



# “I don't want to single anyone out”: Reimagining teaching and assessment in dialectical teacher-researcher partnership

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# DD-LANG (Dynamic Diagnostic Language Assessment) Project



Research to advance the **theoretical, empirical and practical basis** of foreign language (L2) assessment supporting learning

- funded by the **Research Council of Finland** and University of Jyväskylä Sept.1. 2022 – Aug. 31. 2026
- focuses on **reading** and writing in English as a foreign language in upper secondary schools in Finland (16–18 -year-olds) during preparation for national Matriculation Exam (ME)

## 2 major goals:

- 1) Elaborating assessment framework to support teaching & learning by integrating **dynamic** and **diagnostic L2 assessment**
- 2) **Combining online dynamic-diagnostic assessment and classroom assessment, teaching, and learning**

# Research as *praxis*

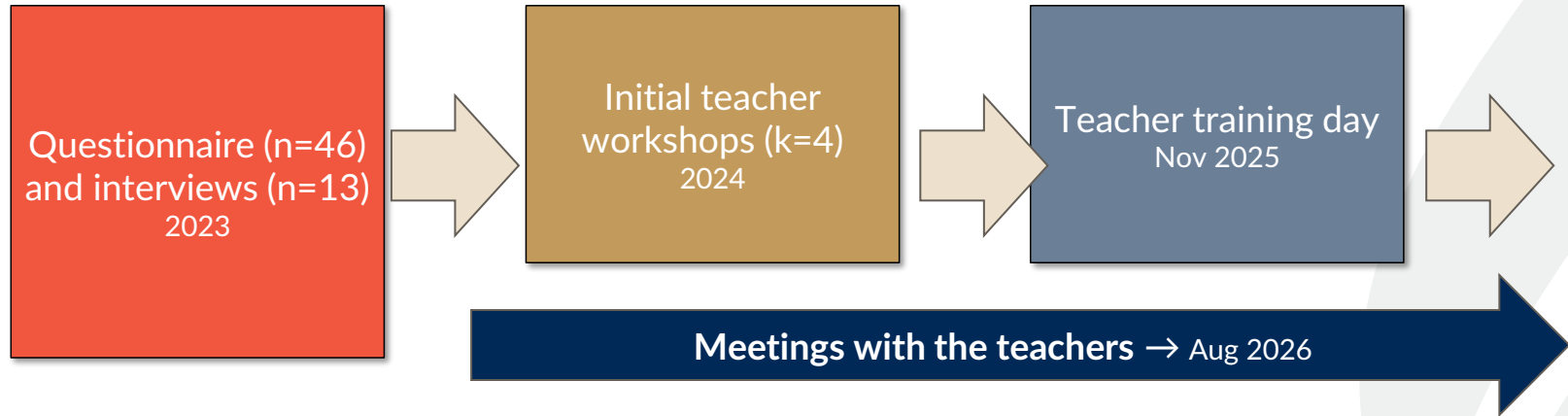


- “Theory without an experiment is a voluntary play of mind; an experiment without a theory is a knife without a handle” (Veresov, 2014)
- **Theory is used to change practice and is validated in it:** theory guides how teachers may develop their classroom practices, which allows for theory-building

# Our praxis with teachers



- 7 upper secondary schools in 4 cities in Finland, EFL classes
- EFL teachers (n = 14)
- Upper-secondary school students in various years (n = 513)



Dynamic assessment (DA) is a framework in which teaching and assessment are interrelated parts of **one educational activity** aiming at identifying learners' abilities **in the process of maturing** and **pushing them forward**.

Is about:

- ✓ yielding insights into individual differences and what they mean for instruction
- ✓ both assessing and developing  
(Poehner & Leontjev, 2020; Lidz, 1991)



Photo by Kristiina Halonen ([Kristijna in Flickr](#))



### Choose the best fitting answer to the question.

the next one. Ford at the time was putting the finishing touches on an all-electric version of its best-selling F-150 pickup, with a nifty feature for just such an emergency: in a power outage, the truck would be able to function as a backup battery, powering an owner's house for days. "I can't tell you how many F-150s I saw parked in driveways while I was driving around Texas during that week," says O'Gorman.

The F-150 Lightning is the latest offering in Ford's \$22 billion electric vehicle (EV) push. It's also a huge deal for the company which is fighting both fellow incumbents (like GM) and highly-valued upstarts (like Tesla and Rivian) for what analysts say will at least at first be a limited electric market but is likely to be the future of the auto industry. "We just absolutely think there's going to be a big shake out," Ryan O'Gorman told TIME of the EV market. "There're going to be clear winners and losers, and the pecking order of the industry is going to change."

What is Ryan O'Gorman's opinion about the future?

**New manufacturers will gain leading positions**

**Old manufacturers will suffer bankruptcies**

**The future of the car industry is worrisome**

**The whole car industry is going to be altered**

**There will be new car manufacturers in the US**



## Learner's response

New manufacturers will gain leading positions

The future of the car industry is worrisome

The whole car industry is going to be altered

## Mediation

Sometimes you don't need to know the exact meaning of an unknown word. But if you do, it's helpful to look at the **words and sentences around it**. If you understand the **general idea** of what you're reading, this will help you figure out what the unknown word might mean.

### The following may help you find the meaning of an unknown word:

-Which words come right **before or after** the unknown word? Do these words help you understand the difficult word?

- Can you **divide** the unknown word **into parts**? Can you recognise the **meaning of the parts**? (e.g., *un-help-ful*)

- Recognising only part of the meaning may help, too. Is the word **positive or negative**? What **part of speech** is it, for example, a verb (*to go*) or an adjective (*beautiful*)?

- How are **details** in a sentence or in several sentences connected? For example, the word *but* suggests that details are contrasted, and *because* tells us that a reason is given. Look for these kinds of words in the text.

Correct!

# Learner-chatbot interaction example



## Learner query

why are you doing this to me

## chatbot response

**I understand** that this exercise might be challenging, but it's **designed to help you improve your reading** comprehension skills. It's important to be able to understand and interpret written information, especially in academic and professional settings. **Don't worry, it's okay to make mistakes** during this process. **That's how we learn.** Keep going, you're doing great!



### **Teach Off Your Students, Not At Them**

Teaching as dialogic mediation - take up what students say and bring it into the instructional conversation, encourage more dialogic, collaborative, co-constructed interactions, pay attention to the semiotic, linguistic, & instructional resources that learners are using, attempting to use, or need to be aware of in order to participate in an instructional activity.

# Praxis in teacher-researcher interaction: OPE10 example

# Teacher workshop (spring 2024): Opportunities and challenges



**OPE2:** Perhaps the quality or the or the nature of assistance or tuition provided by the teacher would be different based on-on-on a mediated score. Depends on on group sizes. If you have a group of 38, yeah, yeah.

**OPE1:** Yeah, I was just thinking how could how could I do that to differentiate the teaching in the classroom. **That's always been my problem. I don't seem to get it, how I'm supposed to do that with a classroom full of people.**

**OPE10:** They're all **doing exercises at a different pace** and and- Even though you tell them to wait for my mediation, they will still do the exercise on their own time. And, yeah, it's hard to keep track of that.

**OPE2:** We are not teaching a group of students any longer. We are teaching **38 individuals with very, very specific and personalised issues.**

# Meeting with OPE10 (spring 2025): using information in the classroom



**OPE10:** I'm because I'm always a little sort of cautious when it comes to what's the word, eriyttäminen (= *differentiation*), in the classroom, because **I don't want to sort of single anyone out...** But I guess **it could be also used to**, um, **sort of shuffle the seating arrangement in a way to form pairs that can support one another or, to form pairs that are on a similar level** as well, and then sort of spend more time there when needed. But again, I wouldn't want to do it openly necessarily, I might prefer to sort of because they'll notice it at some point... Or then just to sort of for myself to figure out where to spend more time where to hover more and what kind of help to offer then

**Dmitri:** ... I wonder if there is **an opportunity not even kind of grouping the students**, but also like **knowing who the students are in this pairs**, right, **in terms of different, potentially different dynamics** that they may have in the classroom based on their, you know, mediated score **so that it's not intrusive...**

# Meeting with OPE10 (October 2025): mediation and learners' agency



**Dmitri:** And I think that's also kind of an important part is like to like, how do we intervene? And when? Where?

**OPE10:** I like the fact that you **go around the classroom** and, actually **talk to the students** and go through the exercises with them. I feel like **I tend to give them a little too much autonomy** every now and then ... I don't want to bother them too much or make them feel uncomfortable ... but **I could let go of that and just chat with them more** and get to know them better in that way. So I feel like I have something to learn from you in terms of that...

Yeah, I usually try to make myself available, ask them if they need anything from me rather than start a discussion specifically, but **it's easier to approach them if you already know something about them** beforehand. And I feel like **this data could be one aspect...** Are they struggling because they don't know what they're doing and they're just too scared to say it? ... Like, what is the reason why they're not moving ahead with the exercises or, but this data could help with that, at least, you have that information before you **approach groups or students**, and then also, you know, in group work, or in formulating seating plans, or something like that, you can use the information to see **what kinds of groups you want to make.**

**OPE5: learners working together  
and teacher mediation**

# Early discussion of course ideas: peer mediation and teaching off your students



**OPE5:** Yeah, I was thinking about... that some of the students brought up that maybe if they knew the level of the exercises, they could concentrate on practicing those or **they could work in pairs, helping each other.**

**Dmitri:** So do you do or **have you tried that with your students** kind of asking students to help their peers?

**OPE5:** **sometimes** when you do pair work, yes, they I always **tell them I help each other.** But of course, I can't listen to everybody...

**Dmitri:** we want to help everyone, right, as a teacher, kind of give them everything. But then you kind of realize, that this is not helping actually, right? ... I, as a teacher... make a note mental note. **What is it that my students give me? All of this partial knowledge, all of these actual struggles, all of these emotions... that they give me and I react based on what they give me.**

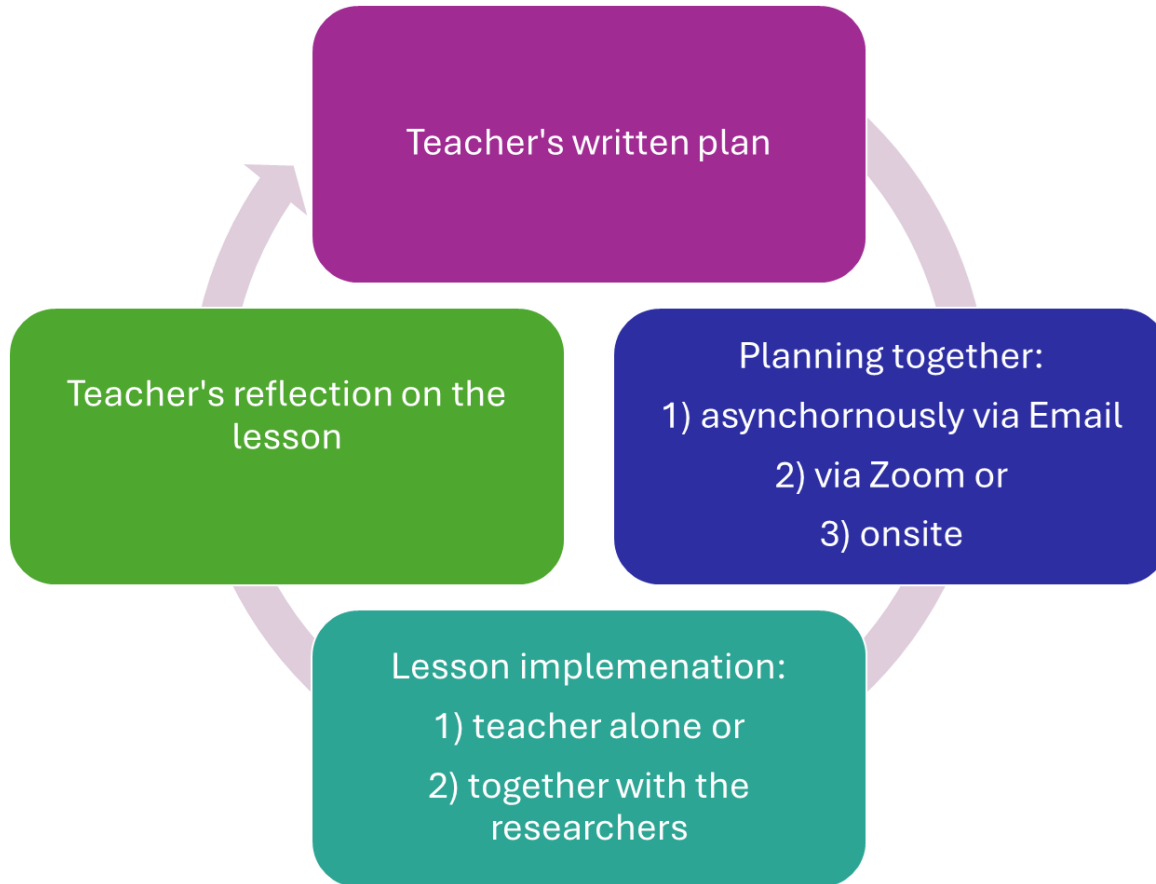
**OPE5:** Yeah, it sounds good. **That's kind of my dream philosophy as well,** in a way. Because I'm, I'm this sensitive

# DD-lang course



- Elective course
  - Weekly lessons starting from Oct 2025 until mid-Jan 2026
  - 6 second-year upper secondary school students
- OPE5 wanted to focus on **students working together**
- Our goal was to help the teacher to teach off their students by mediating both the teacher understanding and the students in the classroom, forming the **concept of mediated development**
- **Reading-writing connection, peer work** asking for and giving feedback with the intention to develop
- Classroom activities, including
  - DD-Lang exercises
  - AI as a tool for learning
  - Process writing with a focus on peer responding

# Course planning process



# Learner mediated/unassisted performance reports



Username	Set	item_count	attempt_count	correct_on_first_attempt	correct	mediation_score	avg_mediation_wo_correct
S1	Specific details, easier	4	4	4	4	4	0
	Specific details, difficult	5	5	5	5	4	0
	Deducing vocabulary easier	1	1	1	1	4	0
S2	Specific details, easier	5	13	1	5	2.4	2
	Specific details, difficult	5	9	3	4	3.2	2
	Deducing vocabulary easier	5	7	3	5	3.6	1
	Deducing vocabulary difficult	5	15	0	5	2	2
S3	Specific details, easier	5	16	0	3	1.8	2.2
	Specific details, difficult	5	7	3	5	3.6	1
	Deducing vocabulary easier	2	3	1	2	3.5	1

**Learner:** why is the answer the last one

**Bot:** The answer is the last one because it best matches the content of the text you read. The text states that Jeff Winter's style in his book is similar to his style as a referee. This corresponds to the last answer option, "The author displays the same style as he did when working as a referee." The feedback you received also supports this interpretation.

**Learner:** Can you tell the message of the correct answer easier?

**Bot:** Sure, the correct answer means that Bill Barich, in his book, was able to really capture the 1 spirit or heart of horse racing. He didn't just write about the races, but he was able to convey what makes horse racing special and unique.

# Early planned activity based on the DD-Lang information



Planned activity	OPE5's reflection on implementation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="156 352 904 614">1) <b>Ask Copilot to adopt the persona of a teacher:</b> “Please in this chat adopt persona of a teacher of English who is very caring but at the same time wishes their students to have as much agency in their learning process as possible...”</li><li data-bbox="156 623 871 702">2) <b>Ask it as much as you can about the task</b></li><li data-bbox="156 710 929 887">3) Then ask them to <b>think whether the response helps them to learn</b> something about this text and how to read it and about reading in general.</li><li data-bbox="156 896 923 1062">4) After the chat with CoPilot, discuss in your group (/with your partner) what you learned about the text and about reading the text</li></ol>	<p data-bbox="967 352 1760 472"><b>How did it go? How did the students engage in the activity, what feelings/emotions you observed? How did it feel?</b></p> <p data-bbox="1064 483 1760 789"><b>It was difficult for the students to think of questions to ask about the text</b>, so <b>I gave them some hints</b>, and instructed them to ask ‘why option x is right and why option two is wrong’, <b>but this CoPilot exercise did not work very well</b> otherwise</p> <p data-bbox="1064 800 1740 1062"><b>Some frustration</b> (only a hint) <b>was experienced by some students</b> but mostly they were working and motivated all the time, asked questions and I navigated in the class, helping them and giving instructions when necessary</p>

# Implementing a lesson together



Planned lesson (around the chatbot activity where we shift the students' understanding of the discussion with the chatbot)	OPE5's reflection on implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) <b>Guiding principles:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) AI as a tool for learning: what you ask and how</li><li>b) Intentionality: learning Vs task completion</li><li>c) Teaching off your students</li></ul></li><li>1) Students completing new set of DD-Lang tasks focused on main idea of a paragraph</li><li>2) Teacher and researcher jointly observe and mediated students as needed:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) not modelling but asking guiding questions</li></ul></li><li>1) Final discussion</li></ul>	<p>How did it go? How did the students engage in the activity, what feelings/emotions you observed? How did it feel?</p> <p><b>It was easier for the students</b> to work with the chatbot this time and <b>they managed to ask question</b> that enabled them to <b>learn more about the text</b> and to help them <b>understand the connection between reading and writing</b>. One of the students even managed to rewrite the whole text in her own words and make the main idea 'visible' during the process, so <b>the goal of the lesson was achieved this time</b>.</p>

# Implementing a course together with OPE5: Learners' use of AI as tool for learning



## Before the intervention

**Learner:** **why is the answer the last one**

**Bot:** The answer is the last one **because it best matches the content of the text you read.** The text states that Jeff Winter's style in his book is similar to his style as a referee. This corresponds to the last answer option, "The author displays the same style as he did when working as a referee." The feedback you received also supports this interpretation.

...

**Learner:** **what does "novel security features" mean**

**Bot:** "Novel security features" means "new security features." In this context, it refers to unique or innovative features in electric cars that improve their safety or functionality.

## After the intervention

**Learner:** why is that the best option

**Bot:** "The cost of travel" is the best title because it reflects the main idea of the text...

**Learner:** **how can I practice this**

**Bot:** You can practice reading comprehension in many different ways. Here are a few tips:...

**Practice summarizing the main idea of a text in one or two sentences.** This will help you focus on the essential points in the text....

**Learner:** **what strategy will help me understand** what the text is about most easily. Even if there are many correct answers, how can I understand what the main point really is.

**Bot:** To understand the main point of the text, you can use the following strategies: ...Ask yourself questions: **What is the author trying to say? What is the purpose of the text? What are the most important points in the text?**

# OPE5's plan and reflection in the latter part of the course



**Plan:** The teacher explains what will be happening during the lesson. The students discuss in pairs what they already know about writing a composition and what they think the most important criteria for writing a good composition are and then share their thoughts with the whole group. **The teacher also asks them what they think they learned about writing when doing the reading comprehension exercises.**

## **Reflection:**

We talked **about the connection between last time and this time**, and how **finding the main idea of a text** is connected to **writing their own texts**. Then they discussed what makes a good writer in English in two groups and then they shared their points with the whole class. Both groups had similar points but also different ones and we were able to discuss a rather versatile list of different points.

## **Teaching off your students:**

When we discussed the criteria, I tried to make the students to **see the connection with their own ideas about a good writer** they had come up with and **the criteria on the handout**, and they managed to say/write something about every main category.

# Discussion



- Not researcher and being researched but **colleagues learning from each other**, resolving everyday challenges in the classroom
- Not just teachers' **conceptual development** but also classroom applications >> **learner development**

## NEXT STEPS:

- More classroom interventions designed in praxis
- Teacher workshops and individual coaching sessions: DD-Lang teachers and researchers **developing classroom practices together**



**Kiitos!**  
**Thank you!**

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