

Learning L2 Non-Congruent Collocations across Cumulative vs. Concurrent Group Dynamic Assessment Instructional Conditions

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Abstract

Collocations play a crucial role in the efficiency of speaking in a second or foreign language. However, learning non-congruent collocations has always presented itself as a difficulty to foreign language learners. Against this background, the present study aimed to investigate the effect of two types of dynamic assessment – cumulative dynamic assessment and concurrent group dynamic assessment – on learning non-congruent English collocations by L1-Persian learners of L2 English. The participants were given the Preliminary English Test (PET) based on the results of which 73 homogeneous learners were selected who were then assigned to two experimental conditions. Prior to the experiments, the participants in both groups were given a non-congruent collocations test designed by the researchers. Afterwards, learners in one of the groups received cumulative group dynamic assessment for the targeted collocations while participants in the second group received concurrent group dynamic assessment. At the end of the treatment, both groups were given a collocations post-test. The results of the statistical analyses indicated that both cumulative and concurrent group dynamic assessment were effective in learning non-congruent collocations. However, there was not any statistically significant difference between the effects of the two types of assessment on learning non-congruent collocations by the EFL learners.

Keywords: Collocations, Concurrent Group Dynamic Assessment, Cumulative Group Dynamic Assessment, Dynamic Assessment (DA), Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA)

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1. Introduction

Collocations characterized as –fixed lexical combinations– have established themselves as one of the significant aspects of the English language and thus teaching and learning them is of paramount importance (Nation, 2001). Nowadays, there is a growing consensus that knowledge of collocations plays a crucial role in learning and acquiring an L2 as it can diminish cognitive demands on the part of language learners during second language production and processing (Conklin & Schmitt 2008). In addition, as argued by Hsu and Chiu (2008), the lack of competence in utilizing correct collocations can be an indicator of L2 learners’ foreign-soundness. These points of significance provide compelling reasons for collocations to be subject to a substantial number of recent studies (e.g. Akbari, Haghverdi, & Biria, 2015; Ashouri, 2015; Fan, 2009; Laufer & Waldman, 2011; Nakata, 2006).

In the Iranian EFL context, a number of issues have been observed and also reported regarding the learning of vocabulary including collocations. For instance, as reported by Namvar, Mohd Nor, Ibrahim, and Mustafa (2012), the majority of Iranian learners rely mostly on combining words by considering the literal translation of word combinations into English instead of using the correct combinations (collocations) in English. This can pose more challenges especially while learning non-congruent collocations—which include different lexical components in L1 and L2 (Yamashita & Jiang, 2010). Thus, instead of using the collocation “*heavy rain*” an Iranian learner may use “*hard rain*” which is the literal translation of the “*baran-e-shadid*” in Persian (Namvar, Mohd Nor, Ibrahim, & Mustafa, 2012).

Furthermore, studies on vocabulary–non-congruent collocations included–have been mainly related to the instruction of vocabulary and to a lesser extent to vocabulary assessment. In other words, few studies have tapped into the inclusion of assessment and instruction together which is the central premise of dynamic assessment (DA). Based on the sociocultural theory (SCT) of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), assessment and instruction should be inseparable for proper instruction. In scaffolding– a central concept in SCT—a more knowledgeable peer is recognized. Additionally, based on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—another central concept in SCT which mainly revolves around one-to-one mediation—to find the proper level of instruction, there is a need for continuous assessment in a dialogic cooperation between teacher-learner, so that what has been learned and what is needed to be learned are clear (Poehner, 2009).

In addition to one-to-one mediation in DA, Poehner (2009) introduced the notion of group dynamic assessment (G-DA) which is based on the group’s ZPD. He also distinguished between the two main modalities of G-

DA namely the concurrent and cumulative G-DA. Concurrent G-DA involves interaction between students, in which one of the students acts as the more knowledgeable peer that supports the other student. However, in cumulative G-DA, the interaction occurs between the teacher and students, in which students take turns and interact with the teacher and the cumulative exchanges lead to learning (Poehner, 2009).

There are a number of studies on collocation and DA in the Iranian context (e.g. Hashemi & Eskandari, 2017; Jafarigohar & Haghghi, 2016), however, these studies have not distinguished between cumulative and concurrent G-DA. Thus, the current study made endeavour to address the potential applicability of G-DA and its two modalities to the process of learning non-congruent collocations by Iranian EFL learners.

Against the background presented above, the present study attempted to contribute to the knowledge in this area through investigating the following research question:

Is there any statistically significant difference between the effects of cumulative vs concurrent dynamic assessment on learning non-congruent collocations by Iranian EFL learners?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Dynamic Assessment (DA)

According to Lantolf and Poehner (2004), Dynamic Assessment (DA) is rooted in Vygotsky's work on the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Extensive research in the fields of psychology and education has been carried out drawing on this construct. Findings from this body of research confirmed that DA can be distinguished from other approaches to assessment by emphasizing that mediation of the learners' performance (e.g. prompt, clues, leading questions) in the process of assessment plays an essential role in understanding the learners' abilities. Hence, it can be crucial in enhancing the development during the assessment process itself.

The construct of ZPD, introduced by Vygotsky has to do with the level of skill or knowledge just above which the learner is aimed to reach (Ellis, 2013). ZPD refers to a distance between the current knowledge an individual possesses and the potential knowledge he or she can gain. Indeed, different scholars have come up with different interpretations of ZPD. That is, they drew on Vygotsky's theory in different ways and with different names (Ellis, 2008). According to SCT, individuals can reach higher levels of mental activity through mediation (Lantolf, 2000). This theory introduced a framework which can be used by the researchers to systematically examine cognition without having to isolate it from the social context (Xiaoxiao &

Yan, 2010). Poehner (2008) noted that sociocultural perspective offers a mediated relationship between human and the world. Based on the concept of ZPD, it can be suggested that learners need to be provided with assistance during assessment so that they can see what they are exactly capable of. Thus mediation can be considered a core concept of DA (Wertsch, 2007) and is assumed to be achieved through the following three ways: including the use of some material tools, interaction with another person or the use of symbols (Vygotsky, 1997).

2.2 Distinctions between Dynamic and Non-Dynamic Assessment in the Context of Education

Haywood and Lidz (2007) claimed that as an interactive approach to assessment, DA lays emphasis on the learners' ability to respond to intervention. According to Caffrey, Fuchs and Fuchs (2008), DA can be distinguished from static/non-dynamic assessment (NDA) with respect to the interaction between learners and the assessor, features of the feedback exchanged between the learners and examiner, and features and nature of learning.

Regarding interaction, Haywood and Lidz (2007) noted that NDA or alternatively static assessment is concerned with a type of atmosphere where both examiner and the learners are involved in a threatening condition. However, DA contributes to a supportive atmosphere in which the emphasis is on a joint attempt to achieve learning. In the case of feedback, while NDA results in no or very little learning-friendly feedback, the feedback produced by DA should be adjusted so as to match learner's specific ZPDs. Furthermore, NDA highlights the product/outcome of learning, while DA lays emphasis on the role of the process(s) of learning. Thus, DA is a form of assessment which highlights the process of learning, with the whole assessment being conducted around the unfolding intervention provided by the teacher.

As the above-mentioned definitions imply, DA takes issue with any segregation of instruction and assessment, which can lead to two main outcomes. First, DA removes fixed and old boundaries between instruction and assessment. Second, DA facilitates the expansion of a better learning-friendly cooperation between an examiner as a mediator and the examinees (student) as learners.

2.3 Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA) and its Two Modalities

Poehner (2009) postulated that the major challenge with respect to DA research concerns the way in which DA can be employed in the classroom, where the interactions between instructor and students involve a range of ZPDs. This would pose difficulties to the application of one-to-one

assessment especially in large classrooms. Consistent with Vygotskian approach, in the context of classroom assessment, the degree to which the interactions between peers and more significant others impact the performance of individuals must be taken into account (Poehner, 2009; Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010).

To overcome the above-mentioned challenges, and in line with Petrovsky's (1985) studies on 'joint activity' and 'pooling efforts', as well as his particular emphasis on 'correctly organized group work' and 'collectives in academic settings' (as cited in Poehner, 2009), group-based dynamic assessment (G-DA) was introduced by Poehner in 2009. Although GDA was founded upon the mediation-oriented principles of DA and ZPD, Poehner asserted that instead of focusing only on individuals' ZPD through one-to-one mediation in DA, the entire group can get involved with an activity through co-construction of the group's ZPDs in G-DA. In fact, G-DA lays emphasis on the development of the whole group with the aid of mediation offered by primary and secondary interactants.

Poehner (2009) presented two categories of G-DA, namely cumulative G-DA and concurrent G-DA. The former allows the learners to initially take turns to participate as primary interactants with the teacher. If the learners provide erroneous answers, the teacher gives some prompts with the aim of helping the learner to provide the right answer. This is cumulative as its aim is to push the group forward in its ZPD by engaging in negotiations with individual group members in their own ZPDs (Poehner, 2009). However, the latter involves the teacher's initiation of the interaction with one particular group member. In fact, in concurrent G-DA, unlike its cumulative counterpart, the researcher does not stay with the same learner, going on to other participants (Poehner, 2009). Thus, the teacher seeks to develop each individual through ZPD of the group.

The effects of DA on learning various components of language have been investigated both internationally (e.g. Anton, 2009; Davin, 2011; Lantolf & Poehner, 2011; Poehner, 2008; Xiaoxiao & Yan, 2010) and also in Iran (e.g. Ebadi & Yari, 2017; Ghahremani & Azarizad, 2013; Hashemi & Eskandari, 2017; Isavi, 2012; Miri, Alibakhshi, Kushki, & Salehpour Bavarsad, 2017; Sadeghi & Khanahmadi, 2011; Saeidi & Hosseinpour, 2013; Tabatabaei, Alidoust, & Sarkeshikian, 2018; Zoghi & Malmeeer, 2013). A review of the previous studies suggests that DA can have a positive effect on L2 learning.

For instance, Ebadi and Yari (2017) examined the effects of DA on EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge development through conducting 15

sessions of DA. The results of thematic and microgenetic analysis indicated an overall positive influence of DA on learners' vocabulary improvement.

In the same vein, Mirzaei, Shakibei, & Jafarpour (2017) investigated the effect of cumulative G-DA on EFL learners' vocabulary learning through the use of ZPD-based collaborative frameworks. The results of both quantitative and qualitative phases of the study pointed to the positive contributions of G-DA with regard to learners' deeper vocabulary enhancement.

2.4 Collocations

According to Benson (1997), as with any other language, English has fixed, identifiable, non-idiomatic phrases and constructions called fixed combinations or collocations. In his definition, Carter (1998) depicted collocations as "a relationship between lexical items that regularly co-occur" (Carter 1998, p.163). These patterns of co-occurrence can be grammatical as they emanate, in the first place, from syntactic dependencies or they can be lexical given that they involve semantic relationships. Furthermore, Nation (2001) posited that collocations are described as closely structured groups the elements of which frequently or uniquely appear together. Given the importance of collocations, a growing number of studies have been conducted over the past decades (e.g. Ashouri, Arjmandi & Rahimi, 2014; Jafarpour, Hashemi & Eskandari, 2017; Hashemian, & Alipour, 2013; Koya, 2003; Mongkolchai, 2008; Sadeghi & Panahifar, 2013; Uçar & Yükselir, 2015; Yumanee, 2012). All of these studies were unanimous in the challenges that the combinations of lexical items can pose to learning collocations in an EFL context.

2.5 Congruency vs Non-Congruency of Collocations

Nakata (2006) made a distinction between collocations, drawing on the L1 and L2. As noted by Nakata (2006) those collocations which can be translated literally into the L2 and yield meaningful equivalents are called congruent collocations.

On the contrary, non-congruent collocations lack translation equivalents in the L2 so that their literal translation into the L2 sounds odd (Nakata 2006). L2 studies of collocations show that L2 learners' L1 makes an important contribution to the acquisition of L2 collocation (e.g. Bisk-up, 1992; Boonyasaquan, 2006; Fan, 2009; Koya, 2003). Learners' recourse to L1 may be a reflection of their assumption regarding the existence of a one-to-one correspondence between L1 and L2 collocations. When the collocation in the first language matches that in the second language (i.e., congruent collocation), there would be a positive transfer (Laufer & Waldmen, 2011; Mongkolchai, 2008; Yumanee, 2012). However, the disagreement between

linguistic units, e.g. collocations, would result in a negative transfer, pushing L2 learners to produce erroneous L2 combinations (Ellis, 2008; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

2.6 Learning Collocations in Light of DA

One way L2 learners are helped to solve the challenges involved in learning collocations can be through the right assessment type teachers give to the learners. In such a context, DA seems to provide promising and effective learning and teaching opportunities. Lidz and Gindis (2003) posited that DA, as an approach to figuring out individual differences along with their role in teaching and learning, can lead to the provision of an intervention following the assessment procedure.

In their study, Hessamya and Ghaderi (2014) investigated the role of DA in learning vocabulary by Iranian EFL learners. The results showed that DA significantly affected vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. In a recent study, Hashemi and Eskandari (2017) examined the effect of DA on learning two types of collocations (congruent vs incongruent). They concluded that learners in the experimental group could markedly benefit from DA in learning both congruent and incongruent collocations consistently.

Given the importance of DA, so far, a large number of studies (e.g. Anton, 2009; Barzegar & Azarizad, 2014; Poehner, 2008; Yildirim, 2008; Zoghi and Malheer 2013) have been carried out. Moreover, collocations have also been subject to many investigations (e.g. Anani Sarab & Kardoust, 2014; Ashkan & Seyyedrezaei, 2016; Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; Molavi, Koosha & Hosseini, 2014; Nesselhauf, 2003; Uçar & Yükselir, 2015). As a review of the previous studies indicates, to date, to the best knowledge of the researchers, no study has examined the impact of concurrent and cumulative dynamic assessment on learning non-congruent collocations.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The initial participants of this study were 98 intermediate EFL learners from a gender-segregated English language institute in Tehran. The participants were all at the intermediate level of English language proficiency. They came from various educational backgrounds. These learners were studying English for various reasons like better job opportunities, better academic achievement and personal interest in English language. These 98 participants were given a PET based on the results of which 73 learners whose scores fell within +/-1 SD from the mean were selected to ensure that the participants were homogeneous in terms of their

overall proficiency. The reason for selecting the scores between ± 1 SD from the mean was that these scores were the closest to the mean and accordingly the scores were more homogenized and less dispersed. The participants of the study were all female learners within an age range of 18 to 24.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

3.2.1 Preliminary English Test (PET)

A sample Preliminary English Test (PET) was adopted from Preliminary English Test 5 of Cambridge ESOL Examinations published by Cambridge University Press in 2008 in order to determine the learners' proficiency level. This was done to select a homogenous sample of participants. Three sections of PET were utilised in this research, which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Different Sections of PET Used in the Study

Section	Time	Focus	Number of Parts	Points
Section 1	1 h	Reading	5 Parts	35 Marks
Section 2	35 min	Listening	4 Parts	25 Marks
Section 3	10-12min	Speaking	4 parts	15 Marks
Total score:75				

To examine the reliability of the test, Cronbach's Alpha was employed and an acceptable reliability of .83 was obtained for the reading and listening parts. The inter-rater reliability for the speaking section was found to be .76, which is an acceptable index of reliability. The writing section of PET was not included for the purpose of the present study.

3.2.2. Non-congruent Collocation Test (Pretest and Posttest)

To assess the learners' performance on non-congruent collocations, a test consisting of 30 multiple-choice items was developed by one of the researchers. The source of the collocations was the *Collocations in Use* authored by McCarthy and O'Dell (2006). Initially, thirty collocations which did not have translation equivalents in Persian and if translated into Persian word by word, they would sound unnatural (non-congruent collocations) were identified and then a test of collocations was developed. The test was of a multiple-choice format that included four options one of which was the correct meaning of the target collocation. In other words, the target collocations were used in sentences and the participants needed to choose one of the options, a, b, c, or d that had a similar meaning to the target collocations. A panel of experts consisting of one Ph.D. holder in TEFL and another one in linguistics was also formed to assist the researcher in choosing

the non-congruent collocations for the purpose of the study. This test served as the pretest and posttest of the study.

To examine the content validity of the test, the initial items were chosen and revised by a Ph.D. holder in TEFL. As for the reliability index, the test was piloted and the scores gained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha was .76 which is considered satisfactory.

3.3. Procedure

As stated earlier, 98 female intermediate learners were initially selected through convenience sampling and given a PET the results of which were drawn on to select a homogeneous sample of 73 learners whose scores lay between +/-1 SD from the mean. These 73 participants were then divided non-randomly into two experimental groups. Afterwards, learners in one of the groups received cumulative group dynamic assessment for the selected collocations following the procedures proposed by Poehner (2009). According to Poehner (2009, p.488), "Cumulative G-DA attempts to move the group forward through co-constructing ZPDs with individuals". In cumulative G-DA, the students take turns to engage as primary interactants with the teacher. When a student provides an incorrect answer, the teacher provides that student with mediation prompts until s/he arrives at the correct answer. This approach is believed to be cumulative since its goal is to move the group forward in its ZPD through negotiations with individual group members in their own ZPDs. Based on these definitions, the following steps were taken in the first experimental group:

- 1) Initially, the exercises in the *Collocations in Use* (McCarthy and O'Dell 2006) corresponding to the identified non-congruent collocations were presented to the participants.
- 2) Having finished the exercises, the teacher divided the learners into groups.
- 3) The learners were asked to check their answers in groups.
- 4) The groups were advised to work together and make sentences in which the collocations were used.
- 5) Some individual students from the groups were asked to read out the sentences.
- 6) If the sentence read was not correct, the teacher provided the learner with another sentence in which the collocation was used.
- 7) If the learner was able to make another sentence, the teacher stopped and if not, other steps were taken as follows:
- 8) The teacher provided a broader context in which the meaning of the collocation became clearer.

9) In case the learner did not manage to get the right meaning in step 7, the teacher gave a synonym of the collocation or an antonym and finally a definition.

10) In case all the previous steps proved ineffective, the teacher presented the Persian meaning of the collocation and asked the learner to make sentences and also use a dictionary to come up with the right examples.

As it is evident from the above-mentioned steps, the teacher, or mediator as Lantolf and Poehner (2004) put it, starts within a broad ZPD and then narrow it down until s/he gets within the individual group members' zone of proximal development in an attempt to provide the learner with the most effective feedback available. Moreover, since in this experimental group, the individuals worked collaboratively to make the sentences and the teacher provided mediation for the individual members of the group, and consequently the group ZPDs were moved forward through co-constructing ZPDs with individuals, the procedures were in line with Cumulative G-DA principles (Poehner, 2009).

The second experimental group received concurrent G-DA based on Poehner (2009). As he maintains, concurrent G-DA refers to a type of DA based on which the teacher gets two students engaged as primary and secondary interactants in the course of his/her interaction and thus providing the learners with his/her mediating support. As evident, the main feature of concurrent G-DA lies in the involvement of a secondary interactant in the process of assessment. To carry out concurrent G-DA in the present study, the following steps were followed in the second experimental group:

- 1) Initially, the exercises in the *Collocations in Use* (McCarthy and O'Dell 2006) corresponding to the identified non-congruent collocations were given to the participants.
- 2) Having finished the exercises, the teacher assigned the learners to groups.
- 3) The learners were asked to check their answers in groups.
- 4) The groups were advised to work together and make sentences in which the collocations were used.
- 5) Some individual students from the groups were asked to read out the sentences.
- 6) If the sentence read was not correct, the teacher provided the selected learner with another sentence in which the collocation was used.
- 7) If the learner managed to make another sentence, the teacher stopped here and if not other steps were taken as follows:
- 8) The teacher chose another group member and went through steps 1 to 7.

9) Following that, the teacher gave the second interactant a broader context in which the meaning of the collocation became clearer.

10) In case the second interactant did not manage to get the right meaning, the teacher gave a synonym of the collocation or an antonym and finally a definition.

11) In case all the previous steps proved ineffective, the teacher provided the Persian meaning of the collocation and asked the learners to make sentences and also use a dictionary to come up with the right examples.

The salient difference between the Cumulative GDA and Concurrent GDA as Poehner (2009) states lies in the fact that in cumulative GDA, students initially take turns to engage as primary interactants with the teacher. Following that, when an erroneous answer is given by a learner, the teacher provides prompts for the learner until s/he comes up with the right answer. On the other hand, in concurrent GDA the teacher gets two students engaged as primary and secondary interactants in the course of his/her interaction and thus providing the learners with his/ her meditating support (Poehner, 2009).

The treatment lasted for 10 sessions in both experimental groups. After the treatment, both groups were given the post-test. The results of the pretest and post-test were analyzed to verify the null hypotheses.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Prior to conducting the main study, it was deemed necessary to ensure that both groups were not significantly different in terms of their knowledge of non-congruent collocations. To this aim, a non-congruent collocations test was given to the two groups and an independent samples t-test was run on the scores. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and results of independent samples t-test for the scores of the two groups on the collocation pretest.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and the Results of Independent Samples t-test for the Scores of the Two Groups on the Collocation Pretest

	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig(2-tailed)
Pretest Both Groups (equal variances assumed)	Cumulative GDA	37	10.1622	2.60889	.478	.634
	Concurrent GDA	36	9.8333	3.23817		

As indicated in the above table, students in the cumulative GDA group ($M = 10.16$, $SD = 2.60$) were not significantly different from students in the concurrent group ($M = 9.83$, $SD = 3.23$) in terms of their knowledge of collocations prior to the treatment, $t(71) = .478$, $p = .634 > .05$.

As it was mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the present study was to investigate if there is any statistically significant difference between the effects of cumulative vs concurrent dynamic assessment on learning non-congruent collocations by Iranian EFL learners. To this aim, an independent samples t-test was run on the posttest scores of the two experimental groups. Table 3 demonstrates the descriptive statistics and results of independent samples t-test for the posttest scores of the two experimental groups.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Results of Independent Samples t-test for the Posttest Scores of the Two Experimental Groups

	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Posttest Both Groups (equal variances assumed)	Cumulative GDA	37	14.4054	2.9006	.429	.669
	Concurrent GDA	36	14.1111	2.9644		

As indicated in the above table, students in the cumulative GDA group ($M = 14.40$, $SD = 2.90$) were not significantly different from students in the concurrent group ($M = 14.11$, $SD = 2.96$) in terms of their knowledge of collocations after the treatment, $t(71) = .429$, $p = .669 > .05$. Thus, it can be inferred that there is not any statistically significant difference between the effects of cumulative vs. concurrent dynamic assessment on learning non-congruent collocations by Iranian EFL learners.

4.2. Discussion

The results of the present study can strengthen the findings of previous studies conducted by Anton (2009), Lantolf and Poehner (2004), Poehner (2009) and other researchers who have investigated positive effects of DA on learning a foreign or second language. Likewise, in line with the purpose of the current study, the research by Ebadi and Yari (2017) on the role of DA in learning vocabulary showed that DA significantly affected the vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be inferred that the positive effect of both concurrent and cumulative G-DA is attributable to the common core of DA and G-DA. This argument can be supported by previous studies

concerning the effectiveness of DA in language learning (e.g. Ahmadi Safa & Beheshti, 2018; Hashemi & Eskandari, 2017; Miri, Alibakhshi, Kushki, & Salehpour Bavarsad, 2017; Tabatabaee, Alidoust, & Sarkeshikian, 2018). It can be concluded that DA, with its emphasis on mediation and interaction, may have contributed to learners' involvement and consequently more willingness to sustain their studies and hence their better performance on the posttest of collocations.

In the theories associated with DA e.g. ZPD and SCT, certain elements such as interaction, feedback, and cooperation and collaboration are considered essential (Albeeva, 2008). All these elements are considered necessary and conducive to better learning of various linguistic elements. Likewise, trajectories of the same elements are seen in the definition of DA. For instance, it has been stated that DA is different from static (traditional) assessment in the nature of the examiner-student relationship, the content and form of feedback, and the emphasis on process rather than product (Anton, 2009). As stated by Poehner (2009), DA targets the true potential of the learner and thus extends the interactive nature of learning to the process of assessment. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the effectiveness of both concurrent and cumulative DA in learning non-congruent collocations as the core elements of DA. Moreover, DA was built on the principle of ZPD which pushes the learners in a progressive manner from their current status of development to the next stage of development. This progression is also supported by a more knowledgeable person such as an instructor which gives the learners support and trust to move forward. In addition, interaction is another factor salient in DA which was also emphasised in the current study. All these theoretical explanations drawn from Vygotsky's ZPD and his sociocultural theory give credence to the validity and justifiability of the findings of the present study.

Furthermore, in learning lexical items, there are new voices regarding the application of SCT and mediation which are also the core components of DA. Drawing on sociocultural perspectives and mediation, White (2012) proposed the conceptual approach of learning. The effectiveness of conceptual mediation has been confirmed by a number of scholars such as Negueruela (2008) and Poehner (2008). In this new approach, the emphasis is on the association of schemata, sharing and discussion of the concepts among classmates, and individual conceptualization of meaning of the lexical items through socialization and interaction. Therefore, it can be stated that DA can pave the way for the realization of the conceptual approach to learning collocations.

This study showed that both concurrent and cumulative G-DA were effective in learning non-congruent collocations. As mentioned earlier, non-

congruent collocations do not have direct equivalents in the first language of the learners and negative transfer may add to the challenge of learning (Nesselhauf, 2003). However, provision of continuous assessment inherent in DA may have made the learners sensitive to the nature of non-congruent collocations and negative effect of referring to meanings of individual words or getting help from first language.

However, caution should be exercised in treating the findings of this study. More studies specifically in the Iranian EFL context are required to understand how concurrent and cumulative G-DA contribute to the learning of collocations. More specifically, it should be pointed out that there are also critiques regarding DA, and that superiority of DA when compared to traditional assessment has been critically evaluated (e.g. Swanson & Lussier, 2001). Contrary to the findings of the present study, Murphy (2002) stated that not all empirical studies on DA have led to positive results in education. In a meta-analysis done on DA, Swanson and Lussier (2001) concluded that effect size of DA has been a function of various factors including ability, age, sample size, and the type of procedure used to operationalize DA. Thus, although the findings of the present study support and get supported by the previous studies showing positive effect of DA and more specifically G-DA, they should not be taken as absolute and need to be taken into consideration with care. In other words, the contextual characteristics of the present study should be considered for making decisions on the employment of G-DA as an instruction tool in the classroom.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The results of this study can be beneficial for language teachers who are interested in various kinds of assessment and their potential effects on learning different language skills and components in general and collocations in particular. Based on the findings of this study, language teachers need to gain more awareness of various kinds of collocations and the way they pose challenges to learning. Moreover, language teachers can gain familiarity with the principles of G-DA and its various modalities as well as the steps required to implement these assessment types. Currently, English teachers in Iran follow a mix of traditional and communicative approaches to teaching English as a foreign language. With regard to vocabulary and collocations, the methods are more traditional emphasizing mostly on memorization or using them in a limited number of sentences restricted to specific contexts. It seems that more innovative approaches need to be included in the English language curriculum that are supported by empirical studies in the Iranian EFL context. G-DA can be a potential candidate assuming that it can positively affect vocabulary acquisition among Iranian EFL learners.

Although injecting new and innovative methods into the curriculum seems to be difficult because various parts of a curriculum such as assessment procedures and materials need to be updated too, foreign language institutes may start with a more moderate approach. For instance, the starting point may be seminars and workshops to familiarize the teachers and trainers with different models of G-DA and asking teachers to reflect and report on piloting different G-DA procedures. In other words, the introduction of G-DA can itself follow a dynamic assessment procedure by considering the tolerance of the current education system at the outset of G-DA's introduction to the Iranian EFL context and also continuous feedbacks received from teachers, students, parents etc., when the introduction is gradual and cautious. Based on such feedbacks, it can be decided how G-DA fits the context and what modifications are necessary.

As with any research study, the present study suffered from some limitations and these limitations are suggested to be noticed in future studies. For instance, it is recommended that in future studies on collocations and congruent vs cumulative G-DA more representative and larger samples should be considered. In addition, the design of the current research did not include any control group due to the practical restrictions imposed on the researchers from the context of study. Thus, further studies must be carried out with experimental designs in which a control group is also included to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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