



## EFL ADOLESCENT LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS APPLYING DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT TO ENHANCE THEIR SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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### Abstract:

Dynamic assessment (DA) has been broadly applied in educational settings over the past few decades. It not only helps evaluate students' learning ability but also helps predict their potential future development at the same time. This study aims to investigate EFL adolescent learners' attitudes toward applying DA to enhance their speaking performance. The data were gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. 14 participants who had experienced DA were invited to do a questionnaire expressing their attitudes including three aspects, namely behavioural, cognitive, and emotional. Then six of them were selected to enter semi-structured interviews. The result of the questionnaire revealed that EFL adolescent learners possessed positive attitudes in three domains- behavioural, cognitive, and emotional. The data from the interviews showed that classroom anxiety was not a big problem for students. Eagerness, concentration, confidence, and motivation were what they gained after getting used to DA. Besides, DA was reported to enhance their speaking performance in terms of accuracy and fluency.

**Keywords:** EFL adolescent learners, attitudes, dynamic assessment, speaking performance

### 1. Introduction

Out of four key language skills, speaking is regarded as the most important skill in learning a foreign or second language by learners. Ur (1996) assumes that speaking consists of all other skills of knowing a target language. On the one hand, Bueno, Madrid, and McLaren (2006) believe that "*speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face*" (p.321). On the other hand, speaking is viewed as the most challenging of the four skills to assess (Ginther, 2012). Assessment expresses the learners' achievement and development by evaluating both the learning process and products. The

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way students are instructed and learn reflects the efficacy of assessment (Doğan, Atmaca & Yolcu, 2012). Assessing speaking requires observing a live oral performance or capturing the performance by some mediums of evaluation at a later period. An approach for elicitation needs to be chosen, marking scales should be developed and interviewers or rates must be trained. There are many factors impacting the assessment process including the use of integrating skills from pronunciation to pragmatics in addition to the sensibility of social-cultural and interpersonal factors rather than a writing test (Luoma, 2004).

Changes in language teaching methodology lead to aligned modifications of language assessment. The conventional form of assessment was aimed at measuring how much learners acquired from what they had already been taught. This way is called “static assessment” which contains little or no instructions or feedback from the assessor. It is assumed to be an isolated method of judging learners’ progress because the aforementioned assessment merely reveals students’ available existing capacities. In contrast, assessment involving learning opportunities is regarded as “dynamic assessment” (DA) which has been fine-tuned to improve language teaching and learning by evaluating students’ ability to learn from interaction and predict their potential future development (Ajideh, Farrokhi & Nourdad, 2012).

In the teaching context of Vietnam, verbal tests take place two times during a course for mid-term and final tests. Instead of giving hints, explanations, suggestions, prompts, and leading questions, examiners only give necessary requests for the speaking tasks. This cannot secure the accountability to search for learners’ future growth and lead them to higher levels of language acquisition thanks to the needs, potentials, and diverse learning styles. In order to enhance learners’ speaking performance, it is essential to prove that DA can bring some efficacy to the aforesaid skill. This study is designed to reply to the following research question:

- What are EFL adolescent learners' attitudes towards applying dynamic assessment to enhance their speaking performance?

## **2. Literature review**

To understand the concept of DA, it is necessary to go through the two background perspectives of DA – the sociocultural theory and the Zone of Proximal Development in advance.

### **2.1. Sociocultural theory**

The sociocultural theory was established by Vygotsky (1897; 1936) in his writings which posed education between an individual and culture. It is developed based on the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development within SCT (cultural-historical theory). Children are exposed to a social environment where they can get access to all social, cultural, and interpersonal sources of development (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018). Vygotsky separates the child’s intellectual development into two periods: inter-psychological

which occurs when the child interacts with other people and intra-psychological development which happens when new attempts are made to deepen his/ her learning after learning from other people and society. Poehner (2008) assumes that the key concept of Vygotsky's ideas focuses on the central role of social interaction in the process of cognition development. In SCT, teaching is the procedure of cooperating with students in the formation of growing mental functions (Roebuck, 2001). Learners need the assistance of another person to achieve a new task and then they can perform the task independently after manifesting it. Therefore, the learning process happens thanks to the mediation called social interaction.

In DA, assessment and instructions are combined together. That is, intervention or mediation is embedded within the way of assessment with the purpose of identifying the individuals' competence and guiding them to higher levels of functioning (Lids & Gindis, 2003). According to SCT, individuals' reactions to mediation which is near to their current level of capacity, reveal cognitive functions that have not entirely grown yet (Poehner, 2007). As a result, DA targets the things individuals have the ability to do in cooperation with others instead of what they can perform by themselves (Poehner, 2007). In other words, the process should be the emphasis of DA based on Vygotsky rather than the final product.

## **2.2. Zone of proximal development**

ZPD is considered the basic feature constructed by Vygotsky. The zone in this term is aimed at centralizing the connection between instruction and development (Chaiklin, 2003). According to the theory, children's cognitive development takes place in two levels. "*The actual level of development*" is the former in which children can do the task independently and autonomously without any assistance. The latter is "*the potential of development*" which children can achieve with the help of a mediator – the teacher or a more competent peer.

The primary meaning of ZPD is "*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). In another definition, Vygotsky's ZPD is the difference between what a child can do without help and what he or she can perform in cooperation with others, not only in assessment and in classroom learning situations (Kozulin et al., 2003). That is, the process of scaffoldings or mediation offered by the teacher or a smarter peer brings the competence that has existed in the process of emerging, and developing, then consequently exposes the latent potential of development. Additionally, to boost the development of a less competent one, there should be an interaction between them and a more competent one.

## **2.3. Dynamic assessment**

Dynamic assessment (DA) is a sub-category of ZPD that originated from Vygotsky's (1986, 1978) ideas on the way a child's cognition grows and assessment occurs with the

integration with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Lidz (1987) defines DA as *"an interaction between an examiner-as-intervener and a learner-as-active participant, which seeks to estimate the degree of modifiability of the learner and the means by which positive changes in cognitive functioning can be induced and maintained"* (p.4). It is considered a method to measure *"thinking, perception, learning and problem-solving"* (Concepts listed in ZPD) throughout the teaching procedure in the aim of fine-tuning cognitive functioning (Tzuriel, 2001). In another definition, DA is an approach that combines both instruction and assessment activities to construct learners' development thanks to consistent forms of mediation (Lantolf and Poehner, 2004). DA regards language learning as knowledge building and the outcome of the interaction between students and teachers (Birjandi, Daftarifard & Lange, 2011). Thus, learning improvement can be fostered by a medium of interaction consisting of appropriate instructions, intervention, or mediation.

The aim of DA is to elevate cognitive functioning based on delivered cognitive tasks (Deutsch & Raynolds, 2000). That is, thanks to instructions and feedback for cognitive skills of acquisition, learners' potential or hidden competence can be assessed in a dynamic, process-oriented, and flexible way. In order to achieve the objective, the examiner must interact with the child during their tasks' performance for the purpose of understanding learner differences and some implications for instruction that support the process of intervention in the assessment procedure (Lidz & Gindis, 2003).

#### **2.4. Dynamic assessment versus non-dynamic assessment**

While non-DA is viewed as being passive, standardized, and observational, DA engages active participation for both learners and examiners. DA involves the examiners not only presenting the test and identifying errors during the learning process but also relying on this outcome to make a decision about the learners' deficiencies and strengths. On the contrary, Non-DA is believed not to bring an effect on the learners' progress because it assesses learners' ability based on a set of behaviours and uses the outcome to determine a certain level of performance.

Based on Vygotsky's (1978) remarks, DA is focused on active modification by making active efforts, the teachers attempt to adjust the child's weak points and solve their problems with the purpose of bringing positive changes in the learners' accomplishment. In contrast, Non-DA is centralized on psychometric principles and incorrectly believed that a person's solo performance on a test stands for a complete picture of the individual's competence instead of the whole picture consisting of two aspects of information; the person's performance with support and the benefits the person gain from the support both in finishing the same task and in switching this facilitated performance to diverse test (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). In other words, DA must have instruction accompanied by assessment as two aspects of one coin, whereas NDA sees instruction and assessment are two separate coins.

In terms of pedagogical diversities, Lantolf and Thorn (2006) summarize three differences between DA and NDA from Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) as follows: (1) NDA emphasizes the outcomes of previous growth while DA concentrates on future

developments; (2) the connection between examiners and examinee is distinct in DA and NDA. In NDA, examiners' roles are neutral and they merely want to narrow the measurement in errors. In DA, examiners are more flexible because they intervene in the assessment process; (3) in NDA, limited or no feedback on the learners' performance can be found until the assessment is done whereas in DA, a particular form of feedback provides mediated accommodations.

### 2.5. Speaking performance

According to the English Oxford online dictionary, speaking is regarded as the action of imparting information or expressing one's emotion in words. Flutcher (2003) indicates that speaking is the oral means of language to interact with others. Brown (2003) defines that *"Speaking is a productive skill that can directly and empirically be observed, those observations are invariably coloured by accuracy and effectiveness of a test-takers listening skill which is necessary compromises the reliability and validity of an oral production test"* (p.151).

To convey messages effectively, speakers need to master several aspects of the language. There are five key elements: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Besides, some other factors also contribute to the efficacy of communication such as motivation, anxiety, and so on. In general, improvements in speaking capacity depend on the motivation and learning environment (Putri, Amri & Ahmad, 2020).

### 2.6. Adolescent learners

Adolescence demonstrates the period when teenagers are growing into adults between the age of 13 and 19. The first characteristic of adolescence to note is the **physical shift** which comprises the development of the bone frame, muscles, and brain as well as sexual and hormonal adulthood. Another feature is **socialization**. Teenagers tend to associate with their peers rather than their families. That is because they make an attempt to show off their greater independence and the definition of their identity. **Cognitive processes** are the third highlight in adolescent characteristics. Young people commence to understand abstract things and advance their language skills as well as verbalization, which assist them in communicating in a more fruitful way. Piaget (1950) indicates that teenagers can be able to look into situations logically based on cause-and-effect perception and use symbols through the medium of imagination. The final and major characteristic of adolescents is **emotional changes**. Teenagers become irritable and moody and prone to get access to banned substances including cigarettes and alcohol due to their curiosity and desire to experiment. Parents and teachers should pay more attention to aggressive behaviours and discipline problems.

### 2.7. Learners' attitudes

Attitudes can be simply defined as people's stances (Freeman, 1989). In another assumption, Baker (1992) and Garrett (2010) indicated that attitude is defined by three elements: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The cognitive element which is related to

thoughts and beliefs is established on the idea that humans are not born with attitudes, but thanks to socialisation, specific attitudes are possibly “learned” forcing individuals to think or respond favourably or unfavourably towards the objects. Regarding the affective component, it is linked to a person’s feelings towards an object which is considered a determinant of a person’s attitude. The third factor of attitude, behaviour, is viewed as an individual’s willingness to act in a particular way. According to Bohner and Wanke (2002), attitude plays a role as an influential determining factor that can predict and explain behaviour.

## **2.8. Related studies**

Here are some studies examining EFL adolescent learners’ attitudes toward using DA to enhance their speaking performance. Both qualitative and quantitative research has been conducted to investigate the aforementioned domain.

Ebadi and Asakereh (2017) conducted a study to examine the case of a beginner and an advanced learner of English regarding their speaking skills. The participants narrated a series of picture stories and they obtained mediation while speaking based on their ZPD. The researchers employed microgenetics, thematic analysis, and private speech to figure out any possible changes in participants’ cognition growth and self-regulation capacity. The findings disclosed a vital development in the participants’ cognition and their progress toward further self-regulation. The results of the thematic analysis of unstructured interviews revealed their fulfilment with DA.

In another study, Shafiee, Talakoob, and Fatahi (2018) investigated the effect of using DA on teaching the rhythm of English to Iranian EFL learners and their attitudes toward it. The participants belong to the intermediate level of frequency. Based on the findings of the attitude questionnaire, EFL learners gained positive attitudes toward the usage of DA to learn rhythm.

Siwathawon and Wudthayagorn (2018) conducted research on a group of Thai University students who had trouble speaking English. Data gathered from retrospective interviews and dairies indicated that the participants exhibited positive attitudes toward DA.

To investigate the efficacy of DA in the assessment of student teachers’ speaking performance and to figure out their attitudes towards DA, Köroglu (2019) carried out a study with a survey and an interview including 29 student teachers. The results revealed that the DA made participants satisfied and gained positive attitudes towards this assessment type. DA was assumed to offer an authentic, creative, and relaxing atmosphere.

Pratolo and Zahruni (2020) carried out a study involving 4 Indonesian university learners. The results of interviews pointed out that learners had positive attitudes toward DA because it brought them a comfortable, structured, practical, and meaningful floor to figure out their speaking behaviour, weak points, strengths, and needs. Moreover, DA supported them in obtaining objective feedback with less anxiety.

The related literature revealed that DA was mainly studied with participants who belonged to an adultery age group or had high levels of language proficiency in terms of speaking skills development. On the one hand, this study aims to explore learners' attitudes toward DA in another different group of participants. On the other hand, in Vietnam, dynamic assessment is a novel approach that is hardly ever applied in English classrooms. Testing and assessment have taken place with traditional or static modes in which learners have to perform individually and their potential development seems to be ignored. This study was conducted in the hope of bringing some didactic premise for the units and peers.

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **3.1. Research design**

To meet the ultimate aim of the study, it is necessary to point out what EFL adolescent learners' attitudes are towards using DA to enhance their speaking performance. For that reason, the study employed a mixed method using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The study recruited 14 EFL adolescent learners aged 13-15 (beginners of A2 Level, CEFR) in a private English language centre. There were four male and 10 female students as participants who had experienced DA for four sessions before doing the questionnaire and entering interviews.

#### **3.3. Research instruments**

To collect the data, the questionnaire was adapted from the one created by Boonrangsri, Chuaymankhong, Rermyindee, and Vongchittpinyo (2004) with three domains of attitudes namely behavioural, cognitive, and emotional. In this study, the questionnaire comprises 15 items eliciting EFL adolescent learners' attitudes toward using DA to enhance their speaking English. It contains the aspects of behavioural (the first five items), cognitive (the second five items), and emotional (the third five items). In general, 10 items are positive and 5 are negative. The expressions were marked on a five-point Likert scale (Oxford, 1990) from Strongly Disagree (Level 1) to Strongly Agree (Level 5).

In order to have an in-depth view of EFL adolescent learners' attitudes towards using DA to enhance their speaking performance, semi-structured interviews were carried out. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to identify how learners felt, what benefits they gained, and what they thought about the application of DA.

#### **3.4. Research procedures and data analysis**

After experiencing DA, participants were asked to work on the questionnaire including 15 items indicating behavioural, cognitive, and emotional aspects of attitudes towards

using DA to enhance their speaking performance. The collected data was run by SPSS software to interpret the research results.

After completing the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The participants were six learners out of 14 participants who had answered the questionnaire. Interviewees were two participants gaining more improvement, two participants gaining less improvement and two participants gaining average improvement after the mediation of DA.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Results of the questionnaire

**Table 1:** Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N	N of Items
0.838	14	15

Table 1 represents the reliability statistics of EFL adolescent learners' attitudes towards using DA in speaking performance (Questions 1-15). In this table, Cronbach's Alpha is 0.838, higher than the recommended threshold of 0.70. Thus, there is good reliability among the items.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics test of questionnaire results

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean	14	4.18	0.39

As can be seen, the mean score of the questionnaire was 4.18 which belongs to the high level of attitudes (Oxford, 1990). It can be concluded that EFL adolescent learners' attitudes towards using DA in speaking performance are at a high level.

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics test of attitude clusters

Clusters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavioural		4.36	0.33
Cognitive	14	4.23	0.51
Emotional	14	4.00	0.48

As demonstrated in Table 3, the mean scores of the attitude aspects namely behavioural, cognitive, and emotional are 4.36; 4.23; 4.00 respectively. It is indicated that each of the three attitude aspects towards using DA to enhance learners' speaking performance is at a high level.

### A. The behavioural aspect of attitudes toward using DA to enhance learners' speaking performance

As can be shown in Table 4, all respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they are more eager when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction. A majority of participants (over 90% agreed and strongly agreed) expressed that they become more concentrated and able to recognize and regulate themselves when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction. Over 70% of learners agreed and strongly agreed that they can come up with new ideas based on the teachers' instructions. Regarding the negative statement, most respondents (71.43% strongly disagreed and 21.43% disagreed) voted for the item "I don't care for the teachers' prompt feedback, hints and correction while speaking". It means that they really cared about what the teacher tried to support them. Overall, all the positive statements (the first four items) made up the most percentage at strongly and agree and the negative obtained the most at strongly disagree and disagree (the fifth item). Hence, it can be concluded that learners have positive behavioural attitudes towards using DA to enhance their speaking performance.

**Table 4:** Participants' behavioural attitudes toward DA

No	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
1	I become more eager when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints and correction.	-	-	-	10 71.43	4 28.57	4.29
2	I am more concentrated when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints and correction.	-	-	1 7.14	4 28.57	9 64.29	4.57
3	Based on the teachers' prompt feedback, hints, and correction, I can be able to find out new ideas.	-	-	3 21.43	5 35.71	6 42.86	4.21
4	I started to recognize and regulate myself when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction.	-	-	1 7.14	10 71.43	3 21.43	4.14
5	I don't pay attention to the teachers' prompt feedback, hints, and correction.	10 71.43	3 21.43	1 7.14	-	-	4.57

### B. The cognitive aspect of attitudes toward using DA to enhance learners' speaking performance

Statements 6-10 represent learners' positive and negative cognitive attitudes towards using DA in speaking performance. Over 70% of respondents (agreed and strongly agreed) assumed that DA can help activate their knowledge, boost their learning awareness, and improve their English. Regarding negative items, most participants (over 70%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that learning with DA is difficult and DA can demotivate them to speak English. In other words, learners found DA easy-to-get access to, and it motivates them to speak the target language.

As apparent from the data, respondents acknowledge the significance of learning English with DA. This is evidence of their positive cognitive attitude towards using DA to enhance speaking performance.

**Table 5:** Participants' cognitive attitudes toward DA

No	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
6	In my opinion, learning by talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction is difficult.	4 28.57	7 50	3 21.43	-	-	4.07
7	In my mind, the method of talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction helps activate my knowledge.	-	2 14.29	2 14.29	2 14.29	8 57.14	4.14
8	I think the method of talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction helps me gain more awareness of self-study.	-	-	2 14.29	6 42.86	6 42.86	4.29
9	I think that talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction can improve my English-speaking skills.	-	-	1 7.14	6 42.86	7 50	4.43
10	The method of talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints and correction demotivates my English-speaking skills.	7 50	4 28.57	2 14.29	1 7.14	-	4.21

### C. The emotional aspect of attitudes toward using DA in speaking performance

Statements 11-15 elicit positive and negative emotional attitudes towards using DA in speaking performance. As can be seen in the table, over 90% of learners (agreed and strongly agreed) feel more confident when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints and correction. Moreover, all of them voted that they were happy when learning with DA. A plurality of learners (21.43% agreed and 71.43% agreed) desired to learn with DA in the future. In terms of the negative items, 42.86% of learners disagreed and strongly disagreed that they feel anxious when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints and correction and 28.57% agreed and strongly agreed with the aforesaid expression. It means that just a few learners felt anxious when learning with DA. In other words, classroom anxiety is not a big problem for this learning method. For item #13, half of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that they feel embarrassed when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints and correction whereas 14.29% of them strongly agreed with this idea. It can be understood that embarrassment is not an issue affecting much DA either.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that learners have positive emotional attitudes toward using DA to enhance their speaking performance.

**Table 6:** Participants' emotional attitudes toward DA

No	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
11	I feel anxious when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints and correction	2 14.29	4 28.57	4 28.57	3 21.43	1 7.14	3.21
12	Talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction makes me more confident	-	-	1 7.14	7 50	6 42.86	4.36
13	I feel embarrassed when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction	1 7.14	6 42.86	5 35.71	-	2 14.29	3.29
14	I feel happy when talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction.	-	-	-	10 71.43	4 28.57	4.29
15	I desire to learn with the method of talking directly to the teacher and receiving prompt feedback, hints, and correction in the future.	-	-	1 7.14	3 21.43	10 71.43	4.64

#### 4.1.2. Results of semi-structured interviews

To get insightful views about the EFL adolescent learners' attitudes towards using DA to enhance their speaking performance, the researcher made use of the data from semi-structured interviews involving six out of 14 participants who had done the questionnaire. It consisted of two participants gaining more improvement after the mediation (participants Jerry and Junia), two participants gaining less improvement after the mediation (participants Jackson and Olive), and two participants gaining average improvement after the mediation (participants Suka and Tommy). The purpose of the interviews was to identify how learners felt, what benefits they gained, and what they thought about the application of DA.

#### A. Learners' feelings towards the application of DA

Regarding the results of the interviews, all interviewees felt a bit anxious when entering the first DA session, but this trouble was not a big deal because they felt excited, more comfortable, and confident then. This result again confirms that learners have positive emotional attitudes toward DA.

##### Excerpt 1:

*"When talking alone with the teacher, I am a bit under pressure. But I feel better then and it becomes interesting."* (Jerry, interview extract)

##### Excerpt 2:

*"At first, I am quite nervous because I am afraid that I do not have enough language ability to communicate with the teacher. But I feel more comfortable and more confident then."* (Olive, interview extract)

**Excerpt 3:**

*"For the first time, I am a little under pressure, but when I get familiar with the method and I feel excited."* (Suka, interview extract)

**B. Learners' benefits thanks to the application of DA**

Albeit the little anxiety when joining DA, learners gained three main benefits from DA. Along with the privacy that DA could prevent learners from losing face, some learners admitted that DA can enhance their language skills including vocabulary, fluency, and grammar thanks to the teachers' prompt feedback, hints, and correction. Others found themselves more concentrated and more motivated after the course because they believed that they had reached a specific ability and that what they talked about could make listeners understand. The finding is parallel with the result of positive behavioural attitudes in the questionnaire regarding improving learners' language skills, motivation, and concentration thanks to the application of DA. Following are the participants' responses about the benefits gained from DA

**Excerpt 1:**

*"Regarding benefits, it helps me identify mistakes and correct them for the time afterwards."* (Jerry, interview extract)

**Excerpt 2:**

*"Thanks to the privacy. I am not afraid of being criticized for my mistakes by my peers."* (Suka, interview extract)

**Excerpt 3:**

*"I think that learning with the teacher makes me more concentrated. If I work in a group, there are a lot of ideas (from friends)... and it takes time... I want to learn with DA in the future as it helps me practice skills and enhance vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and so on."* (Tommy, interview extract)

**C. Learners' beliefs toward the application of DA**

Being asked about what learners thought about DA, learners believed that DA was suitable for them because their speaking ability regarding accuracy and fluency was improved thanks to the application of DA. Moreover, the teacher's prompts, hints, explanations, suggestions, and scaffolding questions helped activate their knowledge as well. Besides, motivation is what they can gain from DA. This result is in agreement with the result of positive cognitive attitudes reported in the questionnaire.

**Excerpt 1:**

*"I would like to learn with DA in the future because it is suitable for me. When learning with the teacher... I can come up with new ideas based on the teachers' hints... talking to*

*the teacher helps me gain the ability of fluency and accuracy...instead of knowing vocabulary partially.” (Jerry, interview extract)*

**Excerpt 2:**

*“...I become more motivated...and desire to talk more...I can see myself reaching a certain target... like communicative ability.” (Junia, interview extract)*

## 4.2. Discussion

The present study aims at investigating EFL adolescent learners' attitudes toward using DA to enhance their speaking performance. The results of the research indicated that most learners have positive attitudes in terms of three aspects, namely behavioural, cognitive and emotional. A few learners reported that they were a bit nervous when joining DA for the first time. On the one hand, we can explain that DA had not been applied in their class before, so learners were quite embarrassed at first. On the other hand, the assumption of teaching and learning in Vietnam has been deeply affected by Confucianism which was initiated by Confucius (551-479 BCE). Guo (1995) explained that Confucianism teaches governors the way to rule and the common people how to comply with the rule and behave appropriately- the purpose being to retain the social order based on hierarchy. In classroom settings, teachers are considered the rulers who deliver knowledge and learners voice up when allowed (Li and Wash, 2011; Ting, 1987). Following this principle, learners tend to invest most of their time in listening, reading, noting, and so forth. They just speak when opportunities are offered. Therefore, learners in this context need time to adapt to the new learning method and change their mindset as well.

As evident, DA can bring learners a number of benefits. Along with the privacy that DA can help them secure the ego, improvements in their language skills are what they can achieve. Besides, learners gain more concentration, motivation, and confidence after the course or when the method of DA is familiar to them. The results were consistent with the point of view that DA can strongly improve the test takers' motivation and self-confidence in doing L2 speaking tasks (Poehner, 2005; Yakisik and Cakir, 2017).

As mentioned before, DA is mainly based on Vygotsky's social theory which expresses that children are exposed to a social environment where they can get access to all social, cultural, and interpersonal sources of development. In this context, learners experience interaction with the assessor whose scaffolding can assist them in the process of cognition growth. In other words, thanks to the support from another smarter person, learners can achieve and perform a new task independently. This also secures the theory of ZPD which stands for “*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). As can be seen, the teachers' prompt feedback, hints, and correction during DA could elevate learners from the actual development level to the potential one in which learners dare to speak English and believe that the listeners can understand them.

## 5. Recommendations

The small-scope sample is considered one limitation of this study. Although its results unfold some positive findings, evidence would be more convincing if larger-scale research is conducted.

One more thing is that this study targeted EFL teenage learners only. To be more fruitful, it is expected that more upcoming related-topic research that focuses on different samples should be conducted.

## 6. Conclusion

The current paper made an effort to explore the EFL adolescent learners' attitudes towards using DA in speaking performance. The results pointed out that learners had positive attitudes toward the three aspects, namely behavioural, cognitive, and emotional. The findings are consistent with the details listed in the literature review. It is obvious that DA can lead learners to the development of their cognition and their progress. In other words, learners are levelled up from their actual development level to the potential level because DA concentrates on the learning procedure and mainly functions on the mutual interaction between a learner and a teacher. This process takes learners' needs and various characteristics into consideration, so all students can benefit from the assessor's assistance based on their necessities.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The author of this paper has no financial or personal relationships with other people or organizations that could affect or bias the content of the paper.

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