

The Effect of Group Type and Mediation Type in Group Dynamic Assessment on the Improvement of Iranian Homogeneous and Heterogeneous EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension

Research Article
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Received: 2019-11-02

Accepted: 2020-10-28

Abstract

Based on Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development, dynamic assessment (DA) has at its core the integration of assessment and instruction through mediation. DA is practiced either individually or collectively. In group-dynamic assessment (G-DA), as Poehner (2009) introduced, learners are simultaneously exposed to mediation. The problem which has been ignored in G-DA is the homogeneity and heterogeneity of EFL learners while being mediated. This study tried to investigate the effect of group-dynamic assessment on homogeneous and heterogeneous EFL learners' ability in listening comprehension. It also intended to find out if expert-novice and peer-to-peer mediation types in G-DA differed in their effects on homogeneous and heterogeneous EFL learners' command of listening comprehension. To this end, eighty intermediate EFL learners were chosen to be the

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DOI: 10.22051/lghor.2020.28998.1214

DOR: 20.1001.1.2588350.2023.6.4.5.6

participants. According to their language proficiency, they were assigned to two groups of forty homogeneous and forty heterogeneous learners. Then, each group was divided into two experimental groups. The participants in all groups attended three listening sessions. For the mediation, the participants were assisted through novice-expert and peer-to-peer mediation types. To find out the main and interaction effect of group type and mediation type in G-DA, the post-test scores were analysed through running a two-way ANOVA. The results indicated that both group type and mediation type had significant main and interaction effect on learners' listening comprehension. A post hoc test was also utilized to compare the mean differences between the groups.

Keywords: group-dynamic assessment, homogeneous, heterogeneous, mediation type, zone of proximal development

Introduction

All teaching and instructional activities are almost directed toward meeting one need. They provide the learners with a situation, and also with strategies which smooth the path of language learning and development. Assessment, as an activity in language learning process, should also serve the purpose of helping learners to learn something new besides assessing their performance. Assessment in traditional terms, as McNamara (2004) argues, is an activity through which the assessor collects information based on which he can determine the learners' current level of knowledge or ability. In traditional terms, assessment acts as a means to provide the examinees with a record of their past achievements and thus it is called "static assessment" by some researchers (Feuerstein et al., 1998). The primary focus of attention in traditional assessments is on grading learners' past performance.

To ensure the effect of assessment on learners' future performance, a need was felt to think of other frameworks and approaches in assessment so as to devise an alternative method which could serve as a procedure to modify such performance. To meet such a purpose, the integration of assessment and instruction was needed.

One form of alternative assessment through which assessment and instruction are integrated is "Dynamic Assessment" (DA). Lidz (1991) argues that DA does not focus on what learners can accomplish alone. It, on the contrary, emphasizes learners' assistance that turns out to be successful in facilitating improved learning performance through the integration of assessment and instruction. DA is an approach which, as Vygotsky (1978), and Lantolf and Poehner

(2008) claim, determines where the learner is at, and then tries to improve development by offering him specific mediation. This mediation can be provided through some *scaffolding* strategies. Wood et al. (1976) see scaffolding as the process of assisting learners through interaction in consecutive steps of a problem. Scaffolding can take place either between a teacher and students or between students and students whereby less knowledgeable learners are provided with required assistance by more knowledgeable learners in class. This assistance is offered in accordance with the way the more knowledgeable learners are tutored by the teacher. The former can be termed as *expert-novice* (teacher-student) scaffolding and the latter as *peer-to-peer* (student-student) one.

DA is applied either to the individuals one by one or to a group of learners. Poehner (2009) proposed Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA) as an approach to DA claiming that a major difficulty with putting DA into practice in L2 classes is that one-to-one interactions do not happen conveniently due to the number of students in L2 classes. He further explains that in G-DA, a number of learners are simply placed together to form groups and then they are assigned tasks to perform. The ability of the learners is not taken into account in assigning them to different groups.

With this in mind, the present study made an attempt to pursue Poehner's claim by placing individuals in groups of homogeneous and heterogeneous EFL learners. The researchers wanted to find out the impact of group type when G-DA is applied on EFL learners with almost the same and different ZPDs. The current research had its second focus on the effect of mediation types in G-DA. In other words, it tried to see how expert-novice type of mediation and peer-to-peer one differed in their effect on homogeneous and heterogeneous EFL learners' improvement of listening comprehension.

Review of the Related Literature

Dynamic Assessment

According to Lussier and Swanson (2005), "dynamic assessment is a procedure that attempts to modify performance via examiner's assistance in an effort to understand and promote learning potential" (p. 66). As Naeni and Duvall state:

DA, grounded in Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD, focuses on what a

learner is able to do with the assistance of a more knowledgeable another and the type and amount of mediation needed for a learner to be able to do a task in DA indicates the learner's learning potential. (Naeni & Duvall, 2012, p. 26)

It is the more knowledgeable other who provides the guidance and instruction during the learning period. The more knowledgeable one establishes learner's ZPD and provides appropriate mediation. It is the process of mediation which makes DA different from other approaches to assessment. According to Williams and Burden (1997) "mediation refers to the part played by other significant people in the learner's lives, who enhance their learning by selecting and shaping the learning experience presented to them" (p.40). As Haywood and Lidz (2007) argue, the assessor finds ways to help the learner move to the next level of development. In DA, as they explain, the examiner establishes an active relationship with a learner and what happens between them is more than just giving instructions.

From the theoretical point of view, Vygotsky's writings about the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) planted the seeds of dynamic assessment. As Vygotsky states:

Zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86)

Rogoff and Wertsch (1984) in their explanation of ZPD, describe ZPD as Vygotsky's most famous concept. They argue that ZPD is the level of knowledge which is just beyond that with which the learner is currently capable of doing. They believe that the learner can easily move into the next level of knowledge if he cooperates with another person and this person can be either an adult or a peer who is more knowledgeable.

ZPD can provide teachers with ways to help learners when they face any problem in their learning stages. Bornstein and Bruner (1989) have used the term 'laddering' to refer to this process. They believe that students should work on tasks which are rather difficult and demanding for them in which they need some assistance to succeed. DA is therefore an approach through which the intended

assistance and mediation which is rather planned can better be realized.

Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) propose *cake* and *sandwich* formats as two models of DA. In cake method, mediation is offered throughout the administration of the assessment, whereas in sandwich format the mediation is given before the assessment. There is a training phase before the assessment in sandwich model. This training happens after the pre-test when the learners' problems have been diagnosed by the teacher and

DA can be practiced either individually or collectively. Whether it is group-based or one-to-one, it follows, as Poehner (2009) explains, the same general rule of providing learners with assistance. Poehner (2009) differentiated between two procedures for G-DA: *concurrent* and *cumulative* G-DA. In concurrent G-DA, the teacher interacts with the whole class as a group. To make sure, the teacher may offer assistance in response to an individual, but the interaction shifts quickly between primary (teacher and a learner) and secondary (other learners) interactants. In approach to cumulative G-DA, the interactions which the teacher carries out are of one-on-one type. Here, the learners need to take turns in interacting with the teacher as primary interactants.

Dynamic Assessment and Peer-to-Peer Mediation

Originally, Vygotsky's concept of ZPD basically dealt with the interaction between a learner as a 'novice' and a teacher as an 'expert'. But currently, sociocultural theorists such as Mitchell, Myles, and Marsden (2013) have turned their attention and given a new direction to the interactions in ZPD in which pair and group work among peers are also taken into account. This new direction was earlier emphasized by Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995) who argued that individuals can cooperate and collaboratively establish a ZPD in which each learner both assists and is assisted. In other words, interaction occurs between peers. Donato (1994) also emphasized that learners have the ability to offer guided help to their peers in class when they are involved in interactive tasks. Kaufman and Burden (2004) observed that studies on DA have traditionally taken into account only expert–novice relations and paid no attention to peer-to-peer interactions. But, some studies reveal the fact that learners can also act as effective providers of mediation. For example, Swain and her colleagues' research (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2000; Swain 2001) into L2

development emphasizes the significant role of interaction between peers.

Scaffolding Strategies

In an instructional setting, as Knestrick (2013) explains, the term “scaffolding” refers to the assistance or guidance that a teacher provides when the student is learning a new concept and this intended assistance or guidance can be offered through some scaffolding strategies.

One helpful scaffolding strategy is what the cognitive psychologist David Ausubel (1978) calls *advanced organizers*. The teacher can present new information or concepts to learners through advanced organizers. They are some kind of simplified introductions to a lesson that acquaint the learners with the subject matter. *Frontloading vocabulary* is another strategy through which, as Alber (2011) explains, the learners are introduced to a list of a new vocabulary items and expressions that are included in a passage. The third Strategy is what Prabhu (1992) calls *Opinion- gap activity*. This activity requires that students give their personal ideas and attitudes so as to complete a task in L2 classes. For example, the students are invited to talk about a social problem, such as high rate of unemployment and offer some solutions through class discussion.

Studies on Dynamic Assessment

Different researchers have turned their attention to the impact of DA on L2 development. Among them, the following are assumed to be the pioneers: Lantolf (2000), Lantolf & Poehner (2011), Lantolf & Thorne (2006), Poehner (2007), Poehner (2008), Poehner (2009), Poehner & Lantolf (2010), Ableeva (2010), Kozulin & Garb (2001). Some other studies have also been done in the field of DA.

Ableeva (2010) demonstrated that traditional assessments are not able to reveal the hidden sources of poor performance in learners. She found that DA is able to diagnose the learners’ needs and problems and then allows for suitable and constructive intervention to assist them in solving the problems. The results of her study showed that, through interactions in the zone of proximal development, DA permits to establish not only the actual level of learners’ listening ability but also to diagnose/assess the potential level of their listening development.

Alavi et al. (2012) studied the practicality of G-DA in finding out the strategies of mediation that are offered by a teacher during his G-DA interactions

with L2 learners in listening. Moreover, their study intended to discover the effects of group dynamic assessment-based instruction on the co-construction of knowledge among L2 listeners. This study led to the development of some mediational strategies which consisted of different forms of implicit and explicit feedback.

In his study, Hidri (2014) investigated the development and evaluation of a dynamic assessment of listening comprehension in EFL contexts. Qualitative data analysis in his study proved that although the new approach provided better understanding of the learners' both cognitive and meta-cognitive processes than did the traditional assessment, raters were skeptical about the value of and processes involved in DA mainly because they were not familiar with it.

In their study, Mehri and Amirian (2015) tried to focus on the impact of G-DA on the development of control over the past tense. Moreover, the interactions in their study suggest that the learners changed their role from the mere receivers into the active providers of mediation or assistance to other members of the group. But the study did have no intention to focus on the effect of group type or mediation type.

Wang (2015) studied the effect of DA on the listening skills of EFL learners who were at Lower-intermediate level of language proficiency. He explored the integration of assessment and instruction in listening comprehension and concluded that this integration can better be realized through DA. DA, he also concluded, can improve students' listening study at both macro- and micro-levels.

Tabatabaee et al. (2018) conducted a study to make a comparison between the effects of interventionist DA, cumulative G-DA, and static assessments on the grammaticality of the EFL learners' narrative writing. The results indicated that cumulative G-DA was more effective in helping the EFL learners to write grammatical narrative paragraphs.

Shabani (2018) conducted a group dynamic assessment on writing during twelve weeks of instruction. In his study, the experimental group underwent G-DA instruction for 12 weeks and received prompts, hints and scaffolding during all stages. In his study, Shabani has had his major attention on the general effect of G-DA on learners' writing skill. He has taken his attention away from the role of peers' interaction and suggests other researcher to focus on the significance of mediation provided by the peers.

The above brief overview of a few studies carried out on DA reveals its effectiveness in helping the learners to achieve higher levels of learning and development. However, a gap still remains and a need is still felt. Researchers have not taken account of homogeneity and heterogeneity of learners in G-DA. When G-DA is practiced in EFL classes, the question which seems necessary to be answered is whether EFL learners with the same or different language proficiency should attend the same or different classes. Another challenge to the implementation of G-DA in EFL classes is the mediation types through which assistance is offered. To the best of our knowledge, researchers have widely worked on G-DA. However, they have paid almost no or little attention to the type of mediation which can best suit the group type in G-DA.

With these gaps in mind, the current research intended to find out the main and interaction effect of group type and mediation type in G-DA on homogeneous and heterogamous EFL learners' command of listening comprehension. The following three questions were accordingly posed as the research questions of the study:

1. What is the significant main effect of group type in G-DA on Iranian EFL learners' ability in listening comprehension?
2. What is the significant main effect of mediation type in G-DA on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability?
3. Is there a significant interaction effect of Group type and mediation type in G-DA on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension?

Method

Participants

Eighty intermediate female Iranian EFL learners taking English Conversation Course in Pardis Institute of Foreign Languages in Marand, Iran were chosen through purposive sampling from intact class groups to be the participants of this study. The participants, ranging from 17 to 19 in age, were then divided into two groups of forty homogeneous (Group1) and forty heterogeneous EFL learners (group 2). The criterion for homogeneity and heterogeneity of the participants was

their language proficiency which was determined through the participants' educational background and achievements in the institute. Their final term scores obtained during four past semesters of EFL learning were calculated. Learners with a mean score of over 85 out of 100 were assigned to homogeneous group and those with scattered mean scores (over 85 and lower 85) were assigned to heterogeneous group.

Homogeneous participants of the study were then assigned to two groups of twenty EFL learners to form two experimental groups (Group 1A & 1B) since the two groups were supposed to be mediated differently. To put it in simpler terms, the first twenty EFL learners of the study were treated through novice-expert mediation type and the second twenty EFL learners in the second experimental group were treated through peer-to-peer mediation type.

Quite like the homogeneous participants, heterogeneous participants of the study were also included in two experimental groups (Group 2A & 2B) with twenty learners in each. The reason again was to treat the learners differently through novice-expert mediation type and peer-to-peer one. The purpose was to see if mediation types differed in their effect on EFL learners with different language proficiency. In expert- novice mediation type the teacher interacted with the learners since he was considered to be the more knowledgeable one in the class and in peer-to-peer mediation learners interacted with each other in groups of four to help one another.

Instrumentation

To decide upon the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the participants, their achievements in terms of their scores during four past semesters in the institute were analyzed and they were assigned to different groups accordingly. Participants in all four groups attended three listening sessions and received pretest, mediation and posttest. In both pretest and posttest, they were supposed to respond to some comprehension questions. The questions included traditional multiple choice tests, true/ false statements, and communicative stimulus- response tasks, in which the test-takers were required to respond in written form to a set of questions based on the presented listening extract. Three Scaffolding strategies of *advanced organizers*, *frontloading vocabulary*, and *opinion gap activity* were used by both teacher

(expert-novice) and peers (peer-to-peer). Strategies were the same for both mediations types since the researchers intended to alleviate their possible effects on learners' achievement. The extensive listening tasks had been chosen from the American English File book 4 which stands at the upper-intermediate level.

Procedure

This quasi-experimental study followed Sternberg and Grigorenko's Sandwich Model of DA (2002) and was almost compatible with Poehner's (2009) concurrent and cumulative approaches to G-DA. It was *concurrent* when the teacher applied *advanced organizers* and *vocabulary frontloading* strategies, since the teacher interacted with the entire group. It was *cumulative* when the teacher conducted one-on-one interactions in *opinion gap* activities.

Eighty intermediate EFL learners, who were assigned to four groups, as explained above, were asked to sit in three successive listening sessions. Each group had to meet three sessions separately. The first two sessions were actually kind of tutoring sessions for the knowledgeable learners to learn how to provide their peers with mediation and ZPD-sensitive assistance. The scores obtained from the third session were analyzed. The class management in each session was run with the fixed order of pretest- mediation-posttest.

The research began with the first homogeneous experimental group (Group 1A). The participants in this group were asked to listen to a monologue for five minutes. This pretest phase was run with no mediation or assistance of any kind. To examine the participants' independent listening comprehension ability, they were immediately given six multiple choice comprehension questions, four true/false questions and five communicative stimulus- response questions to answer. The answer sheets were collected for later correction. After a short interval, the participants in experimental group one were invited to listen to another monologue but at the same upper-intermediate level. Right after they listened, they were provided with some mediation through the pre-planned strategies. The assistance or mediation which the participants in experimental group one were exposed to, was of expert-novice type. To this end, the teacher made use of three scaffolding strategies. First, using *advanced organizers* he tried to familiarize the participants with the content of the listening material. Second, through *vocabulary frontloading*

scaffolding strategy, the teacher tried to acquaint the participants with some key vocabulary items embedded in the monologue. And finally, through *opinion gap activity* the participants were instructed to have a class discussion about the content of the monologue. The teacher was also a participant in the discussion. For the posttest phase of the study, right after the participants passed through the mediation phase, they were given exactly the same three types of questions as they had been given in the pretest of the study. The answer sheets were collected for later correction and analysis.

Participants in the second homogeneous group (Group 1B) went through exactly the same procedure; pretest- mediation-posttest, with the only difference that for the mediation phase, the teacher took a rather passive role since the type of mediation in this group was of peer-to-peer type. Instead of the teacher, learners were guided to help each other in accordance with the way they had been tutored. For the scaffolding, the teacher became a coordinator and organized the learners into groups of four learners. He then guided them to make use the same three strategies as in the first experimental group as much as they could to provide each other with required assistance. Here, the teacher was just a coordinator rather than a participant in the discussion. These strategies were supposed to provide the participants with a relative clarification of the listening material. The participants in this group were exposed to the same monologue and also the same questions and then the papers were collected for later correction and analysis.

Participants in heterogeneous groups (Group 2A & 2B) went through exactly the same procedure. The first group was assisted through expert -novice mediation and the second group was helped through peer-to-peer mediation. These two groups differed in peer-to-peer mediation in a sense that more knowledgeable peers were supposed to help less knowledgeable ones in class.

Results

Homogeneous and heterogeneous EFL learners seemed to respond differently when G-DA was practiced through different expert-novice and peer-to-peer types of mediation. Nevertheless, to have statistical justification, a two-way ANOVA was run on the participants' posttest scores to find out the main effect of group type and mediation type and also their interaction effect in G-DA on the

improvement of EFL learners' ability in listening comprehension. The participants' final posttest scores were entered into SPSS for quantitative analysis. First, the descriptive statistics of the participants' post-test scores are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Results of Posttest for all Independent Variables

Group-type	Meditation-type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Homo.	expert-novice	16.60	1.667	20
	peer-to-peer	15.50	2.013	20
	Total	16.05	1.907	40
Hetero.	expert-novice	16.70	1.455	20
	peer-to-peer	13.50	1.504	20
	Total	15.10	2.182	40
Total	expert-novice	16.65	1.545	40
	peer-to-peer	14.50	2.025	40
	Total	15.57	2.091	80

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of all independent variables in terms of participants' mean scores and their standard deviations. This table provides information on the mean scores of all four groups. The mean score of the homogeneous participants mediated through expert-novice- strategies was higher than that of those mediated through peer-to-peer strategies. For the heterogeneous participants mediated through expert-novice strategies, the mean score was much higher than that of those mediated through peer-to-peer strategies. In total, a noticeable difference is seen between the mean scores of homogeneous and heterogeneous participants mediated through different strategies.

A two-way ANOVA was run on a sample of 80 participants to find out if the two independent variables of group type (homogeneity and heterogeneity) and mediation type (expert-novice and peer-to-peer) and their interaction had statistically significant effect on the dependent variable of listening comprehension while conducting group –dynamic assessment.

Table 2*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	132.550 ^a	3	44.183	15.765	.005	.384
Intercept	19406.450	1	19406.450	6924.367	.002	.989
Group-type	18.050	1	18.050	6.440	.013	.078
Meditation-type	92.450	1	92.450	32.987	.001	.303
Group-type * meditation-type	22.050	1	22.050	7.868	.006	.094
Error	213.000	76	2.803			
Total	19752.000	80				
Corrected Total	345.550	79				

Table 2 shows both main effect and interaction effect of independent variables on dependent variable. According to the findings, we clearly understand that both group type and mediation type as our two independent variables had statistically significant main effect on listening comprehension as our dependent variable since the p value for group type was $p=.013$ and for the mediation type the value was $p=.001$. On the other hand, an interaction between mediation type and group type as independent variables could be demonstrated with the $p=.006$. Since statistically significant interaction was demonstrated between the two independent variables, we need to report the main effects. This involved determining the mean difference. To determine the mean differences between the groups, a Tukey post hoc was conducted for multiple comparisons:

Table 3*Tukey HSD*

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: listening comprehension						
(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
homo-expert-novice	homo-peer-peer	1.10000	.52940	.170	-.2906-	2.4906
	hetero-expert-novice	-.10000-	.52940	.998	-	1.2906
	hetero-homo-peer-peer	3.10000*	.52940	.000	1.7094	4.4906
homo-peer-peer	homo-expert-novice	-1.10000-	.52940	.170	-	.2906
	hetero-expert-novice	-1.20000-	.52940	.115	-	.1906
	hetero-homo-peer-peer	2.00000*	.52940	.002	.6094	3.3906
hetero-expert-novice	homo-expert-novice	.10000	.52940	.998	-	1.4906
	homo-peer-peer	1.20000	.52940	.115	-.1906-	2.5906
	hetero-homo-peer-peer	3.20000*	.52940	.000	1.8094	4.5906
hetero-homo-peer-peer	homo-expert-novice	-3.10000-*	.52940	.000	-	-1.7094-
	homo-peer-peer	-2.00000-*	.52940	.002	-	-.6094-
	hetero-expert-novice	-3.20000-*	.52940	.000	-	-1.8094-

According to what table 3 indicates, there exists no significant difference between the means of homogeneous EFL learners who were mediated either by novice-expert mediation type or peer-to-peer one. But this is not true for heterogeneous EFL learners. The mean difference between the scores of those mediated through expert-novice-novice mediation type and peer-to-peer one is statically significant.

Discussion

Group dynamic assessment, introduced by Poehner (2009), was a new

direction taken to ease some inherent inconveniences in individual dynamic assessment. Elaborating on this new direction, Poehner argues that G-DA considers group as a social system. It is not just a context in which individual performance occurs. For this system to work more effectively and efficiently, establishing a group ZPD seems to be a must. It seems to be a determining factor to consider the homogeneity and heterogeneity of group members and then choose an appropriate mediation type when G-DA is practiced in EFL classes.

In line with all the studies which were touched upon in earlier sections, this research also attempted to deal with the effect of G-DA on the improvement of a language skill. However, our study claims to extend and in some cases modify the results of the previous studies. It tried to fill a void left behind by some G-DA researchers and practitioners. This study, for instance, modifies the findings of Slavin (1993) and Tutty and Klein (2008). They favor heterogeneous grouping which, they believe, benefits lower ability learners since these learners can get assistance from other members. The current study, however, indicates that EFL learners with lower abilities in heterogeneous groups get better assistance from their teachers rather than their peers, since they do not find their peers reliable sources for help. This study also extends the results of Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995), who argue that although individuals are not qualified enough and cannot act as an expert, they offer and are offered some help in interactions. The current study, based on its findings, extends the idea by saying that learners can better benefit each other when they are tutored and know how to provide ZPD sensitive assistance. Tutoring, as the results show, had positively affected the higher ability EFL learners in homogeneous groups. This idea is also supported by Donato (1994) who believes that learners have the ability to provide their peers with guided assistance during collaborative interaction.

Data analysis in the present study proves the fact that all our research questions were positively answered. Group type and mediation type have both main and interaction effect on EFL learners' command of listening comprehension when G-DA is practiced. It can simply be claimed that EFL learners with lower abilities in heterogeneous groups need a more capable and knowledgeable person such as a teacher to support and assist them. According to Kaur (2010), teaching students with mixed abilities is a big and challenging responsibility for the teachers who should

know how to deal and tackle such students so that all of them get, gain, grasp and acquire the knowledge according to their requirements. Knowledgeable peers, despite being tutored, cannot simply provide the lower ability EFL learners with the same ZPD sensitive mediation or assistance as a teacher does. It can also be supported by Feuerstein's mediation theory (cited in Williams & Burden, 2000) which asserts that teachers as mediator can better select and organize stimuli and also shape them and finally present them in the most constructive and suitable way so as to improve learning. But this is not true for the higher ability homogeneous learners. The results show that expert-novice and peer-to-peer types of mediation do not differ in their effect on homogeneous EFL learner's listening comprehension ability. This can be attributed to the fact that homogeneous EFL learners with almost the same language proficiency can easily interact with one another and give the same assistance as an expert provides.

This claim can be justified by the observations which were made by the researchers in class while the learners were being assisted. In mediation phase of the study, EFL learners responded differently to the researchers' mediation. The interaction among homogeneous EFL learners was seen to be quite constructive. More knowledgeable learners were observed to be leading and controlling the interactions in opinion gap activity in a helpful manner. They were also seen to be approvingly capable of vocabulary clarification when they used frontloading vocabulary strategy. So, as the results indicate, more knowledgeable peers were successful in providing each other with required help. The results can be justified by referring to Wang's Adaptive Learning Environments Model (1983) which argues that when learners act as a mediator, they identify their own attitudes towards language learning, and their strength and weaknesses both cognitively and socially. They take responsibility for helping each other in carrying out learning tasks.

Quite on the contrary, the heterogeneous learners did not have that much ability to have helpful interaction with their peers in providing them with topic and vocabulary clarification. They were also seen to be reluctant to conduct an opinion gap activity in class. They waited for their teacher to act as a coordinator and a mediator. That is the reason why expert-novice type of mediation proved to more useful with the lower ability EFL learners in heterogeneous groups than peer-to-peer one.

Like other studies, the current study also faced some expected and unexpected problems. Applying different strategies in one session was expected to be demanding and time-consuming for the teacher. Learners also seemed to be quite tired and bored with the prolonged instruction and assessment. In real classes, teachers are recommended to apply only one or two of the strategies so as not to bore the learners more. Teacher also had to closely monitor the learners in pair-works since learners were sometimes noticed not to have been taking the tasks seriously. In some cases, some homogeneous learners were also seen not to be relying much on their peers' assistance. They often resorted to the teacher for conformation.

This study proposes some avenues for further research in G-DA field. Other researchers are kindly invited to replicate this study using different EFL learners at different levels of language ability in other contexts, and on other language skills. They can also include age factor and find the interaction effect of mediation types and age.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the interactive effect of group type and mediation type in group dynamic assessment. We tried to find out if homogeneous and heterogeneous groups of EFL learners would respond the same or differently to expert-novice and peer-to-peer types of mediation when G-AD is applied in listening comprehension tasks. The results indicated that homogeneous EFL learners could equally enjoy assistance provided through expert-novice or peer-to-peer type of mediation. So the type of mediation does make any difference for homogeneous learners. But in the case of heterogamous EFL learners, only expert-novice type of mediation leads to better results. In accordance with the findings of the study, it can be concluded that successful application of G-DA requires that group type and mediation type as two key variables be taken into account when G-DA is practiced to provide the learners with assistance and mediation since they can interactively affect the EFL learners' improvement.

According to the findings of the current study, the researchers believe that if appropriate type of mediation is offered in accordance with the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the EFL learners, learners can better out-perform their current level

of language proficiency. The findings can also have some theoretical and practical implications for EFL teachers if they aspire to have more interactive and cooperative classes in which the teacher acts not only as the disseminator but the mediator of knowledge at the same time. Theoretically, teachers are now cognizant of the interactive relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity of EFL learners on the one hand and the mediation types on the other. So in practice, they can take this point into account when they are applying G-DA in their classes. They can choose the mediation type according to the homogeneity and heterogeneity of EFL learners.

This study may also provide language teachers, both at schools and in language institutes, with a framework for the better application of scaffolding strategies as mediation tools in EFL classes. Teachers can also apply G-DA as a teaching tool through which instruction is given during assessment. In other words, the classroom assessment of learners can be administered using G-DA through which the two objectives of instruction and assessment can be met.

Based on the observations of the learners' behavior during the research in classes, it can also be concluded that adopting G-DA in EFL classes can certainly lead to active involvement of learners in the process of learning. When instruction takes place during or before assessment, learners necessarily focus their full attention on the material. It also increases learners' motivation and reduces their anxiety as it was eye-witnessed by the researchers in practical classes. Learners are motivated and their anxiety fades away since the challenging tasks that are higher than their current level of ability are made easier through teacher's or peers' assistance.

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