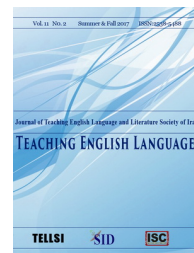


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Research Paper

Developments of English Language Speaking Skill, Awareness and Metacognitive Strategy Use in the Light of Dynamic Assessment Models

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Abstract

Since its introduction to education, Dynamic Assessment (DA) has gained attention from the researchers in different educational fields. The two models of DA have rarely been incorporated comparatively into skill, style, and strategy developments in an EFL setting. This study synthesized the development of the speaking skill, level of language awareness (LA), and metacognitive strategy use (MSU) in the light of comparative incorporation of DA models to fill this gap. Sixty undergraduate Iranian EFL students majoring in English Translation Studies attended this mixed methods research. Quantitative analysis of the data showed that although the participants in both groups were able to gain significantly higher speaking scores as compared to their counterparts in the control group inter-experimental groups' differences were not significant. Regarding LA and MSU, neither the interventionist nor the interactionist model led to significant levels in the process of developing the speaking skill. The qualitative analysis of interviews, however, showed specific changes in the experimental groups' LA and MSU in light of the DA-oriented mediation. In addition to theoretical contributions, the results shed light on some aspects of

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integrating DA in EFL education and bear some implications for multiple EFL stakeholders.

Keywords: Dynamic Assessment Models, Language Awareness, Learning Strategies, Speaking Skill

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1. Introduction

Since the 1900s, the use of standardized tests has grown rapidly in education (Estaji & Forough Ameri, 2020; Poehner, 2008) and the resultant innovations have mainly emerged in the form of *cosmetic changes to tests*, ranging from computerized to online assessment innovative initiatives (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, pp. viii-ix). Such innovations are mainly the outcome of a paradigm shift under which instruction and assessment can't be bifurcated (Poehner, 2005). Conjoining these two notions is the result of Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) and later Feuerstein's (Feuerstein, Rand, & Hoffman, 1979) theories which favor a new paradigm called Dynamic Assessment (DA).

Most of the EFL context-related studies have focused on the impact of DA on learners' overall achievement of various language skills (e.g., Ahmadi Safa, Donyaie, and Malek Mohammadi, 2015; Kao, 2020; Khoshsima & Farokhipour, 2016); ignoring the fact that DA, appearing in multiple models and sub-models, can function as both an assessment *of* and *for* learning (Poehner, 2005), and is supposed to be interwoven with some other personal variables of language learners. Given these assumptions, this study was designed to investigate the possible impact of DA models (i.e., interventionist & interactionist) on EFL learners' triple S: skill, strategy, and style (i.e., speaking skill, language awareness (LA), and metacognitive strategy use (MSU)).

2. Literature Review

DA emanates from the Lev Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) of higher mental functioning and is closely associated with its Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) tenet. In his book, *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky defines the ZPD as the difference between the learner's actual and potential levels of development. However, the diverse interpretations of the ZPD have led to different models of DA, categorized under two broad terms, namely *interventionist* and *interactionist* (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004).

2.1 Interventionist DA vs. Interactionist DA

Interventionist DA uses prefabricated standard mediational moves whereby mediation is rendered alongside a mostly implicit-then-explicit scale. The mediator needs to follow the scale indeed, moving from one hint to another until the learner can give the correct answer or the mediator reaches the final hint (Lantolf & Poehner, 2013). Alignment of interventionist DA with psychometric scales and criteria of reliability and validity has turned its sub-models into a more desirable scenario. On the contrary, interactionist DA is more associated with Vygotsky's dialogic approach through which assistance emerges from the interaction between the examiner and the learner and is, therefore, highly responsive to the learner's ZPD (Poehner, 2005).

DA was first introduced to applied linguistics by Lantolf and Poehner (2004, 2007) and Poehner and Lantolf (2005). Its models, though individually, have gained momentum in language education studies; starting with the prominent works of Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), Antón (2003, 2009), Lantolf and Poehner (2004, 2007, 2011, 2013), Poehner (2005) and followed by many others. As Anton (2009) holds, its application has been educationally beneficial since DA helps to gain a better assessment of learners' actual and potential abilities.

Köroğlu (2019) conducted a study on the interventionist model of DA and reported learners' both academic achievement and positive attitudes. In recent

years, some other studies have aimed at implementing the mentioned models of DA. For example, Thouësnny (2010) proposed a web-based application based on both the interventionist and interactionist DA to improve French learners' written skills.

Additionally, DA has also been a subject of various studies in the Iranian EFL context. For instance, Pishghadam, Barabadi, and Mehri Kamrood (2011) concluded that offering mediation as hints could increase students' scores in reading comprehension. Fani and Rashtchi's (2015) implementation of an interventionist version of DA yields support to the effectiveness of mediation in developing reading ability of both group-based and individualized DA groups. In another study, Rashidi and Bahadori Nejad (2018) explored the effect of DA on the writing of Iranian EFL learners; concluding that it helped the EFL learners improve their writing ability, especially regarding the organization parts. Ahmadi Safa, Donyaie, and Malek Mohammadi (2015) investigated the effects of interventionist and interactionist DA on EFL learners' speaking proficiency and concluded that, although both models were efficient, the interactionist DA group outperformed the interventionist counterpart. Khoshsima and Farokhipour's (2016) similar investigation concluded that interactionist DA helped learners solve speaking problems more easily and show better development as a result of negotiated interaction with the mediator. On the other hand, the results showed that students scored higher on the posttest following an interventionist session. Examining the effects of interventionist and interactionist DA on EFL learners' listening comprehension, Ahmadi Safa and Beheshti (2018) concluded that interactionist DA helped the EFL learners to gain better results in listening comprehension. Rahmani, Rashtchi, and Yazdanimoghaddam (2020) focused on the impact of DA on the development of argumentative essay writing of EFL teachers. They

concluded that, although both DA groups had a better performance than the non-DA one, the interactionist group outperformed the interventionist counterpart.

2.2 DA of the Speaking Skill

Though speaking has exceptional qualities turning it into the most difficult skill to measure (Correia, 2016), many studies in recent years have focused on its assessment (Wahyurianto, 2018; Yufrizal, 2018) in light of DA-based initiatives. It is mostly due the interactive nature of DA between the teacher and the learner (Son & Kim, 2017). DA can be appropriately integrated into speaking tests to optimize the speaking skills of the examinees (Siwathaworn & Wudthayagorn, 2018). As a proof, Kao (2020) integrated speaking tasks and showed that the DA group outperformed the none-DA group in terms of speaking performance. In the same vein, Son and Kim (2017) showed a changing pattern in Korean learners' responses to a more implicit DA form which helped learners to improve their speaking skill.

2.3 The Impact of DA on LA and MSU

Furthermore, DA can be an effective way of knowing who the learners are and in pushing them forward in solving linguistic and cognitive issues (Birjandi, Estaji, & Deyhim, 2013). It is believed that ZPD-sensitive assessment can increase noticing, and, as a result, language awareness (LA) in language learners (Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012). LA, according to Carter (2003), "refers to the development in learners of enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language" (p. 64). In the same manner, Fairclough (1992) states that LA is "conscious attention to properties of language and language use as an element of language education" (p. 2). Similarly, Verity (2003) describes LA as a subfield of applied linguistics and maintains that LA is concerned with the native speaker's knowledge to make it conscious and available to learners.

DA is supposed to positively contribute to LA as morphological awareness as a sub-category of LA has been enhanced in light of DA process (Fracasso, Bangs, & Binder, 2016). Contrary to a positive expectation as to the role of DA in awareness-raising, the literature suffers from the lack of due attention to this issue; hence convincing enough to rationalize a particular attention in this study and a viable gap to fill.

Alongside developing language skills and components as well as LA, another critical and interrelated factor for successful second/foreign language learning is resorting to learning strategies in general and metacognitive strategy use (MSU) in particular (Zhang, 2013). O'Malley and Chamot (1985) define the latter category (i.e., metacognitive strategies) as a set of initiatives applied when planning and thinking about the learning process, monitoring its outcome and evaluating an activity when done. Extensive evidence indicates that learners' metacognition can directly impact the outcome and the process of learning (Abbasian, 2005; Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Bolitho et al., 2003; Eilam & Aharon, 2003; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Palmer & Goetz, 1988; Victori & Lockhart, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001, as cited in Rahimi & Katal, 2012, p. 76). Additionally, as Mora-Merchán and Mora (2000 as cited in Navarro & Lara, 2017) state, difficulties in the use of metacognitive processes can cause learning difficulties. Besides playing the role of a means in language learning, metacognitive strategies, as an end, have also been the subject of DA-oriented research. For example, Birjandi, Estaji and Deyhim (2013) Navarro and Lara (2017), and Weisgerber (2015) investigated the impact of DA on language awareness and MSU. Moreover, Ebadi and Asakareh (2017) revealed that the participants' self-regulation showed significant development as a result of their exposure to DA of the speaking skill, though they have not mentioned the DA model under investigation.

Contrary to the conventional studies, DA-oriented literature shows scarcity of studies on the casual relations between DA implementation and MSU and LA enhancements. This research gap seemed to be a sound rationale for the researchers to design a study like this in an attempt to incorporate the three supposedly interrelated variables (i.e., speaking ability, LA and MSU) within the framework of the two models of interventionist and interactionist DA in light of a parallel mixed-methods design. Realized as the problem and purpose of the study, these issues are presented in the form of the following research questions:

1. Do the models of DA (i.e., interventionist and interactionist) and conventional assessment have significantly different effects in promoting the speaking performance of the target learners?
2. Do the models of DA result in significant enhancement of LA among Iranian EFL learners?
3. Do the models of DA result in significant development of MSU among Iranian EFL learners?
4. What are Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of the effects of the models of DA on their LA?
5. What are Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of the effects of the models of DA on their MSU?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

The participants were 87 Iranian undergraduate students of English Translation Studies from *Islamic Azad University in Tehran*, whose age ranged between 19 and 25, and they were selected through convenience sampling. Based on an IELTS mock exam at the outset of the course, only the students in the B1 level of Common European Framework (IELTS band score of 4.5 to 5, $n = 60$) were accounted as the participants. Having divided them into two experimental and one control groups, the researcher-teacher administered samples of IELTS Speaking Task 2 (selected from the tasks provided by Brook-Hart and Jakemen, 2012) for the purpose of both

diagnostic and achievement tests of speaking performance. Based on such tasks, the participants were required to speak on a topic for about two minutes. To this end, they were given one minute to get prepared to talk about the task-topic card which showed what points had to be included in the talk. Then, both the IELTS mock exam and the pre-test were employed to make some valid and reliable decision on the selection and inclusion of the final participants.

The control group was exposed to mainstream of a conventional treatment; whereas, the experimental groups received mediation according to the interventionist and interactionist approaches to DA. The study was conducted while the participants were doing their four-credit *Speaking and Listening Course* in English Translation Studies. The Course mainly aims at improving the learners' general speaking and listening abilities for which the instructors are allowed to incorporate any suitable materials they deem function well. The classes were held for three hours per session/week, lasting for 15 sessions (45 hours altogether).

3.2 Instrumentation

Given the nature of the study and the target variables, three different instruments were used as follows:

3.2.1 Pretest (Diagnostic Test) and Posttest (Achievement) of Speaking

Samples of IELTS Speaking Task 2 (selected from the tasks provided by Brook-Hart and Jakemen, 2012) were employed as the pretest and posttest of speaking performance for diagnostic and achievement purposes, respectively [thereafter may be used interchangeably].

3.2.2 LAQ and MSQIT

Language Awareness Questionnaire (LAQ) for adult English learners provided by British Council (2013) and Metacognitive Strategies Questionnaire by Item Types (MSQIT) developed and validated by Purpura (1999) were used to collect data on LA and MSU, respectively. Cronbach's alpha reliability indices run on the LAQ, showed its reliability indices ranging from a low of .65 for its pre-administration to a high of .92 for its post-administration. Additionally, an exploratory factor analysis using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with varimax rotation was run to probe the underlying construct of the LA, leading to a three-factor solution with an accuracy common variance rate of 33.83 percent.

3.2.3 Semi-structured Interview

The experimental groups sat for a semi-structured interview at the outset of the intervention so that the 4th and 5th research questions could be investigated. The interviews included two main parts: firstly, the participants were asked whether they thought DA implementation sessions had any effect on their level of LA. Since the LAQ had been given to the participants one week prior to the interview, they were asked to think about the categories which they thought DA had helped them improve in. The items on the LAQ were categorized into three major groups of:

- a) characteristics of English vocabulary (countable/uncountable nouns, articles, adjectives, lexis...);
- b) English tenses;
- c) other grammatical features (reported speech, passive...).

Secondly, they were asked to name the category/categories, which they thought they had made the most progress in, along with a brief explanation about MSU. Again, because they had access to MSQIT one week before the interview sessions, they were asked whether the course had helped them to learn how to a) set goals, b) plan for their learning process and c) assess their own learning process.

3.3 Procedure

3.3.1 Participants Selection

As said, an IELTS mock exam was administered first to make sure of the sample homogeneity in terms of the English language proficiency, whereby ultimately 60 participants locating in the B1 level of Common European Framework (IELTS band score 4.5 to 5) were included in the study.

3.3.2 Pretests

At the outset, all participants went through the non-DA interview based on IELTS Speaking Task administered by two qualified and officially certified IELTS examiners. Each interview, recorded for further analysis, lasted for about five minutes. Simultaneously, LAQ and MSQIT were also administered.

3.3.3 The Mediation

For the interventionist group, Lantolf and Poehner's (2011) framework based on their menus of mediating moves from most implicit to most explicit was applied. Typically, the menus should consist of 6–8 moves. In fact, the first moves tried to alert on the existence of performance problems and the final moves functioned as remedial initiatives. For more practical purposes, they suggested an inventory of teacher prompts (Table 1).

Table 1

Inventory of Teacher Prompts

1. *Pause*
 2. *Repeat the whole phrase questioningly*
 3. *Repeat just the part of the sentence with the error*
 4. *Teacher points out that there is something wrong with the sentence. Alternatively, she can pose this as a question, "What is wrong with that sentence?"*
 5. *Teacher points out the incorrect word*
 6. *Teacher asks either/or question*
 7. *Teacher identifies the correct answer*
 8. *Teacher explains why*
-

Teacher's mediation was postponed to the student's answer; no mediation was followed by the correct answer, but any incorrect answer was followed

by the instructor's resort to one of the above eight-type mediation moves. However, to implement the interactionist DA model, Poehner's (2005 cited in Ableeva, 2010, p.167) framework which privileges a "flexible interaction between the mediator and the learner as they cooperatively perform the assessment tasks" was followed. Relying on this framework, the mediator assists the learners by providing hints, questions, prompts and explanations selected based on the mediator's assumptions about learners' needs in their ZPD and offers any learner-expedient mediation; an approach which was identified as *Instrumental Enrichment* by Feuerstein.

3.3.4 Posttests

Following the treatment, all participants went through an identical test and questionnaire taking processes to those run prior to the treatment in order to assess the speaking performance, LA enhancement and MSU development, respectively. Additionally, one week after the re-administering of the LAQ and MSQIT, the experimental groups took part in individual semi-structured interview sessions.

3.4 Data Analysis

The interviews (i.e., speaking pretest and posttest) were scored based on the IELTS band descriptors on a nine-point scale (British Council, 2017). The IELTS Speaking band descriptors encompass four sections: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. The scoring was done twice; once by the researcher-teacher herself and once by another examiner. The respective inter-rater reliability estimation indicates significant agreements on the pretest ($r(58) = .91$, representing a large effect size, $p < .001$) and on the posttest test ($r(58) = .56$, representing a large effect size, $p < .001$).

4 Results

4.1 Quantitative Phase

The null-hypotheses associated with research questions one to three were tested via three one-way ANOVAs. After examining the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances (Field, 2009; Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991), the researchers compared the mean scores of the interventionist, the interactionist, and the conventional groups on the pretests of LA, MSU, and speaking. The non-significant results indicated that the participants were homogeneous regarding the variables before the treatment.

4.1.1 Research Question One

One-way ANOVA was run to compare the performance of the three groups on the speaking posttest. Firstly, the Levene's test results (Levene's $F(2, 57) = .203, p = .817$) indicated both non-significant differences and retaining the assumption of homogeneity of variances (Table 2).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Speaking by Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Conventional	20	4.91	.586	.131	4.64	5.19	4	6
Interactionist	20	5.86	.686	.153	5.54	6.18	5	7
Interventionist	20	5.80	.631	.141	5.50	6.10	5	7
Total	60	5.53	.763	.098	5.33	5.72	4	7

Descriptively speaking, Table 2 shows that the interactionist group ($M = 5.86, SD = .68$) had the highest mean on the speaking achievement test. This was followed by the interventionist ($M = 5.80, SD = .63$) and the control ($M = 4.91, SD = .58$) groups.

In a bid to investigate inter-group differences, ANOVA was run (Table 3).

Table 3
One-Way ANOVA; Posttest of Speaking by Groups

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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Between Groups	11.294	2	5.647	13.968	.000
Within Groups	23.044	57	.404		
Total	34.338	59			

Inferentially, one-way ANOVA in Table 3 indicates ($F(2, 57) = 13.96$, $P < .001$, $\omega^2 = .302$ representing a large effect size), proving that there were significant differences between the three groups' mean scores on the speaking achievement test.

Moreover, post-hoc Scheffe tests were run to locate the inter-group difference (Table 4).

Table 4

Scheffe Post-hoc Comparisons Tests; Posttest of Speaking by Groups

Dependent Variable	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Post-SP	Interactionist	Control	.950*	.201	.000	.44	1.46
		Interventionist	.063	.201	.953	-.44	.57
	Interventionist Control	.888*	.201	.000	.38	1.39	

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The follow-up post-hoc Scheffe tests (Table 4) indicate that;

- The interventionist group ($M = 5.80$) had a significantly higher mean score on the speaking achievement test than the control group ($M = 4.91$) (Mean Difference = .888, $P < .001$). Thus, there was a statistically significant difference between the interventionist model of DA and conventional assessment in enhancing the speaking performance of the target learners.
- The interactionist group ($M = 5.86$) showed a significantly higher mean score on the speaking achievement test than did the control group ($M = 4.91$) (Mean Difference = .950, $p = .000$). Therefore, the null-hypothesis was rejected; justifying a statistically significant difference between the interactionist model of DA and the

conventional assessment in promoting the speaking performance of the target learners.

- There was no statistically significant difference between the interactionist ($M = 5.86$) and the interventionist ($M = 5.80$) groups' mean scores on the speaking achievement test (Mean Difference = .063, $p = .953$).

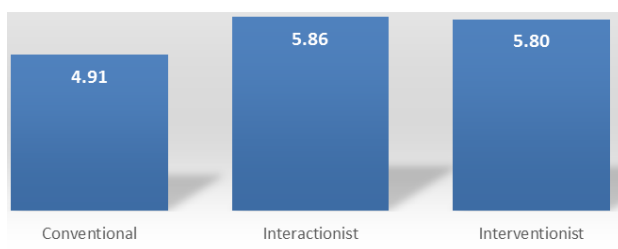


Figure 1. Means on posttest of speaking by groups

4.1.2 Research Question Two

Similarly, a one-way ANOVA was run to compare the three groups' mean scores on the posttest of LA. The obtained non-significant results (Levene's $F(2, 57) = .24, P = .784$) indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met (Table 5).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Language Awareness in Speaking by Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Conventional	20	73.25	17.146	3.834	65.23	81.27	49	103
Interactionist	20	77.25	16.390	3.665	69.58	84.92	58	107
Interventionist	20	79.25	15.328	3.427	72.08	86.42	54	107
Total	60	76.58	16.222	2.094	72.39	80.77	49	107

Descriptively speaking, as Table 5 shows, the interventionist group ($M = 79.25, SD = 15.32$) showed the highest mean on posttest of LA, followed by

the interactionist ($M = 77.25$, $SD = 16.39$) and control ($M = 73.25$, $SD = 17.14$) groups, respectively.

Similarly, another ANOVA was run to investigate inter-group differences (Table 6).

Table 6

One-Way ANOVA; Posttest of Language Awareness in Speaking by Groups

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	373.333	2	186.667	.702	.500
Within Groups	15153.250	57	265.846		
Total	15526.583	59			

Inferentially speaking, as Table 6 shows, the respective one-way ANOVA resulted in ($F(2, 57) = .702$, $P = .500$, $\omega^2 = .010$, representing a weak effect size).

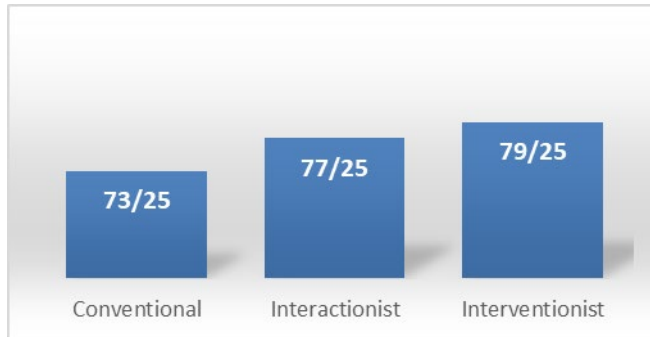


Figure 2. Means on posttest of language awareness in speaking by groups

4.1.3 Research Question Three

The obtained non-significant results related to comparing the groups' mean scores on the posttest of MSU (Levene's $F(2, 57) = 1.93$, $P = .154$) indicated meeting the assumption of homogeneity of variances (Table 7).

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Metacognitive Strategy Use in Speaking by Group

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Conventional	20	119.55	16.816	3.760	111.68	127.42	79	146
Interactionist	20	133.70	28.835	6.448	120.20	147.20	76	191
Interventionist	20	133.20	19.294	4.314	124.17	142.23	95	165

According to Table 7, the interactionist group ($M = 133.70$, $SD = 28.83$) showed the highest mean score on the posttest of MSU speaking, followed by the interventionist ($M = 133.20$, $SD = 19.29$) and control ($M = 119.55$, $SD = 18.81$) groups, respectively.

In an attempt to answer the third research question, a one-way ANOVA was again run (Table 8).

Table 8

One-way ANOVA; Posttest of Metacognitive Strategy Use in Speaking by Groups

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2578.633	2	1289.317	2.602	.083
Within Groups	28244.350	57	495.515		
Total	30822.983	59			

Similarly, as Table 8 shows, the one-way-ANOVA ($F(2, 57) = 2.60$, $P = .083$, $\omega^2 = .051$, representing a weak effect size) helped the researchers come up with non-significant differences between the mean scores of the three groups on the posttest of MSU; indicating failure to reject the third hypothesis.

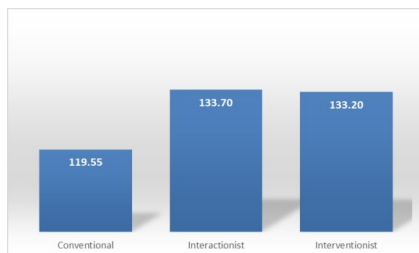


Figure 3. Means on posttest of metacognitive strategy use in speaking by groups

4.2 Qualitative Phase

4.2.1 Research Question Four

The fourth research question intended to probe more into the EFL learners' perceptions of the role of DA in improving their LA. At the end of the DA sessions, the experimental groups were exposed to three options or categories regarding their experiences with DA. The participants were asked the following question:

- "Did this course help you to increase your knowledge of:
 - a) Characteristics of English vocabulary (countable/uncountable nouns, articles, adjectives, lexis...)?
 - b) English tenses?
 - c) Other grammatical features (reported speech, passive,...)?

Tables 9 and 10 show the results of the interviews with the interventionist and the interactionist groups, respectively. It is worth noting that some of the group members attending the study expressed only one of the categories, while some others stated two or even three (all).

Table 9

Participant's Perceptions on LA (the Interventionist Group)

	Total number of participants	Characteristics of English vocabulary	Tenses	Other grammatical features
Number of participants	20	9	13	10
Percentage of participants	100%	45%	65%	50%

Table 10

Participants' Perceptions of LA (the Interactionist Group)

	Total number of participants	Characteristics of English vocabulary	Tenses	Other grammatical features
Number of participants	20	10	14	12
Percentage of participants	100%	50%	70%	60%

Accordingly, most of the participants expressed their satisfaction with the positive effects of the course in improving their knowledge of English tenses. They held that the mediation (upon which their errors were not corrected on the spot) had made them more sensitive to different tenses and aroused their awareness of the use of English tenses. The next highly ranked category was *other grammatical features* on which they mainly attributed consciousness-raising and memorial capacity-building values of DA:

#"It's usually difficult for me to improve my grammar, but this course helped me pay more attention to my verbs. Also, when students talk about their errors, they remember them better."

#"I can now make sentences about the past easier. When the teacher asked us to think about our tenses and correct them by ourselves, we paid more attention to our tenses. Now I can easily talk about an experience, for example, a trip".

#"I like to be given a chance to rethink my sentence because maybe I can correct it by myself!"

#"When I looked at my mistakes about grammar, I had to think about them again. I was surprised because I could correct most of them. I just needed a little hint."

#"It is better for our grammar when the teacher asks us if we can correct ourselves. This will help us learn more."

Furthermore, they appreciated DA in helping them recall new vocabulary items and phrases better, which was followed by its effects on adjectives and adverbs. It also seemed that DA aroused their interests to the mediation process, since both DA groups claimed they had enjoyed being given the opportunity to self-correct their errors:

#"When the teacher asked me to change the part of speech and did not tell me the answer right away, I learned where I should use an adjective or an adverb. I didn't use to pay attention to where I should use adverbs."

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"I especially learned phrases which I can use while speaking like 'to my mind...', 'let me tell you about...', 'I want to talk about...'"

4.2.2 Research Question Five

Both MSQIT and end-of-the course interview data were used to investigate the effects of DA models on MSU improvement in its triple aspects including: *goal-setting processes*, *planning processes*, and *assessing processes*. During interviews, some participants referred to one of the categories of MSQIT, while some others referred to two or even all of them. Besides the MSQIT data, the interview data were coded, and thematized as goal setting, planning and assessment processes compatible with the three common MSU sub-strategies. Tables 11 and 12 summarize the results of the interviews.

Table 11
Participants' Perceptions on MSU (the Interventionist Group)

	Total number of participants	Goal Setting Processes	Planning Processes	Assessment Processes
Number of participants	20	3	13	6
Percentage of participants	100%	15%	65%	30%

Table 12
Participants' Perceptions on MSU (the Interactionist Group)

	Total number of participants	Goal Setting Processes	Planning Processes	Assessment Processes
Number of participants	20	5	14	7
Percentage of participants	100%	25%	70%	35%

As Tables 11 and 12 suggest, the instances in favor of the positive effects of the course on improving the participants' planning processes were higher than those of the two other categories. Participants favored the mediator's hints as they had enhanced their LA (i.e., attention and concentration) rates

towards the purpose of the speaking topic and speaker's speech. Some of the quotations expressed by the participants are as follows:

#*"I always make a plan. I've learned to think about what I am going to say and maybe take some notes before I start."*

#*"...When I speak, I understand my mistakes, and I can correct them myself..."*

#*"... I feel more confident and brave to speak and correct myself..."*

5. Discussion

The primary aim of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of DA in improving EFL learners' speaking proficiency. The quantitative analysis of the data revealed that the experimental groups gained significantly higher band scores on the IELTS speaking task 2 than did the control group. The results also suggested that both the interventionist and the interactionist instructions were similarly effective, despite some non-significant differences in the final performance. These results yield support to the findings of Khoshsima and Farokhipour (2016), who investigated the role of the interactionist and the interventionist models of DA in promoting the speaking of Iranian language learners. Contrary to the similarities between the findings of Khoshsima and Farokhipour's study and those of this study, they had followed a different methodological path (i.e., a qualitative approach for the interactionist group and a quantitative approach for the interventionist group). Therefore, the results of their study leave readers with an uncertainty as to the superiority of either model. However, the findings of this study contradict the results obtained by Ahmadi Safa, Donyaie, and Mohammadi (2015), who found that both models led to significantly better results, but the learners in the interactionist DA group outperformed the ones in the interventionist group.

Moreover, the findings of this study are comparable to those of several national studies although they mainly concentrate on only one model of DA.

For instance, Aghaebrahimian, Rahimirad, Ahmadi, and Khalilipour Alamdari (2014) and Rashidi and Bahadori Nejad (2018) investigated the effect of DA on L2 writing and reported that the learners who had received mediation throughout the course could outperform the ones in the control group. Nevertheless, none of these studies have mentioned whether they opted for an interventionist or an interactionist model. In the same vein, the results of this study are comparable to those reported mainly on the effect of DA on reading skill by Pishghadam, Barabadi, and Mehri Kamrood (2011) on the one hand, and Birjandi, Estaji, and Deyhim (2013) on the other.

In general, most related studies on cause-effect relationships between DA and various skills of English in the Iranian EFL setting, including the present study, have advocated the use of DA in EFL classes and have supported the idea that this assessment approach can help EFL learners achieve higher levels of improvement.

The improvement in the performance of the experimental groups of this study can be explained in light of Poehner's (2005) findings favoring the washback of mediated-testing procedure. This status quo can be rationalized on the grounds that mediation during and after the assessment sessions helps learners reconsider and think through their problems. Moreover, based on Ableeva (2010), DA can function more effectively in the areas learners' need improvement and it can act as a source of appropriate intervention to overcome the problematic area/s. This view can lead to better improvement in learners' speaking skill. Additionally, DA has positive impact on enabling the learners to make a better evaluation of themselves and their progress (Alemi, 2014). It also, as Poehner (2005) states, helps the learners achieve higher levels of self-regulation and take responsibility for their own learning.

The second and fourth research questions addressed the effectiveness of the interventionist and the interactionist DAs on improving EFL learners' LA.

Quantitatively speaking, no significant difference was found between the effects of the two models on the experimental and the control groups, which can be attributed to the less attentiveness of the learners to different properties of language in speaking courses. More specifically, throughout this study, they had a little time to think about different lexico-grammatical hints provided by the mediator. Given the novelty of the issue and rarity, if not lack, of comparable studies, no closely related research could be traced to compare the findings.

On the qualitative side, most of the participants in both interviewed groups claimed that the mediation helped them improve their knowledge and mastery over English tenses, which is comparable to the results of some national studies regarding grammar done by, for instance, Daneshfar, Aliasin and Hashemi (2018), Ahmadi and Barabadi (2014) and Malmeer and Zoghi (2014). Similarly, Barzegar and Azarizad (2013) reported the effectiveness of DA in improving the EFL learners' control over different tenses.

Research questions three and five opted for exploring the impact of the interventionist and the interactionist DAs on MSU. Quantitative analysis of the data revealed that neither of the models was significantly effective in improving the EFL learners' levels of MSU. These findings are in line with Birjandi, Estaji, and Deyhim (2013), who focused on the effectiveness of DA in reading comprehension and MSU among Iranian high school EFL learners. Qualitatively speaking, the post-course interviews revealed that several participants regarded DA effective in improving their MSU in general, and the planning processes in particular. Conducting a qualitative method, Weisgerber (2015), also, studied the role of DA in improving the oral proficiency skills of English-as-an-additional-language. Based on the findings, he favored the greater use of strategies in analyzing the learners' strategic behaviors in the process of implementing DA as compared to static

assessment. Nevertheless, Weisgerber (2015) did not take different categories of MSU into considerations and reported higher use of MSU holistically.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Although DA has recently captured the interest of the EFL researchers, the majority of the pertinent studies conducted previously revolve around DA-oriented language skills, while its contributions to other facilitating factors have almost been neglected. Moreover, two different models of DA targeted in this study have hardly ever been empirically compared and contrasted in a single study.

Based on the quantitative analysis of the data, it is concluded that both the interventionist and the interactionist DAs of the speaking skill can be more effective in improving EFL learners' overall achievement as compared to conventional assessment. These findings are convincing enough to consider DA something more than just an assessment approach, and, as Poehner (2005) puts it, rather regard it an educational procedure that uses mediation which can bring about a full-fledged development in the learners by itself. The quantitative data as to the effects of DA on LA and MSU improvement, though showed non-significant inter-groups' differences during the end-of-course interviews, showed that the members of the experimental groups faced different kinds of changes in their LA and MSU. These resultant changes in the triple S (i.e., speaking skill, strategy and style) in light of the DA-oriented instructions yield support to the educational values of DA not only in terms of language skills instruction but also concerning the learners' cognitive and affective dimensions.

The findings might be promising in yielding further support to the unifurcation approach to EFL assessment and instruction favored in DA. Although it might not yet be entirely feasible to substitute standardized tests with DA, the results of this study have direct implications for classroom

practices, where teacher's assessment of students can happen without the use of standardized tests. These achievements go in line with Lantolf and Poehner's (2005) suggestion regarding DA's role in making classroom formative assessment more productive and help it be tailored to learners' needs at different stages of development. Therefore, the procedures taken by this study can act as a guide for EFL teachers and practitioners who wish to implement DA in their classes.

Furthermore, most of the studies on DA have adapted only one of the models of DA and few studies have focused on comparing these two approaches in the Iranian context (Ahmadi Safa & Donyaei, 2015; Barabadi, Kamroudi & Khajavi, 2018). Thus, the findings of this study can further contribute to the existing literature and assist language educators in selecting the best model of DA in different educational contexts.

As an initial attempt at implementing two different DA models in an EFL context, this study faced certain limitations that can act as the basis for further pertinent research. For instance, since quantitative analysis of the data did not show any significant effect of DA on EFL learners' MSU or LA, further research can be conducted using different instruments to gain a better view of the effectiveness of DA models on LA and MSU.

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