# Dynamic Assessment as the Linchpin of Academic Buoyancy, Reflective Thinking, and Academic Resilience for Intermediate Iranian EFL Learners: A Phenomenological Study

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| | In recent years, dynamic assessment and positive psychology have attracted the attention of many researchers. This phenomenological study explores Iranian intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' perception of academic buoyancy, reflective thinking, and academic resilience in response to dynamic assessment. Data were gathered through narrative inquiry, observation, and focus group discussion involving 18 intermediate EFL learners at a language institute in South Iran. Member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trail were used to ensure the credibility and dependability of the instruments. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed that dynamic assessment positively influenced learners' academic buoyancy by providing tailored scaffolding and support, fostering resilience in the face of academic challenges, and enhancing reflective thinking abilities. These findings suggest that integrating dynamic assessment techniques into language teaching practices contributes to students' adaptive coping mechanisms and ability to navigate academic setbacks, enhancing their academic success and overall well-being. The study underscores the importance of incorporating dynamic assessment approaches to cultivate resilient and empowered learners within EFL settings. This study contributes to understanding dynamic assessment's role in fostering academic resilience and reflective thinking in language learning contexts. The implications of the study are discussed. |

## 1. Introduction

Assessment processes are pivotal in any educational context (Poehner & Lantolf, 2023). The results of these processes are both an indication of students' achievement and instructors' institutional performances (Zhang, 2023). EFL instructors must provide learners with appropriate assessment processes (Davin, 2013). Providing learners with a proper assessment procedure reveals learners' weaknesses and misconceptions and promotes instruction (Davin, 2013). Put differently, instructors' decisions should be meaningfully informed by a particular theory or framework. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT,) with its emphasis on social interaction and culturally mediated artifacts, offers instructors a framework to practice their informed decisions (Vygotsky, 1978, 1998). Besides, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a crucial construct in SCT, considering both actual and potential development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1998). Furthermore, these measures and judgments of performances may bring about an emotional impact that might influence academic success. Dissatisfied

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with the insufficiencies of traditional assessment, teachers and researchers have converted their assessment and teaching processes to dynamic assessment (DA; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Zarei & Rahmaty, 2021). DA entails an interactive assessment approach where the assessor assumes the role of a mediator, offering scaffolding and necessary support to students, thereby facilitating their acquisition of learning materials with greater ease (Levi & Poehner, 2018; Poehner, 2008)

Positive psychology, emphasizing how individuals and communities flourish, covers too many disciplines (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; van Zyl et al., 2024). The science of positive psychology tries to understand, discover, and boost the essential elements of thriving communities (Sheldon & Kasser, 2001). Considering the psychological aspects of learning and achievement, second language acquisition and applied linguistics have paid considerable attention to emotion-based studies (Ghafouri & Tahriri, 2023). The literature review has shown that investigating reflective thinking (RT) practice, AR, and academic buoyancy (AB) are among the influential factors determining academic success (Phan, 2009). In other words, educational psychology scholars are interested in combining various theoretical frameworks to explain the success of academic instruction and learning (Sheldon & Kasser, 2001). Not only overcoming cognitive, emotional, and behavioral issues in an educational setting but also using them constructively depends on AR, specifically AB (Ahmed Shafi et al., 2018). AB is aboutone's capacity to handle academic tensions and challenges (Martin & Marsh, 2010).

Broadly speaking, AB is linked to AR, which is similar to the process of or the capacity for adaptation regardless of all the adversities and setbacks (Asakereh & Yousofi, 2018). Moreover, RT is also a determining factor in academic success (Asakereh & Yousofi, 2018). RT, rooted in the work of Dewey (1933), is more or less similar to critical thinking processes of evaluating decisions and judging processes (Kuuk & Arslan, 2020). Dewey (1933) believes that learners familiar with thinking reflectively and critically are more academically successful since they are aware of the gap between what they know and what they need to know (Martin & Marsh, 2009). To put it differently, those learners who are engaged in critical thinking by analyzing and reflecting on their actions can improve the status quo (Van Velzen, 2017).

The present research investigates the interplay and impact of three pivotal factors—namely, AB, RT, and AR—within the context of DA in EFL education. Despite the existing body of literature exploring the individual roles and interactions of AB, RT, and AR within educational settings (Allan et al., 2014; Kuuk & Arslan, 2020; Martin et al., 2010), a notable research gap persists concerning their collective influence on the process and outcomes of DA. To date, no comprehensive study has systematically examined how these constructs jointly shape DA dynamics within the specific EFL education domain. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by elucidating the nuanced relationships between AB, RT, and AR in the context of DA, thereby advancing our understanding of effective pedagogical strategies and interventions tailored to EFL learners' needs.

The current investigation's prominence springs from the fact that instructors familiar with factors contributing to academic success can normalize the experience of failure by talking about their or others' failures and providing consistent encouragement. Moreover, it is believed that AB, RT, and AR are not innate skills, and they can be learned and enhanced through the development of positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral orientations to school and academic life (Comerford, 2017). Consequently, instructors can practice beneficial skills and strategies with learners to recognize and manage difficult emotions and to make and execute plans to address challenges and overcome setbacks (Anderson et al., 2020).

## 2. Review of Literature
### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky (1998) criticized conventional testing procedures and introduced DA to teach and test simultaneously. DA, as a substitute for the notion of teaching to test, is rooted in both Vygotsky's SCT with its emphasis on ZPD (1978) and Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience framework (Feuerstein et al., 1981). The former highlights the importance of processes through which learners internalize forms of mediation, such as forms of reasoning and conceptual knowledge, which lead to psychological activity empowering learners to understand, think, and act in ways beyond their current

abilities. The latter one bears a striking resemblance to SCT by emphasizing the appropriateness of mediation (Poehner & Wang, 2021).

The amalgamation of instruction and testing as a unified activity both leads to the development of learners and provides a complete picture of learners' abilities. To put it differently, DA leads not only to tlearners'rs' zone of actual development but also their zone of potential development (Ahmadi & Barabadi, 2014; Aziai & Namaziandost, 2023; Kushki & Nassaji, 2024). ZPD was much more than a theoretical concept for Vygotsky, so he made it a fundamental cornerstone of his SCT (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011; Poehner & Lantolf, 2023). In other words, ZPD as a framework pinpointslearners' abilities and determines the basis for an appropriate intervention to occur (Alemi et al., 2019; Lantolf & Poehner, 2011; Rezapour, 2024). Moreover, by considering ZPD as a framework, teachers can understand their learners' when they face difficulties that might affect their learners' cognitive development. As stated earlier in this study, measures and judgments of performances may bring about an emotional impact that might influence academic success. To put it differently, there is an interaction between cognitive processes and emotions in the field of education (Namaziandost et al., 2023), and literature has highlighted that emotions play a pivotal role in academic success and achievement since EFL instruction is considered to be challenging and emotionally burdensome (Zhi et al., 2023).

Underpinned by positive psychology and its emphasis on flourishing individuals and institutions (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; van Zyl et al., 2024), academic success regarding DA processes is examined through AB, AR, and RT.

## 2.2 Academic Buoyancy

Scholars have widely acknowledged that second language (L2) instruction and learning are demanding tasks, and due to different challenges and conflicts in academic situations, it is necessary to stay positive and resilient in the face of difficulties (Huang, 2022). AB originated from the seminal work of Martin and Marsh (2008), who defined it as how well learners can handle the ordinary setbacks and challenges of school life. To put it in another way, AB, as a construct in positive psychology, is about efficiently adapting learners with minor ups and downs in an academic context (Mohammad Hosseini et al., 2023). Being buoyant in confronting difficulties and challenges would lead to educational success for instructors and learners. For instance, it would enhance their motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, and growth (Huang, 2022). The relationships between mindfulness, grit, AB, and boredom were examined by Mohammad Hosseini and colleagues (2023). To gather data, the researchers approached 627 intermediate-level Iranian EFL learners through convenience sampling. The results of the SEM analysis indicated that L2 boredom could be predicted by studying mindfulness, grit, and AB. Moreover, the researchers highlighted that mindfulness is a determining factor in reducing L2 boredom.

In another study, the relationship between AB and burnout in higher education has been investigated by Fu (2024) in China. Stratified random sampling was used to approach 1955 EFL learners of various proficiency levels. Analyzing data through PLS-SEM highlighted that social support and AB played a role in mitigating or preventing EFLlearners' learning burnout. To put it differently, learners who received more help and support from their instructors or peers showed a higher AB and reported lower burnout. Relatedly, to fill the gap underlying the predicting role of AB and self-efficacy in EFL teachers' work engagement, Zhi and colleagues (2023) investigated Chinese EFL teachers. Using SEM, the researchers concluded that AB and self-efficacy are essential factors in predicting teachers' work engagement. The other study results regarding teachers' gender, educational degree, and teaching experience demonstrated a strong relationship between teachers' AB, self-efficacy, and work engagement. Consequently, investing in ways to enhance the buoyancy of both instructors and learners could be of utmost importance in all educational settings (Nurjamin et al., 2023).

### *2.3 Academic Resilience*

AR, as another construct of the current study, shares many characteristics with AB. However, there is no unifying definition of the term. Martin and Marsh (2009) defined it as an acute and intense adversity that accidentally arises and is considered as a significant assault on developmental processes. Moreover, according to Namaziandost and Heydarnejad (2023), resilience is defined as one's capacity to cope with unavoidable adversities inherited in educational settings. Beltman (2021) viewed the construct from four approaches or worldviews to contribute a deeper understanding of the term to the field. The first conceptualization took a person-focused approach and defined it as personal resources or traits that emerge amid adversities. The subsequent conceptualization defined resilience through various processes or strategies individuals use in different situations. In other words, from this perspective, resilience is about the interface between a person and the context in which individuals find themselves. The third perspective was context-focused, highlighting the role of contexts and the numerous challenges they might present to individuals. According to Johnson and colleagues (2014), emphasizing the role of context in studying resilience focuses our attention on individuals' experiences in both here-and-now contexts and in a broader social, cultural, and political arena. The system-focused perspective was the last approach to study resilience by Beltman (2021). In this line of thought, resilience is viewed from a systemic approach; thus, it is a collective responsibility, and interventions adopting a systemic approach could focus on any system, any aspect of a system, or the interplay between or within different systems. To measure degrees of resilience among higher education inductees (Allan et al., 2014), a study was conducted with 1534 participants in one of the universities in the UK. Preliminary results indicated that resilience levels and end-of-year one grades showed uniformity among all 1534 new students. Through a comprehensive four-stage analysis, it was discerned that progressive resilience played a more supportive role in female students' anticipated academic achievements, while resilience exhibited a less straightforward and more intricate influence on male students.

In another study by Namaziandost et al. (2023), the researchers investigated the connection between academic emotion regulation (AER), critical thinking (CT), self-efficacy belief (S-EB), AR, and academic engagement (AE) as determining factors in educational success. 411 MA Iranian students took part in the study. The results of the SEM analysis indicated that S-EB, AR, and AE strongly influence CT and AER learners. To put it simply, learners capable of regulating their emotions and those with high CT abilities demonstrated more confidence in their skills, more resilience in the face of setbacks, and continued their academic education more eagerly. Overall, the study's findings by Namaziandost and colleagues highlighted the determining role of AER and CT in educational success.

### *2.4 Reflective Thinking*

As a non-language factor, RT plays a vital role in academic success (Asakereh & Yousofi, 2018). Rooted in Dewey's (1933) seminal work, How We Think, RT practices emphasize the significance of ideas and imply probable future physical actions in the face of challenges and setbacks. Phan (2009) believes that RT practices have four stages: habitual action, understanding, reflection, and CT. The first stage is concerned with activities that demand little conscious thought. Understanding is about decontextualized reading and learning. The third stage is about persistently considering grounded assumptions and beliefs in our consciousness. The last stage, CT, is one step beyond RT and requires individuals to become more cognizant of their actions.

According to Barrel (1984), RT and CT are used to express higher-order thinking since both force individuals to move beyond their comfort zone (Malmir & Mohammadi, 2018). CT requires individuals to promote the potential to reason, analyze, and evaluate (Halpern, 2003; Li, 2023). Besides, CT is an essential element of educational achievement; thus, it is important to adopt it in an academic setting since it is not an intrinsic construct but something that can be learned via practice (Namaziandost et al., 2023). Similarly, Van Velzen (2017) asserted that individuals incapable of thinking reflectively fail to change the status quo. Numerous studies have been conducted on the effects of RT on educational

success. For instance, to investigate the relationship between RT, emotional intelligence (EI), and speaking skills, Soodmand Afshar and Rahimi (2016) conducted a study among 150 EFL learners. The results of the multiple correlation analysis demonstrated a strong association among RT, EI, and speaking skills. In other words, speaking skills could be predicted by measuring RT and EI. Relatedly, Porntaweekul and colleagues (2016) investigated the effect of RT tactics on enhancing the empowerment of pre-service and in-service educational students in Thailand. The results were beneficial, and students were able to solve their problems. Similarly, Phan (2009) used casual modeling procedures to investigate the effects of RT practices, effort, and deep processing strategies on students' achievement. The result was promising in that reflection, and CT was found to be a factor determining students' learning and academic achievement.

This study investigates the intricate interplay and mutual influence of AB, RT, and AR within the dynamic framework of DA applied in EFL education. While existing literature has diligently scrutinized the individual contributions of AB, RT, and AR within educational contexts, a noticeable gap persists in understanding their collective impact on DA's intricate processes and ultimate outcomes, especially within the complex realm of EFL instruction. Despite the extensive research that has explored these constructs in isolation or with other factors, there remains a significant void in comprehending how they synergistically shape the nuanced dynamics of DA tailored explicitly to the EFL learning environment. By addressing this critical gap, this study aspires to provide invaluable insights that contribute to the theoretical foundation of pedagogical practices and interventions uniquely tailored to the needs of EFL learners, thereby fostering enhanced academic achievement and resilience in this distinctive educational setting. Considering these, the following research questions are addressed:

1. How do Iranian intermediate EFL learners perceive academic buoyancy in response to dynamic assessment?
2. How do Iranian intermediate learners perceive reflective thinking in response to dynamic assessment?
3. How do Iranian intermediate EFL learners perceive academic resilience in response to dynamic assessment?

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Design

This study employs a phenomenological research design to explore participants' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the influence of AB, RT, and AR within the framework of DA in the context of EFL education. As a qualitative research approach, phenomenology allows for an in-depth examination of individuals' subjective experiences and perspectives, offering rich insights into the complex interplay of these constructs within the educational landscape. This study seeks to uncover the underlying meanings, patterns, and themes inherent in their experiences, thus providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The phenomenological approach aligns with the study's objective of gaining a holistic understanding of how AB, RT, and AR intersect within the context of DA in EFL education, facilitating the exploration of participants' lived realities and subjective interpretations.

### 3.2 Participants

For this study, 18 intermediate learners were selected as participants from a language institute in South Iran using Snowball Sampling. Through this sampling technique, attempts were made to recruit a homogenous sample and exclude learners with diverse language proficiency levels. The selected participants ranged in age from 18 to 21 years old ($M = 19.5$, $SD = .65$). Among the participants, ten were male, and the remaining 8 were female learners. All participants reported Farsi as their mother tongue, and none were bilingual in any other language. Additionally, none of the participants had prior experience visiting an English-speaking country. These criteria were established to maintain

consistency and coherence among the participant group, allowing for a focused exploration of the phenomenon under investigation within a homogeneous sample.

### 3.3. Instruments

The instruments utilized in this study encompassed a multi-method approach to gather comprehensive data about learners' AB, RT, and AR. Narrative inquiry, observation, and focus group discussions were employed to explore the nuanced experiences and perceptions of EFL education.

In this study, credibility and dependability (i.e., reliability and validity) of the data collected through narratives, observations, and focus group discussions were ensured through various measures. Triangulation of data sources (i.e., gathering data through different means) provided a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, while member checking allowed participants to verify the accuracy of their narratives. Peer debriefing sessions facilitated discussions on data interpretation, mitigating researcher bias. The researchers maintained reflexivity throughout the study, reflecting on their assumptions and prejudices. Detailed documentation of the research process and establishing an audit trail ensured transparency and accountability. These strategies strengthened the credibility and dependability (i.e., reliability and validity) of the data, enhancing the validity of the research findings.

Narrative inquiry was a primary instrument, allowing participants to articulate their narratives, experiences, and reflections regarding AB, RT, and AR. Through open-ended prompts and prompts designed to elicit rich narratives, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and perspectives, providing valuable insights into their cognitive and affective processes.

Observation complemented the narrative inquiry by providing researchers firsthand insights into participants' behaviors, interactions, and classroom dynamics. Researchers observed participants' engagement levels, problem-solving strategies, and responses to instructional interventions, thus offering additional layers of understanding to supplement the narrative data.

Furthermore, focus group discussions facilitated collaborative dialogue among participants, encouraging the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and experiences related to AB, RT, and AR. These discussions provided a platform for participants to validate and contextualize their narratives within a group setting, fostering collective sense-making and deeper exploration of the research themes.

By employing a combination of narrative inquiry, observation, and focus group discussions, this study aimed to capture the complexity and richness of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding AB, RT, and AR within the context of EFL education, thus ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### 3.4 Treatment

The treatment in this study involved the implementation of DA within the EFL classroom setting, aimed at fostering AB, RT, and AR among intermediate learners. The DA treatment was designed to provide learners with scaffolded support and opportunities for active engagement, reflection, and growth.

Throughout the DA sessions, learners were presented with challenging tasks and learning activities designed to assess their current proficiency levels while simultaneously providing opportunities for guided learning and skill development. For example, in a language comprehension task, learners were asked to read a passage in English and answer comprehension questions. However, instead of merely assessing their ability to comprehend the text, the instructor adopted a dynamic approach by providing targeted support and guidance based on learners' responses.

During the DA class, the instructor assumed the role of a mediator, offering scaffolding and assistance tailored to individual learners' needs. For instance, when a learner encountered difficulty understanding a particular vocabulary word, the instructor provided explanations, synonyms, or context clues to facilitate comprehension. Similarly, in a speaking task, learners were encouraged to express their ideas and opinions in English, with the instructor providing constructive feedback and encouragement to help learners refine their language skills.

Moreover, the DA treatment incorporated metacognitive awareness and self-regulation elements, aiming to cultivate learners' RT skills and enhance their ability to monitor and regulate their learning processes. For example, learners were encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for future learning activities. Through guided reflection exercises, learners developed a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to adopt more effective learning strategies and approaches.

Overall, the DA treatment provided learners with a supportive and dynamic learning environment where they were encouraged to engage with challenging tasks actively, receive targeted support and feedback, and reflect on their learning experiences. By integrating DA into the EFL classroom, this study aimed to assess the participants' AB, RT, and AR, ultimately fostering a positive and empowering learning experience for intermediate EFL learners.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedures employed in this study followed a rigorous and systematic approach, with thematic analysis serving as the primary methodological framework. The narratives, observations, and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim, ensuring accuracy and fidelity to the participants' responses and interactions. Subsequently, the data were coded manually, with codes systematically applied to identify key concepts, patterns, and themes emerging from the dataset.

The thematic analysis involved a recursive process of data immersion, coding, and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006), guided by the research objectives and theoretical framework. Initially, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data through repeated readings of the transcripts, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the content and context. Codes were then assigned to data segments that captured relevant concepts or patterns related to AB, RT, and AR and their interactions with DA.

Through an iterative process, codes were refined, grouped, and organized into overarching themes that encapsulated the salient findings and insights derived from the data. Themes were derived manually, carefully considering the frequency, depth, and significance of the coded data segments. This process involved constant comparison and trustworthiness of codes and themes across the dataset, ensuring the transferability and credibility of the analytical process.

Furthermore, member checking and peer debriefing techniques were employed to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpreted themes. Any discrepancies or disagreements in coding or theme development were resolved through consensus discussions among the research team, ensuring transparency and rigor in the analysis process.

Overall, the thematic analysis approach facilitated a systematic and in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions within the context of EFL education, allowing for rich and nuanced insights into the complex interplay of AB, RT, AR, and DA. By adhering to rigorous analytical procedures and manual coding techniques, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon, thus contributing valuable insights to the existing literature on educational psychology and pedagogy.

## 4.  Results and Discussion
### 4.1 Dynamic Assessment and Academic Buoyancy

The narrative analysis revealed several key insights into the effect of DA on AB among intermediate EFL learners. Many participants expressed heightened confidence and resilience in the face of academic challenges following their engagement with DA activities. For instance, one participant described feeling more motivated to tackle complex tasks in the classroom, attributing this newfound confidence to the supportive and interactive nature of the DA sessions. Another participant highlighted how the feedback received during DA tasks helped them recognize their strengths and areas for improvement, empowering them to approach learning with a positive mindset. Overall, the narratives

emphasized the transformative impact of DA on learners' AB, fostering a sense of optimism, self-efficacy, and adaptability in the academic context.

Observational data provided further insights into the effect of DA on learners' AB within the classroom setting. Throughout the DA sessions, researchers observed increased engagement, participation, and perseverance levels among learners, indicative of enhanced academic buoyancy. For example, learners showed a willingness to take on challenging tasks, seek assistance when needed, and persist in problem-solving despite encountering obstacles. Additionally, researchers noted a shift in learners' attitudes towards mistakes and failures, with many embracing these experiences as opportunities for growth and learning. These observations underscored the positive influence of DA on learners' AB, fostering a supportive and empowering learning environment conducive to academic resilience and success.

The focus group discussion analysis further validated DA's impact on learners' AB. Participants shared collective experiences and reflections on their engagement with DA activities, highlighting common themes such as increased confidence, self-awareness, and motivation. Many participants appreciated the personalized feedback and guidance received during DA tasks, emphasizing its role in building their academic resilience and buoyancy. Additionally, participants discussed how the collaborative nature of DA encouraged peer support and knowledge-sharing, further enhancing their sense of belonging and efficacy in the academic setting. Overall, the focus group discussions echoed the sentiments expressed in the narratives and observational data, affirming the significant role of DA in fostering learners' AB and contributing to their overall academic well-being.

In summary, the results of narrative analysis, observation, and focus group discussions highlight the positive perception of Dynamic Assessment as a booster of learners' Academic Buoyancy in the EFL classroom. Through personalized feedback, collaborative learning experiences, and supportive interactions, DA cultivates a sense of optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy among learners, empowering them to navigate academic challenges with confidence and adaptability. These findings underscore the importance of integrating DA into educational practices to promote students' academic buoyancy and foster a positive learning environment conducive to academic success.

The key themes that emerged from the effect of DA on AB include:

●Enhanced Self-Efficacy: Participants consistently reported feeling more confident and capable in their academic abilities following engagement with DA activities. They expressed a heightened belief in their capacity to overcome challenges, tackle complex tasks, and achieve academic success. Based on the participants' perceptions, which became known during the data collection procedure, this enhanced self-efficacy was attributed to the personalized feedback, scaffolded support, and opportunities for growth provided through DA.

● Optimistic Outlook: A prevalent theme among participants was a shift towards a more optimistic mindset towards learning and academic challenges. Many described feeling more motivated, resilient, and hopeful in the face of setbacks and obstacles, viewing them as opportunities for learning and growth rather than sources of frustration or discouragement. DA sessions' interactive and supportive nature fostered this sense of optimism and adaptability among learners.

● Increased Engagement and Persistence: Participants demonstrated heightened levels of engagement, participation, and perseverance during DA tasks, indicating a more profound commitment to their learning process. They were more willing to take on challenging assignments, seek assistance when needed, and persist in problem-solving efforts, demonstrating a proactive and resilient approach to learning. DA activities' interactive and dynamic nature encouraged active participation and empowered learners to take ownership of their academic progress.

● Improved Self-Awareness: Engaging in DA activities facilitated greater self-awareness among participants, enabling them to recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement more effectively. The personalized feedback and guidance provided during DA tasks helped learners identify specific focus areas and develop targeted strategies for enhancing their academic performance. This heightened self-awareness empowered learners to take proactive steps toward their educational goals and confidently navigate challenges.

● Peer Support and Collaboration: Collaborative learning experiences within DA fostered a sense of camaraderie and support among participants, with many expressing appreciations for the opportunity to learn from and with their peers. The collaborative nature of DA activities encouraged

knowledge-sharing, peer feedback, and mutual encouragement, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment conducive to academic resilience and success.

Based on the collected data, the key themes emerging from the participants' perception of AB in DA classes highlight the participants' perception of personalized feedback, scaffolded support, and collaborative learning experiences as confidence, resilience, and engagement boosters in the academic setting. By cultivating a positive and empowering learning environment, DA is a valuable tool for promoting students' AB and fostering a continuous growth and development culture.

### 4.2 Dynamic Assessment and Reflective Thinking

The narrative analysis uncovered significant insights into the effect of DA on RT among intermediate EFL learners. Participants frequently described how engaging in DA activities facilitated deeper levels of reflection and metacognitive awareness regarding their learning processes and strategies. Many narratives highlighted instances where participants consciously evaluated their approach to problem-solving, monitored their understanding of academic content, and adjusted their learning strategies based on feedback received during DA tasks. For example, participants described pausing to consider alternative solutions, questioning their assumptions, and seeking clarification when faced with challenging tasks, indicating a heightened capacity for critical reflection and self-directed learning. Overall, the narratives underscored the transformative perception of DA in learners' reflective thinking abilities, fostering a more conscious and intentional approach to learning and problem-solving.

Observational data provided additional insights into the effect of DA on learners' Reflective Thinking within the classroom context. Researchers observed instances where learners demonstrated increased metacognitive awareness and self-regulation levels during DA tasks, indicative of enhanced reflective thinking skills. For example, learners engaged in thoughtful dialogue with peers articulated their reasoning processes, and sought feedback to inform their problem-solving strategies. Additionally, researchers noted a shift in learners' approach to learning from passive receptivity to active engagement, with many participants demonstrating a willingness to question assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, and evaluate the effectiveness of their learning strategies. These observations highlighted the role of DA in promoting a culture of reflective practice and metacognitive awareness among learners, empowering them to take ownership of their learning process and outcomes.

The analysis of focus group discussions further validated the perception of DA as a booster of learners' RT. Participants engaged in collaborative dialogue, sharing their experiences, insights, and reflections on the role of DA in fostering reflective thinking skills. Many participants expressed appreciation for the opportunities provided by DA to engage in critical reflection, self-assessment, and goal-setting within a supportive and interactive learning environment. Additionally, participants discussed how the feedback received during DA tasks catalyzed deeper reflection and metacognitive awareness, prompting them to reconsider their assumptions, revise their strategies, and set new learning goals. Overall, the focus group discussions echoed the sentiments expressed in the narratives and observational data, affirming the significant role of DA in promoting learners' reflective thinking skills and metacognitive awareness.

In summary, the results of narrative analysis, observation, and focus group discussions converge to highlight the positive perception of DA in learners' RT in the EFL classroom. Through opportunities for critical reflection, metacognitive awareness, and self-regulated learning, DA cultivates a culture of inquiry and self-directed learning, empowering learners to engage in thoughtful and intentional problem-solving processes. These findings underscore the importance of integrating DA into educational practices to promote students' RT and foster a culture of lifelong learning and growth.

The key themes emerging from the effect of DA on RT include:

● Increased Metacognitive Awareness: Participants reported a heightened awareness of their thinking processes and learning strategies due to DA activities. They described actively monitoring their understanding, evaluating their problem-solving approaches, and reflecting on the effectiveness of their learning strategies. This increased metacognitive awareness empowered participants to make informed learning decisions and adapt strategies based on feedback received during DA tasks.

● Enhanced Critical Reflection: A prominent theme among participants was the development of critical reflection skills through their engagement with DA. Participants described engaging in deep, systematic reflection on their learning experiences, questioning assumptions, and critically evaluating

their thinking and reasoning processes. DA provided a structured framework for participants to engage in purposeful reflection, fostering a more sophisticated and analytical approach to learning.

● Active Engagement in Learning Process: Participants expressed a shift from passive learning to active engagement with their learning process due to DA. They described taking ownership of their education, actively seeking feedback, and engaging in self-directed inquiry to deepen their understanding of academic content. DA encouraged participants to approach learning as an ongoing process of investigation and exploration, fostering a sense of curiosity and intellectual autonomy.

● Iterative Learning and Improvement: Engaging in DA tasks prompted participants to engage in iterative cycles of learning and improvement. They described revisiting their initial responses, refining their thinking, and applying new insights to subsequent tasks. This iterative approach to learning enabled participants to learn from their mistakes, revise their strategies, and make continuous progress toward their learning goals.

● Goal Setting and Planning: Participants reported using DA to set learning goals, plan their task approach, and monitor their progress over time. They described setting specific, achievable goals based on their assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and using feedback from DA tasks to track their progress toward these goals. DA provided a structured framework for participants to engage in goal-directed learning, fostering a sense of purpose and direction in their academic endeavors.

Overall, the key themes emerging from the effect of DA on RT highlight the transformative perception of DA as a booster in increasing participants' metacognitive awareness, critical reflection, and active engagement in the learning process. By providing structured opportunities for reflection, feedback, and goal setting, DA empowers participants to become more self-directed, autonomous learners capable of navigating complex academic challenges with confidence and resilience.

### 4.3 Dynamic Assessment and Academic Resilience

The narrative analysis uncovered profound insights into the effect of DA on AR among intermediate EFL learners. Participants shared narratives of overcoming challenges, setbacks, and obstacles encountered during DA activities, highlighting their resilience in the face of academic adversity. Many narratives emphasized the role of DA in fostering a growth mindset, whereby participants viewed setbacks as opportunities for learning and growth rather than insurmountable obstacles. For example, participants described persisting in problem-solving efforts, seeking alternative strategies, and embracing feedback as part of their journey toward academic success. These narratives underscored the transformative perception of DA in boosting learners' AR, cultivating a sense of perseverance, adaptability, and optimism in the face of academic challenges.

Observational data provided further insights into the effect of DA on learners' AR within the classroom context. Researchers observed instances where learners demonstrated resilience in the face of academic challenges, indicative of their ability to bounce back from setbacks and persevere in their learning efforts. For example, learners were observed engaging in collaborative problem-solving, seeking assistance from peers and instructors, and demonstrating a willingness to try new approaches when faced with difficulty. Additionally, researchers noted a shift in learners' attitudes towards failure, with many participants demonstrating a growth mindset and viewing setbacks as opportunities for learning and improvement. These observations highlighted the role of DA in fostering a supportive and empowering learning environment conducive to academic resilience and success.

The analysis of focus group discussions further validated the perception of DA as a booster of learners' AR. Participants engaged in collaborative dialogue, sharing their experiences, insights, and reflections on how DA influenced their ability to overcome academic challenges. Many participants described feeling more confident and capable in navigating complex tasks, seeking assistance when needed, and persisting in their learning efforts due to engaging in DA activities. Additionally, participants discussed how the feedback received during DA tasks served as a source of motivation and encouragement, empowering them to overcome setbacks and persevere toward their academic goals. Overall, the focus group discussions echoed the sentiments expressed in the narratives and observational data, affirming the significant role of DA in promoting learners' Academic Resilience and fostering a positive and empowering learning environment.

In summary, the results of narrative analysis, observation, and focus group discussions converge to highlight the positive perception of DA as a booster of learners' AR in the EFL classroom. Through

opportunities for collaborative problem-solving, feedback, and perseverance, DA cultivates a culture of resilience and optimism among learners, empowering them to overcome challenges and persist toward academic success. These findings underscore the importance of integrating DA into educational practices to promote students' AR and foster a supportive and empowering learning environment.

The main themes emerging from the effect of DA on AR include:

● Growth Mindset: Participants consistently demonstrated a growth mindset, viewing setbacks and challenges as opportunities for learning and growth rather than insurmountable obstacles. Engaging in DA activities fostered a mindset of resilience, encouraging participants to persevere in the face of adversity, seek alternative strategies, and embrace feedback as part of their learning journey. This growth mindset enabled participants to approach academic challenges with optimism, adaptability, and a willingness to learn from their experiences.

● Persistence and Perseverance: A prevalent theme among participants was the demonstration of persistence and perseverance in the face of academic challenges. Participants described persisting in problem-solving efforts, seeking assistance from peers and instructors, and demonstrating resilience when faced with difficulty during DA activities. This resilience enabled participants to overcome setbacks and obstacles encountered during the learning process, fostering a sense of determination and resilience in pursuit of academic success.

● Adaptive Problem-Solving: Engaging in DA activities prompted participants to develop adaptive problem-solving skills, enabling them to navigate complex academic challenges with confidence and resilience. Participants were willing to try new approaches, seek assistance when needed, and persist in their learning efforts despite encountering obstacles. This adaptive problem-solving approach empowered participants to overcome challenges, learn from their experiences, and develop effective strategies for future success.

● Positive Self-Efficacy: Participants reported an increased sense of confidence and self-efficacy due to engaging in DA activities. The personalized feedback and support provided during DA tasks bolstered participants' belief in their ability to succeed academically, fostering a positive sense of self-efficacy. This increased confidence enabled participants to approach academic challenges with greater resilience, determination, and optimism, ultimately contributing to their overall educational success.

● Learning from Failure: A recurring theme among participants was the importance of learning from failure and setbacks encountered during DA activities. Participants described embracing mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth, using feedback to identify areas for improvement, and applying new insights to future learning tasks. This ability to learn from failure and adapt their approach enabled participants to develop resilience, perseverance, and adaptive problem-solving skills essential for academic success.

Overall, the key themes emerging from the effect of DA on AR highlight the transformative perception of DA as a booster of participants' mindsets, behaviors, and attitudes toward academic challenges. By fostering a growth mindset, promoting persistence and perseverance, and facilitating adaptive problem-solving, DA empowers participants to overcome obstacles, learn from their experiences, and thrive in adversity. These findings underscore the importance of integrating DA into educational practices to promote students' AR and foster a supportive and empowering learning environment.

## 5. Discussion

This qualitative study, which includes deep data, provides insights into Iranian intermediate EFL learners' perception of DA as a booster of various aspects of learners' academic experiences, including AB, RT, and AR. We delve into the implications of these findings, their alignment with existing literature, and their impact on educational practice. This study represents a novel contribution to the existing literature by investigating the interplay between DA, AB, RT, and AR within EFL instruction. While previous research has examined the individual influences of AB, RT, and AR on academic success, this study uniquely explores how these factors interact with DA. This innovative assessment approach integrates teaching and testing. By examining the effects of DA on learners' AB, RT, and AR, this study sheds light on the mechanisms through which dynamic assessment practices can enhance students' resilience, adaptability, and reflective abilities in the face of academic challenges.

Additionally, employing a phenomenological approach, this study offers rich insights into learners' subjective experiences and perceptions of DA, providing a deeper understanding of the psychological processes underlying their academic success. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on dynamic assessment and positive psychology in educational contexts, offering valuable implications for instructional practices and interventions to promote students' academic resilience and well-being.

The findings regarding AB from this study align closely with the existing literature on the importance of AB in L2 instruction and learning. Scholars have acknowledged that L2 learning is inherently challenging, requiring learners to navigate various obstacles and setbacks in academic settings (Huang, 2022). As conceptualized by Martin and Marsh (2008), AB refers to learners' ability to handle the ordinary setbacks and challenges of school life, reflecting their resilience and adaptability in the face of academic difficulties (Mohammad Hosseini et al., 2023). Consistent with previous research, the current study found that engaging in Dynamic Assessment (DA) activities positively influenced learners' AB, enhancing their ability to cope with academic challenges and setbacks.

The study's findings resonate with Mohammad Hosseini et al. (2023) research, which explored the relationship between mindfulness, grit, AB, and L2 boredom among Iranian EFL learners. The results indicated that AB significantly predicted L2 boredom, underscoring the importance of resilience and positive adaptation in maintaining learner engagement and motivation. Additionally, Fu's (2023) investigation into the relationship between AB and burnout among EFL learners in China highlighted the role of social support in mitigating burnout and enhancing learners' AB. This finding reinforces that supportive learning environments and interpersonal relationships contribute to learners' resilience and academic success.

Furthermore, Zhi and colleagues' (2023) study on the predicting role of AB and self-efficacy in EFL teachers' work engagement provides additional support for the importance of AB in educational settings. The findings indicated that AB and self-efficacy were essential factors in predicting teachers' work engagement, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between instructors' and learners' buoyancy and engagement. This highlights the interconnectedness of AB between instructors and learners, suggesting that investing in strategies to enhance the resilience and buoyancy of both parties is crucial for fostering a positive and productive learning environment (Nurjamin et al., 2023).

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on AB in educational contexts, highlighting the importance of resilience, adaptability, and positive adaptation in promoting academic success and well-being among both learners and instructors. Educators can create supportive learning environments that empower learners to overcome challenges, maintain motivation, and thrive in their academic endeavors by fostering a culture of buoyancy and resilience through interventions such as DA.

The findings regarding RT from this study align with the existing literature on the vital role of RT in academic success. Rooted in Dewey's (1933) seminal work, RT practices emphasize the importance of critical reflection and metacognition in navigating challenges and setbacks (Asakereh & Yousofi, 2018). Phan (2009) delineates four stages of RT, ranging from habitual action to CT, with each stage facilitating more profound levels of cognitive engagement and problem-solving. This conceptualization of RT as a progression towards higher-order thinking resonates with scholars like Barrel (1984) and Malmir and Mohammadi (2018), who argue that RT and CT are essential components of higher-order cognitive processes. CT, in particular, requires individuals to reason, analyze, and evaluate information, making it a crucial element of educational achievement (Halpern, 2003). The findings of this study corroborate previous research demonstrating a strong association between RT and various aspects of academic success, including speaking skills and emotional intelligence (Soodmand Afshar & Rahimi, 2016). Moreover, studies like that of Porntaweekul et al. (2016) have shown the efficacy of RT tactics in enhancing students' problem-solving abilities and empowerment, highlighting the practical benefits of fostering reflective practices in educational settings. Additionally, Phan's (2009) investigation into the effects of RT practices on students' learning and academic achievement further underscores the importance of reflection and critical thinking in promoting students' cognitive development and academic success.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on the significance of RT in academic contexts, emphasizing its role as a foundational skill for higher-order

cognitive processes and problem-solving. By promoting reflective practices and critical thinking skills, educators can empower students to engage more deeply with their learning, develop effective problem-solving strategies, and ultimately achieve academic success.

The findings regarding AR from this study complement the existing literature on resilience in educational contexts. AR shares many characteristics with Academic Buoyancy (AB) and is defined as the capacity to cope with unavoidable adversities inherent in educational settings (Namaziandost & Heydarnejad, 2023). This aligns with Martin and Marsh's (2009) definition of AR as the ability to withstand acute adversities that may impede developmental processes. Beltman (2021) offers multiple perspectives on resilience, including a person-focused approach emphasizing personal traits, a context-focused approach highlighting the role of environmental factors, and a system-focused approach viewing resilience as a collective responsibility. These perspectives underscore the multifaceted nature of resilience and the need to consider individual, contextual, and systemic factors in its study.

The study's findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating the influential role of resilience in academic success. Allan et al. (2014) found that resilience levels were uniformly high among new university students, with progressive resilience supporting female students' anticipated academic achievements. This suggests that resilience contributes to students' ability to navigate academic challenges and persist in their educational endeavors. Furthermore, Namaziandost et al. (2023) investigated the connection between AR, AER, CT, S-EB, and AE among MA Iranian students. The results indicated that AR, S-EB, and AE strongly influenced learners' CT and AER, highlighting their role in promoting cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation, and academic engagement.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the multifaceted nature of resilience in educational contexts and its importance in promoting academic success. By fostering resilience among students, educators can empower them to overcome challenges, persist in their academic pursuits, and thrive in adversity.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the influence of DA on learners' AB, RT, and AR. Through a phenomenological investigation, we have uncovered rich insights into the dynamic interactions between these factors and their implications for language teaching and learning. The findings suggest that DA practices are crucial in promoting students' AB by providing support and scaffolding to navigate academic challenges effectively. Additionally, DA fosters reflective thinking skills by encouraging students to evaluate their learning process and make informed decisions critically. Furthermore, the study highlights the significant contribution of DA to students' AR, enabling them to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity.

These findings have important implications for language teachers, syllabus designers, materials developers, and policymakers. Language educators can benefit from integrating DA techniques into their instructional practices to create supportive learning environments that promote students' academic success and well-being. Syllabus designers and materials developers can use these insights to design curriculum and instructional materials that foster RT and resilience-building skills among learners. Additionally, policymakers can leverage these findings to inform educational policies and initiatives to promote student success and resilience in language learning contexts.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing literature on DA and positive psychology in language education, offering valuable insights into the psychological processes underlying students' academic success and well-being. By recognizing the importance of DA in promoting AB, RT, and AR, educators and policymakers can work together to cultivate resilient and empowered language learners who are equipped to thrive in today's dynamic and challenging educational landscape.

This study offers numerous implications for various stakeholders. The results obtained in this study have important implications for language teachers as one of the most prominent stakeholders in education. The findings help teachers understand how and why they should implement DA principles in their classes. Language teachers can facilitate their students' language proficiency by adopting sociocultural and scaffolding-oriented instruction. In this respect, language teachers can improve their learners' academic success and well-being.

Another group of stakeholders who can benefit from our findings are syllabus designers. These stakeholders implement the principles of DA into the syllabi they develop. Accordingly, by adhering to

the principles of DA, syllabus designers can design a more learner-centered syllabus that considers. In so doing, they can emphasize their learners' RT skills and encourage teachers to focus more on their learners' resilience.

Similarly, by benefiting from our findings, materials developers can design materials that integrate the principles of DA and positive psychology. In creating materials whose aims are to develop a learner-centered approach, enhance RT and buoyancy among EFL learners, and make the learners resilient to various challenges faced in academic contexts, materials developers can help learners take ownership of their learning process. Additionally, by incorporating the findings of this study, materials developers can create more authentic and meaningful tasks and materials and increase the learners' overall well-being.

Policymakers are yet another group of stakeholders who can benefit from the findings of this study. Once policymakers understand the critical tenets of DA and learners' perceptions of AB, RT, and AR, which can be boosted through DA, they will support syllabus designers and materials developers to design and develop the syllabi and materials that aim to foster a learner-centered pedagogy and develop RT and AR skills among learners. Similarly, policymakers can help teacher educators familiarize themselves with DA and positive psychology principles. In so doing, teachers will be trained whose primary aim is to enhance learners" psychological well-being.

Additionally, policymakers can prioritize providing professional development opportunities for language educators to familiarize them with DA techniques and strategies, ensuring they can effectively implement these practices in their classrooms. By prioritizing student well-being and academic success, policymakers can contribute to cultivating resilient and empowered language learners.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study's focus on a specific EFL context and a relatively small sample size of intermediate learners from a single language institute in South Iran may limit the transferability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, using a phenomenological approach while providing rich qualitative data may restrict the ability to make causal inferences or quantitative comparisons. Furthermore, relying on self-report measures and qualitative data collection methods may introduce potential biases and subjectivity into the findings. Suggestions for further research include conducting longitudinal studies to explore the long-term effects of DA on learners' AB, RT, and AR across different language learning contexts. Additionally, future research could investigate the effectiveness of DA interventions in promoting students' language proficiency and overall academic success. Moreover, comparative studies examining the impact of DA on learners with varying levels of language proficiency and cultural backgrounds could provide valuable insights into its universality and applicability across diverse learner populations.

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## Appendix A: Narrative Inquiry Protocol

The narrative inquiry protocol employed in this study aimed to elicit detailed narratives from participants, focusing on their experiences and perceptions related to academic resilience, academic buoyancy, and reflective thinking within the context of dynamic assessment in EFL learning.

**Prompts:**
1. Can you share a specific academic challenge you encountered in your English language learning journey and how you navigated through it?
2. Reflecting on your experiences with dynamic assessment, can you describe a time when you felt resilient in the face of academic setbacks or difficulties?
3. How do you perceive dynamic assessment contributing to your ability to bounce back from academic challenges and maintain a positive attitude towards learning?
4. Can you recall a moment when dynamic assessment helped you reflect on your learning process and make adjustments to improve your performance?
5. Share an experience where dynamic assessment enhanced your confidence and motivation in your English language learning endeavors.

Participants were encouraged to provide detailed narratives in response to these prompts, offering valuable insights into the interplay between dynamic assessment, academic resilience, academic buoyancy, and reflective thinking in their learning experiences.

**Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Guide**

The focus group discussion served as a platform for participants to engage in collaborative dialogue and exchange perspectives on dynamic assessment and its influence on academic resilience, academic buoyancy, and reflective thinking within an EFL context. The focus group discussion aimed to generate rich qualitative data through group interaction and discussion.

**Topics for Discussion:**

1. Introduction: Participants were welcomed and introduced to the purpose and structure of the focus group discussion.
2. Experiences with Dynamic Assessment: Participants were invited to share their experiences with dynamic assessment in EFL learning, including both positive and challenging aspects.
3. Academic Resilience: The group explored the concept of academic resilience and discussed how dynamic assessment contributes to building resilience in the face of academic challenges.
4. Academic Buoyancy: Participants shared insights on academic buoyancy and discussed the role of dynamic assessment in fostering resilience and maintaining a positive outlook towards learning.
5. Reflective Thinking: The group discussed reflective thinking processes facilitated by dynamic assessment, reflecting on how it supports metacognition and self-regulation in learning.
6. Impact on Learning Outcomes: Participants discussed the influence of dynamic assessment on their learning outcomes, including improvements in academic performance, confidence, and motivation.
7. Recommendations: The group shared suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of dynamic assessment practices in promoting academic resilience, academic buoyancy, and reflective thinking.
8. Conclusion: The discussion concluded with a summary of key insights and a thank you to participants for their valuable contributions.

Participants were encouraged to actively participate in the discussion, share personal experiences and insights, and respond to prompts provided by the moderator to facilitate an open and productive dialogue on the topic.