Implementation of corrective feedback in an English as a foreign language classroom through dynamic assessment

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Abstract

The present study tried to investigate the effectiveness of the implementation of corrective feedback in the light of Dynamic Assessment (DA) techniques which are rooted in ZPD on Foreign language learners' learning of reported speech structures. Two frameworks were used as the theoretical bases in this study; Lantolf and Aljaafreh's regulatory scale (1994) and Feuerstein, Rand, and Rynders (1988) Mediated Learning Experience (MLE). Two intact English language classes in a language center (Isfahan-Iran) each having 15 students were randomly selected; one class was randomly regarded as the experimental group and the other one as the control group. The experimental group received DA-based treatment through the frameworks under focus in this study; however, the control group did not receive such treatment and followed the routines of the language center. The classes were tape recorded and were reviewed at the end of each session. After the instruction, the participants took two post-tests, i.e., one immediately after the treatment, and another one after two weeks. The data were then qualitatively analyzed after the transcription, and it was concluded that the amalgamation of DA framework and Corrective Feedback framework were effective in enhancing the participants' learning reported speech structures, and a long term effect was also observed regarding the experimental group.

1. Introduction

Despite the growing understanding of the importance of classroom assessment in the learning process, testing researchers have overlooked the area of classroom-based assessments (Leung & Mohan, 2004; Davison, 2004). The traditional method of one-time performance testing is still performed in most language settings, and the role of teachers as both instructors and assessors has not been given adequate attention. With that in focus, this study examined the application of corrective feedback accompanied by dynamic assessment so as to give an account of emergent development of L2. Through this combination, teachers and practitioners can get closer toward the integration of instruction and assessment in view of dynamic assessment.

Dynamic Assessment (DA, henceforth) is an approach by which assessment and instruction are dealt with based on 'Zone of Proximal Development' by Vygotsky (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). DA has

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been pursued by school and clinical psychologists as a way of more accurately assessing an individual's potential for future development by embedding instruction in the assessment process itself (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). In this framework the mediator jointly engages with learners in tasks, offering support, or mediation, as problems arise. Mediation may include such activities; inter alia, leading questions, hints, prompts, feedback, and examples, that all stress a dialogic way of language teaching.

Considering the opportunity that the mediator (instructor) has in interacting and providing the right feedback for the learners, the debate of what kind of feedback is best to provide is still debated. Having explicit versus implicit feedback has long been a contentious issue, and many studies have tried to shed light on different aspects of these two methods of providing feedback for language learners. The present study, therefore, has tried to operationalize corrective feedback within a dynamic assessment framework. That is, instead of summarizing the learners' achievement at the end of a course or school semester (or even year), the major aim was to provide them with an immediate and contextual feedback so as to make correction more effective for their learning and assessment. Since the most common practice in language classrooms in Iran is following the guidelines provided by Communicative Language Learning Approach, and error correction is implemented implicitly; the urge to introduce both a new approach (sociocultural approach, here DA) and a framework for error correction to the context seemed to be an important issue to be addressed. This way, by integrating the corrective feedback with DA, the authors had in mind to focus on the students' upcoming development rather than the assessment of their past L2 grammar acquisition.

To obtain a better understanding of the frameworks used in this study, the two following sections deal with first, the theories underlying Dynamic Assessment and second, the ideas concerned with corrective feedback.

1.1. Dynamic assessment and S/FLA

As stated in the previous section, Dynamic Assessment (DA) is rooted in Vygotsky's theory of 'Zone of Proximal Development' claiming that it can accurately assess individuals' learning potentials and make them prepared for future developments (Lantolf & Thorn, 2006). In this framework, the mediator jointly engages with learners in doing the tasks, offering support, so that s/he can unobtrusively move them from the potential state to the actual performance while directly involved with the problem. To put it another way, mediation through interaction includes different activities that cause learners to proceed from doing the task dependently, doing it together with the instructor and finally to performing it on their own. Through this process, a diagnosis is formulated encompassing fully developed abilities, revealed through learner independent performance, as well as abilities that are in the process of forming, as indicated by learner responsiveness to mediation (Sternberg and Grigorenko 2002; Haywood and Lidz 2007). Hence, the debate on ZPD by Vygotsky indicates that individual performances by a learner cannot be an exact indication of their actual level of development, and mediation is necessary to discover a learner's cognitive abilities and thereby predict their future development (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005).

Two main conceptualizations have been put forward by Lantolf and Poehner (2004) for approaching DA in classrooms (both EFL and ESL); the 'interventionist' and 'interactionist' DA. The distinction between the two DA concepts, as Lantolf and Poehner (2010) believe, "can be understood with regard to the relative freedom mediators have to respond to learners' difficulties and to pursue concerns as they emerge during the interaction" (p. 16). In interventionist DA, on the one hand, there is a mediation phase between two non DA phases which are usually a pre or post-test. Such an approach to DA can be observed in a study by Kozulin and Garb (2002) in which a reading

comprehension test was administered as a pre-test to a group of ESL students. After administrating the test in a non-dynamic manner, a group of trained mediators negotiated the items with each student and talked about different strategies required in each item. A post-test almost similar to the pre-test was administered afterwards with the goal of development of reading. The development was tried to be evaluated as the difference between the scores of the pre and post-tests.

The interactionist DA, on the other hand, involves continuous interactions between the mediator and the learner in order to estimate the potentials of the learner's ability within ZPD. In a relevant study using interactionist DA, Anton (2003) employed a DA procedure for placing students in an advanced L2 Spanish course. A movie about traveling around Spain was played for the students and the students were required to narrate the story in simple past. The students were evaluated based on their accuracy of use in terms of their vocabulary and simple past forms. The mediator was free to interrupt the students any time and permitted the learners to start the narration over if necessary. The students who were able to promote their performance through the mediation were considered to have a higher level of proficiency. Using Vygotsky's terminology, these learners were immature in their abilities and their ability to use simple past was within their ZPD which was consequently improved via mediation.

Similarly, to examine 'Vygotskian praxis' concerning the second language development, a study was conducted by Lantolf and Poehner (2010) whereby they exemplified a DA approach in language classrooms as a way for language development. A teacher named Lucy implemented an interventionist approach to DA to teach noun-adjective correspondences in English (L1) and Spanish (FL). DA in this study is not used for assessment; rather it is used as a way of interacting moment by moment with the learners in order to help them improve. Hence, they concluded that the application of DA in the classroom calls for the amalgamation of theory and practice, as supported by Vygotsky, and the functions of theory and practice are not mutually exclusive, i.e., theory guides practice but at the same time practice suggests some extension or transformation to the theory.

In the studies mentioned above, DA was shown to be a way to help learners improve their learning state by the help of the mediation provided by the mediators. To operationalize a corrective feedback framework in a DA framework, the following part gives a quick look at the debate over the two dominant techniques of providing feedback, namely explicit versus implicit feedback.

1.2. Corrective feedback and DA in language classrooms

There has been a great deal of controversy on which type of feedback, explicit or implicit, is more effective in both language acquisition and performance in an L2 context. For instance, Carroll and Swain (1993) proposed that explicit feedback helps identifying the nature and site of the learning problem whereas implicit feedback helps with both. In another study, Ellis, Loewen & Erlam (2006) investigated the effects of implicit and explicit feedback on the acquisition of L2 grammar. As a result of the statistical analysis, they came to the conclusion that explicit feedback proved to be more advantageous than implicit feedback in both delayed imitation and grammaticality judgment posttests. More recently, Ellis, Loewen, Elder, Erlam, Philp, and Reinders (2009) investigated 11 studies in which explicit and implicit feedback were compared against each other and found out that the former was more effective at least when production was in focus. In the light of the results obtained in these studies, it can thus be argued that there is no clear indication as to whether explicit feedback is more effective than implicit feedback, or vice versa; a compromise should be reached that equal weight should be given to each of them. The extensive discussion on this issue is actually beyond the scope of the present study (for more information, interested readers can see Ellis, 2008 & Ellis et al. 2009).

Moreover, it might come to notice that the mediation provided during dynamic assessment is the same as the notions introduced via the proponents of corrective feedback. However, Lantolf and Poehner (2010) argue that there is a slight difference between the nature of corrective feedback and the type of mediation provided in DA. This is to say, mediation in DA is a way of interacting with the learner and providing help and support in a stepwise manner in order to achieve development whereas such intimate interaction and autonomy provided in DA approaches are not present in corrective feedback. Therefore, the main objective of the present study is to implement corrective feedback in a more dynamic context, i.e., the application of DA would probably help corrective feedback to be more efficient and interactive.

In their 1994 study, Aljaafreh and Lantolf developed a regulatory scale containing corrective feedback ranging from the most implicit to the most explicit. Their study was not framed in DA; however, the purpose of the study was to promote language development by interacting with the learners and understand their problematic areas in order to co-construct their ZPD. The aim of the present study, however, was implementing this scale (Figure 1) in a DA framework proposed by Feuerstein et al. (1988).

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0. Tutor asks the learner to read, find the errors, and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial.
1. Construction of a "collaborative frame" prompted by the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.
2. Prompted or focused reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.
3. Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in a segment (e.g., sentence, clause, line)-"Is there anything wrong in this sentence?"
4. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error.
5. Tutor narrows down the location of the error (e.g., tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).
6. Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but does not identify the error
1. (e.g., "There is something wrong with the tense marking here").
7. Tutor identifies the error ("You can't use an auxiliary here").
8. Tutor rejects learner's unsuccessful attempts at correcting error.
9. Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (e.g., "It is not really past but something that is still going on").
10. Tutor provides the correct form.
11. Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form.
12. Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action

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Figure 1. Regulatory scale. (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 471)

In their Mediated Learning Experience (MLE), Feuerstein et al. (1988) argue that the problem with many educational settings is their perspective towards future functioning of language learners; that is, they assume that the future functioning of an individual can be fully predicted from their present performance ignoring the fact that through powerful interventions (MLE) the predicted destiny has the potential to change for better (Poehner, 2008).

Feuerstein et al. (1988) define MLE as a process by which the intact environmental stimuli are manipulated by a mediator (here, teachers) who selects, frames, modifies, and reorders these stimuli to reassure that they are presented in the most appropriate way to language learners (cited in Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). They have introduced some components for MLE including 'intentionality', 'reciprocity', and 'transcendence' that were considered in this study. By intentionality, they mean the attempt a mediator makes to provide change in a learner's state of knowledge which is as opposed to

the incidental traditional instruction. The notion of reciprocity indicates the role of the learner as an active participant in the process of learning; that is, the learner and the mediator (teacher) construct knowledge in cooperation. The third notion, transcendence deals with language development through time. It indicates the generalizability of the learnt knowledge to different tasks and situations in the future. Focusing on the above DA framework, the present study thus tried to investigate the effectiveness of corrective feedback (implicit and explicit) concerning reported speech.

As mentioned earlier, the present study has tried to operationalize corrective feedback in an interactionist DA approach aimed at assessing (as opposed to Lantolf and Poehner, 2010) learners on their language improvement (here reported speech). The necessity called for action in teaching reported speech structures in this study was based on the authors' experience on the difficulty of the structure for the Iranian EFL learners due to its rare usage in daily conversations and also in their mother tongue. Therefore, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Can corrective feedback (explicit/implicit) feedback improve the learning of reported speech structures in the EFL learners participated in the study?
2. How can implementing corrective feedback in a DA framework improve the learning of reported speech structures in the EFL learners participated in the study?
3. It was hypothesized that implementing corrective feedback embedded in a DA framework could be effective for learning the structure under question (reported speech) in these learners.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Two intact EFL classes containing 15 female students each were selected in a language institute in Isfahan, Iran. All students had passed 9 to 11 courses of English for an estimated period of 3 years and all mastered Persian as their native language. They were randomly grouped in two classes based on the criterion of the passing score of the previous course. The two classes were assigned to the control and experimental groups.

2.2. Materials

The textbook taught in both classes was 'Passages 1' by Jack C. Ritchards & Chuck Sandy Second Edition.

2.3. Procedure

2.3.1. The framework
As mentioned above, a combination of Aljaafreh and Lantolf' 'Regulatory Scale' (1994) and Feuerstein et al. (1988) was used to teach reported speech structures in this EFL class (the experimental group only).

2.3.2. The experiment

Two L2 classes were selected for the experiment. The main medium of the class was English, and Persian was rarely used. A part of the institute's policy is to have cameras in classes for security and teacher observation. Therefore, the classes in this institute are recorded on cameras and the classes selected for this study were of no exception. The videos were used to review the procedure at the end of each session to remind the researcher about the conversations in class. The experimental group

received treatment (based on the frameworks mentioned above) and the control group followed the routines of the institute.

The control group were taught the related grammatical structure (reported speech) following the steps provided by the institute which was the same as the experimental group but the kind of interaction and the hierarchy of corrective feedback provided for the experimental group were absent in this group.

As for the experimental group, a framework was provided based on the combination of the two frameworks mentioned above prior to the beginning of the course and the notions were followed through all sessions. A profile was developed for each student in order for the instructor to be able to follow the number of feedbacks each student had received and on what points. The profiles were reviewed by the instructor at the end of each session to provide necessary changes in response to each student's needs for instruction and assessment.

The structure 'reported speech' is introduced in unit 5 of the book. Examples are provided in a grammar box containing all possible tense forms in English and their reported counterparts in the front. It is followed by some exercises; such as, rewriting in which the direct quotations are provided and the students need to write the reported counterparts in the front, and a pair work exercise in which the students are provided with a conversation and are to retell the conversation using reported speech. How these exercises were exploited in the classrooms will fully be reported below.

Day 1

To check on the students' knowledge on reported speech a short extract of a movie was played in both classes and the students were asked to report on the conversations. The extract was a conversation between two family members. The following are some extracts from the students' reports ('S' for the student and 'I' for the instructor).

(1)

S1: ... The father was very angry because his son got bad marks ....

I: All right, tell us how he showed his anger?

S1: He was shouting and had red face

I: right, what did he say? Can you tell us what he said?

S1: He said "why don't you pay attention to your school assignment?"

I: All right, any other (pointing to the students)

S2: Yeah! As she said, he was angry, so angry and said "I must ask for some tutor for help"

I: Oh! Who said that?

S3: the father, and the son agreed ...

I: what did the son say in response to the suggestion?

S4: He said "OK I'll do whatever you suggest"

As it is obvious, the students did not use reported speech in their statements and tried to report directly. The movie extract was conducted as a kind of diagnosis to the present situation of the students and not just a pretest to be checked against a posttest afterwards.

Day 2

The next day in class, the grammar box was introduced to the students inductively by presenting some examples of reported speech. The instructor tried to give students an example of a conversation between her mother and her by reporting the statements in reported speech. Then, she wrote the conversation (the direct form) on the board and the reported counterpart of each sentence in the front. After that, she asked the students to elicit the rules. Some students started saying the rules; for example, 'when your original sentence is in simple present tense you have to change it to simple past' and so forth. This was because almost all students had studied the grammatical structure in school and knew the explicit rules by heart. The same procedure was conducted in the control group.

After finishing explaining the rules, the students were asked to do the mechanical drill provided in their book. The following is an example of what they had to do.

Rewrite the sentences using reported speech. Then compare with a partner.

1. "I'm not surprised at all"   She told me ....

The instructor gave students 10 minutes to finish the exercise in groups. The students were then asked to read their answers one by one. For the control group, the instructor asked for the correct responses and for each incorrect response, the instructor explicitly explained why the answer was wrong and provided the correct answer for the students. The same procedure was implemented through all exercises on reported speech. For the experimental group, on the other hand, the following conversations happened during the sessions.

(2)

S1: "I'm not surprised at all",… Umm … it is simple present so it is change to "she told me that or without that she wasn't surprised at all

I: that's right thank you

S2: "Have you heard the news" ok preset perfect so … "He asked me had you heard the news?"

I: Umm … all right … do you want to think about it again?

S3: may I?

I: Please let her decide on her own

S2: well ok! I don't know if …. Well it is present perfect and I need to change it to past perfect, is it true?

I: yes sure, but is it enough? In your sentence do you mean 'I (pointing at herself) had heard the news?

S2: Oh! Right! Sorry! He asked me had I heard the news, right

I: Good, right! Now just take a look at the original sentence what's the form?

S4: It is a question

I: (to S2) so? Should you change it?

S2: Umm! Yeah! To use if or whether? Means "He asked me if … I need to change to a statement …. I had heard the new ….

I: correct, thanks

In this conversation, the students needed some implicit hints to get to the answer. The students did not seem to have a problem with indirect questions because they have had it in their previous terms in

the book 'Interchange 2'. The next student responsible for item 7 seemed different in the amount of feedback needed:

(3)

S5: "was the movie scary?" the answer is "the children asked me had the movie scary?"

I: (showing uncertainty in face) well .....

S5: I am not sure well, 'was' is past ... simple past, and I have to change it to past perfect ... So I have to have 'had' isn't it true?

I: OK, can you make a sentence in past perfect for me?

S5: I had my lunch before I came here.

I: Can you give another sentence, about you studying before coming here today?

Here it seemed that the student had a sort of confusion between the auxiliary 'had' and the past form of main verbs 'have/has: had'. The teacher asked the student to make a sentence with a different concept to check the source of the problem.

(4)

S5: I ... studied ... need had, right?

I: nodding

S5: I had studied English before I came here today.

I: good, nice, so can you make your answer again?

S5: yeah, OK, "the children asked me had been the movie scary? Wait, Had the movie been scary?

S2: It is a question like mine

S5: OK, a question, it is a question too ...

S2: Change it to statement ....

I: Would anyone else want to ....?

S6: May I? The children asked me whether or not the movie had been scary

I: right, thanks

Here, the instructor let the peers help provide a less direct or confrontational way of correcting to the situation. S5's primary problem did not seem to be the rules of reported speech but the indirect questions. The instructor had supposed that all students had learned this structure before; however, having two students with the same shortcoming she decided that this structure needed to be explained all over again. The magnitude of the problem differed as S2 could correct herself by being provided with a small hint, but S5 could not see where the problem was even after S2 tried to give her the idea of indirect questions. As a result, the instructor tried to provide a fun situation to refresh the students' minds of the structure in need. It is worth mentioning that what was presented in the DA framework (elaborated in the introduction section) as 'intentionality' helped the instructor detect the real source of the error.

The activity was a kind of chain game. One student asked a question directly and another student repeated the question in an indirect manner:

(5)

I: "Could you open the window please?"

Shohreh: (looking at Nasim sitting next to the door): She asks if you could open the window.

Nasim: sure!

I: "when is Sahar free to go out?"

Zahra: (to Sahar): She wants to know when you are free to go out?

The game went on for three more exchanges and then the instructor asked the students to come up with their own questions and go round the class. S5 and S2 were also engaged in the game and after two exchanges they seemed to get the rule. The instructor then tried to elicit the rule by asking the students different types of questions and their indirect counterparts.

The important point here is the way the instructor's first interpretation would be without digging down into these two students' real source of problem while answering questions. Had followed the conventional method of asking for the correct answer and then corrected any mistaken ones, the teacher would never understand the real source of the problem, which in this case was not the main structure in need but another underlying attribute needed to accomplish that.

The next exercise was a pair work provided in the book. The exercise was a conversation that the students had to pretend to have heard it unintentionally and now wanted to report to a friend. The teacher gave the students some time to practice the exercise in pairs. Four students were chosen to do the conversation. Two would say the actual conversation and two were in charge to report it to each other as if they were eavesdropping. S5 was chosen intentionally to check if she had improved the shortcomings. The instructor asked them to role play the conversation.

(6)

S1: I heard some interesting news today. Do you know Amanda Jenkins?

S2: Oh! Ryan said he had heard some interesting news today and had asked if Lara knew Amanda Jenkins.

S2 seemed to have improved the problem with indirect question and did not need any kind of help.

S3: I know what she looks like, but I have never met her.

S5: Lara said she knew what did she .... (hesitation, looking at the instructor) continued ... It is an indirect question right?

I: what do you think?

S5: I think so! OK! Lara said she knew what she looked like (looking at the instructor for confirmation) but she had never met her.

I: Good! Nice!

 S5 seemed troubled at the beginning and looked for some help. The instructor tried to provide the most implicit form of feedback. S5, seemed to have benefited from the previous instruction on indirect question, self-corrected herself. Here the instructor provided an atmosphere of learner autonomy by not interfering in the learner's inductive thinking and remained silent till the time the learner was able to correct herself.

The instructor asked two more students to replace students 2 and 5 and finish the conversation.

Day 3

The instructor asked a student to share what she had done the previous day. She started reporting her activities and she mentioned a telephone conversation between her friend and her. The teacher asked the student to tell the others, if possible, what had been said. The real reason behind it was that changing direct sentences to reported sentences when having them printed seems easier than reproducing a conversation happened in a real life situation. The instructor could make sure that the students had learned the structure only if they could use it automatically in a real life situation. This part of the study was implemented to see whether the notion of 'transcendence' could be met according to which the learners involved in a DA context need to be able to transfer what they have learned to other tasks or situations.

(7)

S6: Well I called her to ask about her job interview. She said that she had the job interview yesterday.

I: Well, you mean she was going to have the interview after you called her?

S6: Oh, no! She had it in the morning.

I: So when you called her the interview was finished.

S6: yeah!

I: Don't you think your report has a problem 'cause I misunderstood the time of your friend's interview!

S6: yeah! I guess so! You mean I have to change the time of the report?

I: yeah!

S6: Ok! It happened before yesterday afternoon. Uhu ... she told me that she had had the job interview.

I: right, good!

I: any other? Anyone else wants to share a conversation?

S7: Yeah, me! Yesterday my friend told me that she was going to take a trip tomorrow.

This student seemed to have thought about her sentence and the sentence was alright except the idea of time. The instructor then tried to make her notice the fact by asking some questions about the exact time of the event.

(8)

I: Oh! Good! So what day is today everybody?

Class: Tuesday!

I: So she is taking her trip tomorrow on Wednesday?

S7: Oh no! Today! She said today!

I: but you're reporting it NOW and the day she mentioned is not tomorrow anymore it's today!

S7: So what should I do?

S8: Change it to 'the day after'??!

The instructor tried to look at the others to see if everybody has the same idea as S8 or not. It seemed most of the students did not know how they could report a time that is passed. The instructor then started giving examples.

(9)

I: OK! For example, yesterday we were out I mean me and my husband. My husband wanted to eat out. So here it is, we are passing this restaurant and he suggests: "do you want to eat here?" And I accept. Now I want to report that, see, He asked me ... help me everyone .....

Class: He asked if you wanted to eat here

I: Oh! You mean here in class??!

Class: (Laughing)! No! There in the restaurant

I: Yeah! That's it! You need to change what to what?

Class: here to there

I: OK! Let's have another example! Umm ... Yesterday I was talking to my mom, and here is what she was saying. I had a conversation with your dad yesterday and he accepted to get another loan form the bank. Now let's see how I can report this to you ... yesterday, my mom told me that .... come on everyone ... Let's write it on the board ...... OK tell me .....

Class: she told you that she had had a conversation with your dad yesterday (half silent in this part) and he had accepted to get (got) a loan from the bank

I: OK! Now! Let's see! Yesterday was Monday, but my mom meant the conversation was on Sunday!

S9: Oh! We need to use 'the day before'

I: that's right! So here we have to change what to what?

Class: 'Yesterday' to 'the day before'

I: that's true

In this conversation, two students seemed to have overgeneralized the tense modification and tried to change the infinitival 'to get' to 'to got'. Here too, the notion of 'intentionality' helped the instructor find out the real source of the problem.

(10)

I: Alright, wait a moment, Zohreh, could you give us the answer again

Zohreh: Sure, she told you that she had had a conversation with your dad the day before and he had accepted to got a loan from the bank.

I: Well, how about I tell you there's something wrong with your answer

Zohreh: But the time is true I have to change to past perfect and change yesterday to the day before!

Zohreh seemed to need a more explicit feedback on her answer.

(11)

I: You're right; the problem is with the last part of your answer, the part talking about the loan.

Zohreh: (repeating with herself) he had accepted to got a loan from the bank.

I: Well, you sure need to change the tense but is there any exception, I mean a verb that should not be changed?

Zohreh: (seems unable to identify the error)

I: OK, do you know what infinitives are?

Zohreh: yeah! To plus a verb

I: what kind of verb? I mean the form of the verb?

Zohreh: simple form

I: what do you mean by simple?

Zohreh: means, no –ing, -ed, etc.

I: Good, now can you take a look at your answer again?

Zohreh: Oh yeah! Sure! To get ... right

I: Good! So everyone you need to change the tense of the verbs but not when they are in an infinitive form

In this situation, the instructor started from the most implicit form of feedback and moved toward more explicit ones till the time the student was able to identify the error on her own. The instructor continued on different changes of time and place expressions; such as, tomorrow, this, that, etc. by giving examples.

The next exercise was a listening exercise. The students were to take notes while listening to the parts once, and then ask each other questions. Some sentences were not reported speech but some others were (see Appendix x for the transcription of the parts).

(12)

S10: what did Nicole say about her sister?

S15: She said that her sister is getting married

I: you know the time of the conversation, huh?

S15: what do you mean?

I: the conversation you are talking about is not happening now, it happened in the past. So you need to report it …

S15: Can't I use the direct statement?

I: Sure you can, but it is better to report a conversation happening in the past.

S15: OK then, she said her sister was getting married

In this conversation, the student did not seem to have a problem with the structure of reported speech, but the problem was with the function of this particular form. Again without asking the student to reason out her answer, the teacher would not understand the source of the problem properly.

During the sessions, other cases of problems such as the above were recognized and treated likewise. Another student for example had a problem with the concept of present perfect tense and therefore could not simply analyze these sentences let alone changing them to reported speech. The same routine was implemented to improve the problem. Some students were able to self-correct themselves by very implicit hints such as pausing or the facial expressions of the instructor, but some needed more explicit feedback even to the degree that the instructor had to speak about the rule and ask students to do some exercises to improve the weakness. The last exercise practiced in class was similar to the first activity practiced. A movie extract was played and the students had to report to the instructor.

Day 4

At the end of the fourth session from the day teaching reported speech started, an extract of a CNN documentary was played. The students were asked to report the reporter after each two minutes. The students seemed more confident and more willing to take part in reporting. Some still needed to analyze things explicitly but with a few implicit hints such as when did that exactly happen? Or where she meant by there or here, they were able to provide correct reports of the situations. It is worth mentioning that the same extracts were presented for the control group as well. The difference however was the way the instructor treated these movies in class. The movie part was presented in class, and during the episode the instructor only stopped the video and reviewed some new vocabulary and asked some comprehension questions about the content of the part. No corrective feedback was provided as to the structure of the answers and no requirement for reporting the statements.

To check for the possible long term effect of DA and also any difference existing between this group and the control group, it was decided to compare their performance in the final exam. The institute's routine contains one mid-term and one final exam. Both the midterm and the final exams consist of two parts; written and oral. The exams are designed in a way to evaluate both structural and communicative skills of the learners. Thus, the written exam is a multiple choice test of 4 sections: listening comprehension, vocabulary, structure (grammar), and reading comprehension, and the oral exam contains mostly communicative questions related to the course.

The final exam was conducted five sessions after the last session working on reported speech. The focus of the comparison was the oral exam which was again video-taped. The questions provided contained 5 questions on the topic of reported speech. The instructor responsible for the oral exam had been talked to and he was asked to cover all 5 questions for all learners. The questions required students to make spontaneous reports of real conversations they have had or to change a statement to reported speech orally. The latter were found to be easily manageable for nearly all the experimental group (EG) students and for more than the two third of the learners in the control group (CG). The EG student who had difficulty answering one of two transformation questions was interviewed right after the exam (the instructor was watching the whole oral session through a TV set connected to the camera). The question was: "I felt fascinated by the news" The student claimed at the moment she couldn't distinguish the structure of the sentence. She had difficulty analyzing 'fascinated' as an adjective and therefore was not able to change the tense of the sentence to the appropriate one.

The second type of the questions was a spontaneous open-ended type in which students had to talk about a personal experience (e.g. think of a time when you overheard someone say something really

funny, or someone told you a big secret). The CG answers were of three types. The first group (7 Ss) avoided the situation completely and tried to narrate the story.

(13)

S: Yesterday, my friend told me a secret, it was about her friend's fiancé. Her friend is getting married to her professors at the university.

A number of these students tried to use reported speech in a prefabricated form by giving only one sentence and as much as the instructor tried to elicit more they did not share any information. The sentences they gave were simple uncommunicative ones out of context.

(14)

S: yesterday, my friend told me she had been sick

I: That was a secret?!

S: Well (smiling), she didn't have a secret.

I: OK tell me what else did she tell you yesterday on the phone? You talked on the phone, right?

S: Yeah! Well! Nothing special really (looking uncomfortable)

I: Alright then!

The remaining tried to be more communicative; however, when the instructor tried to ask follow-up questions it took too long for them to provide appropriate answers or even were incapable of providing a correct one.

(15)

S: Once, in a party, my friend made a joke, he said he was very happy when watching his wedding video backwards, he said when I watched it backwards my wife gave the ring back and went back to his father's house (both laughing)

I: What was his wife's reaction?

S: She was angry I guess!

I: what did she say?

S: she said "I'm going to show you when we get home"

I: OK!

The DA group students seemed more at ease providing communicative answers with no avoidance.

(16)

S: Once my friend told me a secret, she said she had copied his father's signature on a check!

I: Oh really! What did you tell her?

S: I told her she should (pause) had to tell her father the truth

I: And? What did she say?

S: She was so afraid of his dad!

Anything else she said?

S: No!

In this conversation the student was able to take two turns of the conversation and provide an appropriate answer.

(17)

I: Can you tell me about a time you were shocked about a piece of news?

S: Yeah, sure! Let me think a moment …. OK, once I was watching the NEWS and there was something about a person killing 7 women!

I: Oh! Can you tell me what the news was?

S: Yeah! About a man who had killed 7 women and that he was arrested by the police.

I: OK

In this conversation the instructor seems unable to provide a good situation for the student to use reported speech and it was not clear whether the student was able to use the structure or not. It is worth mentioning that the above student was the one who had difficulty understanding and using past perfect earlier in class.

As a matter of fact, because of the limitation in the scope of the present study, all other activities that were done in the experimental classroom can not fully be reported here. From what went on in the two classes comparing corrective feedback with DA and without DA, we can initially figure out that there was a dialogic relationship between the instructor and the students in the experimental class. This fact is necessary if we wish to follow the integration of assessment with instruction which is the ultimate goal of DA. More information regarding the explanation and interpretation of the obtained data will be provided in the next sections.

3. Results and discussion

The present study tried to investigate the role of corrective feedback and Dynamic Assessment in an EFL setting. The questions of the study followed two purposes: First, how corrective feedback, both implicit and explicit, could improve the learning of reported speech structures in the learners in a DA environment, and second, how the implementation of DA framework together with corrective feedback could help these learners learn reported speech structures.

It was hypothesized based on previous research (e.g. Carroll & Swain, 1993; Ellis et al. 2006; Ellis, et al. 2009; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008) that the implementation of corrective feedback can be effective in language learning. The point here was using a more dynamic and interactive framework of corrective feedback by Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1994) in which there were different levels to explicitness and implicitness to feedback. Respecting the second research question, it was hypothesized that implementing the above framework in a dynamic assessment framework (here Feuerstein et al. (1988)) could help improve the learners and also provide a possibly longer term retention.

To deal with the first research question, the framework adopted from Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1994) was applied for each student. As it can be observed in the Procedure section above, through the

experiment, different students received different kinds of feedback in a range from the most implicit to the most explicit based on the instructor's diagnosis of the depth of the problem. As an illustration, in extractions (2) and (3) above the amount of feedback needed was different from a more implicit to a more explicit one for the two learners in the experimental group. To understand whether this kind of feedback would prove helpful to the learners, each participant's profile was investigated by the authors. It could be observed that the students who were in need of more explicit feedback required a less explicit and more implicit one as they received more feedback. They were able to get the language form after an implicit hint such as a pause by the instructor or an indirect question such as 'Would you repeat your answer?' This finding was in accord with Nassaji & Swain (2000), Lantolf & Aljaafreh (1994), and Ellis et al. (2008) in the effectiveness of implementing corrective feedback in a collaborative manner.

For the class in which the typical procedures of the institute was used, the participants had only received explicit corrective feedback concerning each incorrect answer. They were provided with the rules to make correct reported speech statements each time they produced a wrong answer. The instructor in this class did not try to provide different levels of feedback to the needs of each student; therefore, what they had received was repeated teaching of the rules by her. After watching the videos of both classes, the subjects in the control group were found to repeat their mistakes over and over again even after they were asked to repeat the correct form after the instructor. They were found to show correct behavior right after the correction, but making the same mistake the day after while doing the exercises or reviewing.

Consequently, the above mentioned episodes from the language classroom indicated that tailoring feedback according to each student's level of knowledge enabled both the teacher and learner to have a more profound look at the present state of the learner and to evaluate the state to which the learner can reach through the help provided by the instructor. This finding is in accordance with Vygotskey's ZPD by which it is believed that learners can improve to achieve their true potentials through scaffolding by the surrounding environment including teachers and other peers. While the notion of helping in traditional teaching is a unidirectional processes from the teacher towards the learners without considering their true state of knowledge and the amount of help needed to reach their true potentials (see McCarthy an Mac Mahon, 1992), Donato (1994) states that scaffolding is a two way around procedure in which the teacher-learner interaction happens according to the needs of the learners and it is a result of a close collaboration between the two. As a result, providing feedback in a collaborative manner brings in the true nature of scaffolding into language classrooms. As confirmed by other researchers (see Nassaji and Swain, 2000) implementing corrective feedback based on the principles of ZPD helped improve the state of knowledge in the students in the above mentioning language classroom. The learners provided by the graded feedback were found to benefit from learning to their potentials.

The second research question was aimed at discovering whether implementing a corrective feedback framework accompanied by a DA framework would improve the state of knowledge in the learners participated in this study. To investigate this problem, as mentioned in the introduction section, Feuerstein et al., (1988)'s DA framework containing three notions of 'intentionality', 'reciprocity', and 'transcendence' were considered, whose relevant discussion will follow:

To meet the notion of 'intentionality', the instructor deliberately tried to bring the principles of DA, with the notions of mediation and interaction in its core, to classes to diagnose the nature of this difficulty and to start moving the students from the state they were in to the state they could ever be through mediation and intentional interactions. Without ever digging into their state of knowledge, any unsuccessful attempt to use reported speech would be considered a failure in understanding the

structure itself, whereas excerpts, for example, (4 & 9 above) show the difficulty was not really originated from the structure in question. In some parts, the problem was with the tense, in some others it was the indirect questions. The teacher would never understand the source of difficulty without seeking into the learners' minds and interacting with them to improve the problem.

To bring the notion of 'reciprocity' during the conversations in class, the instructor tried to start giving students the chance to get deep into their language choices by beginning with the most implicit feedbacks to the most explicit ones. In the control group class the mistakes were directly corrected and mostly in an explicit way. Here the instructor tried to give the students a chance to discover for themselves what shortcomings their language choices would contain. In some cases the instructor made students give reasons for their answers and consequently tap their metalinguistic knowledge. The use of self-corrections and peer-corrections involved students in their learning process and helped them reach a higher level of understanding of their capabilities. As mentioned earlier, after transcribing the videos and investigating each student's profile, it was clear that the students who had received feedback starting with implicit ones and ended with more explicit ones needed less explicit feedback during the sessions.

To provide the third notion 'transcendence' in the experiment, the instructor started teaching and practicing reported speech with mechanical drills such as transformations and then see whether the learners could perform other tasks as well. Therefore, the instructor first asked the students to change direct statements to indirect ones. The type of task changed through the sessions to more communicative spontaneous tasks such as sharing a piece of news with the class (excerpt 7) to the unplanned questions of their oral exam which required them to give their own experience on some secret or funny situation. The learners seemed to be able to perform well as the type of task changed and tried to cope with the new situations and transfer what they had learned to these conditions.

The final assessment into the degree of improvement in the learners participated in the study came from the movie excerpt played the session after the last lesson on reported speech and the final exam. As reported above the students were more comfortable using the structure and had fewer mistakes. To illustrate the pattern of development in both groups from the diagnosis (pre-test) stage to the post-test and the following delayed post- test, Table (1) below presents the frequency of use regarding the target structure. The correct usage of 'reported speech' was defined as selecting the right tense for the statement in addition to the right person and the necessary adverbs of time and place.

Table 1. Frequencies for pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test

Groups	Pre-test			Post-test			Delayed post-test		
	Tense	Person	Adverb	Tense	Person	Adverb	Tense	Person	Adverb
Experimental group	15%	10%	2%	40%	45%	44%	41%	43%	40%
Control Group	14%	11%	3%	20%	25%	10%	15%	19%	8%

As illustrated in the above table, a general improvement for both groups was found in the post-test; however, this was markedly more significant for the experimental group. The results of the delayed post-test, on the contrary, indicated a continuous increase for the experimental group in contrast to the control group with slightly lower proportions in comparison with their post-test. For example, the proportion of tense increased from 15% in the pre-test to 40% and 41% for the post and delayed post-tests for the experimental group, respectively, but the same figure increased from 14% to 25% in the post-test and had a fall to 15% in the delayed-post-test for the control group. A point worth of mentioning is that some percentages with the experimental group is with a lower number than the

post-test (person and adverbs). One explanation for this occurrence would be the stressful atmosphere of the final exam as opposed to the class context where both pre and post-tests were conducted.

The interactions implemented by the instructor concerning the language classrooms used in this study refer to what Feuerstein, Falik, Rand and Feuerstein (2003) state about the difference between everyday interactions and what happens during interactions in a DA setting. They propose that everyday interactions contain a continuous effort to provide help; whereas, interactions in DA settings contain systematically calibrated mediations according to learners' needs. Feuerstein et al, (2003) further believe that cooperative mediation is an important element in helping learners take responsibility for their learning and being more responsive to the coming language input. An observation of the notion of feeling responsible on the part of the learners comes from the episodes in which the learners were able to self-correct themselves with even the slightest implications from the instructor, or when they were ready to use the structures in spontaneous language production and did not avoid the structure. This willingness to produce the structure for the purpose of communication in stressful situations such as their final exam in this study has an indication of personality growth in terms of more self-confidence in these learners.

The long term effect of DA procedures (as presented in table 1) came about with the comparison made at the final exam. The experimental group had the knowledge after about two weeks from the last instruction. The long lasting effects of DA could be observed for almost two third of these students in comparison with the control group. The results here, to the extent that DA techniques are considered, are in line with the previous studies conducted based on DA techniques in language classrooms with different skills (e.g. Poehner, 2009; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; Ableeva, 2010; Ableeva, 2008; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005; Guterman, 2002; Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995; Cioffi & Carney, 1983). As Vygotsky insisted, psychological functions may form over a very short period of time (cited in Lantolf and Pohner, 2010) which is also called 'microgenesis'. One more indication of the long-time effect of DA strategies observed here even for a short period of time comes from what Feuerstein et al. (2003) call the quality of interactions in DA approaches. They propose that when long time exposure and interaction are key elements in any language setting, the quality of these interactions is equally important. More support for the quality versus quantity of interactions in classes are one-session DA programs designed by Feuerstein which showed improvement in learners' language abilities.

4. Conclusions

The present study tried to compare traditional methods of both instruction and assessment in two EFL classrooms. As observed in the procedures section, the researcher tried to compare the experience of traditional ways of instruction and a mid-term/final exam tradition with a more dynamic procedure through implementing the principles of Dynamic Assessment accompanied with corrective feedback. Throughout the procedure, the problematic grammatical concept of reported speech was tackled in a different way to see if the students could improve the difficulty. New areas of difficulty were revealed as the instructor tried to dig deeply into the sources of the problem and dynamically find remedies for improvement by shifting through different tasks (games) and different ways of interaction (most implicit to most explicit). This is what is expected through implementing a DA Framework to a language classroom through which the mediator actively joins with the learners to help them move from the potential state to the actual performance as well as help improve abilities that are in the process of forming (Sternberg and Grigorenko 2002; Haywood and Lidz 2007)

Concluding this study, we can say, the adjustment of instruction and assessment provided a context of development for the students to move from their present level to where they could really be. This is in accord with the concept of ZPD by Vygotsky. For Vygotsky, development is not the solo production of a task by a learner, rather it is the extent any learner can transfer this knowledge to novel situations (Vygotsky, 1997). The way students could perform reported speech in movie reporting and spontaneous talks even after two weeks from instruction can be a valid evidence for DA as a long lasting approach to be implemented in language classrooms, which is in accordance with most DA studies in the literature.

In the long run, it is reasonable to conclude that DA techniques together with corrective feedback, especially the framework used here, which is more interactive than the usual feedback performed by teachers in most language classrooms, can be regarded as an effective move towards more dynamic language classes in which the learners are assessed every moment based on their performance and are helped through scaffolding to reach their potentials. Implementing DA techniques in classes can, therefore, have a remarkable implication for language teachers. For instance, it may guarantee a more thorough and comprehensive way of assessment by language teachers in which the learners are deeply assessed and instructed accordingly. Further research into the effect of implementing the DA framework here and its combination with corrective feedback is strongly suggested for other skills rather than speaking and other problematic structures in both second and foreign language settings.

There were some limitations, however, suggesting the obtained findings should be taken with more care for classroom application. First, there was a need for longer instructional plans whereas in this study, the instruction lasted only for four sessions. Second, there were factors that the design used in this study could not control, such as having a random sample for the groups under study. So, more robust research procedures are required to come to more generalizable findings with respect to the unification of assessment and instruction.

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İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği bir sınıfta düzeltici dönütün dinamik değerlendirme yoluyla uygulanması

Öz

Bu çalışma düzeltici dönütün uygulanmasının etkililiğini yabancı dil öğrencilerinin dolaylı anlatım yapılarını öğrenmede ZPD'ye dayanan Dinamik Değerlendirme (DD) teknikleri doğrultusunda araştırmaya çalışmıştır. Bu çalışmada teorik temel olarak iki taslak kullanılmıştır; Lantolf ve Aljaafreh'in düzenleyici ölçeği (1994) ve Feuerstein, Rand, ve Rynders'ın (1988) Arabuluculu Öğrenme Tecrübesi (AÖT). Bir dil merkezinde her biri 15 öğrenciden oluşan iki tam İngilizce dili sınıfı rastgele seçilmiştir; bir sınıf rastgele deneysel grup olarak ve diğeri ise kontrol grup olarak sayılmıştır. Deneysel grupta çalışmada kullanılan taslaklar doğrultusunda DD-tabanlı uygulama gerçekleştirilirken, kontrol grupta bunun gibi bir uygulama yapılmamış ve dil merkezinin rutin uygulamaları izlenmiştir. Kayıtlar kaydedilmiş ve her dersin sonunda gözden geçirilmiştir. Öğretimden sonra katılımcılar iki tane ardıl sınava (biri uygulamanın hemen sonrasında diğeri iki hafta sonra) girmişlerdir. Veri, çevir yazılardan sonra nitel olarak incelenmiş ve DD ile Düzeltici Dönüt taslaklarının birleşiminin katılımcıların dolaylı anlatım yapılarını öğrenmelerini geliştirmede etkili olduğu sonuçlanmış ve deneysel gruba yönelik uzun vadede bir etki gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: ZPD, Dinamik Değerlendirme, Düzeltici Dönüt, Arabuluculu Öğrenme Tecrübesi (AÖT), Uzun Erimli Bellek

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