Research Paper

Impacts of Interventionist and Interactionist Dynamic Assessment Models on EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate

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Abstract

In recent years, the role of willingness to communicate (WTC) in second language acquisition has been highlighted, as it is one of the most important factors affecting learners' use of language and their general communicative competence. Knowledge of how different instructional approaches can promote WTC is necessary for the enhancement of EFL instruction. This study compared the effects of interventionist and interactionist dynamic assessment models on WTC among 75 Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The participants were assigned to two experimental groups (EG1 and EG2) and one control group (CG), with a total of 16 treatment sessions being conducted during a semester. The two experimental groups received dynamic assessment interventions; the interventionist model was used for EG1, and the interactionist model for EG2. The results indicated that both EGs significantly outperformed the CG in improving WTC, but no statistically significant differences were found between the two experimental groups. This study will contribute to an improved understanding of how different dynamic assessment approaches can effectively nurture learners' WTC in English. The result implies that either dynamic assessment model could be adopted by the teacher to improve WTC among EFL learners, though more research is still required in the area of optimal assessment strategies in language education.

Keywords: Dynamic assessment, Interventionist model, Interactionist model, Readiness to communicate, Iranian intermediate learners

در سال‌های اخیر، نقش تمایل به برقراری ارتباط (WTC) در فراگیری زبان دوم برجسته شده است، زیرا یکی از مهم‌ترین عوامل مؤثر بر استفاده زبان‌آموزان از زبان و شایستگی عمومی ارتباطی آنهاست. آگاهی از اینکه چگونه رویکردهای آموزشی مختلف می توانند WTC را ارتقا دهند برای تقویت آموزش EFL ضروری است. این مطالعه تأثیر مدل‌های ارزیابی پویا مداخله‌گرا و تعامل‌گرا را بر WTC در بین ۷۵ زبان‌آموز ایرانی زبان‌آموزان متوسطه مقایسه کرد. شرکت کنندگان در دو گروه آزمایشی EG1) و (EG2 و یک گروه کنترل (CG) قرار گرفتند که در مجموع ۱۶ جلسه درمانی در طول یک ترم انجام شد. دو گروه آزمایشی مداخلات ارزیابی پویا را دریافت کردند. برای EG1 از مدل مداخله گرایانه و برای EG2 از مدل تعامل گرایانه استفاده شد. نتایج نشان داد که هر دو EG به طور قابل توجهی از CG در بهبود WTC بهتر عمل کردند، اما هیچ تفاوت آماری معنی‌داری بین دو گروه آزمایشی مشاهده نشد. این مطالعه به درک بهتری از این که چگونه رویکردهای مختلف ارزیابی پویا می توانند به طور مؤثر WTC زبان آموزان را به زبان انگلیسی پرورش دهند، کمک خواهد کرد. نتیجه نشان می‌دهد که هر یک از مدل‌های ارزیابی پویا می‌تواند توسط معلم برای بهبود WTC در بین زبان‌آموزان زبان انگلیسی اتخاذ شود، اگرچه هنوز تحقیقات بیشتری در زمینه استراتژی‌های ارزیابی بهینه در آموزش زبان مورد نیاز است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: ارزشیابی پویا، مدل مداخله‌گرا، مدل تعامل‌گرا، آمادگی برای برقراری ارتباط، فراگیران متوسط ایرانی

Introduction

Theoretical Foundation

Dynamic Assessment (DA) is an evaluative approach based on Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory, one that strongly underscores the dynamic interaction between the learner and the assessor. Unlike the static assessment of a learner's current developmental level, disregarding the individual's future academic potential, DA emphasizes the ability of the learner to change as a result of guided interaction (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). The most central concept of DA is that of the Zone of Proximal Development, first posited by Vygotsky (1978). The ZPD represents the difference between what a learner can do unaided and what they are able to do with assistance or support. In DA, the assessor is not only an evaluator but also a mediator who intervenes in order to support the development of the learner, assessing not only the present abilities of the learner but also his potential for future learning. Scaffolding during the assessment process itself allows DA to identify how learners respond to instruction and what kinds of mediation they need to succeed. This dynamic process of support not only reveals the existing knowledge of the learner but also his capacity to assimilate new concepts and strategies, hence providing a more complete insight into their competencies (Poehner, 2008).

Dynamic Assessment (DA) has been increasingly applied in various educational contexts, particularly in language acquisition, as it enables both formative and tailored assessment procedures that improve learner development. Additionally, this approach will provide insights into how learners engage in problem-solving tasks and what cognitive processes they go through when faced with a problem, making it an all-inclusive assessment tool (Antón, 2009). Two major approaches to DA have been recognized in the literature: the interventionist and interactionist models. Both share the same theoretical premises but differ in the way they conduct mediation throughout the assessment process. The interventionist model of DA is best characterized by the fact that it is both systematic and pre-determined in structure. This particular approach usually follows a standardized format of mediation, where the assistance is provided in a fixed sequence. The interventionist dynamic assessment (DA) usually follows a test-intervene-test paradigm, where participants first go through a task on their own, followed by a period of intervention or mediation and, finally, a retest phase that measures the effects of intervention. The process of mediation is carefully modulated and gradually decreased as learners increasingly demonstrate self-regulatory behavior (Lidz, 1991). In such a paradigm, the amount and nature of mediation generally tend to be constant for the whole learning group. The aim is not just to test the accomplishments of students when provided with support but also to gauge how much support they need and how quickly they can take on new information. This provides a more quantifiable approach in measuring learning potential, one that is usually used where standardization and comparability of results are essential, for example, in educational testing or special education programs (Tzuriel, 2001).

A very major feature of this interventionist model is its reliance on graduated prompting, where prompts are presented in a hierarchical order, at first, minimal, then increasingly more intensive when the learner fails to proceed. The main emphasis is placed on determining the responsiveness of the learner to mediation and also his or her ability to generalize the strategies learned to new contexts. For instance, if a learner is struggling with a math problem, the mediator will initially provide a hint, followed by a clearer explanation and finally demonstrate how to solve it if needed. The learner's development is also monitored in the process to assess his problem-solving skills after the support is provided(Lantolf & Poehner, 2014).

By contrast, the interactionist model of DA is more fluid and dialogic, generally involving a collaborative problem-solving approach between the learner and the mediator. Rather than a

predetermined sequence of prompts, this kind of approach elicits open-ended interaction, with the mediator adjusting his or her level of assistance in response to the immediate needs of the learner.

The mediator actively engages the learner throughout the task, giving suggestions, asking questions, and encouraging reflection, all in an effort to co-construct knowledge rather than simply test performance (Poehner, 2009). The interactionist model more closely approximates the conditions of scaffolding because it permits the mediator to adjust dynamically to the learner's ZPD. An activity especially is made personal, mediated by the design of what the learner is going to encounter during each stage regarding assessment. This approach implies active conversation and negotiation between him and the mediator, although that is what makes it conducive, especially in environments involving language acquisition, where comminicative competencies are crucial to gain (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). For instance, in language assessment, the mediator may assist a learner in improving their knowledge of grammar or vocabulary by engaging them in conversation and gradually refining their responses. This process not only helps to assess the learner's current language abilities but also increases the depth of linguistic knowledge through active participation (Poehner, 2005). This interactionist framework now emphasizes formative, ongoing assessment in which learning is seen as an active, developmental process and not a fixed outcome.

Though the interventionist and interactionist models of dynamic assessment have a lot to offer regarding the learners' developmental trajectories, they do so differently. The interventionist model, on the other hand, gives a more highly structured, standardized approach, quantifying learners' responsiveness to mediation—a feature making it appropriate for large-scale testing situations. In contrast, the interactionist model is much more concerned with the dialogic nature of learning and so gives more personalized and flexible forms of mediation, attuning itself to the learner's immediate needs. In general, DA is a powerful tool for obtaining a glimpse into what learners know and how they learn; as such, it creates a more holistic view of the abilities of these learners compared to traditional assessment tools. In combining teaching with assessment, DA nurtures the cognitive and problem-solving skills of learners while at the same time giving rich, diagnostic information to the educator for informing instruction.

Experimental Foundation
Indeed, a host of research has examined the impact of dynamic assessment approaches on EFL learners' speaking sub-skills. Regarding pronunciation, for example, Yang and Qian (2017) used a mixed-method experiment to examine the impact of DA on Chinese English learners' pronunciation. Participants were 36 English-major college students with a very difficult situation in their pronunciation improvement process. Moreover, the research used two questionnaires to assess participants' attitudes, motivation, and anxiety within the pronunciation class. Yang administered an interventionist DA model by offering oral mediation to the experimental group through hints, suggestions, explanations, or demonstrations. The findings revealed that DA in treatment significantly improved the pronunciation ability of the experimental group, which led to a more positive attitude, higher motivation, and lower anxiety for the learners. Along the same lines, Shafiee et al. (2018) investigated the effect of interactionist DA on teaching English rhythm to 30 Iranian EFL learners through a mixed-experimental design. The results showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group in the post-test, which could be partly explained by the more positive attitude provided through DA practice, as the results of the questionnaires conducted by the researchers quantitatively proved.

Moving on to fluency, Kao (2020) reported on the effectiveness of interactionist DA on the oral fluency of Chinese EFL learners at two levels of proficiency: elementary and advanced. Conducting her research at a Taiwanese university with 119 first-year students, Kao concluded that interactionist DA did not improve the pronunciation of lower proficiency level learners due

to the teacher's constant interventions hampering the learners' content development. In contrast, Safdari and Fathi (2020) have investigated the impact of DA on Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency in their experimental study. They came to a conclusion that the use of DA did not improve the participants' fluency significantly.

Moreover, a number of researchers have been investigating the relative effectiveness of interactionist and interventionist DA in promoting EFL learners' grammatical knowledge. Jafary et al. (2012) identified that interactionist DA enhanced Iranian male pre-university students' grammatical knowledge. In another study, Estaji and Ameri (2020) targeted pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate EFL learners and revealed that interventionist DA significantly succeeded in developing the participants' skills, with lower-level participants obtaining higher post-test scores compared to their high-intermediate counterparts. Participants in the experimental groups developed a more positive attitude toward grammar learning and preferred DA techniques over traditional methods. These findings are corroborated by other studies such as Alavi et al. (2012), Farangi and Kheradmand Saadi (2017), and Shabani (2012) that the effectiveness of DA can be attributed to teachers' accurate diagnostic feedback, learners' involvement in DA interactions, and the chance to discuss grammar issues with the instructors.

Finally, Asl et al. (2024) investigated the impact of interactionist versus interventionist dynamic assessment models on Iranian EFL learners' speaking sub-skills. In this regard, 30 undergraduate students from the Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch, were selected through convenience sampling and participated in both phases of the study. Quantitative data were obtained through participants' pre- and post-test scores of the IELTS speaking module, whereas qualitative data involved the transcribed recordings of the intervention sessions. The integrated quantitative and qualitative results indicated that even though both models positively influenced the EFL learners' speaking proficiency, they differed in magnitude and mechanisms of their effects. More specifically, interactionist DA proved effective in improving grammatical range and accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary depth, while interventionist DA proved more efficient in improving fluency and vocabulary breadth.

While a good number of studies have investigated the effects that DA models have on the development of pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, there is a scarcity of studies addressing how the interventionist and interactionist DA models influence the WTC among EFL learners. Most of the previous studies have focused on linguistic proficiency alone, giving little attention to the psychological and emotional variables that make up the communication behavior of the learner, especially WTC. Besides, the relative effect of these two different DA models-interventionist and interactionist-on learners' WTC has not been much discussed, particularly in those situations where attitudes, motivation, and anxiety in learners interrelate with their WTC. Given that WTC is a critical aspect in language acquisition, an investigation into how these DA models influence it may provide new insights into how instructional strategies could be best optimized to enhance learners' communicative confidence and engagement in real-life situations. Consequently, the following question were posed:

RQ. Is there a significant difference between the interventionist and interactionist DA models regarding their impacts on Iraian EFL learners' WTC?

Methodology

Participants

This study has also been conducted to compare the effects of interventionist and interactionist dynamic assessment models on the WTC of 75 Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Convenience sampling was used in the research from two English language institutes in Mashhad, Iran. The participants were all males, ranging in age from 16 to 23 years. The age bracket is selected with

the purpose of ensuring that the test participants fall within a similar developmental stage, which is relevant to language learning and communication skills.

It means the sample was divided into two experimental groups (EG1 and EG2) and one control group (CG). In detail, EG1 was constituted by 25 learners receiving an interventionist dynamic assessment model. On the other hand, 25 learners were exposed to the interactionist dynamic assessment model. Lastly, there were 25 participants who received no dynamic assessment treatment at all in a control group. All participants were registered in an English language program at a local institution, where they each received a total of 16 treatment sessions delivered over a semester. This design was used to compare the effectiveness of two different dynamic assessment models to improve learners' WTC in English.

Instruments

We used the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) as a tool for selecting intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners for this study. The OQPT is a widely recognized assessment designed to evaluate learners' English language proficiency levels efficiently and accurately. It consists of various sections that assess key language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening. In our experimental design, we sought to make certain that our pool was homogeneous and at an intermediate stage through the employment of this test for the purposes of research integrity. The OQPT made available a secure sorting of learners for the study in distinguishing learners who were possessors of the requisite foundation to make use of dynamic assessment models explored. Moreover, the application of a standardized test, such as the OQPT, adds to the validity of participant selection because it reduces subjectivity and gives a clear framework for language proficiency assessment. In the end, the use of the OQPT in the research design helped not only in the selection of appropriate participants but also added to the rigor and credibility of the methodology.

The second instrument used for the study is the WTC questionnaire adapted from Cao and Philp's (2006) observational method. The researcher perceived the above-mentioned questionnaire to be appropriate for this study because it had been widely used in previous studies. The said questionnaire contained 12 items and used a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 representing the least willing and 6 the most willing. The questionnaire was validated for its content validity through a team of English professionals. Its reliability was measured with Cronbach's Alpha, which exhibited an internal consistency level that was satisfying. Also, it has to be expressed that this scale formed the pre-test and the post-test, as in, first, it was pre-administered before the treatment and administered after the treatment to establish the development of WTC amongst the individuals.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began with the selection of participants by recruiting 75 learners. The participants were randomly assigned to three groups, each group comprising 25 learners. The first group, Experimental Group 1 (EG1), received instruction through the interventionist dynamic assessment model, which provided immediate feedback and guided practice. The second group, Experimental Group 2 (EG2), received interactionist dynamic assessment, peaking emphasis on peer interaction and collaborative feedback. The third group, the Control Group (CG), would not get the dynamic assessment treatment but instead go through traditional instruction methods.

A pre-test was first administered to all participants before the treatment to establish a comparative baseline. This pre-test measured the learners' initial WTC from Cao and Philp's (2006) questionnaire. This instrument allowed for a standard measure of WTC and consistency in initial evaluation across the three groups.

Following the pre-test, all testees received 16 speaking lessons over a period of 8 weeks, with two lessons per week. All three groups were exposed to identical lesson content and delivery methods to isolate the effect of the dynamic assessment models. During this phase, the intervention varied by group: EG1 participants received immediate feedback, guided practice, prompts, and structured peer feedback sessions, while EG2 learners focused on collaborative peer assessments and reflective discussions. In contrast, CG participants followed the traditional instructional format, which emphasized lesson delivery without any dynamic assessment components.

For monitoring, EG1 and EG2 undertook formative assessments every four lessons. The formative assessment of ongoing learning outcomes followed the guidelines of the same rubrics that were used during the pre-test. In the case of the control group, it had typical classroom assessment without the dynamic assessment feature. Finally, after the intervention, all participants received a post-test on the same test as the pre-test. This ensured that the changes in WTC across all groups would be measured reliably using consistent testing instruments.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis started with a close examination of pre- and post-test scores to determine how far the dynamic assessment interventions were effective. Change in WTC for each group was measured, which provided the opportunity to compare the interventionist and interactionist model outcomes directly with the traditional instructional approach. Comparative analyses, therefore, were conducted through methods such as ANOVA and t-tests to ensure rigorous statistical evaluation. These statistical tools could identify significant differences in the WTC improvements across the three groups. The relative effectiveness of the interventionist and interactionist dynamic assessment models in developing learners' WTC and how these approaches compare to the outcomes of the control group were the key concerns of the analysis.

This thus allowed the detailed statistical analysis to show how far the dynamic assessment methods impacted the learners' communication abilities and thereby helped in furthering WTC within educational contexts.

Results

The results of the present study have some revealing insights into Iranian EFL learners' WTC, both before and after the implementation of DA models. Before running any analysis, the data were checked for normality, indicating that the distribution of scores was consistent with the assumptions of parametric testing. In testing the differences among the three groups-CG, EG1, and EG2-one-way ANOVA was performed. This statistical approach allowed for a robust comparison of WTC scores before and after the interventions, illuminating the impact of the different dynamic assessment models on learners' communicative confidence and engagement. The subsequent findings underline the effectiveness of both DA models in fostering increased WTC among EFL learners, providing valuable implications for language instruction methodologies.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Pretest of WTC

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
CG	25	27.2000	4.61880	.92376
EG1	25	26.6800	3.59073	.71815

EG2	25	28.4400	4.65546	.93109
Total	75	27.4400	4.32229	.49909

It was observed from the descriptive statistics of the WTC pretests that the mean scores were roughly close to one another across CG, EG1, and EG2. The average score for the control group was 27.20, the interventionist group scored an average of 26.68, while the interactionist group had a slightly higher score of 28.44. These results show that, before the intervention, participants were at a medium level of WTC in English, with EG2 showing a little higher initial confidence. The standard deviations are indicative of variability within each group, with EG1 being the least variable, therefore more homogenous in its constituent responses. Overall, these pretest results set a baseline for assessing the impact of dynamic assessment models on WTC after the interventions.

Table 2
ANOVA Results for Pretest of WTC

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	40.880	2	20.440	1.097	.339
Within Groups	1341.600	72	18.633		
Total	1382.480	74			

The ANOVA results of the pretest of WTC reveal that the differences between the groups are not statistically significant, as the p-value is 0.339. This means that, before dynamic assessment interventions, the scores of WTC among three groups were not significantly different. Also, the F-value, which equals 1.097, gives evidence to prove that their initial levels of WTC were alike, thus confirming the baseline for further comparisons after the intervention. This lack of significant difference reinforces the assumption that any changes in WTC observed in the posttest could be attributed to the dynamic assessment models employed rather than pre-existing differences in the groups.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Posttest of WTC

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
CG	25	34.4000	7.14143	1.42829
EG1	25	45.8800	10.64707	2.12941
EG2	25	44.8400	9.90656	1.98131
Total	75	41.7067	10.60058	1.22405

In the posttest results, EG1, which used interventionist dynamic assessment, increased significantly in WTC with a mean score of 45.88, while EG2, which used interactionist dynamic assessment, also had a high mean score of 44.84. On the other hand, CG got the lowest mean score of 34.40. The sharp rise in WTC for both EG1 and EG2 testifies to the effectiveness of dynamic assessment in developing learners' confidence and willingness to communicate. The higher standard deviations in EG1 and EG2 also point to a greater spread among participants, indicating that individual improvements as a result of the interventions might be quite different. These findings give support to the positive influence of tailored mediation and active engagement in enhancing WTC among EFL learners.

Table 4

ANOVA Results for Posttest of WTC

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2015.547	2	1007.773	11.517	.000
Within Groups	6300.000	72	87.500		
Total	8315.547	74			

The following ANOVA result from the posttest of WTC showed that the groups differed significantly, having a p-value of 0.000 and F value of 11.517, respectively. Therefore, the given results denote that the used dynamic assessment models significantly had a noteworthy impact on improving participants' WTC in English language production. Moreover, this conclusion can also be supported by high difference scores recorded among different groups in the table mentioned above. The interventionist and interactionist groups differed significantly from the control group, which means that both dynamic assessment models were effective in enhancing WTC. The findings suggest that DA approaches should be integrated into EFL instruction to develop learners' communicative abilities.

Table 5

Multiple Comparisons for Posttest of WTC

(I) groups	(J) groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
CG	EG1	-11.48000*	2.64575	.000
	EG2	-10.44000*	2.64575	.001
EG1	CG	11.48000*	2.64575	.000
	EG2	1.04000	2.64575	.926
EG2	CG	10.44000*	2.64575	.001
	EG1	-1.04000	2.64575	.926

The results of the multiple comparisons for the posttest of WTC further explain the significant differences among the groups. Both the interventionist group (EG1) and the interactionist group (EG2) showed significant improvements compared to the control group (CG), with mean differences of -11.48 and -10.44, respectively, both of which were statistically significant (p <.001). No significant difference was found in the comparison between EG1 and EG2, with a p-value of.926, meaning that both dynamic assessment models were effective in enhancing WTC. Such findings give substantial evidence for the effectiveness of dynamic assessment in the improvement of the ability to communicate among EFL learners and outline the need for educators to consider integrating such approaches into their teaching methodologies to develop learners' WTC.

Discussion

The data analysis indicated that both interventionist and interactionist DA models outperformed the traditional non-DA instruction in bringing about significant enhancement in Iranian EFL learners' WTC. These findings are consistent with the growing body of research evidence that has

so far unanimously pointed to the facilitating role of DA in different aspects of language learning. Integration of tailored mediation in DA apparently develops not only the communicative confidence of the learners but also their general engagement with the language, thus leading to a more positive attitude toward communication in the target language. This section will discuss how the results of this study compare with other similar research into the effects of DA on specific language learning skills such as pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical knowledge.

In support of the current study's findings, Yang and Qian (2017) reported that the interventionist DA model significantly enhanced the pronunciation proficiency of Chinese English learners. This was due to the oral mediation in the form of hints and explanations, resulting in a more positive attitude and higher motivation among learners; their anxiety was reduced. Likewise, the findings of the present study indicated that both DA models assisted learners to be more confident and less anxious when communicating in English. This corroborates the general claim that DA, specifically the interventionist model, is capable of building motivation and reducing anxiety, which are essential conditions for improved WTC.

Shafiee et al. (2018) also found that the interactionist DA model significantly enhanced Iranian EFL learners' ability to learn English rhythm. Their experimental group outperformed the control group due to the positive attitudes facilitated by DA implementation. This aligns with the present study's observation that interactionist DA contributed to learners' WTC by providing a more flexible and responsive form of mediation. This may have been due to the fact that the interactionist model, with its continuous negotiation and adjustment between the learner and the mediator, encouraged learners to feel more engaged and capable in their communication, mirroring the positive outcomes in Shafiee et al.'s study.

However, in terms of fluency-related results, the findings of this study somewhat differ from those of Kao (2020), who reported that interactionist DA did not benefit the oral fluency of lower-level Chinese EFL learners. Kao argued that the teacher's constant intervention might have impeded the development of content fluency for these learners. In contrast, the current study indicated that both DA models—interactionist and interventionist—improved WTC among Iranian EFL learners, which can be associated with increased communicative fluency. This difference could result from differences in the level of proficiency of the learners or differences in the mediation strategies employed in each study. Whereas Kao's research showed the potential for drawbacks for less advanced learners, the present study clearly shows that, in the case of Iranian EFL learners, both DA models provided precisely the balance of support needed for more confident and fluent communication, mediation that was appropriate to their proficiency level.

The current study is in agreement with the results of Jafary et al. (2012) and Estaji and Ameri (2020) that both interactionist and interventionist DA models of assessment significantly improved grammatical knowledge among Iranian EFL learners while investigating the impact of DA on grammatical knowledge. In particular, Estaji and Ameri (2020) found the interventionist DA model to be most effective for lower-level learners in providing structured and targeted feedback that helped them improve their grammatical accuracy. The findings of the current study similarly suggest that the interventionist DA model contributed to enhancing learners' WTC by providing them with the grammatical confidence needed to communicate effectively. By getting structured mediation, learners internalized the rules of the language and applied them in real-time communication, thus increasing their WTC. This is further supported by other research such as Alavi et al. (2012), Farangi and Kheradmand Saadi (2017), and Shabani (2012) that emphasized the role of diagnostic feedback and learners' involvement in DA interactions for successful grammatical development.

Besides, the study of Asl et al. (2024) illuminates how these two DA models influence speaking proficiency at different levels. According to the findings reported by Asl et al., it was observed that both the interactionist and interventionist DA models enhanced EFL learners'

speaking performance but did so in different ways. It therefore follows that the interactionist DA model was better at enhancing grammatical range and accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary depth, while the interventionist model was good for improving fluency and vocabulary breadth. These findings are also consistent with those of the current study in demonstrating that both models significantly improved WTC, albeit through different processes. While the interactionist model emphasizes co-construction of knowledge and real-time dialogue, it probably helped the learners to become more accurate and thoughtful in their communication, while structured mediation within the interventionist model most likely furthered a more fluent and confident communicative style.

This fact-that both interventionist and interactionist DA models significantly developed Iranian EFL learners' WTC compared to traditional instruction-may be supported by a number of theoretical frameworks: those which explain how DA, by its mediation, scaffolding, and interaction, nurtures both the communicative competence of learners and their engagement in communication.

Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) The work of Vygotsky underpins DA through his sociocultural theory, which posits the role of social interaction and mediation in cognitive development. This is central to the Zone of Proximal Development, or ZPD, that describes how a learner might achieve higher levels of competence by means of interaction with a more knowledgeable other, such as a teacher or peer. The interventionist and interactionist DA models support this in their provision for the learners to get tailored mediation, which enhances the communicative skills of the learners. The progressive scaffolding WTC receives in DA setting points at Vygotsky's initial suggestion that development is a process of dynamic and responsive social interaction, which fosters both linguistic competencies and the confidence to communicate.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach

These findings also pertain to the principles of communicative language teaching, which support real communication as a prime goal of language learning. CLT stresses interaction, authentic use of language, and the development of learners' communicative competence. The DA focus on tailored mediation through meaningful interaction supports the aims of CLT in that both models aim at improving learners' ability and will to communicate in authentic situations. DA makes its positive contribution to the development of WTC due to attention to the needs of a particular learner, given through direct feedback, and stimulus of active involvement in communication and overcoming its barriers.

WTC Model by MacIntyre et al. (1998)

This model of WTC, suggested by MacIntyre et al., explains that learners' WTC in a foreign language is preeminently determined by situational and individual factors, with perceived competence and anxiety being some of the most basic determining factors. DA, by responding to an individual learner's needs and by giving feedback constantly, helps them lower their anxiety and enhance perceived communicative competence. This is most probably due to the scaffolding and support embedded in the DA models, which will increase the learners' self-efficacy and reduce the fear of making mistakes that are important to increasing WTC. The fourth is the use of social interactions reflected in an interactionist DA approach wherein a learner participates in dynamic processes of co-constructed learning.

Dynamic Assessment as an Instructional Procedure: Lantolf and Poehner's (2004) Concept

Along the same lines, the use of Vygotsky's theory in language learning as dynamic assessment by Lantolf and Poehner also subscribes to the following facts. As they say, DA

unifies teaching and assessment into one process that assists learners in the movement toward their potential development, thus parsing teaching and assessment together. In DA, learning does not occur as an entity separate from assessment; rather, both are simultaneous incidents in a mediated learning context. This mediation helps learners to internalize linguistic notions, build confidence, and impacts their WTC directly since it raises awareness of how language works.

Affective Filter Hypothesis Krashen (1982)

The affective filter hypothesis postulates that the emotional states of learners, including motivation, confidence, and anxiety, impact a learner's capability to learn the language. Krashen states that low anxiety and high motivation are what will lead to language learning success. Through responsive mediation and support, DA thus places the learner in a low-anxiety environment that should be more conducive to learning. This would confirm the increases found in WTC. The low affective filter gives way to DA models that help learners feel comfortable while communicating, hence increasing their willingness to converse in the target language.

The results indicating that both dynamic assessment (DA) models—interventionist and interactionist—significantly enhanced Iranian EFL learners' WTC compared to traditional instruction can be justified through several theoretical and practical perspectives.

Tailored Mediation and Scaffolding

DA, particularly its tailored mediation, provides individualized support that addresses each learner's specific communicative challenges. This scaffolding aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, where interaction with a more knowledgeable other (e.g., a teacher) enables learners to progress within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). By focusing on immediate, responsive mediation, learners are supported at their level of need, which helps boost their communicative competence and confidence. This support reduces anxiety and creates a sense of achievement, directly enhancing WTC.

Reduction of Anxiety and Increased Confidence

As Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests, a learner's emotional state plays a significant role in language acquisition. DA, by being interactive and supportive, lowers learners' affective filters by reducing their anxiety. When learners feel less fearful of making mistakes, they are more likely to participate in communication. The constant feedback in DA also enhances learners' self-efficacy, making them feel more competent in using the language, which in turn promotes their WTC.

Active Involvement and Engagement

DA encourages learners to be actively involved in the learning process. The interactionist model, in particular, focuses on co-constructed learning where both teacher and learner engage dynamically. This continuous engagement leads to deeper processing of language skills, such as pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical knowledge. As learners experience improvement in these areas, their WTC naturally increases because they feel more prepared and capable of engaging in real communication.

Immediate Feedback and Learning Progress

DA integrates assessment with instruction, making feedback immediate and continuous. The interventionist model often provides clear benchmarks and goals for learners, helping them understand their progress. This transparent learning trajectory not only boosts learners' motivation but also builds their willingness to take part in communication activities since they see tangible improvements in their abilities.

Alignment with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Principles

The principles of DA align with the goals of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes real-life communication, meaningful interaction, and the development of communicative competence. The interaction-focused nature of DA complements CLT by placing learners in authentic communicative situations where they practice using language purposefully, which promotes greater WTC.

Support for Previous Research

The findings align with research by Lantolf and Poehner (2004), who emphasize that DA enhances learners' language development through integrated feedback and interaction. Similarly, studies by MacIntyre et al. (1998) have shown that learners' perceived competence and reduced anxiety are critical factors in increasing WTC, both of which are strongly impacted by the dynamic, responsive nature of DA.

Improvement in Specific Language Skills

The gains in WTC observed in this study may also be attributed to DA's role in improving specific language skills, such as pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical accuracy. By focusing on these areas through mediated learning, DA ensures that learners not only communicate more effectively but also feel more competent in doing so, which bolsters their WTC.

In sum, these complementary theories converge to provide strong support for the notion that dynamic, responsive, and socially mediated learning processes, as represented in DA models, significantly contribute to enhancing learners' WTC. Tailored mediation integrated into DA frameworks and an overall focus on individual needs of the learner provide the ideal venue for communicative confidence and engagement, eventually leading to enhanced WTC.

Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm and extend the benefits of DA previously reported in the context of language learning. Both DA models positively contributed to Iranian EFL learners' WTC by engendering communicative confidence and participation. The interventionist model promoted fluency and reduced anxiety through highly structured mediation, while grammatical accuracy and communication strategy improvements were facilitated in learners by the interactionist model through its more flexible, dialogic approach. These findings reveal the transformative power of DA in language education and underscore how well DA can serve diverse learner needs, thereby acting as a powerful means to enhance communicative competence across diverse linguistic contexts. The results of this study show that Iranian EFL learners significantly improve their WTC when receiving interventionist and interactionist dynamic assessment compared with non-DA traditional instruction. This finding corroborates the existing literature underlining a positive influence of DA on various aspects of language learning. The effective integration of tailored mediation within DA frameworks fosters not only communicative confidence among learners but also their overall engagement with the language. As a result, learners develop a more positive attitude toward communication in a target language and, by this virtue, their language proficiency.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study hold substantial implications for multiple stakeholders in the realm of language education—ranging from learners and instructors to curriculum developers and policy-makers. The demonstrated effectiveness of both interventionist and interactionist dynamic assessment (DA) models in enhancing EFL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) signals a promising direction for pedagogical innovation in language classrooms.

For EFL Learners

Dynamic assessment, by its very nature, empowers learners to engage with language more confidently and meaningfully. The personalized feedback embedded in DA creates a safe and encouraging space where students feel supported rather than judged. This sense of psychological safety reduces anxiety—a major barrier to communication in foreign languages—and nurtures a sense of capability. Learners exposed to DA are more likely to internalize language rules, apply them in real-time interactions, and feel motivated to participate actively in classroom communication. As the study shows, when learners experience targeted scaffolding, their WTC increases significantly, indicating a more proactive and autonomous approach to language use.

For Language Teachers

This research underscores the critical role of teacher mediation in shaping learner outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to adopt DA-oriented practices—whether structured like the interventionist model or adaptive like the interactionist approach. Rather than relying solely on summative assessment or standardized feedback, instructors can engage in real-time dialogue, probing learners' needs and adjusting support accordingly. This approach transforms the classroom dynamic into one of collaboration, responsiveness, and growth. By facilitating a more diagnostic and developmentally oriented instructional model, teachers can unlock learners' latent communicative potential.

For Curriculum and Material Designers

Curriculum developers and instructional designers should take note of the importance of integrating DA frameworks into learning materials. Lessons and tasks should be designed with embedded scaffolding opportunities—structured prompts, reflective activities, peer interactions, and mediated discussions—that mirror the DA process. Materials should also allow for flexibility so that educators can adjust their approach based on individual learner performance and responsiveness. The ultimate goal should be to foster interaction-rich environments that cultivate WTC, aligning with broader communicative goals in language education.

For Educational Policy-Makers

At a broader level, the study provides a compelling case for **institutionalizing DA models within EFL programs**. Given the positive outcomes observed in WTC, policy-makers should consider investing in teacher training initiatives focused on dynamic assessment strategies. Moreover, national curricula might be revised to emphasize formative, learner-centered evaluation practices over traditional, static testing methods. Such systemic shifts could result in more confident, communicative, and competent language users, better prepared for globalized contexts.

Limitations of the Study

Sampling Method
The use of convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings. Since participants were selected from two English language institutes in Mashhad, Iran, the results may not be representative of EFL learners in different regions or contexts. The exclusive focus on male students also restricts the applicability of the findings to female learners and mixed-gender groups.

Sample Size
While the study included 75 participants, a larger sample size could enhance the statistical power of the results and provide more robust conclusions. A small sample may not adequately represent the diversity of learner experiences and responses to the dynamic assessment models.

Age Range
The age range of 16 to 23 years, while chosen to ensure participants were at a similar developmental stage, may limit insights into how dynamic assessment impacts different age groups. Younger or older learners might exhibit different responses to the interventions.

Duration of Treatment
The study's 16 treatment sessions over a semester may not be sufficient to observe long-term effects on WTC. Longer-term studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how dynamic assessment influences learners' WTCover time.

Suggestions for Further Research

Broader Sampling
Future studies should aim for a more diverse participant pool, including female learners and students from various educational backgrounds and geographical locations. This can help enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more holistic understanding of the effects of DA.

Larger Sample Size
Increasing the sample size in future research could improve the statistical power of the study and yield more reliable conclusions. This could involve multi-institutional studies to capture a wider range of learner experiences.

Longer Duration
Implementing a longitudinal study design with a longer treatment duration could provide insights into the sustained effects of dynamic assessment on WTC. Tracking learners over multiple semesters would offer a clearer picture of how DA influences communication skills over time.

Diverse Age Groups
Future research should explore the impacts of DA on different age groups to understand how developmental factors influence learners' willingness to communicate. This could include younger learners in primary or secondary education as well as adult learners.

Cultural Considerations

Investigating the role of cultural factors in WTC could provide valuable insights into how learners from different backgrounds respond to dynamic assessment. This could involve qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, to explore learners' experiences in more depth.

Multiple Assessment Methods

To enhance the validity of the findings, future studies should consider using a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures for assessing WTC. Observational methods, peer assessments, and teacher evaluations could complement self-reported measures, providing a more comprehensive view of learners' communication behaviors.

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