





teaching task. Assessment is a well-known term; sometimes, it is not apparent to understand it in the educational process. In its broader sense, assessment is an ongoing process comprising an open area consisting of various techniques, while the test is a subset of assessment. A test is a fruitful tool that teachers can make; however, it is not the only form, but it is one of the tasks teachers make to assess the proficiency level of students (Brown, 2004). The major concerns that assessment can explicitly provide are enhancing and promoting the teaching and learning process, as it highly impacts the learners' future knowledge and performance. In fact, it is expected to help students determine their language proficiency by indicating the level they may achieve.

None of the EFL and ESL curriculum designers can reject the significance of testing and assessing in language teaching and learning. Alderson (2005) focuses on the importance of assessment in learning and teaching by providing adequate recommendations and feedback; thus it services the educational process. Assessment is a grueling section in learning as it brings anxiety to the learners; certainly, this is because the student's academic life depends on the result of the assessment (Mauludin & Ardianti, 2017). Students consider assessment as a criterion to pass or fail, so to this end, students reject assessment when teachers consider it as an instrument to control them to know who can tackle the difficulties. In this way, assessment only focuses on some of the activities which are done in the classroom without paying attention to the real performance of the students. On the other hand, the result of the assessment can be helpful for the teachers and students as well because it is quite obvious that assessment can easily improve the quality of instruction in any educational setting. However, some teachers do not consider assessment as an important part of the process of language learning and teaching. However, it has a huge advantage being the core of the entire educational process as far as learning and teaching are concerned.

Assessment encourages and motivates students to learn the subject matter more effectively and persistently, and by doing so, students become efficiently aware of the course objectives. Assessment has a crucial role in the education process of understanding and developing ongoing learning (Cowie & Bell, 1999). Tosuncuoglu (2018) discusses the importance of assessment in foreign language teaching and learning assessment, where he states that assessment is used for two purposes, to determine how many students have mastered the aim of learning, to identify the difficulty, and which method works better. Secondly, it can be used to decide whether to continue the teaching program or not. It can be clearly seen that assessment is an indispensable tool to check where the education process needs to be reformed, reshaped, or reconsidered. Since the process of assessment takes into consideration all the possible skills learners need in their language performance; writing is one of the elements which other skills rely on. Hence, the development of the three skills enhances writing skills. The writing assessment can be considered as one of the complex tasks which teachers encounter. For a long time, language teachers used to administrate the traditional method of assessment known as a static assessment but later on, a new alternative assessment emerged to serve the educational assessment process known as dynamic assessment.

## **2. Types of assessments**

In language learning and teaching, assessment has become a vital matter in achieving the goals of education, where it is linked with curriculum and instruction. Thus, teachers and students try to

achieve the outcome of the educational process. An assessment that is applied while the learning process takes place is called a process assessment, while the assessment which is carried out after the learning process is finished is called the product assessment. Bachman (1990) classified assessments as summative and formative assessments. Summative assessment is carried out when teaching and learning are done and when students have already received some knowledge. The goal of conducting the summative assessment is to measure how much they have understood from the information that has been delivered to them. It concentrates on product, not process, as it comes at the end of the teaching and learning process to assess the students' outcomes. Summative assessment often has high stakes.

On the other hand, formative assessment is carried out when the learning process has not finished yet. Formative assessment aims at giving feedback to the students during the teaching and learning process, and it provides ongoing instruction. This type of assessment determines the weaknesses and strengths of the learners; this lets the learners find out their weaknesses to tackle the difficulties they have. However, it enables the administration to understand the points which learners struggle with. Unlike summative assessment, this type of assessment is low stakes and sometimes carries no mark; this will discourage the learners to ignore the activity or having unwillingness to complete the task appropriately.

Poehner & Lantolf (2005) argue that the two types of assessment cannot be considered as a criterion to develop learners' ability, as summative assessment concentrates on the learning outcome, regardless of the learning process. Moreover, the formative assessment focuses on the learning process, but the integration of teaching and practice during the teaching and learning process is ignored (Poehner, 2008). Diagnosing the learners' weaknesses so as to be improved with the help of the teachers can be measured during the teaching and learning process; this can contribute to the main objective of formative assessment. To this end, mediation and interaction are needed to be applied during the assessment. In improving the skills of the learners', teaching and assessment which are integrated have a great role; by doing this, the goal of dynamic assessment can be achieved as it tries to bring teaching, mediation, and interaction with assessment (Mauludin, Ardianti, Prasetyo, Sefrina, & Astuti, 2021).

The process of assessment is differentiated based on informal and formal assessment (Nurhayati, Handini & Fikri, 2020). Formal assessment is planned, and systematic techniques are conducted to enable teachers and students to have an evaluation of students' achievements (Brown, 2004). The formal assessment follows standard tools, for example, WISC (intelligence test), PMC, Minosetta Basal Reading test, and others. This type of assessment is usually shown in written documents, written tests, and scorers in the form of numbers (Nurhayati et al. 2020). According to (Brown, 2001), carefully designed techniques of assessment are applied in formal tests, relying on quantification, to distinguish within students or across students. The function of formal assessment is to determine the proficiency level of the subject matter; here, the achieved information is numerically calculated and analyzed. Formal assessment is usually expected to be reliable as it provides consistent outcomes, as sufficient time will be given to students to complete their knowledge; by doing this, it becomes comprehensive because all the topics which are discussed in classes will be covered (McNulty, 2021).

Brown (2004) argues that “all tests are formal assessments, but not all formal assessment is testing” (p. 6). Essays, quizzes, and other tools can be considered formal assessments.

Informal assessment is conducted and developed by teachers, depending on the form of the program, which is related to the learning process in which teachers comment on students’ learning (Nurhayati et al., 2020). It is qualitative in nature, there is no standardized instrument in this type of assessment for evaluation as it is subjective, and no pre-determined criteria can be found for performance evaluation (McNulty, 2021). Informal assessments are set in classroom activities, designed to draw out the performance regardless of recording the results and deciding on evaluating the students’ competence (Brown, 2004). Commenting on essay papers, suggestions for better pronunciation, and strategies for better writing and reading refer to informal assessment. Through the use of these comments and suggestions, teachers will receive quick feedback. To have more insight into how the assessment process goes on and what are the possible assessment alternatives, Vygotsky attempted at modifying administrating assessments so as to make them as useful as possible in the educational process. In fact, he was satisfied that learners with the same actual level of development might have different levels of potential development and ZPDs; consequently, they need different levels of assistance.

### **3. Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory**

The emergence of sociocultural theory can be traced back to Vygotsky’s studies which mainly aimed at establishing basis grounds as a prime framework for the theory of human psychology. In fact, most of his work was directly concerned with human mentality being responsible for the entire and various language processes. This can be attributed to the fact that he had the belief that humans have language as an innate tendency that enables them to communicate with each other as a part of the basic human needs to maintain their life. In addition, Vygotsky states that both language and communication are the main media which humans use while communicating with individuals.

In Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, human development is seen as the result of the reflection of the mutual communicative process among individuals. This implies that children will learn various social and cultural activities by exchanging opinions, perspectives, ideas, and problem-solving strategies, mainly by establishing relationships with other individuals who are more experienced in a society in related matters (McLeod, 2020). According to Walqui (2006), the Vygotsky theory comprised a number of components that are considered central to the significance of the role of social interaction in learning. The most important of which is that learning, which is mostly expected to be attained by mediation, always comes first, then development occurs, and to this end, language is the source of thought. In addition, learning is an internal process which is converted from social interaction into thought.

Vygotsky refuted the notion that learning is best achieved by giving doses of learning at different levels and periods. Instead, his typical way of learning was entirely holistic; any subject must be taught comprehensively and in all its complexity rather than being taught separately. This way would prepare learners for a better performance and development for later stages, which is the core of the entire sociocultural theory. The outcome of this emphasis opened the gate to ZPD, which Vygotsky was heavily interested in.



The zone of proximal development notion was central throughout all the discussions, elaborations, and manifestations of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. It was a notion that was given much emphasis due to its significance in the entire educational development process. In general, Vygotsky (1978) states that the concept of the zone of proximal development is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). According to this notion, he decisively divides the process of development into past and future, relying majorly on the action which a young learner performs. The past development implies that a young learner can act individually, whereas the future development can be explored delicately by the young learner's accomplishment via mediation.

Vygotsky did not favor the IQ test and other measurements related to learners' potentialities. In fact, it can be noticed that Vygotsky (1994) did not favor the IQ test due to its limitation in estimating an individual's capabilities and performances which means that it is an inadequate measurement as it has no reliable basis. This is because of the fact that this kind of test only estimates an individual's zone of actual development (ZPD) that measures what he/she can do 'retrospectively'. At the same time, it never reveals the testees' covert capabilities or ZPD, which approaches such capabilities 'prospectively'.

According to Vygotsky, ZPD is the notion that indicates the level of future capabilities rather than the present ones which a learner already has. This is achieved through the assistance of community members who are expected to be at a higher educational level compared to the one who is trying to achieve a higher level of education.

#### **4. Dynamic assessment**

Dynamic assessment (henceforth, DA) is not considered as a new approach in the psychological and educational area; however, some of the applications of DA have been used for more than half a century (Haywood & Lidz, 2007). According to Dynamic Assessment Website, the history of DA goes back to the early part of the 20th century. This is because Vygotsky had written his works back then, but they remained unnoticed until the 1970s, when they came under light and then fully recognized.

Recently, there has been a major change in the assessment process where educational and psychological testing is influenced by the change from isolated psychological testing to dynamic assessment (Lubbe, 2004). Shrestha (2020, p. 2) defines dynamic assessment as "DA is an assessment approach that blends instruction with assessment." He further lists the assumptions behind DA,

"(1) traditional assessment may not be suitable for all learners, (2) assessment should consider what a learner will be able to do in the future (i.e., their potential to develop) instead of focusing on their past (e.g., actual development), and (3) information from the assessment should be used to design teaching interventions adapting them as needed."

In this regard, the teachers and researchers will not only focus on the present abilities of the students but also on the potential future abilities of the students, thus helping them to achieve that future (Poehner, 2005).

DA is known as the alternative assessment to the traditional assessment. In contrast, the traditional assessment tries to sum up the students learning process for a specific purpose. DA aims at giving immediate feedback to help teachers and learners get an advance in the entire learning process (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). DA has changed the view of thinking about assessment from how the teachers and researchers had understood assessment. Integrating assessment and teaching is the criterion that DA proposes it. They should not be seen as two different activities but should be integrated (Poehner, 2008).

Combining instruction and assessment is rooted in in Vygotsky's theory of development; as such instruction during the assessment elucidates the level of students' understanding and directs them to a higher level in the future. According to (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002) a dynamic procedure provides the information that cannot be provided by other types of assessments. They later discuss the view that the information of the learners and their abilities makes the results of assessment clearer. To this end, DA procedure is vital to teachers and learners because it does not interpret only scores, but also provides understanding into learners' abilities, weakness and the methods which support development (Poehner, 2008).

One of the primary purposes of DA is to focus on the learning process rather than the product. This will enable instructors to view the learners' weaknesses and strengths and prepare plans for future levels. The process of examining the method instead of the outcome is considered the way to understand mental functioning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

According to (Zafarani, & Maftoon, 2016, p. 198), "DA is neither an assessment tool nor a method of teaching but a framework for conceptualizing teaching and assessment as an integrated activity of traditional assessment." DA concentrates on fostering the students' development instead of evaluating their performance at a particular level; thus, the ongoing process is the main purpose behind applying DA in EFL and ESL contexts.

The role of DA is to recognize the difficulties which the learners face and then find ways to tackle such difficulties. Here, the DA plays a great role in identifying the students' weaknesses; this is because of the fact that, the DA pays special attention to the ongoing process. During this procedure, instructors provide beneficial feedback, hints, and prompts, to enhance the student's competence (Haywood & Lidz, 2007).

DA is the alternative to traditional methods of assessment; static assessment (traditional assessment) presents the important information concerned with learners' mental performance, this type of assessment neglects the learning potential, mediation, and ongoing learning process (Tzuriel, 2001). That is why (Poehner, 2008) states a mutual relationship exists between assessment and instruction. Students' collaboration for future performance is another obvious significant facet of DA. Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018) insists that "the assessment of child's ability through a collaborative activity was a better prediction of future cognitive functioning than a measure of independent performance through traditional tests of intelligence" (p. 603). In this aspect, DA is expected to demonstrate the students' constantly changing learning ability by giving them instructions and guidelines. In interactive assessments, the role of the students is more active, and the activities and interventions of the students are designed carefully to produce changes in students'

cognitive functioning, which is achieved through applying DA (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002). Due to the characteristics mentioned earlier of DA, it has become an alternative assessment to the static one.

Although the application of DA in educational psychology can be traced back a long time ago, its application in the field of language and literacy education is new (Shrestha, 2020). To have a more efficient understanding on DA, it is very important to deal with the major models of this type of assessment. So far, different approaches to DA have been introduced; however, it might not be easy to review all the different models of DA. According to Lantolf and Poehner (2004), Poehner (2008), and Shresta (2020), there are two major types of DA, namely, interventionist and interactionist. The way mediation takes place while DA is in the process shows the differences between the two. Intervention, or in other words, mediation, is considered as a large range of assisting by having standardized prompts and hints through interaction (Poehner, 2005). Lidz and Gindis (2003, p. 104) suggest, “it would be important to discriminate between those interactions that promote such development and those that do not, assuming that all interactions are not equal.” Interventionist DA deals with quantifying the level of required support learners need to reach the next level.

The other model of DA is known as the interactionist, where the one-sided method of the teacher-student role is highly ignored and, instead, there is a kind of direct support to the learners by the mediator. In this case, the assessment forms a friendly conversation as the learner can get help in a supportive atmosphere (Poehner, 2005). As such, the distinction between the two is a matter of help; with the interventionist, the role of the mediator is to give prompts, hints, and suggestions as already prepared based on the learners’ weakness, but with the interactionist, the immediate conversation and dialogue between the two is the pivot around which the process of learning revolves. In general, it is possible to state the fact that the application of DA in language teaching is crucial in promoting teacher-learner relations. Thus, the learners’ performance, interaction, and skills would improve, and the teaching-learning goals will be achieved efficiently. Some studies have reported that the application of DA is a precise element in enhancing teaching and learning to serve the entire education process (Mauludin et al., 2021).

## **5. The significance of DA in writing**

Since the current article focuses on the significance of DA in developing the performance of learners’ writing skills, it is necessary to shed light on how this may happen. First of all, DA relies heavily on face-to-face interaction to identify their difficulties and attempt to minimize the difficulty level. In addition, DA would provide immediate support in writing activities such as choosing a proper title to write about and considering the language at all levels, including vocabulary, structure, and even mechanics in order to enhance the level of writing in general and the capabilities of learners in particular.

In fact, DA is a very satisfactory approach to promote the performance of writing through a number of strategies, including rendering the obstacles learners usually face when writing about different topics. It is also beneficial for the teacher to figure out which way is the most appropriate for his /her learners to be applied in the next lecture as the teacher has already diagnosed the learners’ weaknesses. All of this takes place by giving mediations while the writing process is taking place. The ultimate goal of DA in writing is to make learners have better and more efficient performance and to facilitate



the entire writing process since the future understanding of writing would be developed and eased. This is clearly demonstrated by diagnosing the present level of proficiency so as to prepare them for better writing skills in the future. The learners' writing would also be enhanced by using some techniques, namely, scaffolding.

## 6. Related studies

In the language learning and language teaching field, many studies have been conducted to investigate the role of Dynamic assessment in enhancing the learners' writing skills. This is done for the purpose of the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Assessment plays a pivotal role in improving learners' level of language proficiency; besides, it can be administrated to achieve the learning process's goal. However, the traditional or usual assessment is not expected to fortify the students' development, as the main goal is on the results, not the process (Mauludin & Ardianti, 2017). DA here is considered to be an alternative approach in teaching so as to develop the assessment process, and it is expected to help students in raising their language skills. This section is devoted to reviewing some related studies demonstrating the role of DA in improving language skills in general and writing skills in particular.

Mahdavi (2014) investigated the impact of DA on the essay writing ability of Iranian EFL learners using mediated learning experience. In this study, the sample was 60 learners who were all pretested from the beginning. They were divided into two experimental and two control groups and passed 15 sessions. The traditional testing and teaching method was administered to the control groups, while mediation through mediated learning was taught to the two experimental groups. In the end, the experimental and control groups took posttest to investigate the differences in performance and to see the effect of DA on EFL learners' essay writing ability. The researcher revealed that the experimental groups which received the mediation approach were more successful in essay writing and DA developed learners' writing through the mediated learning experience.

Hessamy & Ghaderi (2014) investigated the role of dynamic assessment in vocabulary writing of EFL learners. The sample of the study was 50 learners at the intermediate level. Pretest, mediation, and posttest were administrated. The participants were divided into two groups, the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group which received mediation performed better compared to the control group. Moreover, it revealed that DA has advantageous in the performance of tests and vocabulary learning by the learners.

Mauludin & Ardianti (2017) tested the influence of DA on writing skills. To achieve the aim of the study, two groups (experimental and control) of students participated. DA approach was administrated with the experimental group, whereas the control group was taught traditionally. Pretest and posttest were calculated to show the students' improvement in writing skills. Their study demonstrated that DA strongly promotes the students' writing skills, and intervention in the assessment process helps students relax as they can get instructions when they have a problem during the assessment. Moreover, DA supports teachers in having information about the student's level of writing skills.

Shabani (2018) conducted a study to investigate the role of DA in improving writing skills. In his study, 44 students participated in two groups equally; the experimental group (G-DA) and the control group, and a mixed method were used to collect the data. The experimental group went through 12 weeks, and the participants received prompts, hints, and scaffolding, while the control group received the traditional method. The result of his study showed that the experimental group outperformed the other group.

Rashidi & Bahadori Nejad (2018) investigated the practicality and the effect of dynamic assessment on the performance of Iranian EFL learners. In this study, 17 learners participated in two groups, the experimental group and the control group. Mediation was administered in the experimental group. The result of the study showed that DA positively influenced writing ability, and the experimental group outperformed the control group. In the interview, the learners responded that DA could enhance the EFL writing process.

Mauludin et al. (2021) conducted a study to see the role of DA in improving writing skills in an ESP class. The findings of the study supported the use of DA in improving writing skills as it revealed that DA has a pivotal role in improving students' development in writing skills, such as; grammar and vocabulary. Immediate feedback can be used to tackle the difficulties encountered by the students. Moreover, the participants showed positive feelings towards DA as it minimized the level of anxiety. Sadek (2015) revealed that DA greatly improves the content, language, and organization of writing. Moreover, the students had a bright side of the DA application.

## Conclusion

Assessment is the only way to formally evaluate the educational process based on the learners' course outcomes. It can be considered as the bridge between education and its purposes, where it needs to fill the gaps in education. Though there have been many attempts to promote assessment to enhance the performance of the entire educational process, a new and alternative approach proved to be efficient and successful based on the reviewed studies, namely, dynamic assessment.

The results of the reviewed studies manifested that dynamic assessment is both useful and influential as far as writing skill development is concerned. Through the use of dynamic assessment, there is cooperative and ongoing support by teachers to make the learning environment friendly and effective as the aforementioned studies showed that DA can minimize the level of anxiety, promote the writing skill of learners and prepare them for a better future performance. In addition, DA proved to be a mirror that reflects the precise level of the learners, which teachers can work on to prepare them for the future since it diagnoses the weakness of the learners and what they need to become confident learners through carrying out the immediate interaction between mediators and students. In contrast, this interaction cannot be found in the traditional assessment.

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