The Effect of Dynamic Assessment on Essay Writing Ability of Iranian EFL Learners:
A Gender Related Study

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ABSTRACT

The current study investigates the effect of a type of dynamic assessment, Mediated Learning Experience, on the essay writing ability of different genders of Iranian EFL learners. In order to accomplish the goal of this study, 60 pre-intermediate male and female Iranian language learners were selected out of 100 students based on their performance on the standard test of OPT (Oxford Placement Test). They were randomly assigned into two control groups, one male and one female, and two experimental groups, one male and one female in a way that each one consisted of 15 learners. The groups were pre-tested at the beginning and then each passed different treatment periods in 10 sessions. The experimental groups were trained with mediation through mediated learning experience and the control groups were taught in the traditional way of teaching and testing. Finally, all the groups participated in a post-test and a One-Way ANCOVA was used for analyzing the scores obtained from the pre-tests and post-tests in all control and experimental groups. A t-test was also used for comparing the results in the post-tests of the groups and it was revealed that the two experimental groups that experienced the mediation approach, were more successful compared with the other two control groups who were taught traditionally. The findings of this study suggest that dynamic assessment through mediated learning experience, not only promotes the writing ability of the learners, but it is also gender related. Pedagogical implications for teachers and students who are in relation with essay writing teaching and learning are proposed.

Keywords: Dynamic assessment, mediated learning experience, zone of proximal development, graduated prompt.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma dinamik bir değerlendirme türü olan Aracılı Öğrenme Deneyimi'nin EFL öğrencilerinin kompozisyon yazma yeteneğine olan etkisini, ayni zamanda bu etkinin farklı cinsiyetlerdeki yansımalarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın hedefine ulaşması için OPT (Oxford Placement Test)'e katılan İran'lı 100 öğrenci arasından İngilizce dil seviyesi orta-alt olan 60 kız ve erkek öğrenci seçilmiştir. Bu öğrenciler rastgele yapılan bir gruplama ile herbiri onbeş öğrenciden oluşan iki kontrol gurubu ve iki deney gurubuna bölünmüştür. Grupların hepsi de ilk başta ön-test ve ardından da on bölümlük (özel) derslere tabi tutuldular. Deney gruplarına azami öğrenme gelişimlerini artırmak için Aracılı Öğrenme Deneyim merkezli dersler, kontrol gruplarına ise geleneksel tarzda dersler verildi. Son aşamada ise tüm öğrenciler ön-test benzeri bir final-teste tabi tutuldular. Tüm grupların almış oldukları ön ve final test sonuçlarının analizi için tek yönlü ANKOVA tekniği kullanılmıştır. Ardından, final-testlerini alan tüm grupların sonuçlarını karşılaştırmak için bir de t-test tekniği kullanılmış ve Aracılı Öğrenme Deneyimi oturumlarını alan deney gruplarının (kontrol gruplarına kıyasla) daha başarılı oldukları saptanmıştır. Dolayısıyle, bu çalışmanın bulguları dinamik bir değerlendirme türü olan Aracılı Öğrenme Deneyimi'nin öğrencilerin yalnızca yazma kabiliyetlerinin geliştiğini göstermekle kalmayıp, ayni zamanda cinsiyetler arasında farklılıklar olduğunu da göstermiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dinamik değerlendirme, aracılı öğrenme deneyimi, geleneksel öğretme yöntemi, azami öğrenme gelişimi, ilerlemeci teşvikler.

To My Beloved Mother

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

As one of the most imperative skills among the four skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking, usually writing is the last skill that we learn. The reason can be rooted in the difficulty of writing. Emmons (2003) mentioned that writing is definitely a "hard work". Parker (1993) supported this view and stated that writing is torment for the students. This problem can be solved by applying new approaches and methods in teaching and assessing writing. These days the teachers are encouraged to apply a different way of teaching and assessing writing instead of the traditional approaches. Unlike the traditional approaches of teaching and assessing writing, the only purpose of the new approach is not just evaluating the existing knowledge of writing.

EFL writing is a complicated social activity comprising many abilities, such as choosing suitable topics according to certain audience, generating logical and clear ideas, structuring rich and proper content, demonstrating accurate language expressions, etc., and achieved by independent thinking skills, such as classifying, evaluating, synthesizing, etc. (Xiaoxiao and Yan, 2010). Writing is a significant skill and having enough knowledge about teaching approaches of writing for the teachers is of high importance.

The reason behind the significance of writing is that for example, in order to study in higher education, academic knowledge is needed and this knowledge is presented in the form of written text. Students should be capable of interpreting the passages and completing the written assignments related to them. Since this can be so thought-provoking for the students, they need to know about the practices special for each task and apply them.

There are some specific strategies that students require while writing. For example, declarative knowledge helps the learners to have the ability to plan, draft, edit and revise in writing. In addition, students need to have some information about the proper use of writing strategies and this knowledge is called procedural knowledge (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). In other words, the procedural knowledge is the conscious knowledge needed for doing an activity. On the other hand, conditional knowledge is also used when there may be the need for adjusting the strategy into another framework.

A lot of factors are helpful in being a good writer. In the first place, there should be a complete control over the topic. That is the writer should have some information about the topic. Moreover, the objectives that the writing task is following are essential. By considering the points that the assignment is asking for, the writers can perform better on their writings. In order to presenting a more effective task, clever writers try to use their knowledge of strategies.

Self-regulated writers have and use the knowledge of strategies for accomplishing learning tasks effectively and the metacognitive knowledge of their own learning which enables them to select, employ, monitor, and evaluate strategy use (Brown,

Campione and Day, 1981). Thus, metacognitive knowledge which helps the writers in informing them about the strategies that they can use in monitoring their task plays an important role. For example, in this way they can collect and organize the information that they need.

Second and foreign language programs have been described by standardized testing for being the most reliable procedure in finding the language abilities of the learners. However, this kind of testing was questioned by Vygotsky (1978) for its underestimation of the abilities of the learners and not considering their developmental differences. As a result, Dynamic Assessment (DA) was suggested by Vygotsky aimed at modifying cognitive functioning. DA is a coordinated approach to both instruction and assessment and makes use of interaction between teacher and learner. In DA, learner abilities are transformed through dialogic collaboration between the learner and the assessor/tutor (Poehner, 2007).

In this way, assistance is provided to the students where there is the need for support. This approach evaluates the writing ability of the students and helps them improve their writing simultaneously. Dynamic Assessment is an "approach to understanding individual differences and their implications for instruction that embeds intervention within the assessment procedure" (Lidz and Gindis, 2003). The main focus of this study is considering the relationship between instruction and assessment.

1.2 Theoretical Basis of Dynamic Assessment

Dynamic assessment which has its origin in the theories of Vygotsky (1989) is a kind of assessment that provides the learners with mediation according to their needs. As Lidz and Gindis (2003) put it, dynamic assessment is an approach for finding the

differences between the learners and their implications in the process of instruction in order to connect the intervention to the assessment. In other words, it helps the learners to find the strategies by the help of their own capabilities. The advocates of the dynamic assessment are on the belief that during the assessment, the dynamic assessment offers mediation and assistance and by doing so, finds significant information about the capabilities of the students. Lantolf and Poehner, (2004) believe that dynamic assessment finds its purpose in changing the performance of the students during the process of assessment.

Dynamic assessment can be better explained when it is compared with the Static assessment. In static assessment which is the traditional way of assessment, the focus of attention is on the results of teaching and learning while this focus in dynamic assessment is on the process of learning. Static assessment forbids providing any mediation or helps during the assessment and relies only on the abilities of the learners without any intervention. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) explain this way of assessment as an approach in which the items are provided to the learners as a whole and all at once and the learners are not allowed to receive any feedback and the only feedback at the end of the exam will be a score.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the Sociocultural Theory of Mind (SCT) are two notions that constitute the theoretical basis of dynamic assessment. These two concepts will be explained in detail in chapter two, however, a short explanation will be offered here. ZPD is simply the space between the learners' independent abilities and their abilities by the help of a mediator (Vygotsky, 1978). SCT, on the other hand, claims that mental functioning of the people is a mediated process organized by activities, concepts, and cultural artifacts (Ratner, 2002).

There are many models of dynamic assessments. For example, interactionist, interventionist, Budoff's learning potential measurement approach, Guthke's Lerntest approach and mediated learning experience. As of the important types of dynamic assessment, Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) was developed by Reuven Feuerstein and the colleagues (Feuerstein, Rand, and Hoffman, 1979) and it is similar to the Vygotsky's work. The basic belief of this approach is that the cognitive abilities of the people are changeable and this is the exact explanation of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM) presented by Feuerstein (Feuerstein et al., 1988). MLE is the interaction between the learner and the teacher that ends in the cognitive development of the learner.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

Writing is a complicated skill and there are so many different reasons for this claim. The main reason is the perceptions that are developed by the reader because different people have different understandings about what they read. As a result, the writer's task is very complex and difficult. Various factors related to the writing process such as social context arrangements are needed to be considered by the writer because these are different in various societies. Therefore, the writers are at the center of the attention and should figure out all the elements of feedback from the side of the readers, the text itself, the discourse, and the reality altogether.

In order to progress in this process, writers must adopt, develop, and use various strategies. They should go through the stages of planning, drafting, and revising. Considering the importance of the writing task makes the promotion of this ability indispensable. From among the approaches applied in developing the writing ability

of the learners, dynamic assessment suggests a new way of assessing and promoting which blends instruction and assessment.

DA is more suitable for process writing because in DA the teacher acts as a promoter and provides immediate and situated feedback during the whole procedure; Moreover, the focus of DA is students' future development, not the outcome of the past development (Xiaoxiao, and Yan, 2010). This approach provides opportunities for the learners to perform better by receiving support through intervention. In this way their zone of proximal development can be determined by measuring their performance before and after the assistance. The broader the zone of proximal development, the more benefit is received from intervention.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the new point of view in instruction and assessment and the effectiveness of one kind of dynamic assessment (MLE) on essay writing ability of EFL learners learning English as a foreign language. A dynamic assessment approach with mediation through a mediated learning experience will be used. The main research questions of this study are:

- What is the impact of dynamic assessment on EFL learners' essay writing ability?
- Is dynamic assessment with specific reference to writing ability gender related?

1.4 Significance of the Study

In order to have a broader view about the DA and its effect on writing ability, the way that assessment and instruction are related to each other should be conceptualized at the first place. The central issue in this study is considering the

relationship between assessment and instruction. This association can be viewed from two points of view like connecting them (instruction and assessment) and integrating them. By connecting instruction to assessment:

- The procedures emerge from a grounded analysis of instructional interactions and pedagogical practices in the classroom.
- Pedagogical goals are established and then parallel instruction and assessment activities are devised (Poehner, 2008).

It is obvious that first of all, the impact of testing and teaching on each other should be considered. The effect of testing on teaching is referred to as wash-back effect and is applied usually in situations with high-stake testing where the goal is obtaining high test score. In this kind of tests, the scores indicate the way that the students have been trained and learnt how to solve the problem in a short time; However their ability or knowledge is neglected.

The significance of this study is considering the effect of teaching and assessing on each other and specifying the role of mediation in this relationship. Fredricksen and Collins (1989) argue that the impact of a test could be good or bad by suggesting that a test has high systematic validity if it promotes favorable instructional practices and low systematic validity to the extent that it inhibits learning. By accepting this view, it can be noticed that the society unconsciously is leading the tests in the way of instructional practice. Therefore, considering that the assessment and instruction are separate activities and have different goals and methods, it can be said that they have an opposite relationship.

While wash-back studies investigate the impact of assessment on instruction, the reverse relationship is also possible. This effect can have a leading role to instruction

because the assessment approaches are not imposed upon the institutes and the teachers giving the opportunity of identifying and choosing the assessment approaches to them.

Assessment and instruction can be integrated, too. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) believe that dynamic assessment represents a paradigm shift toward a new philosophy of assessment that refocuses assessment on helping individuals develop through intervention. They stated that in the traditional assessment, the examiner presents items, either one at a time or all at once, and each examinee is asked to respond to these items successively, without feedback or intervention of any kind. At some point in time after the administration of the test is over, each examinee typically receives the only feedback he or she will get: a report on a score or set of scores. By that time the examinee is studying for one or more future tests.

Integration of assessment and instruction makes the intervention possible. Accordingly, as Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) put it, dynamic assessment takes into account the results of an intervention. In this intervention the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the test as a whole. The final score maybe a learning score representing the difference between pre-test (before learning) and post-test (after learning) scores, or it may be the score on the post-test considered alone.

The total integration of assessment and instruction can only be achieved when learner development becomes the goal of all educational activities and this is the major contribution of dynamic assessment. In this study, efforts were made to consider the instruction and assessment as two combined concepts which allow for

intervention and as a result can help the learners improve in their essay writing ability.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Dynamic Assessment: an assessment of thinking, perception, learning and problem solving by an active teaching process aimed at modifying cognitive functioning (Tzuriel, 2001).

Formative Assessment: "assessment that is specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning" (Sadler, 1998, p.77).

Summative Evaluation: "the process of providing information to decision-makers, after a course of instruction, about whether or not the program was effective and successful" (Richards, and Schmidt, 2002, p.573).

Mediated Learning Experience: "human interactions that generate the capacity of individuals to change, to modify themselves in the direction of greater adaptability and toward the use of higher mental processes" (Feuerstein, 1979, p.110).

Zone of Proximal Development: "the distance between what a learner can do by himself or herself and what he or she can do with guidance from a teacher or in collaboration with a more capable peer" (Richards, and Schmidt, 2010, p.644).

Graduated Prompts: an approach to dynamic testing which assists drawn from hierarchically structured protocols are provided until children can solve the tasks (Campione, and Brown, 1987).

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical basics of dynamic assessment and dissatisfaction with the current approaches in assessment especially in terms of writing skill. Different aspects of writing which are considered as difficult to handle for the writers were discussed. Research questions and the reason for which this study was done were defined and at the end the key terms used in this study were described.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the studies which have been done on the dynamic assessment and more specifically the researches done on the instruction and assessment of the writing skill. A definition of writing will be presented and the writing process will be discussed in terms of its multidimensional nature and the characteristics necessary for effective writing. Components of writing will be outlined to emphasize the areas of difficulty that students may have with writing. A discussion on current writing programs is included to emphasize the changing role of writing instruction and as a link to the need for assessment measures that reflect current practice in writing. Different types of approaches used in teaching writing skill and the characteristics of the writers were presented. In this chapter writing is discussed as a Social and Cultural Phenomenon and different models of the writing process will be presented. At the end, critics to traditional assessment and the reason for suggesting DA are to be included. In addition, different models of DA including MLE will be offered in the last part.

2.2 Definition of Writing

Writing is known as a complex process because it reflects the communicative skills of the writers. In order to expect a precious outcome, teachers must take into account the major problems of the EFL students in helping their writing. Flower and Hays

(1980) define the writing as a process which is dynamic problem solving, goal directed, and complex. They proposed a hypothetical model on the constituents of writing and mentioned that there are four steps in writing to be considered. At the first place is planning which comprises determining and gathering of ideas, organizing all the concepts, and setting the purposes. In planning part, long term memory and writing are considered as input and an abstract plan as output.

Second step is interpreting which helps producing the theoretical plan for the text to be written. Throughout the translation process, process abilities of the writer play an important role (Graham and Harris, 1989). In the third step, reviewing, modifications are applied on the produced text in order to revise. In this stage, the text is improved by being edited, the goals of the writer are met, and the needs of the audiences are ensured. Metacognitive processes are involved in the monitoring section which is the last process in order to connect the last three parts together. Revision includes deletion or addition of the text and can change the text slightly or completely for many reasons (Hayes and Flower, 1986).

2.3 Writing as a Process

In the recent decades, most of the studies done, had a focus on cognitive processes which are activated through the writing process. Two models of writing that are considered as having important role in researches on writing were recognized; The model that Flower and Hayes presented in 1980 and the model that was offered by Bereiter and Scardamalia in 1987. Alamargot and Chanquoy (2001) discuss that these two models are different from the point of the view that the first one is a common model of cognitive process throughout the writing process and the second one is a developmental model.

On the other hand, since the definition of the both models is based on the linguistic knowledge, it can be said that they have a feature in common. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) and also Flower and Hayes (1980) mention that the linguistic knowledge that the two models have in common, means the syntax and words of the writing which are directly interrelated with rhetorical space or the written text and indirectly with some other features of the two models. Furthermore, Hacker, Dunlosky, and Graesser (2009) stated that the two models are dependent on an information processing model which is mechanistic-oriented and not linguistic-focused. Moreover, control of the inputs of writing like rhetorical prompt or task environment and cognitive functions of the writing like goal setting or planning in the model of Flower and Hayes shows that the writing process is complex.

Traditionally, the writing skill had been viewed as considering a series of surface rules in the text. In other words, the significance of the issue was simply dependent on the mechanics of writing such as punctuation, spelling, or the grammar. In fact, many writing courses were only the grammar classes since the students were asked to just copy the sentences and make the necessary changes of them in tense or person. However, recently this perspective changed to a cognitive one and a shift from the cognitive product to the writing process happened (Scaniamalia and Bereiter, 1986).

This great revolution of the teaching philosophy owes its development to the audio-lingual method which grew the gradual teaching, error prevention, and arising accuracy by practicing the structures. In the 1980s, practices in NES (Native English Speaker) compositions caused the teachers to become more aware and a shift of the substitution of guided writing for controlled writing occurred. Writing was only

changing the grammar of sentences, such as combining sentences, or giving direct answers to questions.

Gradually, the new field of NES composition was known by the researchers and the teachers became more aware of the needs of English language learners for the academic writing. As a result a new shift began from language-based writing classrooms toward the study of writing strategies. As the communication came to be more important than the structural accuracy, error was accepted as developmental and productive instead of being unexpected and substandard. There was a theoretical shift in the writing books since the focus of them was on the organization patterns teaching. These patterns are common in academic writing of English and include thesis and topic sentences, or essay and paragraph modes such as comparison-contrast, process, and cause-effect.

During the 1980s, an approach called 'expressive' came to existence which considered writing as a self-recovery process. This approach appeared in the English L2 classrooms by the name of process movement: a concentration on personal writing (narratives or journals), student creativity, and fluency (Zamel, 1982). Accordingly, the difference concerning process and product classrooms came to existence. In process writing, the students are motivated and encouraged to apply the internal resources and their individuality. The teachers believed in the kind of writing which is read exclusively by the person who writes it that is writer-based writing without any audiences. The outcome which is the product is not as important as communicating feelings or generating thoughts that are the processes. Therefore fluency is prior to accuracy.

In contrast, as Nunan (2002) puts it, the focus of the teachers on product writing was only on linguistic patterns, verbal discourse, and accuracy without any writing processes. In writing as a process, at first the kind of writing is reader-based for academic audiences but there is no concern about the writer's voice. Accordingly, the L2 student is forced to write in line with academic conventions and use creativity. Thus, the strategies of process writing are taught to the students in order to reach written products which are effective.

2.4 Text Quality in Writing

Almost everyone needs to learn writing for presenting opinions and more importantly supporting and demonstrating what has been said. The writers who are proficient consider adapting their words in order to gain a particular purpose because they know the importance of communicating in a clear way. Furthermore, they know how to write complex texts by joining different models of writing in a single text.

Kissner (2009) believes that text structure is defined as the structural patterns that authors apply in order to gain a purpose in a text by expressing their thoughts or ideas. Meyer (1985) mentions that the authors choose a particular kind of structure related to the text they are writing for communication.

What constructs the single thought of the person is the way that the words are arranged in a sentence and what determines a theme or a general thought is the way that the sentences are organized in a paragraph. But a paragraph is not only a series of sentences that are linked together. It establishes the framework of a text by providing the construction that is needed. In other words, a paragraph is like a small

essay which has all the elements of topic sentence, supporting information, and concluding sentence.

Flower (1989) indicates that "readers rely on two interwoven factors in text to get meaning: cohesion and psycholinguistic redundancy" (p.187). In writing the long scripts, the paragraphs are used in order to classify what the writer aims to provide and in view of that, the readers are guided into a central meaning or statement supported by examples, main ideas or details. If a piece of writing is easy to read the reason behind it is the focused paragraphs that include the details of the claim and this prevents the readers from getting confused and as a result finishing the reading. The readers prefer to read the paragraphs which transfer the claim with illustrations and examples and at the same time are well organized. Therefore, Paragraphs are written according to the readers and consistent with the purpose of writing.

There are different purposes and various audiences behind different pieces of writing. These diverse models of written texts are called text types. Biber's (1989) believes that "linguistically distinct texts within a genre represent different text types; linguistically similar texts from different genres represent a single text type."(p. 6).

2.5 Problematic Components of Writing

Writing can be a problem for the writers in many cases. There are some areas of writing that students may face the problem usually. These elements are as follows:

2.5.1 Mechanics of Writing

In writing the mechanics that can be a source of problem for the learners include grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Darus and Ching (2009) inspected the most errors that students encounter while writing in English on 70

Chinese students in a selected public school in Perak. The first language of all the students was Chinese. 70 essays were evaluated and classified into 18 types of errors by the help of Markin 3.1 software and error classification system. The results illustrated that most common errors were related to mechanics of the writing, propositions, subject-verb agreement, and tenses. In addition, it was demonstrated that the first language of the students absolutely affected the essay writing of the students. Intralingual transfer from Malay together with some developmental errors were the other kind of errors observed in the writings too.

Totally, 19.1 % of the errors that is the largest class of errors in the scheme category were related to the mechanics of writing. On the other hand, the other kinds of errors included of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. The spelling errors were generally related to carelessness or phonetic perception. The students composed the words by considering only the sounds of them and the problem was with inadvertence to the fact that there are a lot of vocabularies in English language that are from the same sound but different meanings and also spellings. Spelling mistakes such as *'I am studing in SMK Yuk Choy'* also can happen due to the students' carelessness.

Capitalization is considered as a significant problem in the writings of the students because a large number of errors came to happen in this part. For example, proper nouns were not written in capital and the common nouns were capitalized. Moreover, errors in punctuation consist mainly of omission of comma, incorrect use of comma, wrong substitution of periods, or the absence of period at the end of the sentences. These errors happened mainly as a result of the students' carelessness. The reason

behind these errors is the fact that the same punctuation marks with similar functions are used in Chinese and Malay too.

2.5.2 Coherence and Cohesion

Moran (1988) points that there are two areas of problem in the writing of a poor writer; Coherence and cohesion where the former considers the units in a text and the latter reflects the association of the sentences which are adjacent. Moreover, as Johnson-laird (1983) puts it, there are three levels for coherence: confusing, incoherent, and unclear text. Confusing writing contains events that contain no temporal or longitudinal relationship. The most central kind of difficulty in writing is incoherency, and occurs because the events are unconnected or basic links are improbable. And in the third level, unclear referents or associations cause serious problem in readability.

As Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) mention, Poor writers usually do not rely on the structure of the text and inaccurately make use of 'knowledge telling strategy' that is explaining and elucidating the topic of composition with all the knowledge that they have in their mind which is called. The writers came to the conclusion that proficient writers make use of the metacognitive strategy to enable them in retrieving the associated ideas that they have in their background knowledge and in gathering pieces of interrelated and edited ideas to fit the text.

Fallahzade, and Shokrpour (2007) did a study on the students' EFL writing problems in Shiraz University of medical sciences. The survey was related to the EFL writing problems of university students and it mentioned the major difficulties that Iranian learners encounter in writing their reports. The research tries to determine the deficiency points of the medical students in their writing skill.

The main objective in this survey was to define if the areas of problem for these medical students and interns were writing skills or language skills. With the purpose of comparing these students, 101 admission and progress records by these students were measured according to a systematic sampling approach. The notes that were written in internal pediatrics and medicine wards were scored for grammar and syntax, vocabulary, and spelling as language skills and coherence, punctuation, cohesion, and organization as writing skills.

The results obtained by descriptive statistics showed that the scores given to vocabulary, organization and spelling were the highest errorless scores whereas the most problematic areas were comprised for coherence, punctuation, organization, and cohesion as the maximum problem. The no error percentages were at the lowest point, in the contrary, the highest percentage for errorless cases belonged to the organization. Moreover, it was revealed that in each component, the means of errors were approximately close to each other and this indicates that the problem encompassed all the elements.

2.5.3 Knowledge of Revision

This aspect of writing that distinguishes the skillful and poor writers is a very important component of writing (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1986). Revising and editing can occur as the text is being created or after the initial draft is completed. Revision includes organizing the text in order to share it with an audience (Bos 1988). Features related to discourse level revision skills were studied by Kobayashi and Rinnert (2001) among three groups of EFL writers from Japan. They investigated the relationship between this kind of skills and English proficiency on the one hand and writing experience on the other.

53 university students who had different educational levels and different amounts of receiving writing instruction were divided into three groups. In the first group, were undergraduate students who received no writing instruction; in the second group, students experienced one year of writing instruction in English; and in the third group, revising English texts which had some coherence problems was asked from the graduate students. These coherence problems were of three discourse levels of intersentential, essay, and paragraph.

The students were requested to make changes to the texts which were both written by Japanese university students and modified by the researchers for having particular kind of problems in coherence. The results revealed that group number 2 was superior to group number 1 and their skill of revision was near to group 3. On the other hand, in intersentential level, group number 3 did better than the two other groups. Both wiring experience and language proficiency were associated with revision performance, nevertheless language proficiency was more connected to the intersentential level of revision. The most dominant implication of this study was demonstrating the crucial role of explicit instruction in enhancing the level of revision skill and correction strategies in the writings of students.

Al-Jarrah (2007) inspected the effects of revision approach on ESL writing. Two groups of students who were following a writing course attended in this study. They were studying at the department of English of Mutah University. The implications revealed that in the sections of mechanics of writing and syntax, the students in both groups of A and B showed major differences, that is the students in group B had 56% of syntactic errors whereas this percent is was only 28 in the other group.

Moreover, mistakes in mechanics of writing were 12% and 32% in groups A and B respectively. On the other hand, in the coherence section, the more coherent writings were written by students in group A who were instructed about the revision approach compared to group B who did not experience such instructions. Similarly, in the cohesion part, group A students outperformed the students in group B. The results of this study indicate strictly the significance of considering revision skill in teaching writing.

2.6 Types of Approaches in Teaching Writing

There are different types of approaches to teaching writing. Process approach, product approach, and genre based approach. Each of these approaches will be explained separately:

2.6.1 Process Approach

Tribble believes that "process approaches are writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through the 'publication' of a finished text (Tribble, 1996, p.37). Process approaches focus on what writer does during writing and the focus is not on the textual structures. Murry suggests that Process approaches are based on the notion that writing is a repetitive process (Murray, 1987).

Raimes (1983) stated that this approach shows the change from product to process which shows how the person starts writing, and continues. He believes that by process writing the students are trained to generate ideas for writing, to think of the purpose, audience, and the ways of communication and so on. Therefore, this process is a developmental one because first the ideas are generated then the processes of expressing, drafting, and organizing occur.

2.6.2 Product Approach

Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010) defines the product approach or prose model approach as an approach in which the person produces different kinds of written products and stresses imitation of different kinds of model paragraphs or essays. Pincas (1982) believes that writing is basically the linguistic knowledge in which the attention is focused on the usage of syntax, vocabulary, and cohesive devices.

He states that in product approach, learning to write has four stages: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. The familiarization stage aims to make learners aware of certain features of a particular text. In the controlled and guided writing sections, the learners practice the skills with increasing freedom until they are ready for the free writing section, when they 'use the writing skill as part of a genuine activity such as a letter, story or essay' (Pincas, 1982, p. 22).

2.6.3 Genre Approach

Swales (1990) describes a genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (1990, p.58). This definition suggests that there are some structures in a certain model of genre and many communicative purposes are included in it. So, genre approach can be considered as a framework which supports students' writing with generalized systematic guiding principles about how to produce meaningful passages (Rahman, 2001).

Martin (1993) explains that genres are influenced by other features of the situation, such as the relationships between the writer and the audience, the subject matter, and the pattern of organization. Genre approaches have some features in common with other writing approaches. For example, Badger and White stated that "Like product

approaches, genre approaches regard writing as linguistic but, unlike product approaches, they emphasize that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced" (Badger and White, 2000, p.153).

2.7 Characteristics of the Writers

As Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983) put it, writers employ some task-specific or self-regulation strategies while writing. They discuss that self-regulation strategy (metacognition) is a procedural, conditional and declarative knowledge. Procedural knowledge mentions the information for performing a strategy like forming ideas or planning. The information applied for adapting a strategy to another setting is called conditional strategy and declarative knowledge refers to the knowledge related to planning, editing and revising.

Taylor and Beach (1984) discuss that expert writers are aware of the goals of assignment. Moreover they have the knowledge of the subject, and they consider their audiences. Accordingly, in order to collect and establish the data, preparing a text which is cohesive, and considering the structure of the text, it is essential for the writers to have a good command of the writing strategies.

On the other hand, there are poor writers that are in the exact contrast with the expert writers. The reasons for the poor performance of the writers are different and significant. For example the level of achievement is different in different learners. To date, no specific studies illustrated the particular reasons of the poor performance of writers and the characteristics of them. However, the compositions written by the poor writers have some features. The areas of difficulty for the writers can be in the

sections of mechanics, content generation, content quality, coherence, text structure, text narrative, knowledge of revision, or knowledge of the writing process.

Skillful writers in contrast to poor writers pay attention to the significance of the strategies needed in writing. Advanced writers should have and apply the knowledge of writing strategies in order to carry out the learning task successfully and their learning metacognitive knowledge in order to be able to choose, apply, observe, and assess the strategy use (Brown, Campione and Day, 1981).

While writing, metacognitive knowledge and the required strategies are employed by the clever writers in order to have a controlled and appropriate strategy use. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) believe that the metacognitive strategy enables the skilled writers in both retrieving the ideas from their memory and gathering the ideas for getting edited to be included in the text. Therefore, metacognition is the extent to which the writer has the comprehension and control over the cognitive processes (Flavell, 1981). According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) expert writers retrieve their ideas from the memory by making use of strategies. In addition, they consider a considerable amount of time in order to generate the content (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1986).

Usually the most important problem that the writers encounter is considering the structure in the compositions created. Text structure helps the writers in preparing a plan for collecting and organizing the ideas in writing comprehensible texts. Generally, the expert writers are distinguished from the poor writers by the features of writing. For example, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) mention that revision as a significant aspect of writing, identifies strong and weak writers. Poor writers unlike

the proficient writers, make use of fewer revisions, spend a lot of time on the mechanics of writing, and count on lower cognitive processes.

2.8 Writing as a Social and Cultural Phenomenon

The cognitive features of writing which encompassed the physical act of it were the main point of focus in traditional assessment of this skill. Writing should not be considered as exclusively or not only a product but it should be also thought of as a cultural and social issue. Moreover, writing encompasses a specific purpose because it happens in a context which is designed for a particular audience (Hamp-Lyons and Kroll, 1997). In addition, Sperling (1996) calls writing a meaning-making activity which is both socially and culturally formed and both socially and individually purposeful.

Putting more emphasis on the social act of writing compared to the cultural side of it, Hayes (1996) believes that the reason why writing is considered as social is that it takes place in a social situation and a social convention connects the subject of the writing, the person to whom we write to, and the way of writing together. He states that the rules by which we write and the phrases we use in our writings are the ones that the other writers invented and applied before.

Social aspects of the writing are seen to be the main focus of the literature of writing in English or second language and it refers to the process of learning in order to write for the purpose of using in academic contexts because it is one of the original needs for the ESL students entering an academic discourse community (Spack, 1988). Accordingly, by learning how to write, the purpose is not only learning the vocabulary, grammar, or even the linguistic forms of academic writing.

As Spack (1988) puts it, writing considers some criteria specified to a discipline, and it follows a particular set of methods of inquiry that are allowed and not allowed. Moreover, the methods for shaping the conventions of a discipline in a certain text, the techniques of representation for different writers, the approaches for reading and disseminating the texts, and even the ways that the texts influence the other texts are different (Spack, 1988).

On the other hand, the cultural features of writing have always been a controversial issue. Kaplan (1966) introduced the notion of contrastive rhetoric for the first time and analyzed the ESL essays of a huge number of learners. He mentioned many distinctive writing differences in students from various cultures and put them in simple diagrams. In these diagrams different criteria like English writing or oriental discourse were symbolized differently. In this way Kaplan's thesis which encountered many criticisms before, regained its respectability because the researchers came to the conclusion that culture has a deep influence on many different aspects of writing.

Grab and Kaplan (1989, 1996) and also Leki (1992) introduce many of the cultural influences on writing. They mention that variation in writing does not refer to differences in thought patterns but they reflect the cultural preferences and using the options of linguistic possibilities (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). The variations in writing are either directly (explicit teaching) or indirectly (exposure) learned primarily by educational systems. Therefore, it can be said that these variations are somehow the reflections of cultural principles that are stimulated through education.

Many variations in writing patterns were explored in recent years. For example, Spanish writers usually write very long introductions and apply digression instead of sticking to the main point (Collado, 1981, cited in Leki, 1992). As another example, in Chinese, for clarifying a topic, a series of examples are provided without stating the main topic (Matalene, 1985, cited in Leki, 1992). Cultural aspects can affect the coherence of a text and organize a text in the form of a meaningful whole. Leki (1992) notes that coherence is the correct assessment of the writer from what the reader infer from the text. Readers usually read a text by considering their background knowledge from their own cultures and expectations (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983), and as a result misinterpretations are common in transferring the message of the author.

Therefore, as Hinds (1987) puts it, English language is a writer-responsible (as opposed to reader-responsible) language and the writer is responsible for relating the propositions to the ideas and not the reader. In a language which is reader-responsible, the expectations of the writer and the reader are the same, so it is easier for the reader to make comprehensible interpretation from the text.

Hayes (1996) mentions that a representation is formed by the reader from both the text and the character of the writer; so the distance between considering a text as deficient or incoherent is very short. The implication for the testing of writing is that writing ability cannot be validly abstracted from the contexts in which writing takes place. The ability to write indicates the ability to function as a literate member of a particular segment of society or discourse community, or to use language to demonstrate one's membership in that community.

2.9 Models of the Writing Process

2.9.1 Hayes and Flower Model

A very dominant and leading model of the writing process was that of Hayes and Flower (1980) that discusses a) task environment of writing process including the text produced and the writing process, b) some cognitive processes including translating, revising, or planning, and c) the long term memory of the writer including knowledge of audience, knowledge of topic, and the knowledge of writing plan. What differentiates Hayes and Flower from the other models of writing is the issue that here writing is not considered as linear but a recursive process. Accordingly, the students are not provided with models of linguistic forms and asked to follow them in their writings, but the instruction will be more effective applied in the writing process itself.

2.9.2 Bereiter and Scardamalia Model

As a persuasive model of writing, Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) model is a model which has two dimensions with an obvious paradox. This contradiction includes on the one hand, the reality that all the people of a well-educated community can learn to write in the way that they can speak and on the other hand, since writing is a difficult process, only some people can become an expert in it. In order to come along with this problem, Bereiter and Scardamalia mention that there is difference between knowledge transforming and knowledge telling.

Knowledge telling involves no or little planning or revision and Bereiter and Scardamalia call this as unproblematic for the reason that any fluent speaker can do it with a little knowledge of the writing system. Bereiter and Scardamalia put an emphasis on the significance of the interactive elements in conversation absent in

writing and state that people provide each other with continual cues while talking - cues to elaborate, cues to stop, cues to shift the topic and a variety of others which help them to omit or add anywhere needed (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987). Since these interactions are absent in the writing, the responsibility of generating content is with the writer. Three sources of input are applied by the writer in order to come up with this situation: the topic, the writer's knowledge or schema about the procedures of writing, and the text written so far.

Knowledge transforming on the other hand, needs much more skill and a great deal of practice. The process of writing in knowledge transformation includes both putting the thought on the paper and creating new knowledge. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) consider the problem analysis and goal setting as the first step in knowledge transformation. Problem solving comes subsequently which includes two domains of rhetorical problem space and content problem space where the former seeks for achieving the purposes of the writing and the latter considers the belief and knowledge of the writer.

Grab and Kaplan (1996) state that the two-model process of Bereiter and Scardamalia defines the reason for the differences between unskilled and skilled writers by explaining that proficient writers apply totally different writing strategies from those of the unskilled ones. In addition, it answers the question why writing tasks are different in stages of difficulty. For example in case of unskilled writers, if there is a high demand for information, more cognitive effort is needed in order to coming along with the content and rhetorical problem spaces.

Totally, the notions of knowledge transformation and knowledge telling are useful for both writing assessment and writing pedagogy as they illuminate many questions as the role of genre familiarity in identifying the difficulty of task. Familiar writing tasks may be manageable for unskillful writers through a knowledge telling procedure and with a little complexity, accessible for the skillful writers through a strategy of knowledge transforming but, the tasks that may be unfamiliar to the writers can put even the proficient writers into challenge (Alderson and Bachman, 2001).

2.9.3 Hayes Model

Hayes (1996) model considers the writing in two parts of individual and task environment writing. The task environment consists of physical and social environments. The physical environment entails the composing medium such as word processing or handwriting, and the text produced so far. The social environment involves the imagined or real audiences of the writing. As Hass (1987) mentions, the composing medium has been partly included in the model for the reason that technological inventions have had a profound influence on both the social and cognitive aspects of writing. For instance, some studies have been found to have differences in the editing or planning procedures of the writer produced by word processors (Gould and Grischkowsky, 1984).

This model considers the roles of motivation and affect in the writing process. For instance, Hays (1996) cites the research done by Palmquist and Young (1992) and Dweck (1986) and states that students' views on the reasons for an effective performance have an effect on the way that they apply their effort. Accordingly, if students see the writing ability as an innate and unchangeable aptitude, they will lose their self-confidence for being a successful writer.

One of the drawbacks on the usefulness of Hayes model in evaluating the second language writing is the fact that there is little attention to linguistic knowledge (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Grabe and Kaplan model can cover this gap and present a complete list of the components of language knowledge related to writing. It is notable to say that Hayes model considers genre knowledge and task schemas as the language knowledge. Language knowledge in this view is built on the work of Canale and Swain (1980) and includes discourse knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and sociolinguistic knowledge. All these three areas of knowledge should be considered in writing and the writing assessment.

2.10 Objectives of Assessment

Since students have problem with writing and the written expressions usually, assessment of writing plays a central role for the teachers and the improvement of students. Methods of the traditional assessment do not consider the difficulties the students usually encounter in one hand and the management of intervention strategies on the other. Isaacson (1988) pointed out that in spite of the fact that the strategies and processes of writing skill were in the focus of the many researches, the process of writing is not connected to the assessment and remediation by most of them. By the reconsideration of writing in curriculums, the need for operative instructions followed by enough tests for writing proficiency was emphasized (Scardamalia and Bretter, 1986).

In order to consider the smallest improvement in writing, special writing tests sensitive to this factor are required during both short and sometimes long periods of time (Tindal and Parker, 1989). It is obvious that in case of accepting the strategy instruction and process orientation in writing, the measures and procedures of

assessment should follow the objectives of instruction. Moran (1987) believes that by considering the degree of applying the cognitive functions of writing into the writing instruction, the measurements in assessment for the poor writers improves. Therefore, as Hooper et al. (1994) put it, assessment processes of written language are required to be qualitative and dynamic in order to simplify the intervention of writing problems.

Berninger, Mizokawa and Bragg (1991) suggest that since the existing instruments do not follow a theory and as a matter of fact do not reflect the results of the writing as a process. Accordingly, these instruments are not the suitable tools for detecting the areas of problems that the students are encountered in the process of writing. In order to evaluate the students' difficulties in their writings, it is necessary to reflect on the exogenous and endogenous aspects (Hooper et al., 1994). Exogenous factors are related to the variables in school environment such as teacher characteristics, direct instruction, or the style of instruction.

On the other hand, endogenous aspects are associated with the variables intrinsic to a person like motivation, metacognitive awareness, cognitive strategies, or goal setting. In order to have a better evaluation of the writing difficulties that students encounter and by the purpose of improving a set of intervention techniques, assessment of both exogenous and endogenous aspects is necessary (Hooper et al., 1994).

Many authors agree that the direct measures of learning can be substituted for the insufficiencies and failures of the standardized tests (Vygotsky, 1978; Howell, 1986). The measures of learning are the learning based procedures of assessment that are referred usually as dynamic assessment procedures. Vygotsky believed that ability

tests cannot measure the children's ability and cannot profit from instruction (Campione et al., 1984) and this view guided him to come to the conclusion that assessment should measure both the previous learned knowledge of the child and the learning efficiency (Brown and Farrara, 1985). Accordingly, a more exact measure of learning proficiency can be provided by measuring the child's ability in learning something by the help of assistance and comparing it with his ability in learning and doing alone.

2.11 Instruction and Assessment

The meaning of the term 'assessment' is different when it comes together with Dynamic Assessment. Frequently, the term assessment is used either directly for formal testing instruments or indirectly for other forms of assessment. As a result two different kinds of assessment called Summative and Formative and a distinction between them will be described here. As Bachman (1990) puts it, summative assessment reports on the results of learning after instruction is finished whereas formative assessment comes with the purpose of providing feedback and useful information for the teaching.

According to formative assessment, the weak and strong abilities of the learners are identified for the future educational decisions. Therefore, usually the teachers provide this kind of assessment and use it in their educational settings. On the other hand, summative assessment is related to that kind of standardized and large-scale tests which asks for the long procedures in administration and scoring. The sequence of items, the allocated time, and the language of the questions are among the factors that should be considered in order to have a valid assessment of the ability considered (Bachman and Palmer, 1996).

The scores are compared in order to identify the abilities of the learners in a large scale and for making important decisions about the funds and acceptance into universities to the schools and the students respectively (Shohamy, 1999). Although standardized tests are now the most proper form of assessment, Ellis (2003) suggests that many formative assessments are used even after these tests. From among the drawbacks of the formative assessment, is its statistical problem, which is needed for standardization. However, in case of administration procedures, and interpretation of performance formative assessment equals with its psychometric counterparts. Therefore, instruction and assessment are dichotomized teaching and testing that focus on learning and measuring the learning respectively.

2.12 Critique of the Traditional Assessment

The connection between the content of the test and instruction is so significant that some kinds of tests such as standardized or norm referenced tests are criticized for this reason (Shapiro and Derr, 1987). The other notable factor for the criticism of these tests has been their failure in assessing the small amounts of improvement in learners (Marston, Fuchs, and Deno, 1986). As an example of a standardized test, Test of Written Language (TOWL) (Hammill and Larsen, 1987) can be mentioned that is used for evaluating the progress of writing skill. Although this test is a reliable and valid one (Poplin, 1983), this claim can be rejected for the reason that it is mechanics-based and its validity for the higher writing skills is low.

Jacobson (1991) believes that TOWL is a very inclusive and comprehensive one for assessing the ability of the students in performing conventions; however, it measures the thematic maturity very superficially which is a very helpful ability in writing for easily conveying meaning. On the other hand, this test assesses only the editorial

errors such as grammatical incorrect sentences, or punctuation. Poplin (1983) states that the measured skills on individual tests are hardly appropriate for measuring the editing of one's work.

Other drawbacks to this assessment involve the absence of some strategies for teaching the shortening or lengthening a text, and 'scoring' that fails to assess the results correctly (Hooper, Montgomery, Swartz, Reed, Sandler, Levine, Watson, and Wasileski, 1994). The purpose of The TOWL is to assess the composition and not the skills separately. Nevertheless, the reason behind the criticism of this test was its weaknesses in the scoring procedures, construction, or its construction (Norris, 1992).

Another kind of standardized test is Woodcock and Johnson's Written Language Achievement. A stimulus picture together with three words is provided for the students and they are asked to write a sentence which includes those three words. Poplin (1983) states that the test called Picture Story Language and has been critiqued because it had problems in its validity and reliability in one hand and using stimulus picture which is nowadays outdated. This test conducts the evaluation process by the help of three components of syntax, productivity, and abstractness.

Generally, norm-referenced tests of writing measure the quantitative levels of progress that the learner is passing on his own expected progressive ability. Accordingly, Ysseldyke and Regan (1980) believe that for an assessment to be useful, firstly, an instructional program should be included and secondly, a dynamic instead of a static procedure should be followed. By considering the above-mentioned problems of standardized tests, the attention is focused more on the

dynamic assessment (Missiuna and Samuels, 1988; Palincsar, 1990, cited in Jitendra and Kameenui, 1993).

2.13 Dynamic Assessment

Dynamic assessment which appeared about 80 years ago is basically rooted in a theory of the well-known Russian psychologist L. S. Vygotsky (1989) as Sociocultural Theory of Mind (SCT) and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It tries to use the human abilities with the aim of finding and improving the potential capabilities. The cognitive functions that this theory considers specify that in this system the person gets more engaged because by getting supported by interactions, the way of finding different techniques of thinking and presenting are found. The cognitive functions which appear as a result of the reaction of the students to the support presented to them for the areas of problem, explain the role of SCT and these functions come to improve in this process. On the other hand, appropriate mediation enables individuals to exceed their independent performance, and this in turn stimulates further development (Vygotsky, 1986, 1998).

Vygotskian notion of the Zone of Proximal Development is also one of the fundamental factors in dynamic assessment. The ZPD can be defined as "the distance between the actual development 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" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). The ability to regulate ourselves emerges from mediation by others and by this definition mediation can be connected to ZPD (Lantolf, 2009).

ZPD is related to mediation on the one hand and internalization on the other which are two associated concepts. The role of mediation is providing an opportunity for individual's potential development. In addition, Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) that supports Feuerstein's theory is also included in the central concepts of dynamic assessment.

Mediation is defined as a process that humans employ in order to regulate the material world, others' or their own social and mental activity by using 'culturally constructed artifacts, concepts and activities' (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Nevertheless, in language teaching and in this study, the word mediation is used as the assistance that is given to the students by the teacher and this intentional and reciprocal interaction together with closer assessment cooperation, allows the tutor to promote the ZPD of the learners more easily.

Dynamic assessment is a kind of assessment in which the weak points of the writing ability of the students are identified and more attention is paid to those parts. In this way the students are supported in case of their problems. By incorporating an instructional component, the process of learning is evaluated. The assessment in dynamic assessment is not separate from instruction but they come together and a combination of these two results in a better outcome. In other words, as Haywood et al. (1990) put it, rather than simply recognizing the current level of performance, dynamic assessment emphasizes the optimal performance under some specified conditions.

Once the areas of problem are identified, an approach to dynamic assessment, mediation is used. The students are provided with a mediated learning experience in

this approach. In this way, depending on the needs of the students, instruction as an assistance is presented to them. This assessment procedure causes the students to improve and find a better way. Accordingly, dynamic assessment offers development by providing the interaction opportunities and internalization of them.

By the help of ZPD, it will be possible to know about the capabilities of the learners in both potential and actual sections. Accordingly, Vygotsky's theory proposes that we should find information about both the existing and future abilities of the students (Vygotsky, 1978). In this way, dynamic assessment makes use of learner's current abilities and promotes their future abilities by working on the weak points of their performance. Consequently, dynamic assessment acts in process and expands the situation by the help of gradual assessment.

There are two approaches to dynamic assessment. Interactionist approach and interventionist approach. As Thouesny 2010 explains, interactionist approach of dynamic assessment is a qualitative assessment of psychological processes and mediation is arranged by the way of considering the feedback received from the results of the assessments. Consequently, this opportunity is given to the students to choose the mediation through a discussion with the tutor and they are constrained to accept something preprepared.

In interventionist approach as Lantolf (2009) argues, a prefabricated and fixed set of clues and hints is determined in advance and offered to learners as they move through a test item by item. The hints are arranged on a scale from implicit to explicit based on the assumption that if learners are able to respond appropriately to an implicit form of mediation they have already attained a greater degree of control over

the educational subject and they do not require more explicit assistance (Lantolf, 2009).

2.14 Models of Dynamic Assessment

There are different models of dynamic assessment but all of them follow a specific feature to assessment. The key feature of these models as Marcrine and Lidz argue is that the mediator actively intervenes to help learners understand the basic principles of task solution, and to proceed in a strategic, self-regulated style (Marcrine and Lidz, 2001). Five models of dynamic assessment will be explained here.

2.14.1 Interventionist Dynamic Assessment

In interventionist dynamic assessment the mediation provided to learners is standardized and the mediator is not free to respond to learners' needs because they will become obvious throughout the procedure. However, a highly scripted approach to mediation should be followed in which all the leading questions, hints, and the prompts are prepared hierarchically from implicit to explicit. This approach is not defined in the notion of Vygotsky but in old psychometric terms and by the purpose of maximizing the objectivity of the assessment (Luria, 1961).

By considering the results in a quantified system as scores, the performance of the learner is discussable using concepts of reliability, validity, and generalizability. As Thouesny (2010) puts it, considering that interactionist dynamic assessment is adapted to psychometric testing, the interventionist approaches are more accepted compared to them. Accordingly, in an interventionist approach, compared to a more qualitative or interactive approach, the programs which need test scores of language proficiency might have less uncertainties about the validity of dynamic assessment.

2.14.2 Interactionist Dynamic Assessment: Feuerstein's Learning Experience

Feuerstein's dynamic assessment is developed independently from Vygotsky's approach but there are basic similarities and commonalities between them that it seems the Feuerstein's research by the purpose of increasing the Learning Potentials is a continuance of the work done 70 years ago by Vygotsky and Luria. Feuerstein's approach has many in common with the other models of dynamic assessment as well but it differs in various important ways. For example, it tries to consider the issue of human abilities that is associated with Vygotskian theory. On the other hand, Feuerstein's model includes parallel improvements to those models suggested by other DA experts like Brown's concept of transfer or Carlson and Wiedl's (1992) emphasis on learner verbalization and as a result it is the most comprehensible approach to DA.

The most important distinction that distinguishes Feuerstein's dynamic assessment from the others is that it incorporates instruction and assessment together in a way that none of them can exist separately. Vygotsky's terminology is not employed by Feuerstein, however, he agrees with making a single educational activity and creating a ZPD with learners for promoting improvement. Accordingly, Feuerstein's dynamic assessment is the best approach to change the classroom activity.

2.14.3 Budoff's Learning Potential Measurement Approach

Budoff's approach is famous for concerning the validity of scores by using standardized measures of intelligence. This approach states that the old intelligence assessments is sufficient for understanding the capabilities of many children, however, for many children who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, analyses of assessment results are cooperated by the division between the children's culture and the culture of the school (Budoff, 1987; Budoff and Friedman, 1964).

That is to say that the lack of particular varieties of educational opportunities compared to cognitive impairments has a more effective influence on the (poor) performance of a traditional intelligence test.

"Inspired by Luria's (1961) work with underachieving students in Soviet Union, Budoff reasoned that the effects of a child's background of his test performance could be mitigated to a degree if the child was familiarized with the test and strategies for solving the kinds of problems it contains" (Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2002, p:73). Budoff believes that if the scores of children are improved by training, this can be considered as a sign of their learning potential. The Budoff's approach was the first dynamic assessment research outside of the Soviet Union and he used the test instruments such as Koh's learning potential task and the Raven Learning Potential test which had a well-established psychometric features.

Budoff and Friedman (1964) believe that Budoff is concerned on developing the learner's test performance since he is on the opinion that learners' learning potential in future is apparent by their degree of change. Although Budoff does not refer to the cognitive development as an objective of the process, he shares a principle that cognitive abilities are changeable if proper opportunities are provided. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) suggest a difference between dynamic assessment and dynamic testing. They stated that Learning Potential Measurement of Budoff considers a potential for improvement rather than promoting the improvement and as a result is an example of dynamic testing. Moreover, since the learners in his research replied the mediation phase in a different way, the dynamic assessment's claim about the dynamic feature of cognitive abilities is true.

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2.14.4 Mediated Learning Experience

Feuerstein et al. (1988) state that the children with direct learning experiences have only a periodic understanding of reality and refer to them as culturally deprived children. By 'culturally deprived' they mean that these children did not acquire any culture although there was the access to a culture for them. Kozulin (1998) defines the culturally deprived children as the ones who didn't experience their cultures mediated to them adequately.

Kozulin (1998) explains that the culturally deprived child will encounter many problems for the subsequent learning because of the lack in cognitive functions needed. These functions include making comparisons between the differences and similarities, developing representations, formulating and testing hypotheses and the ability to plan, etc. Putting the emphasis on the mediated learning experiences, Feuerstein considers a relationship between this model and direct learning experiences.

He believes that the more the children go through the mediated learning experiences, the greater is their ability to profit from the direct exposure to learning. In addition, when there is no mediated learning experience, the individual will benefit a little from direct encounters in learning (Feuerstein et al., 1988). Vygotsky's notion states that mediation in mediated learning experience, simplifies the internalization of the children's interaction by changing it from intermental to intramental functioning (Vygotsky, 1978). As a result, the social interaction of the children together with the mediator presents a model for the children for transforming and imitating beyond their capabilities.

Feuerstein states that the reason of poor performance of children in school is not the same for all of them. In this way, he explained that by considering the correctness of his theories about the mediated learning, the reason for the change in different children's performances could be measured by the analysis of their interactions with an expert in an intensive mediation session that is the dynamic assessment (Feuerstein et al., 1988). Accordingly, the Mediated Learning Experience for Feuerstein is located at the center of Dynamic Assessment.

2.14.5 Guthke's Lerntest Approach

Budoff's work about the progress of some of the dynamic assessment procedures has been analyzed by Guthke and his colleagues at Leipzeig University and they called it Lerntest, or Leipzeig Learning Test (LLT) (Guthke, 1992). Guthke (1993) mentions to the Vygotskyan hypothesis of cognitive development and stated that humans make use of many domain-specific ZPDs for learning ability or general intelligence and not only one. This statement has changed the processes of dynamic assessment and moved them towards the procedures further than intelligence testing like language aptitude (Guthke et al., 1986).

The difference between the methods of Guthke and Budoff is that Budoff has preferred the separation of the test administration stage and the mediation phase and believes in assessment instruction opposition, and quite the opposite; Guthke chooses the method of combining the mediation and the test together. Guthke et al. (1986) mention that in the early versions of Leipzeig Learning Test, the only assistance that was offered to the examinees with a wrong response was to "think properly once again". In the next steps if the examinees were not able to correct themselves, the solution was revealed.

There are many different innovations that Guthke has offered in order to make the LLT adaptable to various assessment settings. For example, for an LLT to be administered, a unit or a chapter may need to be adapted together with the integration of the results and the ongoing instruction. LLT does not classify the participants in their scores or the like and this is a priority of it to the Budoff's method. Therefore, by considering the fact that the mediation is a part of the assessment which is integrated with the subsequent teaching, it can be said that the LLT is dynamic.

2.15 Related Studies on Dynamic Assessment

Dynamic assessment and more specifically the model of mediated learning experience have been used in many studies with different skills and also different participants. For example, Knodel (1996) investigated the effectiveness of two kinds of dynamic assessment approaches, the mediated learning experience and the graduated prompt, on the assessment of composition writing of the poor writers without a learning disability and the learners with a learning disability.

Graduated prompt is a type of dynamic assessment which helps to identifying the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) of the students in a way that a series of clues are given to the learners that are graded from easy to difficult and the learners apply these hints in order to find the correct answer little by little. Eleven learners with learning disability and ten poor writers with nearly the same range of age attended in a writing composition test using the spontaneous writing sample of the Test of Written Language-3.

Zhang, (2010) conducted a research on constructing dynamic assessment mode in English writing class. This study suggested that in presenting the dynamic

assessment to the students, the instructional and graduated mediation should be offered based on the developmental requirements of the learners in the process of writing. Accordingly, the instruction and assessment are integrated and as a result, both the learners' development and the teaching are enriched.

Dynamic assessment mode was also investigated by Zhang (2008) for online EFL writing classes. A theoretical dynamic assessment mode was constructed for Chinese tertiary EFL writing class, incorporating such interventional measures as the establishment of a web-based writing teaching system, the adoption of an online automated essay scoring system, and the design of scaffolding strategies for each stage of writing. It was proposed that the success of such an assessment mode will be dependent on the construction of an English writing learning community, along with a more sensible distribution of the jobs among students and between the teacher and students.

Ajideh and Nourdad (2012) investigated the effect of dynamic assessment on EFL reading comprehension in different proficiency levels. 197 Iranian university students participated in six groups of this study. The immediate and delayed effect of dynamic assessment on reading comprehension ability of EFL learners at three proficiency levels was investigated.

Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) studied the interaction between adult ESL learners and a mediator. Learners developed in the ZPD through developmental assistance in treatment sessions. The development of a ZPD through group-work resulted in performance in higher level of competence for both learners because students perform above their level of individual competence in the ZPD with the help of the

peer and accordingly as the learner acts with increasing independence, the development happens.

2.16 Conclusion

This chapter presented the review of the related literature. First of all a definition on the writing was presented and writing was considered as a process. The quality of text was discussed and the components of writing including mechanics, coherence, and cohesion were explained. Since this study investigates the differences between traditional and new approaches to teaching writing, different types of approaches to teaching writing were discussed. In a section writing was considered as a social and cultural phenomenon and different views on this issue were argued. The reasons why dynamic assessment is in contrast with the traditional assessment and the problems with traditional assessment were presented. Then, the most important term of this study that is dynamic assessment, was explained with presenting different models of it especially Mediated Learning Experience that is the focus of this study. Finally, some of the related studies done on dynamic assessment were mentioned to finish the chapter.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose behind this research was to investigate if dynamic assessment had any effect on the essay writing ability of male and female EFL learners of Iranian English language institutes. In this research, a pre-test was used in order to see whether the students who were learning English as a foreign language had any difficulty in their writing. Accordingly, the participants qualified for the study and also the materials were selected. After treatment a post-test was administered and the results in pre-test and post-test sections were compared. This chapter presents a comprehensive and detailed explanation about the design of the study, participants, data collection, and the data analysis. Moreover, the process of applying the MLE and traditional was of teaching in the treatment section will be explained in detail.

3.2 The Design of the Study

This study was carried out as an experimental study for the reason that it was seeking to reveal that an intervention had the intended fundamental effect on a group of participants. An experimental design is "a plan for assigning experimental units to treatment levels and the statistical analysis associated with the plan" (Kirk, 1995, P.1).

This study consisted of a pre-test, treatment, and a post-test. Control and experimental groups were randomly assigned with the purpose of establishing the

cause-and-effect relationships while the researcher employed independent variables (mediated learning experience) and measured dependent variables (essay writing ability).

As the first step, before going through the three main sections of the study, 100 Iranian EFL learners from different language institutes were asked to attend the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which is a standard general English language test from Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. Accordingly, the general proficiency levels of the students were identified and the participants who were from approximately the same proficiency levels were selected and randomly appointed into two different (experimental and control) groups such that each group consisted of equal number of female and male learners. As the second step, a pre-test was administered among the chosen participants in all groups. Then, in the treatment section, the learners in the experimental groups were taught through a type of dynamic assessment that is the mediated learning experience, and the participants in the control groups were presented with traditional way of teaching.

At the end, in order to check the learners' writing ability after the treatment, a post-test was presented to them. Finally, the performances of the groups were investigated and differentiated in order to compare the effect of Mediated Learning Experience with the traditional way of instruction. It is notable to say that, in this research, the essay writing ability of the students was considered as the dependent variable and the Mediated Learning Experience as the independent variable. A more detailed explanation of the process, sample, and the analysis of the study follows.
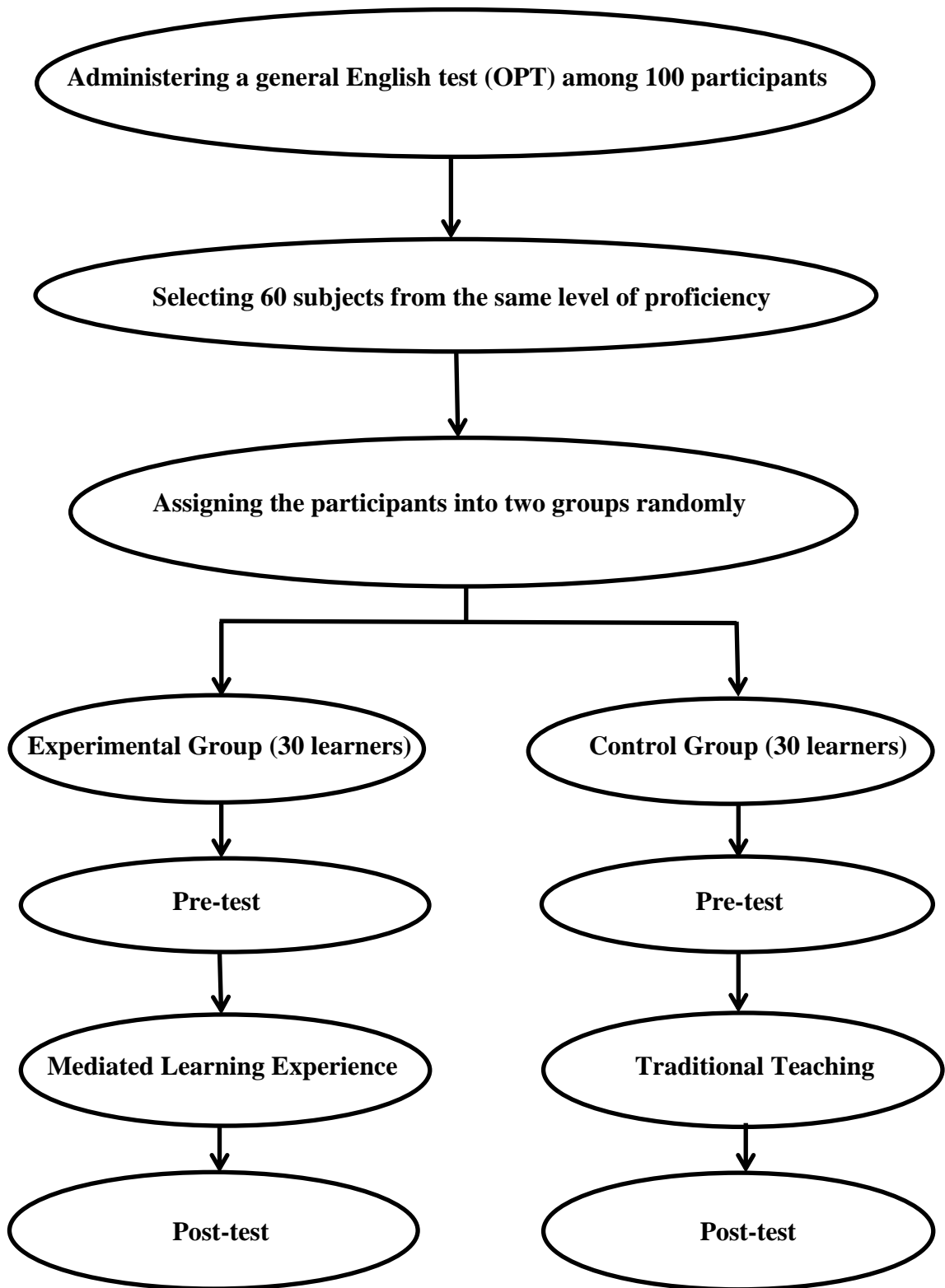
Figure 3.1. The Design of the Study

3.3 Participants

The students who participated in this study were 60 pre-intermediate-level Iranian learners from different language institutes of Iran including Kish, Shokuh, and Iran Language Institute. The age range of these participants was between 18 to 25 years old and they were all university students from different fields of study who were learning English as a foreign language. These participants were from the same English language levels because all attended a standard placement test required by the institutions before joining the classes and they passed the same English courses in their institutes. Since this study was concentrating specifically on the effects of Dynamic Assessment on the essay writing ability of both male and female students, the participants of the research were from among both female and male learners equally (15 males and 15 females in each group).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection procedure of this study consists of a placement test, pre-test, treatment, and the post-test. A placement test was used in order to identify the students' general English language level and to choose learners in pre-intermediate level. The participants who scored a certain grade were considered as being qualified for the study. Then these students were divided into groups of control and experimental. Subsequently, the treatments related to each group was presented to them and a post-test was administered to all the groups. At the end, the results achieved from pre-test and post-test essays were compared together in order to assess the differences. A detailed explanation of the data collection process, the treatment stage, and a short explanation on the statistical analysis of this research follow.

The students who participated in this study were informed clearly about all the procedures of the research. They were given notice that the information from the study was confidential and they could also draw back at any time because their participation was voluntary. In order to assess the essay writing ability of the students, the IELTS Essay Writing Test (Cambridge ESOL Examinations) was used. In addition, this test was applied for both pre-test and post-test.

As the first step of the study, 100 students from among different language institutes of Iran were asked to attend the test of general English language, OPT (Appendix A). This test was administered with the purpose of choosing a certain number of pre-intermediate-level students for participating in the study. The placement test of OPT (Oxford Placement Test) from Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations was used in order to identify homogeneity of the students' general English language level that is the pre-intermediate level. As Bachman (1990) indicates "…placement tests are frequently designed to measure students' language abilities" (p.59).

The reason for administering this placement test was to place the participants in different levels of proficiency and choosing the ones that were in the pre-intermediate level. Therefore, since the placement tests are intended to measure the learners' level of proficiency, the OPT was used in this study. As Farhady, Jafarpoor, and Birjandi (1994) stated, "placement tests are used to determine the most appropriate channel of education for examinees" (p. 20). Placement tests are based on the theory of language and also more specific compared to the proficiency tests. So, a placement test was used in this study in order to confine the test to finding a specific level of learners.

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The test included 60 questions for investigating the vocabulary, and structure skills of the participants together with one writing question. One point was assigned for each item in the first two sections and 10 points for the third section that is writing. Therefore, the total score was 70. The total specified time for the test was 60 minutes, considering 30 minutes for sections one and two, and 30 minutes for the third section. According to the OPT table, the scores arranged from 30 to 39 out of 60 are considered as pre-intermediate learners. The scores were considered from 70 and then were arranged in the range of the pre-intermediates in the OPT table. The students who got the grades in this range were selected for the study. So, 60 students out of 100 were assigned as the pre-intermediate level participants and the rest were excluded from the study.

Therefore, the general English proficiency level of the students was identified in order to determine the experimental and control groups. Accordingly, these 60 students were randomly and equally assigned into one experimental and one control group including 15 male and 15 female for the experimental group and 15 male and 15 female in the control group. Afterwards, a pre-test (Appendix B) was administered between the groups.

Accordingly, the students were asked to write an essay on a topic given to them. The content of the topic was on the importance of happiness, the reason that it is difficult to define, and the factors that are important in achieving it. This topic was selected from IELTS essay writing test and the participants were expected to spend about 40 minutes on the topic given. Moreover, the minimum number of words for writing the essay was 250 words. It is noteworthy that, the expert judgment was used in this study in order to considering the homogeneity level of the item difficulty in both pre-

test and post-test. In choosing the topics in pre-test and post-test, it was tried to choose the topics that seemed to be easier for the participant and they have many ideas about it to help them write better and easier.

As a criterion in essay writing, the participants were expected to write three paragraphs including the introduction for the first one, the body, for the second, and the conclusion for the third one. The students were asked to give reasons for their claims and involve any related examples from their knowledge or experience.

The essays were collected and scored according to the scoring procedure of IELTS Task 2 Writing Checklist and Descriptors (Appendix C). The criteria used for assessing and scoring involved the contextual language such as sentence construction, spelling, punctuation, and the clarity. The rating scale was from 0 to 9. The students who obtained a score of 4 or less were considered as having serious problem in essay writing.

The experimental groups received mediation whereas the control groups experienced the traditional way of learning. In presenting the mediation to the experimental groups, the students were informed about their problems in the texts then these problematic areas of the essays in the pre-test of students were considered and with the purpose of helping them for writing better essays, some suggestions were given to them. Accordingly, during the 10 sessions of mediation, based on the needs of the students and the kind of the problem, the suggestions were presented to the students implicitly (by an example in a sentence) or explicitly (by giving explanations). On the other hand, the control groups attended the same number of treatment sessions, but in the traditional way of teaching and learning the essay writing.

As the last step of the study, in order to achieve the main goal of the research, which was investigating the effect of treatment (instruction through a mediated learning experience) both the experimental and control groups were asked to participate in a post-test (Appendix E). The post-test included another topic from the IELTS Essay Writing Test again and the instructions and expectation were the same as in the pre-test. In this test, the participants were asked to write about our dependency on computers and the extent to which this is helpful or harmful.

The scoring procedures in both pre-test and post-test were the same. All the essays were scored by the criteria of IELTS Task 2 writing checklist. Totally a number of four areas of language were considered in correcting the essays. First of all the response to the task was of a high significance because it was expected that the participants address all the parts of the task. The second language area was coherence and cohesion, and the students were expected to skillfully manage cohesion and paragraphing. Lexical resource was the third criterion which investigated the range of vocabulary used by the participants in their essays. Finally, the essays were assessed for the grammatical range and accuracy and the range of structures used in the essays was considered.

Moreover, in reducing the scorer bias and increasing the reliability of the study, the scoring procedure was administered by the help of three qualified scorers who were M.A. graduates in English Language Teaching. They were experienced teachers with 5 to 6 years of teaching experience. Accordingly, the average of the two scores was considered if the two raters considered different scores for one student. But, if the number of differences was more than one, a third scorer rated the writing and the final score was the average of the three.

3.4.1 Active Application of MLE and Traditional Teaching in the Conduct of the Study

After scoring the papers in the pre-test part of this study, it was specified that the essays of the learners suffered from coherence and cohesion together with different types of errors such as grammatical, lexical, and spelling errors. However, the considerable deal of the errors in the essays of the participants encompassed the grammar. A sample of participants' essays in the pre-test section can be seen in the appendices (Appendix D). Here are some examples related to the mentioned points of errors:

Cohesion and coherence:

No one can't deny that good life is the most important factor of happiness so money is important too.

Grammatical errors:

The word happiness should define in different way.

Some things that can help people to have happiness are including watching a funny movie, and go to party.

Lexical errors:

When we encounter everythings in the trust way we can be happy all the time.

Some things that can help people to have happiness…

Spelling errors:

The relationship between people can cause to acheiving happiness.

As the first step to the mediation in the first session of the treatment, the essays collected in the pre-test were given back to the participants and they were asked to search for their probable errors in their own essays. The learners tried to take some hints from the mediator for finding their errors but they were not successful. In the

next step, the papers were collected and it was noticed that some of the learners have corrected their mistakes mostly in the spelling part. For example:

- Happiness involves to have the sense of <u>succes</u> in life ⟶ Happiness involves to have the sense of <u>success</u> in life.

- People should feel to have good parents and <u>helth</u> ⟶ People should feel to have good parents and <u>health.</u>

Then, the learners were asked to search for many more errors in their own essays by the help of the mediator and some more mistakes were found but not still all of them. In the next step, the mediator collected the papers again and only underlined the sentences that contained error and gave back them to the learners. This time, they were asked to think about the exact location and the reason of the error in the sentence. They were also requested to correct their errors in their writings after locating them. It was noticed that this time, in some cases, students even overcorrected themselves. For example, 'to some of the people happiness is satisfaction in job' changed to 'for some of the people happiness is satisfaction in job'.

The mediator rejected all the questions of the learners in this process, however; some of the learners were hardly successful in finding some points but not all of the mentioned points by the learners were problematic. Then the tutor informed the learners one by one about the kinds of the mistakes that they made in the sentence but again didn't mention the exact error. After that the exact nature of the error was identified by the teacher and as the last attempt, they tried to correct their own errors.

By the end of this process, the learners were aware of their errors and curios about knowing the reasons behind and also the correct form of them. During the time of specifying the exact place of the errors in the writings, the tutor talked to the learners one by one and explained the rule related to the error. What follows is some of the examples of this process:

1. Mediator: '*satisfied from*' is wrong in this sentence, you should write '*satisfied with*'.

   Learner: aha, so '*with*' is the correct preposition for it.

2. Mediator: '*everythings*' is wrong, you should write '*everything*' because we can't pluralize a plural word.

3. Mediator: '*can't*' is wrong here.

   Learner: what should I write then teacher?

   Mediator: you should change it to '*can*'.

   Learner: why?

   Mediator: Because we can use '*no + a noun*' or '*none*' instead of '*any*' in a sentence but the verb of the sentence should be in the positive form, while the verb of the sentence containing 'any' must be negative.

Accordingly, during the clarification of the errors, the learners were provided with some other examples on the subject matter. Finally, as mentioned before, since the grammar was the most common error of the learners, in order to enhance the grammatical ability of the learners, it was tried to concentrate more on the grammatical points in the treatment sessions of the experimental groups. Therefore, the last two sessions of the treatment were allocated to working on more grammatical points (such as pluralization, prepositions, and tenses). In this way, depending on the kind of the error, the need of the learners, the rules of the grammar were instructed

either by the help of an example in a sentence (implicit teaching), or by giving an explanation (explicit teaching). In addition, during the treatment, the experimental groups were asked to write three more essays on different topics in order to exercise what they have learnt and to show their weak points.

The traditional way of teaching essay writing presented to the control groups involved the complete instruction of the essay writing from the beginning. The instruction lasted for 10 sessions and each session continued for 30 minutes. During the treatment period of the control group, two targets (from the total of 20 targets) in each session were instructed from the essay writing instruction of Barron's IELTS Essay book. The learners in the control groups were taught on the four writing skills of responding to the task, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, in addition to the revision part.

3.5 Limitations and Delimitations

This study had some limitations in the process of conducting. First of all, since dynamic assessment is an approach which uses mediation and instruction, performing this issue is possible in a long time. Therefore, the issue of time was a difficulty which could cause the participants to leave or quite the study and make the outcomes unknown. Finding participants in the same range of age and same English language proficiency was another problem the researcher encountered. As the last concern, since the performance of the participants ought to be corrected and evaluated by different teachers using the checklist, finding experienced teachers with a good command of English for having reliable results was not easy.

On the other hand the study had some delimitations, too. As an example, mediation presented to the learners in the experimental group and also teaching the learners in the control group were both done by the researcher. Accordingly, the researcher was the only mediator or tutor in all sessions of treatment and in both of the groups. The reason that the researcher deliberately chose this direction was to increase the reliability of the study. The other issue that can be mentioned as delimitation of this study is related to the instruments used in the data collection. The researcher used standard instruments in order to intensify the validity and reliability of the research.

Moreover, in the statistical analysis of this study, the results were analyzed and compared by using both independent sample t-test and ANCOVA to prove the correction of the results and increase the reliability.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

Since the main objective of this study was to consider the effect of dynamic assessment and more specifically mediated learning experience, considering the significant differences among the groups is of a high significance. In this research, the scores obtained from the two groups in the pre-test, and the post-test were compared independently to see if there is any difference between the results of the pre-tests and post-tests of the both groups.

By considering the scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test, there should be certain answers to the research questions but this was only possible by considering the statistical analysis of the gained scores. The mean, variance, and the standard deviation of each group were computed and compared. In order to compare the results achieved from the writings of the different groups, and to check how the groups were different from each other on a particular variable, independent sample

test (t-test) was used. In other words, t-test was conducted here in order to compare the mean scores of the control and experimental groups. The t-test is used for identifying the differences where the means obtained belong to two different groups. T-test is especially useful when there are two groups and two sets of data from before and after the treatment and the goal is comparing the mean scores on a variable.

Moreover, in this research, a One-Way ANCOVA was used for analyzing the scores and comparing the results obtained from the pre-test and post-test in both control and experimental groups. Analysis of covariance or ANCOVA is applied when the probable effects of a variable are to be controlled. This situation happens when the groups are different on a variable that can influence the effect of independent variable on the dependent variable. Actually, ANCOVA illuminates if the independent variable is influencing or not and then eliminates the effect of the covariate statistically.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology of the current study. First of all the design of the study and the procedure were explained thoroughly. Then information about the participants and their English language level were discussed. The process of collecting the data and the issues considered in data collection were offered. Moreover, a comprehensive and complete explanation was presented about the active application of MLE and traditional teaching in the conduct of the study was presented and in the last section statistical analyses were briefly defined.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of the data collected on the analysis of the students' essay writing ability as the dependent variable. The purpose behind conducting this study was to discover whether there was any development in the essay writing skill of the Iranian EFL learners when interaction and mediation is applied. A secondary purpose was to investigate whether there was any difference between the male and female learners in terms of receiving intervention and instruction.

At the very first step of this research, a Standard English language test (OPT) was administered in order to identifying the homogeneity of the participants. As it was mentioned before in chapter three, 100 pre-intermediate-level Iranian male and female students participated in this test. The purpose behind this test, which was considered as a general English test, was to assess the linguistic competency level of the participants and to select the students from the same levels. Accordingly, 60 out of 100 participants were selected as the pre-intermediate-level learners and the rest were eliminated.

The participants who were selected to join the study were randomly assigned in two experimental and control groups. Every group contained 30 participants including 15

male and 15 female in each. As the pre-test, in the next step, a topic was given to the participants to write an essay on. Accordingly, before presenting the treatment to the learners, the performances of the two control and experimental groups were compared with each other. Then, all the participants in all groups attended in a treatment period in a way that the participants in the experimental group were presented with mediation and the learners in the control group experienced the traditional way of essay writing learning. At the end, in order to investigate the results of the treatment, a post-test was presented to all the participants again.

The Statistical analyses consisted of a One-Way ANCOVA for analyzing the scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test in both control and experimental groups. In addition, t-test was conducted in order to analyzing the post-test results obtained from the intervention with mediated learning experience. All the statistics conducted in this study were carried out by applying SPSS 21 software. For the purpose of comparing the results in pre-test and post-test, a procedure of statistical analysis was accomplished and the detailed explanation of this process is shown in tables and figures by the purpose of providing a clear-cut image of what has been obtained.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted for both sections of the pre-test and post-test. Accordingly, frequency, mean, and standard deviation values were obtained for both of the groups both totally and separately (considering the male and female learners).

4.2.1 Pre-tests

The first research question of this study asks if there is any significant difference in the essay writing ability of EFL learners who are involved in a mediated learning experience and those who are instructed by the traditional way of teaching.

In order to find a more precise answer to this question, the scores obtained from the pre-test part of the research were analyzed separately. In this part, the learners were presented with a topic selected from IELTS Essay Writing Test and were expected to spend about 40 minutes on the topic given. In this way, the learners' writing ability was assessed with the purpose of being able to ascribe the possible developments of experimental groups' essay writing ability in the post-tests to the use of mediation learning experience after the treatment. Table 4.1, represents the descriptive statistics of the scores of the pre-test.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics for the Pre-test Scores

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test Scores Totally					
Groups	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Control	30	4.83	0.56	4.00	6.00
Experimental	30	4.86	0.86	4.00	7.00
Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test Scores Separately					
Groups	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Male Control	15	4.86	0.51	4.00	5.50
Female Control	15	4.80	0.62	4.00	6.00
Male Experimental	15	4.86	0.63	4.00	6.00
Female experimental	15	4.86	1.06	4.00	7.00

4.2.2 Post-tests

By the end of the treatment which was consisted of presenting mediation and traditional teaching way to the experimental and control groups respectively, a post-test was presented to all the learners in control and experimental groups.

Accordingly, the differences between the essay writing ability of the learners in this section was assessed too. The descriptive statistics of the post-test results is displayed in table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics for the Post-test Scores

Descriptive Statistics for the Post-test Scores Totally					
Groups	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Control	30	5.00	0.70	4.00	6.50
Experimental	30	6.03	0.99	4.50	8.00
Descriptive Statistics for Post-test Scores Separately					
Groups	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Male Control	15	5.06	0.67	4.00	6.50
Female Control	15	4.93	0.75	4.00	6.00
Male Experimental	15	5.93	0.86	4.50	7.50
Female Experimental	15	6.13	1.14	4.50	8.00

4.3 Statistical Analyses: Pre-tests vs. Post-tests

Beside presenting the descriptive analysis of the scores in pre-tests and post-tests, the obtained data of the pre-test and post-test in control and experimental groups were analyzed by using a Covariance or One-Way ANCOVA to see whether there are any differences between these groups and to compare the essay writing achievement of both of the mentioned groups. The other purpose behind using the One-way ANCOVA was to eliminate peripheral variability (learners' writing ability) that originates from pre-existing individual differences. In the next step, a t-test was run to compare the scores obtained in the post-tests. The significant differences between

the groups were recognized by considering the 0.05 alpha level in the SPSS software. The data obtained from the pre-tests and post-tests in each group were analyzed in order to verify whether there are any differences in the post-test scores of the two groups after controlling for differences in ability. The results are presented in the tables 4.3, and 4.4 below.

Table 4.3. ANCOVA Analysis of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of Con. Group

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	10.370[a]	1	10.370	70.316	.000	.715
Intercept	.008	1	.008	.052	.821	.002
Pretest-Post	10.370	1	10.370	70.316	.000	.715
Error	4.130	28	.147			
Total	764.500	30				
Corrected Total	14.500	29				

Table 4.4. ANCOVA Analysis of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Exp. Group

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	20.805[a]	1	20.805	71.377	.000	.718
Intercept	1.358	1	1.358	4.658	.040	.143
PrePostControl	20.805	1	20.805	71.377	.000	.718
Error	8.161	28	.291			
Total	1121.000	30				
Corrected Total	27.967	29				

As the tables show, the partial eta-squared in the experimental group (.718) is higher than that of the control group (.715). Therefore, it can be said that Dynamic

Assessment with specific reference to mediated learning experience has an effect on the essay writing ability of the experimental group. Consequently, it can be concluded that the control group (taught by traditional teaching) did not perform better than the experimental group (receiving the mediated learning experience). On the other hand, the F-value in both tables of 4.3 and 4.4 are higher than 1 (F>1) and this means that there is a difference (somewhere) between the pre-test and post-test scores.

Then an independent sample t-test was conducted in order to compare the mean scores of the control and experimental groups. In other words, the values of the continuous variables of instruction and mediation for these groups were compared with each other. Table 4.5 represents the t-test analysis of the post-tests in the mentioned groups.

Table 4.5. Independent Samples Test for Equality of Means (Post-tests of Con. and Exp. Groups Totally)

Independent Samples Test for Equality of Means for the Post-tests of Female Con. and Exp.				
Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig (2-tailed)
Control	30	5.000	.7071	
Experimental	30	6.033	.9994	.000

The other reason for running this t-test was to check any possible difference between the two groups. As table 4.5 shows, the mean of the post-test scores in control group was 5.000, and this value in experimental group was 6.033. So, the mean of the post-test scores of experimental group is significantly higher than the control group. Besides, the significance level of the test was .000 and this number was lower than 0.05.

In the next step, in order to discover the differences among four groups of male and female in both control and experimental groups, an ANCOVA was conducted. By doing so, the influence of additional variables was removed (reducing the error variance) and the probability of detecting the differences between the groups increased. The results obtained are illustrated in tables 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9.

Table 4.6. ANCOVA Analysis of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Female Con. Group

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	6.230[a]	1	6.230	47.535	.000	.785
Intercept	.011	1	.011	.087	.773	.007
PretestPost	6.230	1	6.230	47.535	.000	.785
Error	1.704	13	.131			
Total	373.000	15				
Corrected Total	7.933	14				

Table 4.7. ANCOVA Analysis of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Female Exp. Group

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	14.814[a]	1	14.814	56.318	.000	.812
Intercept	1.266	1	1.266	4.815	.047	.270
PretestPost	14.814	1	14.814	56.318	.000	.812
Error	3.419	13	.263			
Total	582.500	15				
Corrected Total	18.233	14				

Tables 4.6 and 4.7 show the ANCOVA analysis for the female control and experimental groups in their pre-tests and post-tests. As it is shown, the partial eta squared for the female control group is .785 and the Sig value for their table is .000. On the other hand, the partial eta squared for the female experimental group is .812 but the Sig value for this group's table is .000 too.

Table 4.8. ANCOVA Analysis of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Male Con. Group

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2.772	1	2.772	6.980	.020	.349
Intercept	.169	1	.169	.425	.526	.032
PretestPost	2.772	1	2.772	6.980	.020	.349
Error	5.162	13	.397			
Total	418.750	15				
Corrected Total	7.933	14				

Table 4.9. ANCOVA Analysis of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Male Exp. Group

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	6.003	1	6.003	17.615	.001	.575
Intercept	.217	1	.217	.636	.440	.047
PretestPost	6.003	1	6.003	17.615	.001	.575
Error	4.430	13	.341			
Total	538.500	15				
Corrected Total	10.433	14				

Similarly, in tables 4.8 and 4.9, the ANCOVA analysis for the male control and experimental groups in their pre-tests and post-tests is displayed. The partial eta squared for the male control group is .349 and the Sig value for their table is .020. On the other hand, the partial eta squared for the male experimental group is .575 and the Sig value for this group's table is .001.

The results indicate that after controlling for the primary quantitative ability, the differences in post-test scores got significantly different among the groups:

- Female Control Group: F =47.535, ρ=.000 <.05, partial eta-squared= .785

- Female Experimental Group: F=56.318, ρ=.000<.05, partial eta-squared= .812

- Male Control Group: F=6.980, ρ=.020<.05, partial eta-squared=.349

- Male Experimental Group: F= 17.615, ρ=.001<.05, partial eta-squared=.575

According to the results, the partial eta-squared in male experimental group (.575) and female experimental group (.812) are higher than that of the male control group (.349) and female control group (.785) respectively. Therefore, improvement in essay writing through a mediated learning experience had a large effect on essay writing achievement of the both experimental groups. Consequently, it can be concluded that the control groups (the groups that were taught by traditional teaching) did not perform better than the experimental groups. Since (.812) is even greater than (.575), the interpretation is that female learners in experimental group were more successful comparing to the males in the so-called group. As a result, these findings answer the second research question of this study and proofs that dynamic assessment with specific reference to essay writing is gender-related.

4.4 Comparison of Statistical Analyses: Post-tests

In order to compare the results obtained from the essay writings in the post-tests of female experimental group and male experimental group, two t-tests were conducted. By doing so, it was specified that to what extent the male and female groups benefited from the intervention approach which was presented through mediation learning experience.

Table 4.10. Independent Samples Test for Equality of Means (Post-tests of Con. and Exp. Groups Separately)

Independent Samples Test for Equality of Means for the Post-tests of Female Con. and Exp.				
Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig (2-tailed)
Control	15	4.933	.7528	
Experimental	15	6.133	1.1412	.002
Independent Samples Test for Equality of Means for the Post-tests of Male Con. and Exp.				
Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig (2-tailed)
Control	15	4.900	.6601	
Experimental	15	5.633	.9537	.021

As table 4.10 shows, the mean value for the females in the control group who were taught by traditional teaching was 4.933 and this number was 6.133 for the females in the experimental group. Similarly, it is shown that the mean for the male participants in the control group was 4.900 and 5.633 for the same sex of participants in the experimental group. On the other hand, while the mean value for the both groups in the control group had a small difference, the females in experimental group (6.133) performed much better than the males in the same group (5.633). In addition, the significance levels in the post-test scores of the female and male participants were .002 and .021 respectively which are smaller than .05 and this means that the

mentioned difference is not by chance, but because of the effect of the independent variable.

4.5 Answering the Research Questions

4.5.1 Research Question 1

- What is the impact of dynamic assessment on EFL learners' essay writing ability?

In order to answer the first question, an independent samples t-test was used and through comparing the t-test results of essay writings in the pre-tests and post-tests between the control and experimental groups, the mean of the post-test scores in the control group was 5.000, and this value in experimental group was 6.033. So, the mean of the post-test scores in experimental group was meaningfully higher than the control group (table 4.5). Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a difference somewhere among the mean scores obtained from the post-tests in all the groups. In addition, according to tables 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9, the partial eta-squared in male experimental group (.575) and female experimental group (.812) are higher than that of the male control group (.349) and female control group (.785) respectively. Thus, providing learners with the intervention through mediated learning experience had a large effect on the essay writing ability of the EFL learners in both of the male and female experimental groups.

4.5.2 Research Question 2

- Is dynamic assessment with specific reference to writing ability gender related?

As far as the eta-squared of female experimental group (.812) is even greater than that of male experimental group (.575), we can say that the female learners in experimental group were more successful compared with the males in the same

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group. As a result, dynamic assessment with specific reference to writing ability gender related is gender related.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the statistical analyses of the current study. The results obtained from the study were analyzed in descriptive and inferential forms and also offered in corresponding tables. Finally, the hypotheses of the study were tested according to the results found by the data analyses. The discussion on these analyses will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the primary goal of the current research was to investigate the effect of dynamic assessment on the writing ability of Iranian EFL learners. Moreover, this study was conducted to examine whether there are any important difference between the essays of the learners who were involved in the mediated learning experience and that of those who did not experience this mediation. Considering the results presented in chapter four, this chapter will discuss the outcomes of the study in terms of the research questions. A summary on the current study will be presented subsequently and at the end the chapter will be finished by bringing up the pedagogical implications and presenting some suggestions and ideas for the further research.

5.2 Discussion

The research questions of the present study were:

- What is the impact of dynamic assessment on EFL learners' essay writing ability?

- Is dynamic assessment with specific reference to writing ability gender related?

In order to answer these questions, the results obtained from the pre-test and post-test were investigated. The scores of the essay writing tests in the post-tests, as mentioned earlier in chapter four, have revealed that the learners in the both

experimental groups performed better compared to the two control groups. As it was shown, the mean in the pre-test of the control group (male and female) was 4.83, while this number changed to 5.00 in the post-test results of this group. On the other hand, the number of mean in the pre-test of the experimental group (male and female) was 4.86 and changed significantly to 6.03 in the post-test.

Therefore, it can be said that the two experimental groups that experienced the mediation approach were more successful compared with the other two control groups who were taught by traditional way of teaching . Since the mediated learning experience provides learners with so many benefits for better and easier essay writing, the participants' progress was expected. Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) is a kind of interaction between the learner and the environment by the help of a teacher or mediator who helps to the cognitive development of the learner. When there is no mediation, the opportunity of the learners for benefiting from the learning is limited and as Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991) put it, the lack of MLE is the main reason of the learner's deficiencies in positive disposition, learning tools, and the tendency to learn. In addition, in this regard, rewriting practice after the mediation was also applied either independently or with the guidance of the teacher in order to help the learners practice the corrections and apply the feedbacks.

The outcomes of this study demonstrate that almost all the learners who have participated in the research had problem in the essay writing and improved their writings by experiencing the mediation. The mediation presented to the learners was different in each of them because the ZPD was different in different learners. During the mediation, some of the participants of the study were able to improve their writings because they could specify their own errors or mistakes after revising their

essays. As a result the request for help from the teacher followed and the problem was solved by the help of the mediator's hints and clues. On the other hand, some other participants were in need of the teacher's control and explicit stating. Concerning the errors which were in the essays of the participants, most of the difficulties of the learners were concerned with grammar. However, the other areas of the language including spelling, vocabulary, and cohesion were also among the errors observed in the essays of the participants. By comparing the pre-test and post-test essays written by the participants, it was specified that mediation was successful most of all in the grammar part and less than all in the spelling part. The reason behind this finding is that in case of grammar, the number of grammatical errors of the learners was limited to some common difficulties among the essays and in case of spelling the domain of the words to be learned was unlimited.

Grammar was the main part of the learners' errors in their writings and since grammatical errors can affect the whole meaning of the sentence, considering these kinds of errors was of high importance in the mediation part of this study. Accordingly, the learners were asked to find their errors themselves and fix it. Where they were not successful in correcting themselves, the mediator or the teacher provided them with the right answer. The area of difficulties in the grammar part included using articles (such as a, an, the), using prepositions (such as in, at, for), pluralization, using relative pronouns (like which, who, whom) and verb tenses.

The results obtained in this study support the findings of the research conducted by Knodel (1996). As mentioned in chapter two, the study investigated the effectiveness of two kinds of dynamic assessment approaches, the mediated learning experience

and the graduated prompt, on the assessment of composition writing of the poor writers without a learning disability and the learners with a learning disability.

The results showed that the learners as a group considerably benefited from graduated prompt intervention. However, the other learners who did not have progress in their writings by the help of graduated prompt, experienced the mediated learning intervention and continued the study.

The intervention with mediated learning experience helped the learners to significantly improve as a group. The progress was found in the post-test section of the research for both the students with a disability and the poor writers who experienced the graduated prompt approach and improved. The only difference between the two groups was that the poor writers who had a disability were in need of lower levels of prompting whereas the poor writers with learning disability called for the higher levels. The findings on this study suggest that the mediated learning experience and the graduated prompt approach for both groups of poor writers with or without a learning disability were effective methods of assessment in recognizing potential to learn.

In the present study also, the post-test scores in the experimental groups were significantly higher than their scores in the pre-test section. The results demonstrate that the learners' essays improved in terms of both content and clarity. The mechanical errors in the post-test section were fewer comparing to the pre-test part. Moreover, after the treatment through a mediated learning experience, coherence and cohesion were considered more than before.

Lantolf and Poehner (2004) revealed the fact that the participants' level of understanding had changed during the first and second sessions. He indicates that the learners in both sessions required the help of a tutor because they were not able to control the structures completely on their own. However, the kind and amount of the help that they asked for changed a little. In other words, they were able to do better with less help in the second session. The results of the current study also indicated that the learners needed less help for writing in the next sessions of treatment and could perform more independently than the previous sessions. Therefore, this issue shows that the learners improved.

As mentioned earlier in chapter two, Zhang (2010) also conducted a research on constructing dynamic assessment mode in English writing class. He proposed that such an assessment mode should present graduated and contingent scaffolding instructional mediation based on the developmental needs of the learners in the writing process and as a result reflecting the dialectical integration of instruction and assessment, making it possible to improve both the development of the learners' writing ability and the teaching. The study proved that the learners showed more willingness for doing writing assignments and also were in more cooperation with their teachers. In addition, it seemed that the learners enjoyed more while writing since they were more willing to write, more active, and more cooperative while doing the task.

In the traditional assessment, the role of teacher's intervention in the improvement of learners' independent performance was not considered and this development was not visible. Dynamic assessment mode was investigated by Zhang (2008) for online EFL writing classes. The study showed that the dynamic assessment greatly improves the

learners' writing abilities by mediation on writing strategies, encouraging remarks, and giving reference materials by the teacher. These factors not only bring out creativity for the learners, but also lead to harmonious collaboration and cooperation between them.

He also conducted a research on constructing dynamic assessment mode in English writing class (Zhang, 2010). This study suggested that in presenting the dynamic assessment to the students, the instructional and graduated mediation should be offered based on the developmental requirements of the learners in the process of writing. Accordingly, it is concluded that, the instruction and assessment are integrated and as a result, both the learners' development and the teaching are enriched.

This research proposed that such an assessment mode should present graduated and contingent scaffolding instructional mediation based on the developmental needs of the learners in the writing process and as a result reflecting the dialectical integration of instruction and assessment, making it possible to improve both the development of the learners' writing ability and the teaching. The study proved that the learners showed more willingness for doing writing assignments and also were in more cooperation with their teachers. In addition, it seemed that the learners enjoyed more while writing since they were more willing to write, more active, and more cooperative while doing the task.

Correspondingly, Xiaoxiao and Yan (2010) proposed that EFL process writing integrated with dynamic assessment can build up the learners' writing confidence and improve their writing competence. The process is defined in the following chain

reflection. In the learners' ZPD, the teacher's mediation stimulates the learners' responsiveness and as a result their eagerness of engagement in the writing process rises and the span of the ZPD increases and therefore, the result is that the learners' improvement from their existing cognitive ability level to the future level happens.

Accordingly, the learners see their own progress clearly while having face to face interaction with their teacher and as a result their self-confidence for a better writing is built up and they can definitely transfer what they learnt in this writing task to their future simple or more complicated writing assignments. The study also showed that the writings of the learners came to be more logical and richer in content comparing to their drafts. The present study also showed the similar improvement in terms of content since the essays were clearer and richer compared to the essays written in pre-tests.

As indicated in chapter two, Ajideh and Nourdad (2012) examined the effect of dynamic assessment on EFL reading comprehension in different proficiency levels. The immediate and delayed effect of dynamic assessment on reading comprehension ability of EFL learners at three proficiency levels was investigated. The conclusion of the study revealed that applying dynamic assessment had both immediate and delayed effect on improving the reading comprehension of the EFL learners; however, no significant difference was seen among different proficiency levels. It was concluded that dynamic assessment can be beneficial for EFL readers and its effect remains over time. Accordingly, the findings of the current study on the positive effect of dynamic assessment are supported once more.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

In this study, the scores of the learners on the essay writing ability increased significantly because of the mediation through intervention and interaction. Accordingly, some conclusions can be made based on this finding. As an example, the learners should be provided with the instruction that is slightly above their level of cognitive development.

As Vygotsky (1978) puts it, the only good instruction is the one that leads to development. When the learners are forced and put into a challenge for a higher cognitive level, the level of expectations for the learners themselves increases. In other words, by making the learners believe that their capabilities are more or higher than the levels they consider, this causes them to perform better and try harder for reaching the higher level.

Stremmel and Fu (1993) indicate that during establishing the dynamic assessment approach, the role of the teacher that is the mediator in providing a supportive context for encouraging the learners' learning is significant. They believe that effective teaching throughout the assessment includes an equal partnership in learning when the mediator makes fewer demands on the learners or does not employ too much demonstration.

In addition, teacher must be able to recognize the levels and abilities of the learners in order to make a profit from choosing the type of assistance. Usually the significant responsibility of deciding for incorporating a scaffolding and supportive approach into assessment and instruction is with the teacher. As another concern that asks for

the capability of the teacher is the issue of time since the investment of time in performing dynamic assessment is of high importance.

Amour-Thomas and Gordon (2012) suggested to the teachers to "select tasks with attributes that initially attract, sustain their attention and emotional investment over time" (p.13). This time management is more important compared to that of traditional assessment classes owing to the specific nature of testing and this is the main point to consider for the teachers who do not apply the dynamic assessment approach. However, in order to benefit from investing the time, the teacher should have some specific information on the way of employment and understanding of the learners of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Accordingly, the type and amount of assistance required to be presented to the learners with the performance below the average of standardized measures, must be further assessed with an intervention element in order to define the type and amount of assistance required. In addition, as Vygotsky, 1978 states, cognitive perspectives of learning and improvement suggest a number of issues that play a significant role in the outcomes of learning: social interaction between the learner and knowledgeable adult or capable peer. Peer collaboration in encountering the writing difficulties or in other words making use of the help of the learners with a better understanding of the writing process can be considered as another alternative to the learner-teacher interactions while teaching writing process cognitive and metacognitive skills.

To sum, the significant notions of this research can be mentioned as follows:

1. The intervention should be presented considering the learners' level of cognitive development.

2. Learners need the help of a mediator to perform a task at the beginning and after internalizing it they will be able to perform the task independently.

3. The learners should be aware of their higher capabilities to reach the higher levels.

4. The role of the mediator in providing helpful context or as a partner in learning plays an important role.

5. The mediators should be capable of planning time while providing mediation.

6. Teamwork can help the learner-teacher interactions in teaching the cognitive and metacognitive skills of writing.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Rutland and Campbell (1995) pointed that most research on the area of dynamic assessment applied the tasks which are uninvolved in the classrooms usually. The present study attempted to apply a dynamic assessment approach for assessing essay writing ability. Further future research in this area requires focusing on the suggestions that follows:

1. This study was limited to only one type of dynamic assessment that is the mediated learning experience, so future studies can consider the other domains of dynamic assessment related to the classroom.

2. Addressing the process of teaching and learning in a dynamic assessment approach is required for the future research in order to shift the focus from the performance to the type and amount of intervention required.

3. This study considered only the pre-intermediate proficiency level learners. Future research can investigate the effect of dynamic assessment on other levels of proficiency.

4. Dynamic assessment and more specifically MLE can be done with other language skills other than writing too.

5. The effect of mediation provided to the learners is different from learner to learner, because the degrees of responsiveness to the mediation or instruction are not the same. Therefore, the extent to which different learners benefit from the assistance requires further investigations.

5.5 Conclusion

This study was carried out to discover if there was any important difference between the essay writing performance of the learners who were presented with an intervention through a MLE and that of those who were taught by traditional way of teaching writing.

In this research 100 pre-intermediate learners from different language institutes of Iran participated who were all native speakers of Persian and between 18 to 25 years old. At the beginning, they were asked to attend a general language test in order to determine their proficiency level. 60 people out of these 100 learners were selected and randomly assigned into two experimental and control groups each including 15 male and 15 female learners. In the next step, the two groups attended a pre-test which was writing on a topic and then both experienced the treatment section.

The experimental group was provided with mediation and the control group was taught in traditional way of teaching. The mediation was presented by focusing on

the errors of the learners' essays and helping for improving them in 10 sessions. This process happened repeatedly to finding the weak points and ameliorating them. The learners in the control groups, were taught on the traditional way of instruction in 10 sessions.

Finally, in order to reach the main goal of the study and investigate the role of treatments done, the learners were post-tested by another topic of writing by the same condition in the pre-test. All the essays were scored by the criteria considered in the checklist of IELTS Task 2 writing and obtained scores of the two groups in the pre-test and post-test were compared. Then in order to compare the results in the pre-test and post-test One Way ANCOVA was used and in the second stage, to see how the groups were different from each other in their post-tests, t-test was used.

It has been shown by the present study that the dynamic assessment is an effective means for defining the performance of the learners. Thus, dynamic assessment must be applied on the learners who perform poorly on the standardized measures. While using a dynamic assessment approach for the learners from varying achievements and abilities, it should be considered by the assessor that the nature of the learners' difficulties is not the same and as a result different levels of intervention is required from the side of the learners.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: General English Test (OPT)

Questions 1 – 5

- Where can you see these notices?
- For questions 1 to 5, mark one letter A, B or C on your Answer Sheet.

1   You can look, but don't touch the pictures.

   A   in an office
   B   in a cinema
   C   in a museum

2   Please give the right money to the driver.

   A   in a bank
   B   on a bus
   C   in a cinema

3   NO PARKING PLEASE

   A   in a street
   B   on a book
   C   on a table

4   CROSS BRIDGE FOR TRAINS TO EDINBURGH

   A   in a bank
   B   in a garage
   C   in a station

5   KEEP IN A COLD PLACE

   A   on clothes
   B   on furniture
   C   on food

- In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text below.
- For questions 6 to 10, mark one letter A, B or C on your Answer Sheet.

THE STARS

There are millions of stars in the sky. If you look (6) .... the sky on a clear night, it is possible

to see about 3000 stars. They look small, but they are really (7) .... big hot balls of burning

gas. Some of them are huge, but others are much smaller, like our planet Earth. The biggest stars are

very bright, but they only live for a short time. Every day new stars (8) .... born and old stars

die. All the stars are very far away. The light from the nearest star takes more (9) .... four

years to reach Earth. Hundreds of years ago, people (10) .... stars, like the North star, to know

which direction to travel in. Today you can still see that star.

6	A	at	B	up	C	on
7	A	very	B	too	C	much
8	A	is	B	be	C	are
9	A	that	B	of	C	than
10	A	use	B	used	C	using

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Questions 11 – 20

- In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the texts.
- For questions 11 to 20, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

Good smiles ahead for young teeth

Older Britons are the worst in Europe when it comes to keeping their teeth. But British youngsters

(11) .... more to smile about because (12) .... teeth are among the best. Almost

80% of Britons over 65 have lost all or some (13) .... their teeth according to a World

Health Organisation survey. Eating too (14) .... sugar is part of the problem. Among

(15) .... , 12-year olds have on average only three missing, decayed or filled teeth.

11 A getting	B got	C have	D having
12 A their	B his	C them	D theirs
13 A from	B of	C among	D between
14 A much	B lot	C many	D deal
15 A person	B people	C children	D family

Christopher Columbus and the New World

On August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain to find a new route to India, China and Japan. At this time most people thought you would fall off the edge of the world if you sailed too far. Yet sailors such as Columbus had seen how a ship appeared to get lower and lower on the horizon as it sailed away. For Columbus this (16) .... that the world was round. He (17) .... to his men about the distance travelled each day. He did not want them to think that he did not (18) .... exactly where they were going. (19) ...., on October 12, 1492, Columbus and his men landed on a small island he named San Salvador. Columbus believed he was in Asia, (20) .... he was actually in the Caribbean.

16 A made   B pointed   C was   D proved

17 A lied   B told   C cheated   D asked

18 A find   B know   C think   D expect

19 A Next   B Secondly   C Finally   D Once

20 A as   B but   C because   D if

- In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.
- For questions 21 to 40, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

21   The children won't go to sleep .... we leave a light on outside their bedroom.

   A   except   B   otherwise   C   unless   D   but

22   I'll give you my spare keys in case you .... home before me.

   A   would get   B   got   C   will get   D   get

23   My holiday in Paris gave me a great .... to improve my French accent.

   A   occasion   B   chance   C   hope   D   possibility

24   The singer ended the concert .... her most popular song.

   A   by   B   with   C   in   D   as

25   Because it had not rained for several months, there was a .... of water.

   A   shortage   B   drop   C   scarce   D   waste

26   I've always .... you as my best friend.

   A   regarded   B   thought   C   meant   D   supposed

27   She came to live here .... a month ago.

   A   quite   B   beyond   C   already   D   almost

28   Don't make such a ....! The dentist is only going to look at your teeth.

   A   fuss   B   trouble   C   worry   D   reaction

29   He spent a long time looking for a tie which .... with his new shirt.

   A   fixed   B   made   C   went   D   wore

30   Fortunately, ... from a bump on the head, she suffered no serious injuries from her fall.

   A   other   B   except   C   besides   D   apart

31   She had changed so much that .... anyone recognised her.

   A almost   B hardly   C not   D nearly

32   .... teaching English, she also writes children's books.

   A Moreover   B As well as   C In addition D Apart

33   It was clear that the young couple were ...., of taking charge of the restaurant.

   A responsible   B reliable   C capable   D able

34   The book .... of ten chapters, each one covering a different topic.

   A comprises   B includes   C consists   D contains

35   Mary was disappointed with her new shirt as the colour .... very quickly.

   A bleached   B died   C vanished   D faded

36   National leaders from all over the world are expected to attend the .... meeting.

   A peak   B summit   C top   D apex

37   Jane remained calm when she won the lottery and .... about her business as if
     nothing had happened.

   A came   B brought   C went   D moved

38   I suggest we .... outside the stadium tomorrow at 8.30.

   A meeting   B meet   C met   D will meet

39   My remarks were .... as a joke, but she was offended by them.

   A pretended   B thought   C meant   D supposed

40   You ought to take up swimming for the .... of your health.

   A concern   B relief   C sake   D cause

Part 2

Questions 41 – 50

- In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best fits each space in the texts.
- For questions 41 to 50, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

CLOCKS

The clock was the first complex mechanical machinery to enter the home, (41) .... it

was too expensive for the (42) .... person until the 19th century, when

(43) .... production techniques lowered the price. Watches were also developed, but

they (44) .... luxury items until 1868 when the first cheap pocket watch was designed

in Switzerland. Watches later became (45) .... available and Switzerland became the

world's leading watch manufacturing centre for the next 100 years.

41 A despite	B although	C otherwise	D average
42 A average	B medium	C general	D common
43 A vast	B large	C wide	D mass
44 A lasted	B endured	C kept	D remained
45 A mostly	B chiefly	C greatly	D widely

Dublin City Walks

What better way of getting to know a new city than by walking around it?

Whether you choose the Medieval Walk, which will (46) .... you to the Dublin of 1000 years ago, find out about the more (47) .... history of the city on the Eighteenth Century Walk, or meet the ghosts of Dublin's many writers on the Literary Walk, we know you will enjoy the experience.

Dublin City Walks (48) .... twice daily. Meet your guide at 10.30 a.m. or 2.30 p.m. at the Tourist Information Office. No advance (49) .... is necessary. Special (50) .... are available for families, children and parties of more than ten people.

46 A introduce   B present   C move   D show

47 A near   B late   C recent   D close

48 A take place   B occur   C work   D function

49 A paying   B reserving   C warning   D booking

50 A funds   B costs   C fees   D rates

Questions 51 – 60

- In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.
- For questions 51 to 60, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

51 If you're not too tired we could have a .... of tennis after lunch.

   A match   B play   C game   D party

52 Don't you get tired .... watching TV every night?

   A with   B by   C of   D at

53 Go on, finish the dessert. It needs .... up because it won't stay fresh until tomorrow.

   A eat   B eating   C to eat   D eaten

54 We're not used to .... invited to very formal occasions.

   A be   B have   C being   D having

55 I'd rather we .... meet this evening, because I'm very tired.

   A wouldn't   B shouldn't   C hadn't   D didn't

56 She obviously didn't want to discuss the matter so I didn't .... the point.

   A maintain   B chase   C follow   D pursue

57 Anyone ...... after the start of the play is not allowed in until the interval.

   A arrives   B has arrived   C arriving   D arrived

58 This new magazine is .... with interesting stories and useful information.

   A full   B packed   C thick   D compiled

59 The restaurant was far too noisy to be .... to relaxed conversation.

   A conducive   B suitable   C practical   D fruitful

60 In this branch of medicine, it is vital to .... open to new ideas.

   A stand   B continue   C hold   D remain

Part 3

Writing section

• Imagine you have just returned from a two-week holiday. Write an e-mail to your friend telling him/her about the holiday. Include information about the journey, where you stayed, what you did and the people you met.

Student ID.................................Name..Faculty.............................

Appendix B: Pre-Test

PRE-TEST

Name…………………………………..

Age…………………………………..

Sex: male…………female…………...

- You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

- Write about the following topic:

Happiness is considered very important in life.

Why is it difficult to define?

What factors are important in achieving happiness?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Appendix C: IELTS Task 2 Writing Checklist and Descriptors

UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations

IELTS
AUSTRALIA

BRITISH COUNCIL

IELTS Task 2 Writing band descriptors (public version)

Band	Task Response	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	▪ fully addresses all parts of the task ▪ presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas	▪ uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention ▪ skilfully manages paragraphing	▪ uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'	▪ uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	▪ sufficiently addresses all parts of the task ▪ presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas	▪ sequences information and ideas logically ▪ manages all aspects of cohesion well ▪ uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately	▪ uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings ▪ skilfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation ▪ produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation	▪ uses a wide range of structures ▪ the majority of sentences are error-free ▪ makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	▪ addresses all parts of the task ▪ presents a clear position throughout the response ▪ presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to over-generalise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus	▪ logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout ▪ uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use ▪ presents a clear central topic within each paragraph	▪ uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision ▪ uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation ▪ may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation	▪ uses a variety of complex structures ▪ produces frequent error-free sentences ▪ has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	▪ addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others ▪ presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive ▪ presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear	▪ arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression ▪ uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical ▪ may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately ▪ uses paragraphing, but not always logically	▪ uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task ▪ attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy ▪ makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication	▪ uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms ▪ makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication
5	▪ addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places ▪ expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no	▪ presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression ▪ makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-	▪ uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task ▪ may make noticeable errors in	▪ uses only a limited range of structures ▪ attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences

IELTS Task 2 Writing band descriptors (public version)

Band	Task Response	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	■ fully addresses all parts of the task ■ presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas	■ uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention ■ skilfully manages paragraphing	■ uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'	■ uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	■ sufficiently addresses all parts of the task ■ presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas	■ sequences information and ideas logically ■ manages all aspects of cohesion well ■ uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately	■ uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings ■ skilfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation ■ produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation	■ uses a wide range of structures ■ the majority of sentences are error-free ■ makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	■ addresses all parts of the task ■ presents a clear position throughout the response ■ presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to over-generalise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus	■ logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout ■ uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use ■ presents a clear central topic within each paragraph	■ uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision ■ uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation ■ may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation	■ uses a variety of complex structures ■ produces frequent error-free sentences ■ has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	■ addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others ■ presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive ■ presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear	■ arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression ■ uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical ■ may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately ■ uses paragraphing, but not always logically	■ uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task ■ attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy ■ makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication	■ uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms ■ makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication
5	■ addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places ■ expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no	■ presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression ■ makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-	■ uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task ■ may make noticeable errors in	■ uses only a limited range of structures ■ attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences

Appendix D: Participant's Essay Writing Sample

Happiness is a *(an)* important factor in our life because everyone need to *(needs)* happiness mentally. When we are happy *(,)* we can acheive *(achieve)* everythings *(everything)*. Happiness involves to have *(having-feeling)* the sense of success in life. But what is *(--)* exactly this word mean *(means)*. Happiness is difficult to define because is not the same for everyone *(it does not have the same meaning for everyone)*. When we encounter everythings *(everything)* in the trust *(correct)* way we can be happy all the time. We should satisfied from *(be satisfied with)* our life and adopt *(adapt)* ourselves in every situation we have and we should try to acheiving *(achieve)* everythings *(everything)* that we want. The word happiness should define *(should be defined)* in different way. The relationship between people can cause to *(--)* acheiving *(achieve)* happiness *(cause people to be happy)* and when people do happiness *(are happy,)* they can have calmness *(are calm)*.

But ways of *(achieving)* the happiness have a lot of problems. Some things *(factors)* that can help people to have happiness *(be happy)* are including *(include)*: watching a funny movie, and to go *(going)* to party. People should feel to have *(think of having)* good family and health. For some of the people *(,)* happiness is satisfaction in job. No one can't *(can)* deny that good life is the most important factor of happiness so money is important too. *(and since most of the people imagine a good life in having money and being rich, money can be important as well)*

Appendix E: Post-Test

POST-TEST

Name…………………………………..

Age…………………………………..

Sex: male…………female…………...

•   You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

•   Write about the following topic:

We are becoming increasingly dependent on computers. They are used in business, hospitals, crime detection and even to fly planes. What thing will they be used for in the future? Is this dependence on computers a good thing or should we be more suspicious of their benefits?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.