Dynamic assessment of pragmatics: The impact of dynamic assessment on EFL Learners’ interlanguage pragmatic development

*S.Vahid Merghati, Saeideh Ahangari

Department of English Language, College of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran.

*Corresponding author email: sv.merghat@yahoo.com

Accepted 30 September, 2014

Abstract

Dynamic assessment as a tool to construct the students’ learning tunnel on their weak points and in a way they need on the bases of observations and tests, has the capacity to push the pragmatic knowledge forward in a visible manner. For this study; forty six students were divided into an experimental and control groups. The video-and-questionnaire task by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) was used as Pre-test for both groups, which looks for a general ability in Pragmatic knowledge in students. The results of it revealed very close results in the two groups when comparing with each other, following their previously taken proficiency test. While the experimental group equipped with Dynamic Assessment treatment on the field of Pragmatics, the control group continued their normal classes on the bases of Translation and Awareness rising with same material. The open ended Multimedia Elicitation Task by Gila A Schauer (2009) with additional emphasis on the one by one student double peer interviews was used as the Post-test to make Pragmatic ability exactly sensible. The results were analyzed twice by two raters and then the correlation has been taken between scores. The results of comparing their post-test scores indicated significant differences between the control and experimental groups on their ability to use language. The results of the study will enable language teachers to equip their students with more powerful ability in making proper language item choices. The instruction is not time consuming and easy to be performed while it will have very effective role in students’ language training.

Keywords: Dynamic Assessment; Interlanguage Pragmatics; Teaching Pragmatics.

INTRODUCTION

More than 80 years ago Russian psychologist L.S. Vygotsky and his colleagues developed the Sociocultural Theory of Mind (Haywood and Lidz, 2007). While Educational researchers, especially in Europe and North America, are paying increasing attention to the potential of SCT to illuminate processes of cognitive development, others are less interested in applying the theory as a research lens for understanding educational practices than they are in rethinking those practices. This latter group of researchers has devised a number of methodologies that aim to understand and promote human cognitive abilities and are known under the general term Dynamic Assessment. Dynamic assessment (henceforth, DA), challenges conventional
views on teaching and assessment by arguing that these should not be seen as separate activities but should instead be fully integrated. It refers to an assessment, by an active teaching process of a learner’s perception, learning, thinking, and problem solving. The process is aimed at modifying an individual’s cognitive functioning and observing subsequent changes in learning and problem-solving patterns within the testing situation.

This study tries to employ the DA on Pragmatic development. The term Pragmatics in its modern use is attributable to the philosopher Charles Morris (1938) and his general shape of a science of signs or Semiotics (Dorfler et al., 2009). The semiotics consisted of three distinct branches which Pragmatics was one of them. According to Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics (2009), it is concerned with meaning in the context of language use.

**Background**

**Dynamic assessment**

Dynamic Assessment (DA), changing the general concept of assessment from being just an information-collecting tool to something supporting teaching process, challenges traditional views on teaching, learning and assessment process’. As Baily (1996); cited in Lantolf and Poehner, (2004) mentioned, “Traditionally assessment is being described as an information-gathering activity” (p.3) which then Poehner (2008) considers assessment and teaching as two fully integrated processes’. The general idea behind DA is that information gained through the assessment process beside giving some statistical information to gain insights into learners’ level of knowledge, can be so welcomed and viewed as an integral component of more effective and successful teaching (Artelt et al., 2009; Caffery et al., 2008; Peher, 2006; Haywood and Lidz, 2005).

The unification of assessment and instruction comes out of development understanding of L.S. Vygotsky. As Poehner, (2007) asserts, This Russian psychologist, in his Sociocultural Theory of Mind (STM) knows development to higher levels of consciousness occurring through a process of initialization whereby these functions initially occur as interaction between human beings but as Archer et al, (2012), supports are then transformed into cognitive abilities with the result that “the social nature of people comes to be their psychological nature as well” (p.45). This means that the individual’s abilities can only be revealed when various forms of support are offered.

**The origin of dynamic assessment**

According to Lidz (2002), For Vygotsky, teaching has the greatest impact on development when learners are mediated into performing beyond their current capabilities (i.e., beyond what they are able to do independently). While DAs differ in the names they carry, they share a common purpose in approaching the assessment of learning potential (Dorfler et al., 2009). Those who Support DA adhere to the concept by Vygotsky (1964) who stressed the importance of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as “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”.

Wertsch (1984) expands the notion of the ZPD. He posits that the ZPD contains three components; situational definition, inter-subjectivity and semiotic mediation. The consideration of all these items allows us to define the ZPD in a more concrete manner. Situational definition is the way in which an individual actively creates his/her understanding of a condition, including the context in which it occurs. For those working within the ZPD this means that two individuals, engaged in problem solving, come to the activity with differing representations of the objects and events. In other words, they have differing conceptualizations of the shared situation. In order to further explicate situational definition Wertsch, (1984) divided it into two parts; object representation and task setting. It is important to note that the representation of the object and the context of the task cannot be separated; both are needed in order to fully define a situation.

Dynamic assessment integrates the concept of the ZPD, i.e. the approach to examine both the performance without assistance and additionally achievement under guidance, within dynamic tests providing the individual with help on diverse interventions as aids, instructions, feedbacks, or prompts.

**Approaches to dynamic assessment**

There are two primary approaches to DA, Interactionist and Interventionist. According to Poehner and Lantolf (2004) in the interventionist DA, assistance emerges from the interaction between the examiner and the learner, and then it is fairly sensitive to the learner’s ZPD. Poehner (2008) sees the defining characteristic of interventionist approaches to DA as that the mediation offered to learners is standardized. He further more explains mediators are not free to respond and make plans to learners’ needs at the moment as these become apparent during the procedure “but must instead follow a highly scripted approach to mediation in which all prompts, hints, and leading questions have been arranged in a hierarchical manner, from implicit to explicit, and usually assigned a numerical value” (p.44).
The Interventionist DA, using standardized administration procedures and forms of assistance produces easily quantifiable results to be compared between and within groups. Generally Interventionist DA stays on certain forms of static assessment and their concerns over a psychometric properties which can later be contrasted with other measurements and used to make predictions about performance on future tests (Brown and Ferrara, 1985; Litz 2007; Litz and Heywood 2000; Litz 2007; Poehner 2008). As it is cited in Poehner and Lattolff (2004) two formats exist within interventionist DA, referred to by Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) as the ‘sandwich’ and the ‘cake’ approaches. 

The ‘sandwich’ approach which is pioneered in large part by Milton Budoff and primarily relies on a pretest-intervention/training-posttest format administered in either an individual or group setting, and reminiscent of traditional experimental research designs (Lantolf and Poehner, 2004). In the cake format, during the administration of the assessment itself, the examinee is provided with a mediation based on a standardized menu of hints ranging from implicit to explicit. Thus, the ‘cake’ metaphor alludes to the layering of test items and hints in such a way that a menu of hints can be accessed, as required, for each question or problem before moving on to the next item on the test (Pehner and Lantolf, 2004).

According to Minick (1987), unlike in interventionist orientations to DA, interactionist approaches follow Vygotsky’s preference for ‘qualitative assessment of psychological processes and dynamics of their development” (P: 119). Interactionist DA is a language pedagogical approach that dialectically integrates assessment and instruction to co-construct a future between the learner and the mediator. As Schmidt and Oracasa (2010) wrote, Interactionist DA, based on a qualitative interpretation of Vygotsky’s ZPD, focuses on helping learners perform optimally, which they cannot do independently, and develop to the next level through assistance and interactions with the mediator. It follows Vygotsky’s opinion for cooperative dialoging and is interested in qualitative assessment of a learners learning potential.

Mediation in dynamic assessment

Mediation is directed at the learner aiming an assistance to make sense of their environments which, if being ignored, can lead to severe backlogs in emotional and intellectual development (Klein, 1992). Here it is immediately apparent that its social aspect plays a very important role in DA, ranging from clinical interventions to the more standardized approaches. As Murphy (2011) asserts, Mediation need not only be social; it can also take the form of symbolic agent which, according to Vygotskian thinking, is revealed to the child through symbols via cultural transmission, which is easier to learn, towards higher cognitive functioning symbols, which are more abstract (Kozulin, 2002).

Issues in dynamic assessment

The most often cited criticisms directed at dynamic assessment relate to the large amounts of time required to train assessors, to administer the assessment as well as the costs involved in doing so. As dynamic assessment procedures include materials that involve broad classes of skills, the efficient use and interpretation of tests requires detailed training and highly experienced assessors (Green, 1996; Jitendra and Kameenui, 1993; Haywood and Litz, 2007). In addition, Litz (1992) found that very few university lecturers in the field of school psychology were teaching their students about dynamic assessment. Reasons for this were that lecturers seemed to feel insecure about their knowledge base and level of skill development in dynamic assessment. Some also had serious concerns about the technical adequacy of the model. Litz (1992) state that until this is remediated, lecturers are unlikely to prepare their students in dynamic assessment. According to her (1992), there seems to be a stalemate situation. More research in dynamic assessment is needed, but there are currently very few lecturers/trainers that know enough about the models and procedures to conduct or stimulate this research.

Pragmatics

According to Kempson (cited in Arnoff and Rees-Miller, 2001) “The starting point of studies in pragmatics is the mismatch, often a big one, between that words meaning” which is encoded in rules and structures of the language, and “what speaker mean by using them which may be much richer” (P. 396). As Schauer (2009) states, “linguistic pragmatics which has its early seeds in language philosophy has developed fallowing the concern of the functions and use of language by philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953: in Bach, 2004), Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1975, 1976) and Grice (1968, 1975)” (P.86). Yule (2000) knows Pragmatics as the study of speaker meaning, study of contextual meaning, study of how more gets communicated than is said and study of the expression of relative distance.

Learning pragmatics: study abroad context

Ishihara and Cohen (2010) stated that “we may wonder if learners, especially those who are living in the L2 community are able to get the advantage of their exposure to authentic language” (P.76). Even without a particular instruction in pragmatics in the classroom, they might eventually improve their pragmatic ability.
During the 1990s, studies of second language socialization began to appear (Ochs, 1996). DuFon (2008) writes: Because Language socialization theory focuses on interaction with competent native speakers, most of these have investigated language acquisition in second language contexts at “home” (Schechter and Bayley, 1997), school (Duff, 2002; Poole, 1992; Willett, 1995) or both (Crago, 1992; Findlay, 1995; Pease-Alvarez and Vasquez, 1994; Watson-Gegeo, 1992)” (P.11). Language Socialization Theory (LST) is particularly useful to the study of Inter Language Pragmatics because it focuses on language use in social interaction or the pragmatic aspects of linguistic behavior.

Ishihara and Cohen (2010) stated that “we may wonder if learners, especially those who are living in the L2 community are able to get the advantage of their exposure to authentic language” (P.76). Even without a particular instruction in pragmatics in the classroom, they might eventually improve their pragmatic ability. Khorshidi (2013) on the other hand asserts on study abroad context that Study abroad is a program mixed of formal classes (the same as study at home) and native context. He further more explains, “Simply “being there” is not enough for a fruitful attainment. Schauer (2009) investigated pragmatic development on the bases of non-request studies examining learners’ productive pragmatic development in the study abroad context. She suggests in her study that changes in L2 learners’ pragmatic behavior can occur relatively early and in a relatively short period of time (e.g. Hassall, 2006).

Although theoretical frameworks for cognitive processing certainly help us explain student learning in the L2 pragmatics classroom, it has been pointed out that the learning of pragmatics should not be seen merely in terms of cognitive processing since it most definitely involves the socio-affective domain as well, Schmidt (1993). Turning to the interdisciplinary understanding of these social, cultural, psychological, and affective aspects in relation to the learning of L2 pragmatics, it may seem that success at L2 pragmatics would mean adhering fully to the local norms (Ishihara, 2008).

**Pragmatic Instruction**

This part takes a brief look at theoretical underpinnings for L2 pragmatics instruction. Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) have offered theoretical frameworks to facilitate our understanding of how language learning works. As a first step the Noticing Hypothesis is being presented among output hypothesis, the interaction hypothesis and sociocultural theory. These frameworks help us justify the awareness-raising approach currently being promoted in L2 pragmatics instruction.

The noticing hypothesis in second language acquisition has been extended to its sub-discipline, the realm of L2 pragmatics learning (Schmidt 2001). According to this framework, attention and awareness can be viewed as two sides in a unit. According to Ishihara (2010). Attention is seen as a variety of mechanisms or subsystems that control access to awareness. Schmidt (2001) also knows the attention as limited and selective in nature, managing access to consciousness and leading to the control of action and learning. According to this framework, pragmatic information must be consciously attended for the learning of pragmatics to take place. When pragmatic information is noticed, whether attended to deliberately or inadvertently, the input has the potential to become intake and may be stored in long-term memory. (Kasper and Roze, 1996). As Bardovi-Harlig (1996); Soler and Martinez-flor, 2008) mentions „endeavoring to bridge the gap between pragmatic research and pedagogy, stresses the importance of helping learners increase their pragmatic awareness, rather than perpetuating the model of a teacher-centered classroom where the teachers ‘tell’ and the learners ‘receive’ information.

What is not clear in the foreign account of research into interlanguage pragmatics is the extent to which the development of pragmatic knowledge is distinct from or related to the acquisition of linguistic knowledge (Ellis 2008). Even if learners understand how contextual factors are typically evaluated and how speakers’ intent is expressed in L2 forms, we cannot simply assume that learners are able to produce these forms themselves in interaction.

Having its origins in social psychology, Accommodation Theory can be useful in explaining speakers’ linguistic variability in social contexts. The speech accommodation theory takes both cognitive and affective variables into account in explicating learners’ linguistic behavior in relation to their identity. Ishihara (2008) in Ishihara and Cohen (2008) explains the theory as follows:

> This framework maintains that learners’ social characteristics (e.g., objectively defined social categories such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status) alone would not determine their speech behavior. Rather, learners’ “own subjective attitudes, perceptions of situations, cognitive and affective dispositions, and the like may interact to determine their speech outputs.” Learners’ attitude, motivations, feelings, values, and perceptions (i.e., their subjectivity) influence their social and psychological distance from the target community. As a result, learners’ language converges with or diverges from the target. Simply put, when learners are in favor of the target culture or individual members of that culture, they are more likely to take on linguistic features of target-language speakers or characteristics of the language, (P.109).

Recently reintroducing the cross-cultural practice of translation to increase language learners’ pragmatic competence, the translation has started to be used as a framework to improve pragmatic competence. According...
Assessing pragmatics

Pragmatic ability is challenging to measure. Pragmatics has an important role in proper use of language, so its position by being sure to include its assessment in both short quizzes and longer tests could be under score. Learners tend to pay extra attention to what they are going to be tested on. Earlier research on interlanguage pragmatics has mainly relied on SLA theoretical constructs. As a result, there has been more interest in measurable learning outcomes than in interaction and its relationship to learning (Nikula, 2010); Cohen (2010) talking specifically on Pragmatic assessment introduces a need to provide students with adequate context since an appropriate answer is likely to be dependent on the situation and on what basis are scores assigned to performance. Depending on the situation, even highly competent speakers of the given language may vary enough in their responses so that it is not clear what an acceptable or unacceptable answer would be consequently, keeping the test practical in administration and scoring may not be easy.

When developing and evaluating a test of interlanguage pragmatics, the consideration of the validity, or measuring what it is intended to measure is important. According to Backman and Palmer, (1996), it is needed to determine the extent to which the test task corresponds to tasks in the Target Language Use domain or 'authenticity'. Cohen (in Ishihara and Cohen, 2010), adapting to Rover (2005); Garcia (2004) (in Cohen, 2010) adds that: an approach such as including implicature and/or routines besides speech acts is needed in an interlanguage pragmatics test.

Misunderstandings as another important facet in pragmatic tests are a central issue in cross-cultural or interlanguage pragmatics, which occur both between native speakers’, and a native speaker with a learner. According to Cohen (2010); Yamashita (2008), for a test developer it might be helpful if there was a database or corpus of pragmatic misunderstanding or pragmatic transfer samples of learners from different cultural backgrounds. A prime concern in Cohen (2010), if you are teacher readers, is that your students understand the situations in which pragmatic performance is being assessed." It may be appropriate, for example, to describe the situation in your students’ L1 or dominant language, in order to make sure that they fully understand the contextual factors involved, especially if they are in a foreign- rather than a second-language context." (Ishihara and Cohen 2010).

Research Question

The present study formulated on the hypothesis that DA can push the pragmatic instruction in a very positive manner. The results will enable language teachers to equip their students with more powerful ability in making proper language item choices and interpretations. So the research question concerns:

Does DA affect pragmatic development of EFL learners?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

For the main study, forty nine EFL learners at the intermediate level of second language learners were selected as the participants. Twenty six students in two separate classes took part as control group while twenty three in other two classes which had no pragmatic intervention were chosen as experimental group.

All the participants were in nearly the same age range of 16 – 19 years old who were in the intermediate level of language proficiency. The intervention has been conducted in four classes. For each group there were two classes one for males and another for females. For both control and experimental groups completely similar educational context was provided.

Thirty eight learners who participated in this study were native speakers of Turkish language, a thirteen number were Farsi and eight were Kurdish native speakers. All of the explanations and interviews were done in the participants’ native language in order to prevent any misunderstanding about the videos and other multimedia tasks.

Instruments

Pre-test: Video-and-questionnaire task

The video-and-questionnaire task with which the data concerning the participants’ pragmatic and grammatical ability was elicited, had been developed by Bardovi-
Harlig and Dörnyei (1998). The video contains 20 scenarios including interactions in a form that participants were familiar with and experienced on a regular basis in an educational context. The researcher further modified Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) questionnaire by orally translating the assessment section of the individual scenarios into Farsi (native language of learners), thereby following the original methodology for learner questionnaires (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s, 1998) as they had also provided their Hungarian participants with questionnaires in their native language.

The post hoc oral interview constituted an important addition to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) research methodology as it enabled the researcher to find out whether the participants had actually recognized the ‘correct’ error type in the scenarios. Conducting one-to-one interviews with the participants after they had watched each episode of the video and acted the scenarios on the questionnaire provided the researcher with the opportunity to hear what exactly they had recognized to be the problem in the scenarios that they had scored as inappropriate/incorrect. In order to make the conversations as non-threatening as possible, the scenarios were discussed in the order of the questionnaire and the researcher’s input as interviewer was as limited as possible so as not to restrict or influence the participants.

Since the interview had not been part of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) original data collection design, primary to anything being happened on the study, the questionnaires as data collection instrument were piloted.

Post-test: The multimedia elicitation task

Data for the investigation into the learners’ productive pragmatic ability at the post test level were collected with the Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET) which had been specifically developed for the interlanguage development measure by Gila. Schauer (2009). The MET is a 16-scenario multimedia instrument focusing on requests. Thus, it is designed to provide equal conditions for every participant, while at the same time it provides rich audiovisual contextual information. A further feature of the MET, according to Schauer (2009) is that it elicits oral rather than written data, which, as (Rintell and Mitchell, 1989; Yuan, 2001 cited in Schauer, 2009), stated “display more features of naturally occurring talk than written production questionnaires” (P.179).

The focus was on request utterances for the present investigation since they are frequently performed crosslinguistically different and can be outcome of different strategies and involve the selection of appropriate/polite forms and are thus of considerable significance for the language learner.

Due to the facilities available in Iranian educational context, some changes were made on the MET. Instead of the computerized audio and visual contextual information on each slide the researcher has provided the participants with an introductory slides beside visual contextual information which were included in the MET. As Harada (1996); Schauer (2009) state, it was important to allow the participants ‘to think about what they were going to say before the performance. Since the audio information in with native speakers led the participants into the hurry and stress, it was omitted. Then the student got provided with a full explanation on the context and scenario while looking at pictures from it. This helped the participant to make a full imagination on the context.

Procedure

By previously analyzing the course book, the researcher had pointed out the relevance of lesson topics to some pragmatic topics like presuppositions. Then he had made some material related to that pragmatic topic and devoted it to that special unit to be talked about in the classroom session. Misunderstandings caused by language user’s low proficiency on Pragmatic usually cause humor outcomes. These pragmatic misunderstandings usually are out in the form of jocks as Ghanbari (2011) has collected lots of these jocks on the base of pragmatic misunderstandings in English. Beside his more than 300 jocks, there are comedy short video’s available in corpus linguistics which have been used as the material.

Each session lasted for 1:45 hours in which first 30 minutes was devoted to review the previous session’s material. The next one hour was devoted to their new lesson. Each lesson contained communications and readings which were all authentic. Pragmatic issues inside each unit were paid attention in detail using prepared audio-text jokes and explanations on the bases of awareness rising and translation.

On the other hand in the experimental group of study, the same material was being paid attention following DA format. The DA training session followed a workshop format. That is to say the participants were equipped with both the theoretical and practical underpinnings of Pragmatic notion through DA. There were four distinct pieces to the DA workshop: pre-training mediation, classroom-based DA training, post-training mediation and reflection on post-training mediation.

Related to the material of the lesson in their text book or tasks, the researcher previously had selected a pragmatic topic. First of all he had a general recall on the point in their lesson of the day which was related to a pragmatic topic. Then a weak brain storm was done on the topic. After their minds got ready on the field they started looking at the selected video or the selected audio jock. The brainstorm was full of fun as usual and they had smiley faces before starting the main task. Not only the task itself made lots of fun in the classroom but also the humor made them have their full attention on it. After they
Table 1. Correlation of two raters’ scores on the pre-test and pos-test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>pretest first rater</th>
<th>pretest second rater</th>
<th>Post-test first rater</th>
<th>Post-test second rater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pretest first rater Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.994**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.999**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretest second rater Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.994**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.999**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the post-test scores of two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>control (2)</th>
<th>experimental (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>81.73</td>
<td>54.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>8.35147</td>
<td>8.86504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>1.74140</td>
<td>1.84849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Independent t-test for the comparison of two groups’ post-test mean scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>10.546</td>
<td>43.844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

listened or watched a misunderstanding based jock, they were silent for few minutes to think. Then they were asked to find a problem on the material. The questions guided them to the discussion and questions were continued until they could find the mistake and produce the correct form themselves. Then they moved on to the next task. Usually they had three to two tasks. Then we had some short role plays which fix the needed pragmatic ability. Accordingly, while the participants had the context details in their minds, they came across with individual task. They were asked to make a proper request in the fixed context.

By the end of the semester, the two groups had been equipped with the enough knowledge on the proper language use in different contexts. So they had their post-test on the pragmatic knowledge. The answers they had on the post-test had only two outcomes, whether their answer was correct or wrong. As explained in the instruments part the post test was a general and non-detailed focused one so all the participants took the post-test together.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Considering pragmatic tests potential on misguiding the rater and the addition of one by one interviews on the test items, two raters rated the results of the pre and post-test and an inter-rater reliability was conducted between the two sets of scores. Table 1 shows the results of Pearson correlation between two raters’ scores on the pre-test and pos-test results:

The homogeneous results of the two sets of scores in the pre and post-tests revealed that they are reliable. The participants when taking the pre-test had no instruction on the pragmatic knowledge and were all selected on the bases of their proficiency test, following what was being expected, the pre-test results with a mean score of 50.13 in the experimental group, and 52.05 in the control group were about the same.

Then in order to compare two groups’ development in the pragmatic knowledge after the treatment, the researcher ran descriptive statistics and an independent t-test on the post-test mean scores of two groups. The results are shown in the following tables.

As it is indicated in table 2, the mean score of the control group in the post-test was 54.95, while the mean score of the experimental group was 81.73. There is a difference between the post-test mean score of the two groups, but in order to check whether this difference is statistically meaningful or not, the researcher ran an independent t-test on the post-test mean scores of two groups, the results of which are displayed in the following table.

As it is clear form table 3, the difference between the post-test scores of experimental and control groups is...
significantly meaningful ($t (44) = 10.54, p = .000$). It means that the participants of the experimental group who had gone under the treatment of dynamic assessment outperformed the control group.

**DISCUSSION**

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of Dynamic Assessment instruction on teaching pragmatics to see the effect of Dynamic Assessment on EFL earners' Interlanguage Pragmatic Development. The Dynamic assessment and also Teaching of Pragmatics both are newly developed fields of research and more likely the present study might bear the advantage of being the very first study in an Iranian context holding the potential of introducing a new practical way to teach pragmatics. The analyzed data out of 46 students in two experimental and control groups revealed that dynamic assessment as a tool to build the students learning road in the way they need on the bases of observations and tests affects the participants' pragmatic development in a very significant manner. As it has been mentioned above, the investigation of Pragmatic instruction on the bases of Dynamic Assessment has not been investigated by the researchers a lot, but there are lots of studies on Pragmatic instruction or Dynamic Assessment individually which related each one to language skills or other concepts in second language learning field.

The findings of the present study are to some extent in line with findings of Schauer (2009), who has investigated interlanguage pragmatic Development in English. Her study as the first book-length study of a common occurrence worldwide, investigated the development of interlanguage pragmatics of German learners of English at a British university over a course of one year. The focus was not only on learners’ pragmatic development but also on their pragmatic awareness which is compared with their grammar awareness. The Development of Pragmatic Production also has been investigated in three phases as Request Strategies, Internal request modification and finally external request modification.

On the field of Teaching Pragmatics which itself is a recently developed fields of investigation in Pragmatics, Cohen (2010) has introduced strategies for learning and teaching pragmatics. He has also presented approaches to assess pragmatic ability of learners. Even though his teaching pragmatics strategies were different from the strategies used in the present study, his findings supported the findings of the present study claiming that pragmatic knowledge can be taught and developed.

Ishihara (2010) also has presented theories of teaching and learning pragmatics. Ishihara also had studies investigating practical pragmatic instruction in the classroom on the base of observations and teaching demonstrations as adapting text books for teaching pragmatics, lesson planning for pragmatic instruction or even curriculum writing for L2 pragmatics with the findings which are in same alignment with the present study. House (2008), has investigated using Translation to improve pragmatic competence of L2 students. House, introducing translation as an easy option for grammatical and vocabulary practice beside its testing of higher education at least in Germany, knows it as a tool which had been misused instead of being as a device to improve L2 learners linguistic knowledge. Then she has suggested several alternative, pragmatic uses of translation to exploit the potential usefulness of translation for promoting learners pragmatic competence. What she had found has supported pragmatic development under the umbrella of its instruction which was in line with the purpose of the present study. However, the findings of the present study are in contrast with what Sachiko Kondo (2008) has found. Kondo (2008, cited in Solar and Martinez-flor (2008) states that merely teaching formulaic phrases by rote or forcing learners to conform to ‘target norm’ is not likely to enhance pragmatic ability.

Dynamic Assessment, as a newly developed tool in teaching second language has attracted applied linguistics researchers linking it to different language skills and even more to learners’ vocabulary or grammar learning. For example, Khanahmadi (2011) applying dynamic assessment on L2 grammar assessed the viability of dynamic assessment used as an instructional adjunct in the development of Iranian learners’ grammar. Hoseyn (2013) also using dynamic assessment as a tool to teach vocabulary to his students has boosted their learning speed and development. So the above mentioned research projects support the positive effect of dynamic assessment on the improvement of language elements which is in same sides by the present study.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of Dynamic Assessment instruction on teaching pragmatics to see the effect of Dynamic Assessment on EFL earners’ Interlanguage Pragmatic Development. The analyzed data out of 46 students in two experimental and control groups revealed that dynamic assessment as a tool to build the students’ learning road to the pragmatic development affects the participants’ pragmatic development in a very significant manner.

The investigation of Pragmatic instruction on the bases of Dynamic Assessment has not been investigated by the researchers a lot, but there are lots of studies on Pragmatic instruction or Dynamic Assessment individually which related each one to language skills or
other concepts in second language learning field. The most important contribution of this study is that it draws the language teachers’ attention on proper and effective language use of their students in a more practical way and also guides the students through a way which at its end they can reach to self efficiency and accuracy in their second language use in a more proper manner.

The present study will help the teachers to equip their students with the ability to produce proper language outputs in accordance with the context also guides the researchers in the field of Pragmatics and Dynamic Assessment to be involved in a more communicative and practical approaches to study rather than theoretical and statistical ones.

REFERENCES


