การใช้ **Dynamic Assessment** ในห้องเรียนที่มีการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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บทคัดย่อ

Dynamic Assessment (DA) เป็นรูปแบบการทดสอบและประเมินผลที่เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการทดสอบและประเมินผลแบบโต้ตอบระหว่างครูและนักเรียน (interactive assessment) ซึ่งการทดสอบในลักษณะนี้จะผสมผสานการเรียนการสอนและการทดสอบประเมินผลเข้าด้วยกัน Dynamic Assessment (DA)ได้รับการพัฒนามาจากทฤษฎี Socio Cultural Theory of Mind (SCT) ของ ไวกอตสกี้ (L.S.Vygotsky) โดยมีจุดมุ่งหมายให้เป็นทางเลือกอีกแบบหนึ่งสำหรับการทดสอบแบบ static assessment ซึ่งไม่มีการให้ให้คำแนะนำหรือข้อมูลป้อนกลับให้กับนักเรียนในระหว่างการเรียนรู้และการทดสอบ บทความนี้มีจุดประสงค์ที่จะนำเสนอการนำ Dynamic Assessment (DA) ไปใช้ในการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ โดยในส่วนแรกจะกล่าวถึงกรอบแนวคิดทางทฤษฎีของ Dynamic Assessment (DA) ตลอดจนปัญหาและอุปสรรคในการนำ Dynamic Assessment (DA) เข้ามาใช้ในห้องเรียน ในตอนสุดท้ายของบทความได้สรุปข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับการนำ Dynamic Assessment (DA) ไปใช้ในการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

คำสำคัญ: Dynamic Assessment (DA), zone of proximal development, ห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ, การทดสอบและประเมินผลทางภาษาอังกฤษ

The Integration of Dynamic Assessment into the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Dynamic Assessment (DA) is a subset of interactive assessment which integrates teaching and assessment together through the use of mediation. It originated from the principles of Socio-Cultural Theory of Mind (SCT) developed by L.S. Vygotsky and his colleagues. DA has been developed with the aim to provide an alternative to static assessment which does not provide the immediate feedback to students during the learning and testing process. The aim of this article is to discuss the integration of dynamic assessment into the EFL classroom. The article discusses the theoretical constructs of DA and some concerns for the integration of DA in the EFL context. The article concludes with some recommendations for further use of DA in the EFL context.

Keywords: Dynamic assessment, zone of proximal development, English as a foreign language classroom, language assessment

Introduction

Dynamic assessment (DA) refers to the integration of assessment and instruction which is an approach based on the principles of Socio-Cultural Theory of Mind (SCT) developed by Vygotsky and his colleagues. Dynamic assessment (DA) which has been developed as an alternative to traditional, static psychometric tests is considered as a subset of interactive assessment (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002). The goal of dynamic assessment is not limited to evaluating the learner's present performance level but providing assistance during the learning process in order for teachers to gain useful information regarding students' performance level.

Language learning and assessment in Thailand: Some background and challenges

Traditionally, assessment has been used as an information-gathering activity to gain insight into learners' current level of knowledge or ability (Baily, 1996; McNamara, 2004). Because of its nature in measuring learners' current development or what the learners have already learned, it is also called "static assessment" by some researchers (Feuerstein et al., 1979). In recent years, static assessment has received a lot of criticism as most critics believe that the learner's performance is not static, that is, it can keep on improving and expanding. Poehner (2008) pointed out that L2 educators and teachers were frustrated by static assessments because they were seen as activities that are "distinct from, and perhaps even at odds with, the goals of teaching". This type of criticism can be seen in complaints about "teaching to the test" or "assessment-driven instruction" from teachers (Teo, 2012).

Since then, assessment reformers have emphasized the need for a closer connection between assessment and meaningful instruction (Shepard, 2000). According to McNamara (2000), language tests play a powerful role in many people's lives. This is obviously true in the field of language learning where tests have been used by teachers and evaluators as important devices for the purposes of assessment, evaluation as well as other purposes related to the process of language learning. Additionally, for many years test scores were considered as

the only true indicator of testee's performances without any attention to the process of learning and teaching (Birjani & Sarem, 2012).

This "teaching to test" situation can be clearly observed in Thailand where English is considered a foreign language. Thai students are still studying to pass exams which are informed by structuralist and behavioral views of language and language learning. English language teaching in the Thai context still relies on rote memorization and grammar translation methods. This might result from the tremendous public pressure on students, teachers and schools to raise scores in high-stakes tests such as the O-NET examination. Teachers' attention during classroom interaction is therefore geared towards the treatment of students' grammatical errors, even in tasks that require greater attention to communication, discourse and appropriateness. This situation has led to a growing demand for tailored instruction that targets high-stakes tests.

A recurring criticism of tests used in high-stakes decision-making (such as entry to college, university, or prestige faculties) is that they distort instruction by forcing teachers, whether they want to or not, to teach to the test (Garb, 2003). This type of situation can be harmful to language learning as Herman (1992: p.74) states that "time spent on test-taking often neglects higher-order thinking skills". Other researchers also suggest that while student scores will rise when teachers teach closely to the test, learning often does not change (Shepard, 2000; Smith and Fey, 2000). In fact, in many EFL classrooms in Thailand, instruction is synonymous with preparing students for these high-stakes tests.

With the current education reform in Thailand towards a knowledge-based society, many educators want to move away from traditional rote memorization towards student-centred learning, learner autonomy and the development of critical thinking skills. This new concept of "learning to learn" is in sharp contrast with the dominant "teaching to test" method in Thailand. According to Freeman (2001), the purpose of education today is to produce autonomous life-long learners, and the emphasis should be placed on assessing pupil's ability not only on acquiring information and skills, but also on their ability to transfer and use information, skills and thinking and problem-solving strategies in a wide and flexible range of contexts. In short, it is by concentrating on the process of learning, and students' engagement in this learning process that

teachers can facilitate the acquisition of effective learning skills for the 21st century (Shepard, 2001).

What this means for Thai students studying English language is that greater emphasis should be placed on alternative forms of assessment that promotes learner autonomy. In recent years, there has been a major paradigm shift from a focus on traditional forms of assessment to a greater focus on assessment for learning. The top priority of assessment for learning lies in using assessment to promote student learning through involving students actively in the assessment process (Black and William, 1998). The aim should be a combination of low-stakes, ongoing, formative assessment that guides teaching and learning, tied tightly to both the curriculum and the state's high-stakes summative test (Garb, 2003). Dynamic assessment is one form of assessments that can be implemented in a language classroom to strengthen instruction and assessment.

What is Dynamic Assessment?

Dynamic assessment has been developed by assessment researchers through Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) of learning which emphasises the central roles of social interaction and culturally constructed artifacts in the organization of human forms of thinking (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). In other words, proponents of SCT believe that the process of human learning occurs through social interaction with other human beings and the environments surrounding them. According to Haywood and Tzuriel (2009) dynamic assessment or DA refers to assessment of thinking, perception, learning, and problem solving by an active teaching process aimed at modifying cognitive functioning. DA, therefore, is a combination of instruction and assessment into one single activity which makes it different from static testing where examiners present problems or questions to examinees and record their responses without any help or guidance as they believe that it would interfere with the examinees' performance.

As the term *dynamic* implies change, the major goal of DA is to assess the process of thinking that is constantly changing. Through DA, teachers and students engage in a dialogue to find out the students' current level of performance on any task and share with each other the possible ways in which that performance might be improved. This teacher's intervention during the

assessment challenges conventional views on teaching and assessment by supporting the idea that teaching and assessment should not be seen as separate activities but should instead be fully integrated.

Theoretical Constructs of DA

The central concept of the dynamic assessment (DA) was grounded in the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in Vygotsky's (1978) Socio-Cultural Theory and Feuerstein et al.'s (1988) Mediated Learning Experience (MLE).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

One of the key constructs of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the difference between what an individual can do independently and what he or she can do with assistance or mediation. In ZPD, the development of the learner's ability cannot be seen only from their actual or current development, but also their ability to respond to mediation which can provide an insight into their future development. In SCT, knowledge is constructed through an interaction between a child and the environment (a teacher) through the use of symbolic tools such as language. Hence, ZPD can be viewed as a gap between what an individual can learn unassisted, and what he can learn with the help of a more knowledgeable peer. When applied specifically to a learning context, ZPD proposes that learning may be greatly facilitated through interactions between students as novices and a more knowledgeable and experienced person such as a teacher (Behrooznia, 2014) through tools called mediators.

Mediation

Vygotsky argues that human activities and mental functioning are mediated and facilitated by tools, cultural practices, and artifacts. Mediators, whether they are objects, symbols or people, help transform spontaneous impulses into higher mental processes such as approaches to problem solving (Tziona Bohrer-Levi, 2012). In the case of language learning, successful learning actions may depend to some extent on how the language learning is mediated.

Thus, whether it takes the form of a textbook, opportunities for L2 interactions, direct instruction or other forms of teacher assistance (Donato et al., 1992), mediation is an essential instrument of cognitive change. Through this interaction process, learners may use what Kozulin (1998) referred to as a "symbolic tool" to understand their own environment. Wertsch (2007), influenced by Vygotsky's theory, proposed two concepts of mediation: implicit and explicit mediations. The concept of thinking aloud is an example of implicit mediation which is relatively transparent and easier to control when compared to explicit mediation which is intentional and obviously introduced into the course of activity either by the individual or by someone else such as a teacher. In the context of language learning, teachers can use mediation to collaborate on an assessment task which is closely relate to each student's current level of performance in order to enable the teachers to move students to the next level of their ZPD.

Imitation

Through interaction, learners will start to imitate what their teachers do. Imitation in the context of SCT is not mindless copying of an activity but an intentional and selective mental activity which is a stepping stone towards internalization (Newman & Holzman, 1993). That is, what the learner imitates may gradually become internalized through the interaction process, thus needing less assistance from the teacher to accomplish the same task later on.

Internalisation

When learners are able to complete the tasks that were once possible through mediation or assistance from others on their own, it means that they are able to bring externally formed mediating artifacts into their thinking activity. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) provide three conditions for successful internalization. First, assistance should be graduated with only implicit help offered initially. Next, help should only be offered when needed. And lastly, help should occur through dialogue between learners and a teacher.

DA Formats and Approaches

According to Lantolf and Poehner (2004), there are two approaches to DA: interventionist and interactionist.

Interventionist DA

Interventionist DA can be defined as a more formal and standardized approach that involves quantifiable assistance and aims towards quantifiable measurement. In other words, assistance takes the form of standardized interventions that make use of predetermined guidance, feedback and support. Two formats which exist within interventionist DA are referred to by Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) as the 'sandwich' and the 'cake' formats.

• *The Sandwich format*

The sandwich format consists of three stages: pre-test, intervention (instruction) and post-test. The intervention in this format comprises structured teaching and guidance designed to help the examinee to arrive at the correct outcome or answer. First, the test takers are asked to complete pre-test activities; second, they are given instruction (planned in advance or adjusted to test-takers' needs derived from their performance during the initial test); and finally, they move on to a series of post-tests. Instruction occurs between the pre-test and post-test stages throughout the process of test administration.

• *The Cake format*

With this format, assessment involves intervention (or feedback) from the examiner during the test procedure itself. The examinees carry out testing activities that are given item by item. If they cannot solve an item correctly, they are provided with instruction presented in the form of pre-fabricated hints.

Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) explain the format as successive hints that are presented like layers of icing on a cake and the number of hints varies according to examinees. In other words, the examiner provides the examinees with hint-based instruction and determines how many hints an examinee needs to solve the item correctly. Guthke, Heinrich and Caruso (1986) developed a language aptitude testing instrument based on this assessment format which

provides examinees with five pre-fabricated hint: 1). vague hint, 2). more explicit hint, 3). even more explicit hint, 4. a very explicit hint, and 5). correct pattern and explanation of the solution.

Interactionist DA

In the interactionist approach, learning occurs through a cooperative or dialogic interaction between the examiner and the examinee (Poehner, 2005). A cooperative or dialogic interaction refers to an interaction in which the examiner immediately reacts to the examinee's needs, and learners are allowed to post questions and receive immediate feedback. During the interactionist DA sessions, leading questions, hints or prompts are not planned in advance and teacher-learner interactions are fine-tuned to the learner's ZPD.

In recent years, many researchers have become interested in the integration of DA in language learning (e.g., Leung, 2007; Poehner and Van Compernolle, 2011; Rea-Dickens, 2006; Tzuriel, 2011) and classroom based assessment (Ableeva, 2008; Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). In the next part we will discuss some theoretical background and key concepts of DA.

DA Literature Review

In recent years, there has been rich research literature on DA both in psychological and in educational fields. Language educators have begun to examine the pedagogical applications of DA on L2 reading (e.g. Abdolrezapour, Tavakoli, and Ketabi, 2014; Ajideh & Nouradad, 2012; Kozulin and Garb, 2002), on L2 writing (e.g. Aljafreh and Lantolf, 1994; Alavi and Taghizadeh, 2014; Panahi, Birjandi, and Azabdaftari, 2013) and on L2 speaking (e.g. Anton, 2009; Poehner, 2005). Among the four language skills, the L2 listening comprehension skill has so far received the smallest share of L2 DA research (Ableeva, 2010; Hidri, 2014).

Research in DA with special focus on language learning first began with research being conducted on the relationship between DA and children with specific language impairment or with language differences (e.g. Anton and DiCamilla, 1998; Donato and McCormick, 1994; Lantolf and Appel, 1994;

Lantolf and Poehner, 2008; Kozulin and Garb, 2002). Among these studies, it was found that DA could improve reading comprehension among 23 at-risk immigrants from Ethiopia studying EFL in Israel. The teachers in this study were trained to offer suggestions and ask questions to help students verbalise their decision making processes. This seems to confirm the inseparable link between assessment and instruction as Lantolf (2009) put it, "assessment and instruction are both moments of a single process."

The use of DA in the foreign language classroom was reported in the studies conducted by Poehner (2009) and Lantolf and Poehner (2011) who integrated DA into the classrooms of K-5 primary school students for 15 minutes per day with the hope to improve the correct use of grammatical structure of Spanish. In a study conducted by Poehner (2009), it was found that working cooperatively in activities improves everyone's performance (2009) as students take turns to engage in one-on-one interaction with the teacher. When a student answers incorrectly, the teacher either prompts the same student until he or she gets the correct answer or indicates that the response is incorrect, provides assistance, and asks a different student to provide the correct answer. With these two approaches, Lantolf and Poehner (2011) note that students seem actively engaged, and many times, are asking if they could volunteer the answer.

In another study conducted by Davin (2011), the development of 9 students was observed as they participated in large and small group mediation provided by the class teachers and by their peers. Davin's findings suggest that there are some students who could move from assisted to unassisted performance during the large group DA. These students could also act as mediators during small group work for those who still require mediation. Based on this finding, Davin (2011) suggested that DA can be integrated into the language classroom of an early language programme and that small group work is an essential part of DA as it provides students with opportunities to request mediation either from the teachers or from peers. To summarise, these studies all demonstrated the contribution of DA to L2 pedagogy both for individuals and for groups.

DA in the L2 classroom context

The focus of this section will be on the implementation of dynamic assessment in L2 classroom setting. Dynamic assessment (DA) can be implemented in the language learning classroom to strengthen instruction and assessment. In a DA classroom, instruction and assessment can occur simultaneously. At present, there is growing support for the use of DA in second language pedagogy (Anton, 2009; Lantolf and Poehner, 2004; Poehner and Lantolf, 2005; Poehner, 2005; Ableeva, 2007, 2008; Summer, 2008). One of the reasons for this growing support is because researchers believe that language acquisition and learning can be achieved through joint interactions between instruction and assessment (Davin, 2013).

Poehner (2009) proposed two approaches of dynamic assessment that could be applied to the language classrooms: a cumulative approach and a concurrent approach. In the cumulative approach, a teacher directs all mediation to the same student. In this approach to DA, the teacher engages individuals in dialogue within the whole classroom setting. During daily instruction, when a student makes an error, the teacher will provide pre-scripted prompts one by one, adjustable upon the student's response, until the student is able to formulate the response correctly. Poehner (2009) distinguished between primary interactants-those speaking directly to the teacher – and secondary interactants – those listening in the background. Because the exchange occurs in the social space of the class and before the other students, it has mediating potential to the whole class.

In the concurrent approach, on the other hand, a teacher interacts with all students instead of directing the mediation to a single student. When an individual gives an incorrect answer, the teacher provides mediation and calls upon other students to reformulate the answer, thereby creating a group of ZPD.

Concerns for the integration of DA in the EFL context

Despite notable literature on DA as described earlier which describe the usefulness of DA, it is still difficult to replace conventional static language tests in the Thai EFL context with DA even though this form of static assessment is believed to be limited as it does not promote learners into becoming independent

knowledge constructors and problem solvers (Birjandi and Sarem, 2012). In this section, the limitation and challenges of implementing DA in the EFL context as an alternative form of assessment will be discussed.

When it comes to applications and implications for learning and teaching, every new paradigm or theory has some advantages and disadvantages. One of the challenges in implementing DA in any language classrooms is the fact that DA is a far more time-consuming assessment method than static testing. DA requires more skill, better training, more experience, and greater effort from teachers than static testing. Even with proper training, DA examiners must be able to determine each learner's problem and appropriate mediation required and how to interpret the difference between pre-mediation and post-mediation performance. This process requires more time to administer than static testing and can be a challenge to many Thai EFL teachers because of the current short fall of teachers (Mackenzie, 2011). Additionally, with a class size of up to 30 learners, targeting the development of an individual might represent an unrealistic model for classroom teachers. Because of the large class size, finding proper mediation or treatment that works for a large number of students is another challenge for DA whose goal is to integrate instruction and assessment (Haywood and Lidz, 2003).

So far we have looked at the challenges of integrating DA into the EFL classroom from the perspective of practicality. However, the greatest controversy of the integration of DA concerns the goals of assessment. There are essential differences between traditional static assessment and DA with regards to validity, reliability and fairness of dynamic assessment.

The issue of validity

It is argued that learning-centered assessments such as DA must meet the validity and fairness criteria if they are to provide meaningful and accurate information for further learning and teaching. Bachman (2000) has characterized validation as a process of deciding whether a test measure is really worth counting. In other words, validity challenges assessors to defend their interpretations of assessment performance and to consider the consequences of assessment for individuals, programs, institutions, and society.

However, the fundamental difference between DA and psychometric testing lies in their different relationships between assessment, teaching and learning. Psychometric testing and dynamic assessment are fundamentally two distinct activities with different goals and methods. With traditional psychometric tests, assessment is believed to be a standalone activity that reports the products of learning but is not intended to impact teaching and learning directly (Alderson and Wall, 1993; Cheng 2005; Cheng, Watanabe and Curtis 2004). The assumption that processes of validating standardized tests can be unproblematically applied to classroom assessments such as DA has been questioned on the grounds that these two types of assessment differ in many ways (Moss, 2003). While psychometric or standardized tests seek to isolate abilities, which are believed to be stable and fixed, dynamic assessment is less interested in observing consistencies in performance and more on the process of development. These different goals have important implications for how assessment validation is approached as they shift the focus of assessment from a measurement activity to one that focuses on learner development. This implies a shift from assessment being a mere observation of performance to cooperation with learners and intervention. Through DA, it is argued, the validity of assessment is derived from its success in promoting learner development

Reliability

In psychometric testing, a reliable test refers to a test in which performance is the same across different learners and different administrations. However, as mentioned earlier, the goal of DA is to support learners' development through guided prompts. Thus, change is expected and should be viewed positively. To resolve this fundamental difference, standardization of the mediation process could be implemented to improve greater reliability of DA (Buchel and Scharnhorst, 1993) as in the interventionist approach to DA. On the other hand, it should also be noted that the goal of DA assessment is not on traditional stability but improvement of students' performance which could result from rigorous documentation of the interactive process between the teacher and learners.

Fairness

It is undoubtedly true that the intention of every assessor is that their assessment practices are fair. But how can one justify what fairness is. Delandshere (2002: p 1480) asks the following:

> "When the same test is given to all sixth graders in a state to find out whether their educational experiences yield similar achievements, is it because we are working from a theory stating that if students have all been taught the same thing, they all will learn it in the same way at the same time? It seems unlikely that any educator would articulate such a theory."

Even though the term 'fairness' has not been clearly defined, Gipps (1999) argued that the major developments in assessments have been driven by attempts to achieve this concept of fairness. It was believed that the standardization of tests was an act of fairness where similar contexts for all test-takers would reduce differences in performance. However, in SCT where the learner's development occurs out of an interaction of each individual with the world, fairness refers to the idea of treating or interacting with people differently in order to teach and for them to learn within their ZPDs (Swain, 2010). Thus, in theory, mediation in DA provides the condition for perhaps the most fair and equitable testing process possible because it is being adjusted to meet the specific needs for each learner's development.

Recommendation for further use of DA in the EFL context

A large class size and heavy teaching workload makes it difficult for a teacher to interact with not just a single ZPD but a group of ZPDs. A one-to-one format of interaction between teacher and student has become a challenge to classroom teachers who have to interact with a group of ZPDs. In recent years, there have been some recommendations of ways to implement DA into the L2 classroom. Lin (2009) suggested administering a set of pre-formulated supportive hints and mediations which could provide teachers with information about students' needs and their potential responses to mediation. Poehner (2009) developed a framework called group dynamic assessment (G-DA) in which

teachers can negotiate with a group of learners to co-construct several ZPDs. Poehner's framework of G-DA proves to be attractive in the field of language learning (Saniei, Birjandi and Abdollahzadeh, 2015) as it offers L2 teachers and practitioners a more realistic model of applying DA with groups of learners rather than individuals. This framework is more welcoming as it is less time and energy consuming to language teachers in Thailand who must accommodate a class size of more than 30 students.

In order to successfully implement DA in the Thai EFL context, more research on the implementation of DA in group settings is needed. Although DA might prove to be helpful in uniting teaching and assessment, it might not be practical for students in a large class due to time limitation (Davin and Donato, 2013).

Another way to successfully implement DA in L2 classrooms is through computerized DA (C-DA). Since computer-based tests are increasingly common, DA researchers are beginning to explore the possibility of electronically delivering mediation (Poehner, 2008). Some distinct advantages of computerized dynamic assessment are that it can be administered to a large number of students. In addition, students may be re-assessed as frequently needed and reports of learners' performances are automatically generated.

The use of peer-to-peer mediation (Kaufman and Burdern, 2004) can also be used to apply DA in the L2 classroom. A number of studies in recent years (Swain and Lapkin, 1998, 2000; Swain, 2001) suggest that peers can serve as effective mediators. Moreover, through the interactions between learners in order to solve problems and their strategies for solving them, teachers can use this information to better plan instruction by addressing areas of weakness. Swain (2001) further suggested L2 teachers and practitioners to consider administering tests to pairs or groups of students, as this would "more faithfully mirror regular, daily classroom and non-classroom activity"

Conclusion

To conclude, although the process of implementing DA can be time-consuming and requires careful planning in advance, it is believed to be an innovative and valuable way of assessing students as it allows teachers to

integrate instruction and assessment simultaneously while reducing the student's test-taking anxiety. It is therefore important for L2 teachers and researchers to carry out more research in this area in order to fully understand the impact of dynamic assessment on L2 teaching and learning development.

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