Effects of Dynamic Assessment on College EFL Learners' Reading Skills

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This study investigated the effects of an innovative assessment, dynamic assessment (DA), on Taiwanese EFL learners. The researcher implemented DA to assess and instruct Taiwanese college EFL students' reading skills through the use of mediation. The reading skills being investigated in the study were: finding main ideas, using contextual clues to predict the meaning of vocabulary, and making inferences. The theoretical construct of DA challenged static assessment that relies on students' current/actual performance as the primary indicator of their abilities. The study attempted to answer two research questions (1) What are the effects of DA on promoting Taiwanese EFL students' reading skills? (2) Does DA help the participants realize their learning potential? If so, to what extent? Five EFL college students in Taiwan participated in the study. The research design followed the pre-test, mediation, and post-test paradigm. Implicit and explicit mediation were provided. Quantitative and qualitative data were used for analysis. The study showed that appropriately designed DA procedures played a significant role in promoting learners' reading skills and realizing their learning potential. They also gave valuable information to help the researchers to design future lesson plans to meet the individuals' needs.

Key words: dynamic assessment, EFL reading skills, mediation, learning potential score

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, assessment has been used as an information-gathering activity to gain insight into learners' current level of knowledge or ability (Baily, 1996; McNamara, 2004). Because of its nature in measuring learners' actual development or what the learners' have already learned, it is also called "static assessment" by some researchers (Feuerstein et al., 1979).

One of the main criticisms made by critics of static assessment is that we cannot continue to assume that learners' performance is static. Poehner (2008) pointed out that very often educators, including L2 teachers, were frustrated by static assessments because they were seen as activities that are "distinct from, and perhaps even at odds with, the goals of teaching" (p. 4). It is thus not unusual to hear complaints about assessments such as "teaching to the test" and "assessment-driven instruction" from teachers. Poehner also pointed out that even in the field of applied linguistics, "language assessment and pedagogy have emerged as distinct subfields with their own professional journals and meetings" (p. 4). In fact, criticisms on the separation of assessment and instruction are not new in the education field. Thorndike (1924) criticized the contradiction between the goals of student assessment and the ways students are assessed. He proposed the "learning test concept" which assumes that some learning has to take place within the test. It means that test takers should receive feedback during or after testing on their responses to the questions tested, and clues where they make errors.

Other researchers such as Grigorenko and Sternberg (1998) highlighted a serious problem of static assessment, which is that traditional psychometrics are underpinned by assumptions of performance stability and the normal, bell-curve, distribution of capabilities. The assumptions and test data collected are expected to indicate the learners' true and accurate current performance level. When the learners' responses contradict these assumptions, the results are viewed as "errors of measurement." They thus brought up the importance of taking a new direction on assessment by asking,

"Wouldn't it be nice if researchers could test people's ability to learn new things rather than just people's ability to demonstrate the knowledge that they already have acquired?" (p. 75). In other words, Grigorenko and Sternberg argued that while yesterday's information may be relevant for many assessment questions, such information is not particularly useful for differentiating capacity from performance. The solution to this, according to Grigorenko and Sternberg and other researchers such as Kozulin and Garb (2002) and Poehner (2008), is to adopt *dynamic assessment* (DA, hereafter). DA is a development-oriented process that involves the collaboration between the mediator and the learners with the purpose of revealing the underlying causes of learners' problems and helping them overcome the problems in their learning. The current study was built upon the pedagogical approach of DA by integrating instruction and assessment to fulfill the goal of promoting college EFL students reading skill.

Dynamic Assessment (DA)

As assessors who execute a traditional assessment, we were taught to be neutral and provide directions as the way the test "is." However, providing effective mediation is the core of DA. It means that when we conduct DA, we are not expected to be a neutral third party. Instead, we should "find routes to move the learner to the next level of development" (Haywood & Lidz, 2007, p. 41). DA rests on a considerably more open-ended assumption regarding the stability of learners. This assumption considers the assessment of current functioning to be something that Vygotsky (1978) referred to as yesterday's information. A learner's current level may help to explain past performance but does little to provide teachers with guidelines regarding what to do next. One significant characteristic of DA is that it is not like static assessment which measures a learner's response without any attempt to intervene in order to change, guide, or improve the learner's performance. The importance of DA, therefore, should not be ignored because it is not simply an assessment, but also a tool that can be used to help

make a difference in the learner's skills. As Lidz and Elliott (2000) mentioned, instead of constantly seeking to discover how the child came to be what he/she is, we should strive to discover the child's potential and what he/she is capable of becoming.

DA is different from the practice of teaching to the test in that many DA proponents are interested in assessing a learner's learning potential more than the learner's final test score. Feuerstein et al. (1988) believed that human beings are not fixed systems and that their abilities to change depend on the instruction and guidance provided to them by their teacher or someone who is more proficient. Unlike teaching to the test where the ultimate learning objectives are mainly predetermined by the teacher and the content of the test, in DA the teacher and the learner collaborate to accomplish a learning task. In their collaboration, it is often difficult for the teacher to know in advance with precise certainty what feedback and support will be required by the student. Thus, in DA the teacher has to be attentive to both the quality of the intellectual guidance provided as well as the support for individuals to adapt and change in their non-static development process (Leung, 2007).

DA has had a history of more than three decades. It has been and continues to be used as a procedure that integrates assessment and instruction into a unified activity aimed at promoting a learner's development through appropriate forms of mediation sensitive to the individual's current abilities. However, DA has not yet been taken seriously in the L2 assessment research published in the English language (Leung, 2007). The central concept of the dynamic assessment (DA) was grounded in the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD, hereafter) and Feuerstein et al.'s (1988) Mediated Learning Experience (MLE), which formed the theoretical constructs of this study.

Theoretical Constructs

This study was built upon two theoretical constructs. They are the concept of Zone of Proximal Development in Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, and Feuerstein et al.'s (1988) Mediated Learning Experience.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

DA is grounded in the concept of ZPD in Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory with the view that one's abilities are flexible rather than fixed. It is also concerned with the development of a person's potential abilities. Vygotsky (1978) believed that the normal learning situation for a student is a socially meaningful cooperative activity. He considered tests/assessments at school that only looked at the learner's individual problem solving skills as inadequate, arguing instead that the progress in concept formation achieved by the learner in cooperation with a more mature counterpart (an adult, a teacher, or a more competent peer) was a much more practical way to look at the capabilities of learners. Vygotsky emphasized the role of social interaction and mediation in a learner's internalization. Moreover, the responsibility of the more mature counterpart is to provide constructive mediations, or scaffolding, to the learner. According to Vygotsky, new cognitive functions and learning abilities originate within this interpersonal interaction, and later they are internalized and transformed to become the student's inner cognitive processes. Thus, through cooperation and mutual interaction between the learner and his/her more mature partner, the learner may reveal certain emergent functions that have not yet been internalized. In Vygotsky's SCT(Socio Cultural Theory, these functions belong to ZPD, which is in counter-distinction to fully developed functions that belong to Zone of Actual Development (ZAD). An individual's responsiveness to mediation or support that is sensitive to their current level of ability (ZAD) reveals cognitive functions that have not yet fully developed (ZPD). While the results of static assessments show us the already existent abilities of the student, the analysis of ZPD allows us to evaluate the ability of the student to learn from the interaction with the teacher or a more competent peer. This learning ability may serve as a better predictor of the students' educational needs than the static scores indicated in a static assessment.

Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)

Feuerstein et al.'s (1988) Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) construct was developed independent from Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, but it realizes Vygotsky's vision of integrating mediations and assessment, and that involves co-constructing a ZPD with learners in order to promote development. According to Feuerstein et al., human cognitive abilities are not fixed, instead, they develop while interacting with adults who mediate the world to them in their daily lives. In MLE construct, *mediation* is the key component. Feuerstein et al. state that children in a non-mediated environment learn through a trial-and-error fashion, which resembles the stimulus-response conditioning model of the behaviorist paradigm. They believe that this direct learning experience does not promote children's ability to construct meaning and make connections with a world that is beyond their understanding when they are on their own. On the other hand, in a mediated learning environment, an adult or more competent peer can extend a child's attention beyond the direct learning environment, and help him/her develop many of the cognitive functions necessary to perform tasks that he or she can't perform at the current level. The mediator provides the child a model to move beyond his/her current capacities. The MLE construct challenges the unstated belief in educational static assessment in the way that it claims that the ability of human beings does not stay the same. When an adult or a more competent peer offers mediations to a learner, the mediator is able to attend to the learner's responsiveness to the mediations and then modify the mediations according to the learner's needs. The learner's ability will change with the assistance of effective mediations. The MLE construct fits perfectly within Vygotsky's vision of unifying assessment and instruction as a single development-oriented activity (Kozulin & Garb, 2002).

Previous Studies on ESL Dynamic Assessment

DA has not yet been widely studied by researchers in the ESL and EFL fields (Leung,

2007). Two of the related studies published at the time when this article was written include Poehner's (2007) and Lin's (2010) research. Poehner's study focused on the effects of dynamic assessment on the participants' use of past tense based on their narration. Two L2 French advanced learners in the pre-test phase watched a video clip and were asked to narrate what happened in it. Then, in six weekly DA treatment sessions, the mediator worked closely with each individual to address the verbal tense and aspect problems. The intervention was tailored to learners' individual needs. In the post-test, the initial DA was repeated, followed by two higher-level activities, which the researcher referred to as *transcendence* activities. The first one was a movie containing no dialogue but was filled with intense war images. The second one was a written text. The findings showed that: (1) One participant was able to maintain her high level of performance during the transcendence activities; (2) The other participant's old problems resurfaced in the post-test phase; and (3) The higher performing participant transcended to other linguistic features within a domain of study not explored before.

In Lin's research (2010), she designed three types of mediation in the dynamic assessment to investigate its effects on EFL kindergarteners' abilities in four areas: (1) to respond to greeting and parting initiated by an adult they know; (2) to respond to a simple request made in English from an adult they know; (3) to respond to a request for information made in English from an adult they know; and (4) to respond to an instruction made in English by their English teacher. Her findings showed that mediation played a significant rule for young EFL learners. Moreover, the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach she adopted in her mediation had a positive effect on the children's performance in the target language uses with here-and-now references; however, it had its limitation in teaching children abstract concepts. Lin also reported that the dynamic assessment encouraged meaningful communications and an understanding of interpersonal and textual meanings of English expressions.

Poehner (2007) investigated the development of L2 learners' mastery of verb tense in dynamic assessment and Lin (2010) focused on the DA assessment of EFL children's listening and speaking skills. Unlike these two studies, the current study explored the

effects of dynamic assessment on EFL learners' reading skills. The following section describes the background of the dynamic assessment of reading abilities and the characteristics of the paradigm used in previous studies.

Dynamic Assessment of Reading Abilities

DA of reading abilities uses a response-to-instruction paradigm to complement traditional static assessment of students' reading skills. The process helps the examiner to design appropriate intervention by exploring students' responses to a series of mediations in an interactive teaching-learning relationship. According to Carney & Cioffi (1990), there are several key characteristics of using DA to diagnose one's reading abilities. First, DA is process-oriented versus product-oriented. Second, DA's procedure involves response to instruction, not mere recording of existing abilities. Third, DA allows the examiners to analyze the student's patterns of response to a series of mediated instructions designed to promote one's reading proficiency, instead of only indicating the learners' performance by the use of indices such as percentiles and points. In DA, an examiner analyzes reading tasks to determine what the student needs to do to be successful and how the task might be adapted to help the student achieve success. The significant advantage of dynamic assessment of reading abilities over static assessment is that the learners' response-to-instruction information tells us how they may be able to perform if the conditions that make them inefficient are addressed. Successful reading results from automatic and consciously directed cognitive activities. DA thus investigates the degree to which a student's use of consciously directed cognitive activities can improve reading performance.

Most of the previous studies that explored DA of reading abilities were in the field of special education (Cioffi & Carney, 1983; Hamilton, 1983; Spache, Mcllroy & Berg, 1981; Spreen, 1982; Wilson, 1981). These researchers implemented DA to improve or test the validity of the diagnosis of learners' reading disorders. Although the methodology and procedures they used varied, they consistently recognized that static

assessment often failed to provide the information teachers needed to help their students in a constructive manner. Assessing reading abilities dynamically is not common in L2 reading assessment. One of the few known DA studies in L2 reading was by Kozulin and Garb (2002). They investigated whether DA could help provide information about the learning potential of low-level Israeli high school EFL students in their grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension skills. This study focused on investigating manipulation of grammatical, lexical and sentence structure conventions, as well as finding main and supporting ideas.

The current study was different from Kozulin and Garb's research (2002) in that the researcher investigated five Taiwanese college students whose levels ranged from intermediate-low to intermediate high. Thurs, their English proficiency level was much higher than the subjects in Kozulin and Garb's study. Also, the areas being examined in the current study included more cognitively-demanding reading skills such as finding main idea in higher-level texts, using contextual clues to predict the meaning of vocabulary words, and making inferences. Furthermore, unlike Kozulin and Garb' study that focused on only the quantitative analysis of the learners' performance, the current study incorporated both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the effects of DA on EFL reading skills. Through the qualitative analysis of the participants' response-to-mediation information in the mediated sessions, the researcher was able to discover their certain learning traits and make suggestions on how to modify mediation effectively.

Research Context

The current study investigated the effects of DA on five participants in an EFL course at a university in Taiwan. They were recruited from a mandatory course called "Freshman English for Non-English Majors" offered at the university. In order to provide the readers with an understanding of the needs for the current study, this section describes the nature of the course, and how DA was incorporated to compensate for the shortcomings of the static assessment used in the course.

At the beginning of the semester, the participants were assigned to the class based on their scores in the English subject in the college entrance exam. The class had 37 students. The class was held two hours weekly, eighteen weeks a semester. The instructor of this course was a colleague of the researcher, and had taught Freshman English for non-English majors for over 20 years at the university. As in many typical college EFL classes in Taiwan, students enrolled in the course were expected to take notes in class while the teacher gave lectures on vocabulary words, grammatical rules, pronunciation rules, as well as reading and writing strategies. In the second part of the course, the instructor divided the class into small groups and assigned different topics each week for the students to discuss. In terms of assessments used in the course, two static assessments, which were one mid-term exam and one final exam, were given to the students during the semester. The teacher gained insight into the students' current level and understanding based on the score each student received from the tests.

The two static assessments given to the students consisted of multiple-choice questions. The tests included primarily the content the teacher had taught in class such as selecting the appropriate vocabulary words and answers for reading passages given in the tests. One week after the tests, the teacher went over the questions and explained the answer to each question. This type of static assessment had some limitations. First, it was a product-oriented assessment that did not allow students' knowledge to develop through participation since there was no one-on-one interaction between individual students and the teacher during the tests. Second, it was difficult for the examiner to determine the students' actual understanding because the students could randomly choose an answer from a limited list of options given in the multiple-choice test. To supplement what was lacking in the two static assessments that took place in the "Freshman English for Non-English Majors" course, the researcher implemented an interactive dynamic assessment to explore the potential positive effects beyond what the static assessment could offer. In the interactive dynamic assessment, the students were encouraged to express their knowledge, opinions, and even confusion in their learning process. It also provided the examiner an opportunity to gain deeper insights into the

students' current level as well as their potential learning ability.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of dynamic assessment on Taiwanese college students' current and potential reading skills. The research questions of the study are as follows:

(1) What are the effects of DA on promoting Taiwanese college EFL students' reading skills?
(2) Does DA help the participants realize their learning potential and if so, to what extent?

METHOD

Participants and Mediator

There were five nineteen-year-old participants, three males and two females, in this study. They were Albert, Jessie, Joey, Shannon, and Victor. Names used in the study are pseudonyms. They were students in a course titled "Freshman English for Non-English Majors" at a university in Taiwan as mentioned earlier. Their English proficiency was not at the same level, ranging from intermediate-low to intermediate high based on their English subject test scores in the annual Taiwanese college entrance exam. The researcher received the instructor's permission to recruit subjects from her class to participate in the current study. Before the study began, the researcher spent three consecutive weeks being an observer in the class. She also participated in the students' small group discussion. During the discussion, since the researcher used both Chinese and English interchangeably with the students, they knew that she was a balanced

bilingual.

When the researcher recruited volunteers to participate in this study, she explained to them that the purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of an innovative assessment called "dynamic assessment" (DA) in assessing students' current and potential reading skills. The detail about the study was explained in Chinese to make sure that the students in the course could understand her well. At the beginning, seven students volunteered to participate; however, only five were selected due to two students' schedule conflict with the researcher.

Albert and Joey majored in Information Technology, while Jessie, Shannon, and Victor majored in Statistics. Among all the participants, Joey had learned English for the longest period of time, which was 15 years. He started to learn English since he was four years old at cram schools. The rest of them have begun since they were seven years old, the year when they attended first grade. The participants had different personalities. Albert and Shannon were active and sociable, while Jessie, Joey, and Victor were introvert. In the "Freshman English for Non-English Majors" course they took, Albert and Shannon were more participative than the other three in group discussion. When the participants were asked about what they liked about English, Albert responded with confidence that he liked everything about English. He liked American culture and English songs. Victor and Shannon said that English was a fun language to learn because they felt that English was entirely different from their first language. Jessie enjoyed speaking, listening, and writing in English. Joey responded that he liked English because of practical reasons since it enabled him to read and understand international news given from Western perspectives. He also mentioned that with a solid foundation in the English language, he could receive new information from the English textbooks immediately, instead of having to wait until the Chinese translated versions were completed. When asked to express what they disliked about English, Albert was the only one who mentioned that there was nothing he disliked about this language. The rest of the participants felt that reading was difficult. Jessie further expressed that she felt frustrated and afraid while reading English texts because of her

impatient personality. Shannon and Joey explained it was because of the complicated grammatical rules and spelling that caused their reading problems. Victor believed that it was his lack of vocabulary that hindered his comprehension when he read.

Procedures

This study adopted the pre-test, mediation, and post-test paradigm. The entire study was six-week long. The participants took the pre-test in the first week, and the post-test in the sixth week. From the second through fifth weeks, the researcher, who was also the mediator, worked closely with the participants individually to provide them with as much in-depth mediation as possible to achieve the purpose of concurrently assessing their current level, determining their learning potential, as well as instructing them appropriate reading skills. (In this study, the terms "researcher" and "mediator" are used interchangeably.) In the mediation stage, the researcher used two self-designed flowcharts (Appendix I and Appendix II) to serve as guides. The researcher's interaction with each participant was first audio-recorded and then transcribed for later analyses to answer the stated research questions in the study.

At the pre-test stage, the researcher gave a pre-test to all the participants to assess their current reading level. The pre-test was made up of 12 short passages adopted from previous TOEFL exam samples. The passages were selected to assess the participants' reading skills in three areas: finding main ideas (FMI); using contextual clues to predict the meanings of vocabulary words (CC), and making inferences (MI). In the pre-test, there were four FMI questions, four CC questions, and four MI questions. The researcher recorded the questions that each participant answered incorrectly in the pre-test. A week later, the mediation stage began. The researcher met with each participant individually one day each week outside their regular class time for four continuous weeks. Each time they met, the researcher served as a mediator who provided mediation to each participant on the questions he/she answered incorrectly in the pre-test. There was no time limit for the meetings because the primary purpose of the mediation stage

was to provide the participants with as much in-depth reading skills intervention as he/she needed. In the sixth week, the researcher gave the participants a post-test that were also made up of 12 different short passages adopted from previous TOEFL exam samples. The post-test consisted of the same number and types of questions as in the pre-test, which was four questions in each of the three areas. Since the passages used in the pre-test, mediation, and post-test stages were adopted from the TOEFL exam samples that were designed and tested in advance by a team of professional language test-designers, their validity and reliability were believed to be highly acceptable.

Implementation of DA Mediation

The amount of mediation provided to each participant depended on the number of incorrect answers in each participant's pre-test. The participants received mediation on the questions they answered incorrectly. Therefore, the more incorrect answers a participant provided in the pre-test, the more mediation he/she received. In addition, based on Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), intervention should be provided in gradual progression. The purpose was to estimate the minimum level of guidance required by the novice to successfully perform a given task. Therefore, guidance normally started at a highly strategic level where implicit feedback was provided, and progressively became more specific and concrete, until the appropriate level was reached. Explicit feedback was given in the specific and concrete level. In order to make this formative assessment more systematic, in this study the researcher designed a series of reading skills mediation which began with the most implicit hints and ended with the most explicit ones (Appendix I).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Research Question 1: What are the effects of dynamic assessment on promoting

Taiwanese EFL students' reading skills?

To answer this research question, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data to support the findings. The first type of data is the participants' pre- and post-test scores. The second type is the transcription of the interactional episodes between the mediator and the participants in the mediated sessions.

Participants' Pre and Post-Test.

Table 1 shows the results of each participant's pre- and post-test scores. Since there was one question per passage, and each question was worth one point, the total score of the post-test is 12 points based on 12 reading passages. As shown in Table 1 to 3, all the participants showed an overall improvement in their post-test scores. Paired sample t-test is used to calculate the significant difference value.

TABLE 1
Each Participant's Overall Pre and Post-Test Scores

Participants	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores	Post-test score minus Pre-test score (Difference)
Albert	6	6.5	0.5
Jessie	3.5	8	4.5
Joey	3.5	7.5	4
Shannon	1	7.5	6.5
Victor	2.5	8	5.5

Note. The range of the score is 0 to 12.

TABLE 2
Descriotive Statistics of Pre and Post-Test Results

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair PRTEST	3.3000	5	1.82346	.81548
1 POSTTEST	7.5000	5	.61237	.27386

TABLE 3
Paired Samples Test of Pre and Post-test Results

	Paired Difference							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	(2-tailed)
Pair 1 PRETEST - POSTTEST	-4.2000	2.28035	1.01980	-7.0314	-1.3686	-4.118	4	.015

Since the significance value is less than .05, the results indicated that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test *reading* scores, t (5) = -4.118, p = 0.015. The participants scored significantly higher on the post-test reading test (M = 7.5, SD = 0.612) than on the pre-test reading test (M = 3.30, SD = 1.823). The dynamic assessment of the reading skills in the study is proved to be helpful.

In addition to determining the significance of statistical differences, effect size was also calculated to indicate the strength of the effect of dynamic assessment on the participants' reading skills. Guidelines for interpreting effect sizes (Mitchell, 2002) stated that when the effect size is larger than 0.80, it indicates that it is a large effect, which also means that there is quite a difference between the group means. The resultant effect size was 1.84. This shows that the difference between the scores in the pre- and post-test in the overall reading skill is of large strength because the effect size is greater

than 0.80. Thus, from the quantitative data analysis, the effect of dynamic assessment on the participants' reading skills was highly significant.

MEDIATIONAL INTERACTION ANALYSIS

Besides the quantitative data, the interactional episodes between the mediator and the participants were analyzed to explore unique phenomena that took place in the mediated sessions. It helped add another perspective in evaluating the effects of dynamic assessment on the participants' reading skills. Three types of effects were found based on the transcriptions of the audio-recorded data.

Stronger Motivation in Using English

Before the mediation procedure took place, the participants were told that they could choose to use their first language (L1), Chinese, to express themselves. The reason is that L1 is proven to be a very useful tool in an ESL class to motivate learners to be involved in using more in-depth cognitive skills and to fulfill their linguistic and instructional needs during the process of interacting with peers or teachers (Teo, 2006). Throughout the mediation process, one surprising discovery was that the participants were reluctant to use Chinese to express themselves. This situation was out of the researcher's expectation because these students usually were reluctant to use English in their "Freshman English for Non-English Major" course. An explanation for their strong motivation to use English could be that when the participants were so focused on following the mediation given by the mediator to find the answers to the questions, their usual subconscious anxiety in using a foreign language was at a minimal level. Their strong motivation in using English to converse with the researcher in the mediated sessions could also be looked upon as a sign that the participants began to feel

comfortable with using English as a tool to think and solve problems. Below is an example to illustrate this scenario.

Interaction 1

R: Researcher   V: Victor

(1) R: What does the word "graven" mean in this passage?

(2) V: I think it means, uh, they don't have, uh……

(3) R: You can use Chinese to explain to me if you like.

(4) V: I will try in English.

(5) R: Okay.

(6) V: Hmmm…….Shape. They don't make a shape to described [sic] the god. They don't have a ……

(7) R: They don't have a real shape? Do you mean real "xing zhuang" ("shape" in Chinese)?

(8) V: No, I mean they don't make a real face to described [sic] the god.

(9) R: I see. You mean "graven" means that they don't make an image for their god?

(10) V: Yes.

In this example, we can see that Victor's vocabulary in English is quite limited; however, in Line 4, he expressed his intention to describe in English what was on his mind, even though he knew that the researcher could understand him perfectly if he switched to Chinese. In Line 7, the researcher tried to help him clarify what he said by adding the word "real" and the Chinese translated term for "shape," thinking that he might need to switch to Chinese to express himself to avoid being misunderstood. However, in Line 8, Victor continued using English to complete the entire sentence by changing "shape" to "face," hoping to make his meaning clearer. Although the sentence he used to express himself was not perfect, the researcher was able to understand what he meant. Therefore, in Line 9, the researcher tried to interpret his meaning in a more

proper English sentence to confirm with him what he really meant. While interacting with Victor in the dynamic assessment, the researcher did not notice any anxiety that was frequently found in many typical Taiwanese EFL learners when they were asked to participate in a conversation or discussion in an English language course. Instead, Victor insisted on using English to accomplish his task with no fear of making errors.

Different Roles of Implicit and Explicit Feedback.

Two types of feedbacks, namely implicit and explicit feedbacks, were provided to the participants progressively in the mediation process. Implicit feedback is at a highly strategic level such as asking if the participants noticed two items are being compared in the passage. Explicit feedback is more specific and concrete, such as pointing out a specific sentence where it mentions what exactly are being compared in the passage. The skill of feedback provision used by the researcher was supplying the participants with implicit feedback at the beginning stage, and gradually moving to explicit feedback when necessary. This skill is supported by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) who believed that the role of implicit mediation is to help expand a learner's ZPD. In the study, it was noticed that providing the participants with the implicit feedback at the initial stage of the dynamic assessment helped to challenge the participants to rely on themselves more at the beginning. The mediator offered explicit feedback only when she realized that implicit feedback was not sufficient to generate correct responses from the participants. It was also found that explicit feedback was almost always necessary in the first and second mediated sessions, but not in the later sessions when the participants became less dependent on it as they became more proficient and confident in relying on the provided implicit feedback or on themselves. Interaction 2 and Interaction 3 below illustrate how both types of feedbacks are presented to the participants to guide him to establish proper reading skills and the effects of the feedback on the participants.

Interaction 2

R: Researcher   J: Joey

(1) R: What is the main idea?

(2) J: It tells us we are not the author, and so we can't actually know the music.

(3) R: (The main idea is not correct, and so the researcher provided some help with the keywords) Let me explain some of the keywords in the passage. (She checked if Joey knew the words "permanent," "perishable," "indulge in," "sonata," and "strikingly." Then, she explained them after realizing that he did not know any of these words.)

(4) R: Now, let us go over the flowchart that shows the common places where the main idea can be found in many academic texts written in English. (The researcher then showed the flowchart in Appendix II and reviewed the concepts.)

(5) R: Now, knowing most of the keywords, I would like you to read the passage again. What do you think the author is trying to say about arts, which is related to the main idea?

(6) J: I think the main idea is that music and dance is [sic] not like architecture or sculpture. Architecture and sculpture stay long time. But we cannot know what the author was thinking when they write the music.

(7) R: Good try. You just gave me very good examples that support the main idea. Now, I want you to look at the first sentence. There is a word that describes architecture and sculpture. What is the word? (Here the researcher gave explicit feedback by pointing out the "specific" part.)

(8) J: Permanent.

(9) R: Okay, what types of art are "permanent" based on the author?

(10) J: Painting, sculpture, and architecture.

(11) R: Good. When you move on to the second sentence, obviously the author is talking about a different type of art. What is it?

(12) J: Music and dance.

(13) R: Good. When you look at these two sentences, what is the author comparing?

(14) J: Two things.

(15) R: Two things, okay. What are they?

(16) J: Permanent and perishable arts.

(17) R: Excellent. Now, can you tell me in a short sentence what the main idea is?

(18) J: The author is comparing the permanent and perishable arts.

(19) R: You got it. Good job!

This episode took place in the second mediated session when the researcher and Joey met, which was in the early phase of the study. After explaining the keywords and places where main ideas can usually be found in academic texts written in English, in Line 5 the researcher began offering implicit feedback by asking Joey what the author said about arts. In Line 6 Joey provided an incomplete main idea. Noticing that Joey would need explicit feedback, in Line 7 the researcher directed Joey to the specific sentence in the reading passage where he could rely on to find the main idea. Later on, the feedback became more and more explicit (Lines 9, 11, 13, 15) until Joey accomplished the task.

Interaction 3

R: Researcher   J: Jessie

(The researcher and Jessie were working on an inferential question. Jessie's first attempt to answer the question failed, and the researcher continued the mediation.)

(1) R: Let's look at the details before we move on. The author is comparing two things. What are they?

(2) J: The spectacular rise in prices on the stock market.

(3) R: And?

(4) J: The economic situation.

(5) R: Yes! What is the authoring saying about these two things?

(6) J: Hmmmm …….. (no response while thinking hard)

(7) R: Now, read the passage again. Can you find any keywords that tell you the relation between these two things?

(8) J: The last sentence in the passage.

(9) R: Hmm, actually the keywords are not in the last sentence. But take a look at the underlined sentence in the passage, and see if you can find any keywords there that tell you the relation between the spectacular rise in prices on the stock market and the economic situation.

(10) J: "bore little relation."

(11) R: Good! The phrase means "had little relationship." Now, what can you say about the relation between the stock market and the economic situation during that time?

(12) J: The spectacular rise in prices on the stock market is not……… show [sic] the …… (struggling to find a proper word choice).

(13) R: the "real"……….? (encouraging the participant to go on)

(14) J: the real economic situation.

This episode also took place in the early stage of the study when the participant required both implicit and explicit feedback. In the beginning, the researcher provided implicit feedback (Line 1). As shown from Line 2 to Line 4 above, Jessie was able to provide the correct answers. From Lines 5 and 6 the researcher noticed that Jessie needed more hints. In Line 9, when the researcher tried to see whether Jessie could find the keywords in the passage to help her answer the inferential question, she realized that Jessie did not identify them in the right place (Line 10). Thus, in Line 11 she provided explicit feedback by pointing out the exact part where the keywords were. With the help of the explicit feedback, Jessie was able to find the key phrase "bore little relation" and used it to infer that the stock market and the real economic situation did not bear any relationship (Lines 10 and 12), and thus replied that "the spectacular rise in prices on the stock market is not showing the real economic situation" (Line 14). Therefore, both Interaction 2 and Interaction 3 proved that when implicit feedback was presented at the

initial stage, followed by explicit feedback when the former was not sufficient, the learners were able to find the correct answers to the questions more easily.

The Interchangeable Role of Mediator and Participants.

One of the most significant contribution of dynamic assessment that most traditional assessment did not usually offer is that by interacting with the participants in the dynamic assessment, the mediator did not only help them improve their reading skills, but also allowed herself to be helped by the participants. The participants' responses gave the mediator an opportunity to learn about the learners' difficulty, confusion, and their process of thinking, as well as some technical problems such as question designs that the mediator had neglected. Interaction 4 below supports this point. Sharon was asked to answer an inferential question after she read a passage.

Interaction 4

R: Researcher   S: Sharon

(1) R: Based on the passage, some people have attributed some beneficial effects to aspirin. What can you infer about these claims?

(2) S: Aspirin has many beneficial effects. It cures Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease.

(3) R: First of all, do you understand what the question is about?

(4) S: Yes, it asks about the beneficial effects of aspirin.

(5) R: Well, not quite so. Do you know what the word "claims" mean in the question?

(6) S: No.

(7) R: "Claims" means "statements." Here it refers to the statements many people make about the beneficial effects of aspirin.

(8) S: Oh. The question was not clear to me.

 (9) R: I am sorry about that. Actually the question is not really asking you what you think the beneficial effects of aspirin are. It is asking you what you think about or can infer from the statements many people make about the beneficial effects of aspirin.

In Line 2, when Sharon gave the answer to the inferential question, the researcher realized that she did not fully understand the inferential question asked. Therefore, in Line 3, she asked Sharon if she knew the meaning of "claims" to find out if it was the word that prevented her from comprehending the question. It turned out that Sharon would need more clarification on the question. In Line 8, Sharon pointed out to the researcher that the question was not clear to her, and thus implied that it was not her fault that she answered the questions incorrectly. Therefore, in Line 9, the researcher went on providing more scaffolding to help Sharon proceed to answering the question. This episode showed that dynamic assessment allowed the participant to make criticism on the question and at the same time allowed the researcher to double-check the appropriateness of the question. The researcher later learned that "claimed" could be a difficult word for some Taiwanese EFL college students, and thus she would use it with caution in a reading comprehension test in the future.

Research Question 2: Does dynamic assessment help the participants realize their learning potential? If so, to what extent?

After proving that the effects of dynamic assessment on the participants' reading skills were positive, the second research question was to determine to what extent dynamic assessment in the study helped each participant realize their learning potential. The scoring method used to operationalize the participants' learning potential was adopted from the formula created by Kozulin and Garb (2002). According to Kozulin and Garb, the learning potential score (LPS, hereafter) had to "reflect both gain made by the student from pre-test to post-test and an absolute achievement score at the post-test" (p. 121). The formula they used to calculate the LPS is as follows:

$$LPS = (S\ post - S\ pre)/Max\ S + S\ post/Max\ S = (2\ S\ post - S\ pre)/Max\ S$$

(S pre = pre-test scores; S post = post-test scores; and Max S = maximum obtainable score)

The LPS for each participant in this study was calculated based on this formula. Then, each participant's LPS was used to show his/her LPS distribution. Doing so, LPS would add significance to the assessment by showing the impact of the designed mediation on each participant's individual learning potential. When the participants scored the same in both pre- and post-tests, it indicated that there was no change in the learner's learning potential. The highest LPS one could receive in this study was 2.

Two parts of LPS were used to analyze the results. The first part, as shown in Figure 1, indicates the participants' overall individual pre-test and post-test scores, as well as their individual LPS. In the second part, as shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, the researcher used the participants' pre-test and post-test scores in each reading skill to calculate each participant's LPS in each type of reading skill. In this way, we would be able to investigate in depth the participants' individual LPS in finding main ideas, using contextual clues to predict the meaning of vocabulary words, and making inferences as well as their LPS in their overall pre-test and post-test performance. Finding each participant's LPS using these data did not only determine the changes in each participant's pre-test and post-test scores, but also to what extent the mediation allowed each participant to realize his/her learning potential in their overall performance and in each type of reading skill.
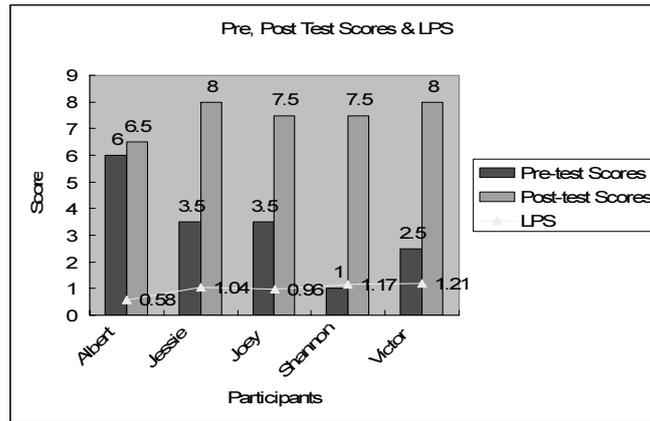
FIGURE 1
Pre-Test, Post-Test and LPS
The Range Of The Pre And Post-Test Score Is 0 To 12. The Highest LPS Is 2.

Since the participants were given 12 questions in both the pre- and post-tests, the maximum points of each test was 12 points. Figure 1 indicates that all participants showed improvement in their post-tests. In terms of the LPS distribution as shown in Figure 1, all of the participants, except Albert, showed significant improvement. Jessie, Joey, Shannon, and Victor progressed considerably in their post-tests. Moreover, their LPS indicated their impressive learning potential. For example, Jessie's pre-test score was 3.5 out of 12 points, and her post-test score was 8 out of 12 points. As a result, her LPS is 1.04, which indicated a very high learning potential. Figure 1 shows that Albert scored the highest in the pre-test among all the participants. However, he only improved 0.5 points in his post-test, and so his LPS is below 0.58, which is considered as no significant improvement. His improvement was the least impressive among all the participants. One possible explanation for this is given in the following.

As mentioned in the method section, the amount of mediation provided to the

participants depended on the number of incorrect answers found in the participants' pre-test. The participants only received mediation on the questions they answered incorrectly. Therefore, the more incorrect answers a participant provided in the pre-test, the more mediation he/she received. Albert's less significant LPS could be that he received significantly less mediation than the other participants in the study. Albert scored the highest in his pre-test among all the participants. His pre-test score (6 out of 12) was significantly higher than all the other participants, whose scores ranged from 1 to 3.5 out of 12. As a result, he received significantly less mediation than the other participants, which possibly caused a low LPS shown in his post-test. He only improved a 0.5 points in his post-test. Thus, his overall LPS score was only 0.58.

In addition to the fact that four participants scored high LPS, another significance of this study was that the LPS data obtained in this study helped reveal what did not show in a static language assessment. For example, Jessie and Joey both obtained the same score in their pre-test, which was 3.5 points out of 12 points. However, their LPS difference infered that they had different learning potential since Jessie scored 1.04 and Joey 0.96. Shannon, who scored the lowest in the pre-test, actually demonstrated a very high LPS after the mediation. Her LPS of 1.17 point was much higher than the LPS of Albert, the highest scorer in the pre-test, who obtained only an LPS of 0.58. Her LPS was also higher than the second highest pre-test scorer, Jessie and Joey, who had LPS 1.04 and 0.96 accordingly. The highest LPS scorer was Victor with a LPS of 1.21. Surprisingly, Victor had the second lowest score in his pre-test, which was 3.5 out of 12 points. After the mediation, he scored 8 points out of 12 points in his post-test, and became one of the two highest scorers in the post-test. The other highest scorer was Jessie, who scored the same points in the post-test as Victor did.

Figure 2 shows the participants' pre and post-test scores in each three reading skill. Figure 3 shows the participants' LPS in each three reading skill.
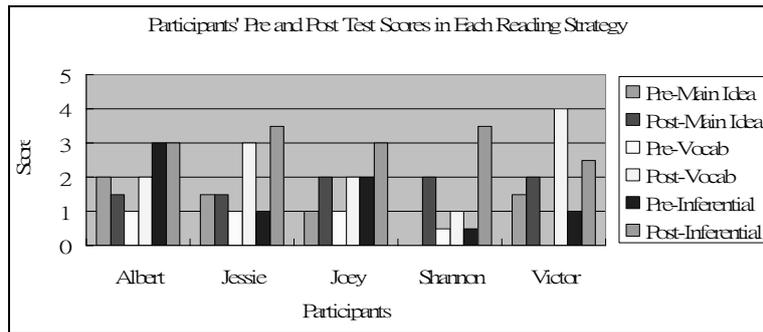
FIGURE 2
Pre-Test And Post-Test Scores in Each Reading Skill.
The range of the pre and post-test score is 0 to 4. When a bar does not exist for a reading skill, it means that the participant received a score of 0 for that particular skill.
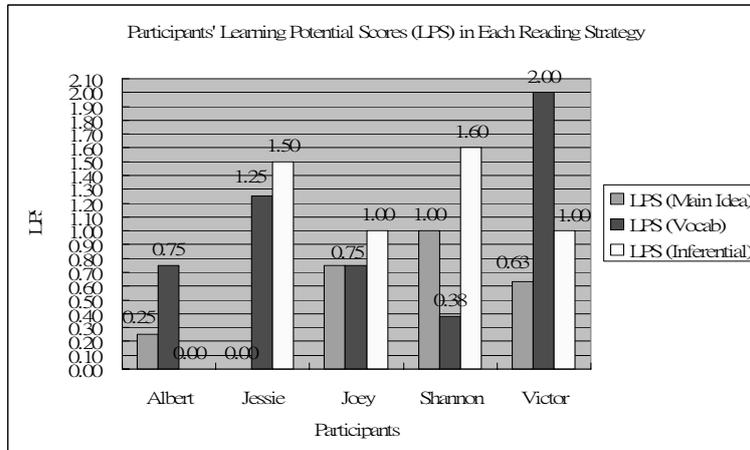
Figure 3
Participants' LPS in Each Reading Skill
The range of LPS for each reading skill is 0 to 2.

Taking a close look at the participants' LPS in each reading skill helped reveal what was hidden in the overall LPS. Also, it helped to discover which particular type of mediation worked more effectively than others. First of all, the participants demonstrated the most satisfactory performance in making inferences. The LPS of four of the participants, except Albert, in making inferences was impressive considering the fact that the highest LPS in this study one could score was 2. Joey and Victor scored 1, Jessie 1.50, and Shannon 1.60. Albert's performance in making inferences remained the same in his pre- and post-tests. Secondly, four of the five participants showed significant improvement in the skill of using contextual clues to predict the meaning of vocabulary words. The scores were 0.75 for both Albert and Joey, 1.25 for Jessie, and 2 for Victor. Victor's LPS in using contextual clues to predict the meaning of vocabulary words was a perfect score because he scored 0 in the pre-test, but a full score of 12 points in his post-test. The least consistent and impressive performance was the skill in finding main idea. Jessie's pre- and post-tests scores in this skill did not change while Albert's LPS was 0.25, and Victor's 0.63 in this skill. The ones who showed significant improvement in the skill of finding main idea were Joey and Shannon, whose LPSs were 0.75 and 1 accordingly.

The findings above showed a surprising result, which was that the participants progressed more significantly in making inferences, a skill that is more cognitively-demanding than the less demanding skill such as finding main idea. Making inferences is more cognitively-demanding because it involves understanding the overall essence of the passage prior to making implication that is not clearly stated in the passage. One possible explanation for the participants' higher performance in inferential skill was that during the mediation process, the mediator and the participants spent more time on this skill than on the other two skills. The mediator walked the participants step-by-step through the stages including finding main idea and understanding keywords to guide them to make educated guesses when answering inferential questions (see Appendix I for the complete procedure for inferential skill). Thus, it is believed that having spent a

longer time on building the inferential skill probably helped strengthen the participants' inferential skill in the post-test.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of DA on Taiwanese college EFL students' reading skills. The findings proved that when assessment was integrated with instructional mediation that is properly designed, it helped promote the participants' overall reading skills. When each participant was evaluated individually in their learning potential, DA proved to play a crucial role in helping individual learners realize their learning potentials. The participants' learning potentials were shown when they were able to take the skills learned from the mediation process a step further and apply them to new materials presented in the post-test. All of the participants, except one, showed significant improvement in their reading skills.

One of the most important lessons revealed in this study is that a pre-test score was obviously not sufficient to indicate what a teacher would need to know to prepare for effective lesson plans. DA allows teachers to see beyond what is shown in a static score. For example, when two learners received the same score in a pre-test, it did not necessarily mean that they were actually at the same proficiency level. Even if they were at the same proficiency level, a teacher could not tell whether they had different degrees of future learning potentials until the mediation stage took place in the dynamic assessment.

What is equally important is that understanding each individual's learning potential would help a teacher design more effective lesson plans that would serve the individuals' unique instructional needs more properly. For example, when a participant's LPS was low in a certain reading skill, we know that he/she would need more extra support in that area. On the contrary, when a participant obtained a high LPS

in a specific skill, we could consider giving him more implicit feedback to replace explicit feedback in our future lesson designed for him in that area. Instead, a teacher should spend more time with him on the area where he scored low LPS. Another advantage of DA was that a teacher could make adjustment to accommodate each individual's instructional needs based on the learners' responses, comments, and questions during the mediation process. It is thus reasonable to conclude from the current study that dynamic assessment is a powerful tool to help teachers to achieve the goal of unifying assessment with instruction.

The intense interaction between the mediator/researcher and each of the five participants allowed the researcher to examine the participants' responses to the mediation closely and in-depth. However, the small number of participants had restricted the researcher's ability to make generalization based on the findings in the study. Also, the study only investigated three reading skills, namely finding main idea, using contextual clues to predict the meaning of vocabulary words, and making inferences. DA should also be implemented to explore other reading skills that were not covered in the current study.

Recommendation for future research in DA includes comparing the effects of dynamic assessment in reading between groups of different proficiency levels. The participants' learning behaviors and reactions to the DA could be further explored in different groups. Also, the interactional episodes that took place during the mediated sessions should be further explored to help design more effective plans that would help students move forward in their progress. In addition, it is highly recommended that future research focuses on developing high-quality mediation for the mediator to use as guidelines while implementing the DA procedure.

To conclude, as Kozulin and Garb (2004) put it, DA "bridges the psychological gap between assessment and instruction and may reduce the students' test-taking stress" (p. 74). Although implementing DA is time-consuming and requires much careful planning in advance, it is an innovative and valuable way of assessing students because it allows

teachers to integrate instruction and assessment simultaneously while reducing students' test-taking anxiety.

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Appendix I
Mediation Procedure

The researcher followed the mediation procedures below when providing the participants with mediation in the study:

A. Finding Main Idea (FMI)

Stage 1 (Implicit feedback):

Say: The main idea is the **summary** statement that tells you the overall message of a given passage. It can be stated in a word or a phrase that can serve nicely as a title. When you read the passage, ask yourself: What (Who) is this paragraph about?

Say: Now, read the passage again carefully, and tell me what you think the main idea is.

* If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 2.

Stage 2 (More implicit feedback): Explain some **keywords** in the passage to help the learner to comprehend the passage. Also allow the learner to ask questions regarding the meaning of words or sentences. Then, use the <u>overall</u> context and pinpoint the <u>possible place</u> of the main idea in an academic text written in English.

Say: Usually main idea can be found in:

a. 1st sentence – topic sentence
b. the last sentence
c. certain phrases such as "in short," "in summary," "in fact," "thus" etc. (because they occasionally are used to introduce the main idea.)
d. Sometimes the main idea is not stated in any specific phrase or sentence. In this case, you will have to read the context carefully, and then make the most educated guess on what the most important point is about the passage.

Then, ask, "What is the main idea in the passage?"

Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

* If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 3.

Stage 3 (Explicit feedback): Narrow down and point out the <u>specific parts</u> in the passage that might lead to the main idea. Focus on <u>paragraph-level</u> explicit feedback. Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

* If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 4.

Stage 4 (More explicit feedback): Continue providing more <u>specific</u> parts in the passage that will lead to the main idea. Now progress to <u>sentence-level</u> explicit feedback. Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

* If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 5.

Stage 5 (Even more explicit feedback): Continue providing more <u>specific</u> parts in the passage that will lead to the main idea. Now progress to <u>phrase-level</u> (a smaller unit within the same

sentence) explicit feedback. Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

   * If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 6.

Stage 6 (Answer provision): If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, explain the context step-by-step and give the correct answer. Focus on "how" you get the answer.

B. Using Contextual Clues to Predict Meaning of Vocabulary (CC)

Stage 1 (Implicit feedback): Explain that in many academic texts written in English, one can guess the meaning of certain important words from the context nearby the words.

Ask: In this passage, where do you look to find the parts that will help you understand the meaning of the underlined word?

a.   If the learner knows the right place to get the answer, complement him. Then, ask him what he thinks the underlined word means. If the learner gives the wrong answer, move on to Stage 2.
b.   If the learner cannot provide any answer regarding where to look to help guess the meaning of the underlined word, or gives the wrong answer, move on to Stage 2.

Stage 2 (Explicit feedback): Pinpoint the <u>possible place</u> where it helps explain the meaning of the underlined word in the passage. Focus on <u>paragraph-level</u> explicit feedback. Explain how to use the feedback to get the answer. Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

   * If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 3.

Stage 3 (More explicit feedback): Pinpoint the <u>possible place</u> where it helps explain the meaning of the underlined word in the passage. Now focus on <u>sentence-level</u> explicit feedback. Explain how to use the feedback to get the answer. Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

   * If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 4.

Stage 4 (More explicit feedback): Pinpoint the <u>possible place</u> where it helps explain the meaning of the underlined word in the passage. Now progress to <u>phrase-level</u> (a smaller unit within the same sentence) explicit feedback. Explain how to use the feedback to get the answer. Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

* If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 5.

Stage 5 (Even more explicit feedback): Pinpoint the <u>possible place</u> where it helps explain the meaning of the underlined word in the passage. Now progress to <u>phrase-level</u> (a smaller unit within the same sentence) explicit feedback. Explain how to use the feedback to get the answer. Mediator should make modification based on individual learners' unique needs.

* If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, move on to Stage 6.

Stage 6 (Answer provision): If the learner can't provide any answer, or the answer is wrong, explain the context step-by-step and give the correct answer. Focus on "how" you get the answer.

C. Making Inferences (MI)

Stage 1 (Implicit feedback): Ask questions to check whether the learner understands the <u>main idea</u> and <u>keywords</u> in the passage.
   a. If yes, go to the inferential question. If the answer to the inferential question is wrong, go to Stage 2 below.
   b. If no, go to Finding Main Ideas (FMI) Stage 1 through Stage 6 until the learner understands the main idea of the passage. Then, go to Stage 2 below.

Stage 2 (More implicit feedback): At this stage, the learner should know the main idea in the passage already. Mediator should now focus on giving <u>overall</u> information to help the learner use the <u>stated</u> meaning to infer the <u>unstated</u> meaning in the passage. Then, ask the inferential question.
   If the answer to the inferential question is wrong, go to Stage 3.

Stage 3 (Explicit feedback): At this stage, the learner should know the main idea in the passage already. Mediator should now focus on giving <u>paragraph-level</u> information to help the learner use the <u>stated</u> meaning to infer the <u>unstated</u> meaning in the passage. Then, ask the inferential question.
   If the answer to the inferential question is wrong, go to Stage 4.

Stage 4 (More explicit feedback): Point out the <u>specific</u> parts that can help the learner connect the <u>stated</u> and <u>unstated</u> parts in the passage. Focus on the <u>sentence-level</u> feedback. Then, ask the inferential question.

If the answer is wrong, go to Stage 5.

Stage 5: (Even more explicit feedback): Point out the <u>specific</u> parts that can help the learner connect the <u>stated</u> and <u>unstated</u> parts in the passage. Progress to the <u>phrase-level</u> (a smaller unit within the same sentence) feedback. Then, ask the inferential question.

If the answer is wrong, go to Stage 6.

Stage 6 (Answer provision): Point out the exact connection between the <u>stated</u> and <u>unstated</u> parts. Explain the connection step-by-step and give the correct answer. Focus on "how" you get the answer.

Appendix II
Where to Find Main Idea Flowchart

Usually main idea can be found in:

a. 1st sentence – topic sentence

b. the last sentence– topic sentence

c. certain phrases such as "in short," "in summary," "in fact," "thus" etc. (because they occasionally are used to introduce the main idea.)

d. Sometimes the main idea is not stated in any specific phrase or sentence. In this case, you will have to read the context carefully, and then make the most educated guess on what the most important point is about the passage.