



Dynamic Assessment – What is it?

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Abstract

Dynamic assessment (DA) is a rapidly growing trend in psychological, educational and language research and practice. The key element of all DA approaches is the belief that evaluation of individual learning potential is no less important than testing the current performance level. The best way of doing this is to insert learning phase into the assessment procedure. The goal of this paper is to identify the main conceptual aspects of DA and to elaborate the relationships between the Vygotskian theoretical tradition and various DA approaches. The paper starts with a brief introduction into early attempts to challenge static approach to assessment associated with intelligence testing tradition. The discussion continues with the role of Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development. It is argued that specific socio-cultural factors played a decisive role in shaping different versions of DA in Russia (Vygotsky's tradition), Israel (Feuerstein's LPAD), and the US. As a result of these divergent trends, one may distinguish DA approaches focusing on major developmental changes and approaches focusing on learning potential in contextually specific areas. The recurring theoretical theme throughout this paper is the question of the "not-so-simple relationships" between the processes of learning and problem solving.