzing to figure out how learners react or response. Both the mediation and the responsive move demonstrate the developmental changes in the ZPD level of the learners (Pohner, 2005). In the analysis of learner's moves interacting with the teacher, the regressive and progressive moves along with on-the-spot examples are concluded as follows:

| Regressive Moves | Progressive Moves |
|---|---|
| 1. Unresponsive | 1. Responsive |
| 2. Provides negative response | 2. Provides positive response |
| 3. Makes a wrong choice | 3. Makes a correct choice |
| 4. Does not overcome problem | 4. Overcomes problem |

**Figure 2**  Learners' Regressive and Progressive Responsive Moves within the ZPD


As discussed earlier**,** DA is an approach in which assessment and instruction are interwoven; that is, learners' participation in activities encourages them to ask the mediator and seek the teacher's feedback. Responsive moves clarify the effects of DA-based instruction in the listening class and the teacher's willingness to scaffold learners by the

manipulation of the learning process. According to Vygotsky (as cited in Ableeva, 2010) both progressive and regressive moves are involved in the developmental changes. Even if there is a regressive move, it can put forward the learner for development. When a learner is silent, it shows the learner's regressive move but it can be moved forward for the learner because the teacher helps the learner to provide an answer by providing a proper feedback.

## Responsive vs. Unresponsive

The responsive move shows an attempt of a learner to produce a correct or an incorrect response; that is, the learner is eager to generate any kind of response (Ableeva, 2010). On the contrary, unresponsiveness shows the learner's inability to provide any correct or incorrect response and represents the learner's silence. According to Poehner (2005), "without subsequent verbalization or attempt to identify or overcome an error, any immediate effect of the mediator's move cannot be known" (p. 183). Unresponsiveness may be due to several reasons, for example, when the mediation offered is vague for the learner or it is the lack of any linguistic item or even a memory block.

## Protocol 10

The speaker said: I like sitting in front of it all day.
S:  I'm like to sitting in front of it all day.
T:  replayed, paused to the point
S:  *silent (unresponsive)*
T:  something wrong is here with the verb
S:  *silent (unresponsive)*
T:  replayed
S:  I like to sitting (doubting)
T:  said "I like" and, asked is there anything wrong here?
S:  I like sitting (doubting)
T:  very good and replayed
S:  *recalled completely (responsive)*
T:  explained the verb "like" and the use of a gerund or an infinitive after that by providing examples.

## Negative response vs. Positive Response

In this situation, the learner attempted to provide any kind of response. Contrary to the previous move (Responsive vs. Unresponsive), the learner was active and engaged in the activity and tried to produce something. Typically, these moves happened after the mediator's scaffolding.

## Protocol 11

The speaker said: I produce video so, I am always using editing software.
S:  I …*(mumbling), (negative response)*
T:  replayed, paused to the point
S:  remained silent
T:  there is a problem here with the verb and replayed
S:  guessed produce and continues I produce video so, I'm always using…software.
T:  replayed
S:  *guessed "editing". (Positive response)*

Here the student knew the word as she mentioned in the class, but needed a bit of assistance to recognize the word.

## Correct Choice vs. Incorrect Choice

This move occurred when the learner could or could not respond properly to the offering of a choice mediation of the teacher. Here, the teacher invited the learner to choose just from the two choices offered.

## Protocol 12

The speaker said: I can be in two chat rooms at the same time.
S:  I can be in two chat rooms the same time.
T:  the same time?
S:  guessed on the same time

T:  on the same time? (Questioning tone) and points to the preposition of time.
S:  mumbling
T:  replayed and asked "on the same time or at the same time"?
S:  *guessed correctly and said "at the same time." (Correct choice).*

## Protocol 13

The speaker said: you are on the air
S:  you are on their
T:  replayed
S:  you are there
T:  there or on the air?
S:  *you are there(incorrect choice).*

## Overcoming Problem vs. Not Overcoming Problem

*Overcoming the problem happened* with nearly an implicit feedback from the teacher or, in fact, a bit of assistance from the teacher. Some learners needed more explicit feedback to overcome their problems. The ZPD level of the learners showed the degree of implicit or explicit feedback.

## Protocol 14

The speaker said: why don't you come back in two weeks?
S:  why you do not come back.
T:  why you don't come back? (rising intonation) and said here is a questioning tone and replayed
S:  *repeated the entire sentence correctly, (overcoming the problem).*

*Not overcoming the problem* happened when the teacher provided mediation for times, but the learner was still unable to produce the right response. Here, it can be concluded that the understanding of the problematic area was hard for the learner or simply put, it is higher than the learner's ZPD.

**Protocol 15**

The speaker said: It is a one-year lease and it will be up by
Sep 1st.

S:  It is a one-year lease and it end up
T:  replayed and paused
S:  guessed "end" again
T:  no, you have problem with the verb.
S:  *mumbling in doubt, (not overcoming the problem).*

## FREQUENCY OF MEDIATOR'S STRATEGIES AND LEARNERS' RESPONSIVE MOVES IN THE ZPD

Considering the SCT perspective, learner's development in
the ZPD can be clarified by the frequency of the mediational
strategies exhibited by the teacher (Aljaafreh & Lantolf,
1994; Poehner, 2005). In the present section, the frequency
of the mediator's strategies during interaction between
teacher and learner in a DA-based instruction (Tables 2) and
the responsive moves of the learners are presented (Table
3).These two tables represent the developmental changes at
three different sessions during the enrichment program (DA1,
DA4, and DA8). Regarding the three sessions, the mediator-
learner interactions were analyzed to find the frequency of
mediational strategies and the learner's responsive moves.
A comparison of mediational strategies demonstrates the
learners' progress in their ZPDs. Table 2 below shows both
the frequency of teacher's mediational strategies and the
extent of learners' demands for mediations. As it is seen,
*replaying* is the most frequently used strategy and *body
movement* strategy used for less.

Table 3 below shows that regarding regression and
progression, the number of total regressive moves for each
learner decreases in the DA8 and on the opposite direction
the number of progressive moves increases in the DA8;
therefore, learners tend to produce more progressive moves.

**Table 2**  Mediator's Strategies within the Learner's ZPD

| Category | Maryam DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Somayeh DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Nazanin DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Hadis DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Negin DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Mina DA 1, 4, 8 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accepting Response | 5 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| Rejecting Response | 16 | 11 | 10 | 18 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 13 | 9 | 5 | 16 | 11 | 5 |
| Replaying | 20 | 15 | 13 | 21 | 13 | 9 | 18 | 10 | 6 | 17 | 11 | 5 | 21 | 16 | 10 | 25 | 18 | 7 |
| Asking the erroneous words | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Informing problematic area | 10 | 7 | 4 | 12 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 4 |
| Metalinc/ contextual clues | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Offering a choice | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Offering body movement | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Providing a corr. pattern | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| Providing explanation | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Total med. strategies | 65- | 47- | 42 | 71- | 55- | 35 | 55- | 45- | 33 | 58- | 44 | -30 | 62- | 48 | -32 | 71- | 53 | -30 |

**Table 3**  Learner's Moves within the ZPD

| Category | Maryam DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Somayeh DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Nazanin DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Hadis DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Negin DA 1, 4, 8 | | | Mina DA 1, 4, 8 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unresponsive | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Responsive | 6 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 11 | 13 | 6 | 9 | 13 | 7 | 10 | 12 |
| Provides neg. response | 20 | 12 | 6 | 18 | 15 | 10 | 21 | 14 | 9 | 20 | 15 | 10 | 17 | 12 | 8 | 24 | 15 | 9 |
| Provides posit.res | 15 | 18 | 20 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 13 | 14 | 16 | 12 | 16 | 20 | 12 | 14 | 18 |
| Makes a wrong choice | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Makes a right choice | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Does not overcome a problem | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Overcomes a problem | 7 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| Total res. moves | 56 | 52 | 49 | 58 | 54 | 52 | 58 | 55 | 46 | 55 | 53 | 51 | 51 | 48 | 50 | 60 | 51 | 44 |
| Total reg. Moves | 28 | 16 | 8 | 24 | 19 | 13 | 32 | 21 | 13 | 25 | 19 | 10 | 26 | 15 | 9 | 31 | 19 | 9 |
| Total pog. moves | 28 | 36 | 41 | 34 | 35 | 39 | 26 | 34 | 33 | 30 | 34 | 41 | 25 | 33 | 41 | 29 | 32 | 35 |

*Note*: DA= dynamic assessment; reg= regressive; prog= progressive; res= responsive

## DISCUSSION

Following Poehner (2008), the reduced demand for teacher's mediation from a learner reveals his/her self-regulation, independent performance and consequently the cognitive development and learning potential. As indicated in table 2, *replaying* was the most used strategy by the teacher at the three different sessions (DA1, DA4 & DA8) and simultaneously its frequency decreased during the three sessions, and in the last session, the teacher used it less. As discussed earlier, this strategy is used while learners need more time for decoding and producing exactly what they had heard; therefore, the teacher invited learners to listen again. It can be concluded here that learner's listening ability is increased and they are more independent in the learning process. Another point is that *rejecting response* and *accepting response* are at the opposite directions. Simply put, the frequency of *rejecting response* is much more in the DA1 and less in DA8 and vice versa for *accepting response*. The reason may be because learners at the early stages of learning tried to guess more to arrive at the right response. *Informing the problematic area* strategy was used most after the accepting/rejecting response. Therefore, it can be concluded that if learners are aware of the source of their problem, they can move forward in the learning process faster. On the opposite direction, *the body movement strategy* was used less but it can be helpful too. Sometimes, providing body movement is better to avoid a long explanation. Additionally, considering other types of mediational strategies, the teacher used mediation more implicitly indicating the learner's self-regulation, anatomy and improvement (Pohner, 2008). As time goes in DA-based classes, the teacher manipulated the listening process and helped learners to be engaged more and take the responsibility for learning. Hence, the learners figured out that they should care more about the learning, so they probably demand less for mediations.

Furthermore, it can be noted that since the frequency of total mediational strategies have decreased, it can support the claim that learner's ZPD has moved toward higher levels. Simply put, the learner's growth has resulted in the learning

process. Consequently, the DA-based instruction and context-sensitive feedback exhibited by the teacher fostered student's learning and helped to activate the learning potential. Table 3 shows that regarding *regression* and *progression*, learners tended to produce moves that are more progressive; that is, the progressive moves helped learners and pave the way for developmental changes. Moreover, it can be investigated that over time, the learners were more eager to take part in the process of listening and learning. Therefore, they were more engaged and in this way the teacher could pave the way for the learner's learning. Regarding the responsive moves, the learners were more unresponsive in the DA1 but the frequency of Unresponsiveness was lesser in DA8. This shows both the eagerness and the responsibility taking of the students. Following Ableeva (2010), it shows the learner's growth of the listening skill in the ZPD. The responsive moves of the learners can bring insights for teachers to invite learners more in the learning process. As the results reveal, the learners in a DA-based instruction tended to be more responsible for their leaning; henceforth, teachers need to pay more attention to the teaching of listening rather than just testing it. Also, DA can be a good approach in teaching the listening skill and in this way the learners can be aware of their learning process and enjoy attending the listening class.

The last point worth mentioning here is that a discrepancy found between the mediational strategies in the present study and the one reported in Ableeva (2010). The researchers have added the *offering body movement* strategy which is absent in Ableeva (2010). As observed in DA-classes *body movement* strategy could help learners to get the point sooner than providing long explanations or sometimes it was easier for the teacher to use this strategy to convey the meaning. Furthermore, she did not describe *rejecting response* in her patterns while the researchers have focused on the frequency of rejecting response to figure out the extent of teacher-learner interaction and dialog. In a similar vein, *putting words together* and *using a dictionary* as mediational strategies were absent in the present study contrary to the one reported in Alavi, Kaivanpanah and Shabani (2012).

More precisely, putting words together is a strategy used with a group of learners while the present study investigated individual dynamic assessment. On the other hand, they did not use *providing a correct pattern* in their mediational strategies.


## CONCLUSION

The mediational strategies and the responsive moves of the learners in the present study offer insights for teachers to apply a DA approach in the classroom environment both in assessing and teaching listening. Regarding the mediational strategies in the present study, it can be concluded that *replaying* was the most frequently used strategy. In addition, the frequency of mediational strategies decreased in the last session so it demonstrates the learners' autonomy and control over learning. With regard to the learners' responsive moves, this study has found that generally learners tend to produce more progressive moves; that is, they help them move forward and find developmental changes. Moreover, it can be concluded that over time, the learners were more eager to take part in the process of listening and learning. Therefore, they are more engaged and in this way teachers can facilitate in their learning. it also shows that DA can be a good approach in teaching the listening skill and in this way the learners can be aware of their learning process and enjoy attending the listening class.

In conclusion, the qualitative analysis of teacher-learner interaction accounts for a  deeper description of the learner's actual and potential abilities. Therefore, teachers can plan for the individualized instruction of the learners according to their needs. According to Anton (2009), although interactionist DA is recognized as a time-consuming and difficult approach to carry out, the advantages for learners and learning plans are considerable and merit applying in the classroom. However, more investigation is needed to understand the effects of DA-based instruction on listening improvement.

# REFERENCES

Ableeva, R. (2010). *Dynamic assessment of listening comprehension in L2 French.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Pennsylvania State University, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

Alavi, S. M, Kaivanpanah, S., & Shabani, K. (2012). Group dynamic assessment: An inventory of mediational strategies for teaching listening. *The Journal of Teaching Language Skills, 3*(4), 28-58.

Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J. P. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the zone of proximal development. *Modern Language Journal*, *78*(4), 465–83.

Antón, M. (2009).Dynamic assessment of advanced second language learners. *Foreign Language Annals, 42*(3), 576-598.

Birjandi, P., & Mosalanejad, P. (2010). *An overview of testing and assessment*. Tehran: Sepahan Publication.

Ellis, R., Loewen, S., Elder, C., Erlam, R., Philp, J., & Reinders, H. (2009). *Implicit and explicit knowledge in second language learning, testing and teaching.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Haywood, H. C., & Lidz, C. S. (2007). *Dynamic assessment in practice, clinical and educational applications.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lantolf, J. P. (2009). Dynamic assessment: The dialectic integration of instruction and assessment. *Language Teaching, 42*(3), 355-368.

Lynch, T., & Mendelsohn, D. (2002). Listening. In N. Schmitt (Ed*.), An introduction to applied linguistics* (pp. 193-210). London: Oxford University Press.

Minick, N. (1987). Implications of Vygotsky's theories for dynamic assessment. In C. Lidz (Ed.), *Dynamic assessment: An interactive approach to evaluating learning potential* (pp. 116-140). New York: The Guilford Press.

Morley, J. (2001). Aural comprehension instruction: Principles and practices. In M, Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 67-101). United States of America: Heinle and Heinle Thomson.

Nabei, T. (2012). Teacher feedback, learner dialogue, and the zone of proximal development. *Kiyo, 6,* 41-58.

Nunan, D. (2002). Listening in language learning. In J. C. Richards, & W. A. Renandya, (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 238-241). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Poehner, M.E. (2005*). Dynamic assessment of oral proficiency among advanced L2 learners of French.*(Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

Poehner, M.E. (2008*). Dynamic assessment: A Vygotskian approach to understanding and promoting second language development.* Berlin: Springer Publishing.

Rost, M. (2001). Listening. In R. Carter, & D. Nunan, (Eds.), *Teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 7-13). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turuk, M. C. (2008). The relevance and implications of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in the second language classroom. *ARECLS, 5,* 244-262.

Vandergrift, L. (1997). The Cinderella of communication strategies: receptive strategies in interactive listening. *The Modern Language Journal, 81*(4), 494–505.

Vandergrift, L. (1999). Facilitating second language listening comprehension: Acquiring successful strategies. *ELT Journal, 53*(3)*,* 168-176.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978*). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Yun, K. C. (2010).  *The importance of teaching listening in the EFL classroom.* Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED512082.