A Case Study on the Development of L2 Listening Inferencing Skills Through the Interactionist Dynamic Assessment

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Abstract

This case study aimed to explore how interactionist dynamic assessment (DA) grounded in sociocultural theory influences the development of inferencing skills in L2 listening comprehension. Dynamic assessment refers to a combined approach of assessment and learning. While interventionist DA provides uniform scaffolding predetermined by the instructor, interactionist DA presents learners with scaffolding contingent on emerging problems or difficulties. To date, while a handful of studies have shed light on the influence of the two DAs on L2 grammatical progress as part of L2 production skills, few have explored its impact on the progress of L2 listening comprehension or on the specific skill of inferencing that often poses obstacles to L2 listeners. Two tertiary-level students from an EFL general English class participated in weekly one hour-long Zoom-mediated interactionist DA sessions over 6 weeks with an experienced L2 listening instructor and researcher using TED Talks. The findings suggested that interactionist DA had a positive effect on the development of L2 inferencing skills. However, the trajectory of the development over the period exhibited a nonlinear pattern with an idiosyncratic repetition of growth and retreat in the development of inferencing skills. Pedagogical implications and directions for further research are discussed.

Keywords: interactionist dynamic assessment, L2 inferencing skills, L2 listening comprehension, scaffolding, TED Talk

Applicable levels: secondary, tertiary

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I. INTRODUCTION

Second language listening has mainly been theorized and empirically researched in the framework of cognition and provided ample evidence that uncovered the covert process of listening comprehension. One of the main strands of research focused on cognitive (e.g., Bao & Guan, 2019; Berne, 2004; Siegel, 2011; Yeldham & Gruba, 2016), as well as metacognitive listening strategies (e.g., Goh, 2016; Vandergrift, 2005; Vandergrift et al., 2006; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). The findings suggested that there are certain effective listening strategies teachable and learnable that directly (cognitively) or indirectly (metacognitively) affect second language listening comprehension.

However, scarce attention has been paid to the potential pedagogical application to and impact of Socio-cultural theory (SCT) on the development of second language listening. Dynamic assessment (DA, henceforward) was proposed by the researchers grounded SCT (e.g., Lantolf & Poehner, 2023; Poehner, 2009). DA integrates assessment and instruction into a complementary unity aimed at fostering learners’ development through mediation responsive to individual’s or a group’s current language abilities. While most of the research delved into observable skills such as L2 writing and verbal and written grammar skills, only a handful of studies has explored the potential influence of and applicability of DA in second language listening comprehension.

Against this backdrop, the current case study aims to inquire the extent to which interactionist DA whereby L2 listeners are individually assisted with the mediation of instructor’s prompts, leading questions, or scaffoldings gradually given depending on the individual problems that each listener might have issues with. While interventionist DA prescribes predetermined scaffolding, which may be more feasible in conventional large classrooms, interactionist DA approaches listeners’ problem that emerge along the comprehension process, whether it is lexical, technical, or semantic issues. The most distinct divergence between the two DAs is that while interventionist DA mediates L2 listeners’ comprehension process with uniform mediation (often pre-determined), interactionist DA provides listeners with problem-contingent scaffolding (whatever forms it may take) that emerge during the process of listening comprehension.

The rationale for examining lexical-syntactic and semantic inferencing skills in second language listening comprehension is that although inferencing is one of the key skills that determine the success/failure of second language information processing and comprehension outcome, it has relatively been under-researched in relation to listening comprehension (Becker, 2016; Van Zeeland, 2014). Given that problem-solving strategies or skills in second language listening comprehension refer to making inferences of lexis or partial/overall comprehension of the text, it, the results of the study and the construct of DA may evidence the potential of the role DA as a potential pedagogical mechanism for second language listening comprehension.

As part of a larger study, this case study observed and analyzed two second language listeners’ dialogic interactions with an instructor/researcher under the framework of interactionist DA an over 6-week period. Among a variety of problems occurring during second language listening comprehension, this study focused on the inferencing skills that pose substantial difficulties to listening comprehension and scrutinized the role of one-on-one tutorials of listening comprehension under the frame of interactionist DA.

The present study aimed to explore the following research questions:

1. To what extent did the two L2 listeners make the right word(s) inferencing? What kind of scaffolding did they make use of in reaching correct inferencing and the final goal of comprehension?
2. What are the identifiable types of inferencing demonstrated by the two L2 listeners?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. DA in Second Language Learning

DA has theoretically and experimentally been proven to be a valuable diagnostic tool primarily in psychological research and, later in educational research focused on teaching and learning of different school subjects (e.g., mathematics, physics). However, it has not been long before language educators have begun to
examine its pedagogical applications of DA (e.g., Ableeva, 2008; Antón, 2009; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2005). This initial L2 research argues that assessment-with-mediation brings assessment and instruction together into an organic unity whereby learning is the consequence of mediation, which is then internalized and becomes accessible to be used later in similar contexts. DA is a connection between assessment and learning is grounded in SCT principles. What DA of SCT framework presupposes is that a learner’s independent performance can only capture a part of their abilities.

Engagement with learners by providing them a variety of prompts, leading questions, and demonstrations when learners encounter difficulties, and observing the extent to which learners respond to this support (scaffoldings) provides insights into the potential abilities that are still forming (Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky (1978, 2012) referred to this conceptual slot of learners’ potential abilities as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and noted that it was the optimal target for instruction to interfere in and guide the learners through with necessary scaffoldings throughout their development. DA comprises a range of procedures that researchers in various fields have formulated to identify the appropriate ZPD of the target learner (Lidz & Haywood, 2014; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). From the outset of introducing DA to second language acquisition (Kozulin & Garb, 2002; Poehner, 2008), DA has been adopted often as a one-shot procedure. While an initial DA was used to determine each learner’s ZPD, subsequent instruction was provided, tailoring to learners’ emerging abilities and needs. DA may be employed to diagnose learners’ needs and to inform instruction aimed at fostering learners’ development. DA studies fall into either an interventionist or interactionist approach (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). While interventionist DA follows procedures in which mediation or scaffoldings in various forms are scripted in advance and provided during the procedure in a standardized manner. In interactionist DA, on the other hand, mediators follow a general principle of beginning with support/scaffolding that is implicit so that they can determine whether the support or scaffoldings given is adequate to prompt a conducive response from the learners. Then it becomes more explicit only depending upon the learners’ difficulties. To date, interactionist DA has been favored in classroom contexts and in one-to-one administrations where the goal is to optimally respond to learner difficulties and subsequently identify the ZPD.

In the case of DA in second language acquisition, studies have been conducted with learners in various levels ranging from primary to university learners (Antón, 2009; Davin & Donato, 2013), with target skills including reading (Poehner & van Compernolle, 2013), listening comprehension (Ableeva, 2010). In the second language writing, there has been relatively more interest in linking assessment with second language writing and locating assessment as an indispensable complement to effective writing instruction (e.g., Crusan, 2010; Cumming, 2009; Hamp-Lyons, 2003; Weigle, 2007). Attempts to make connections between assessment and the teaching and learning of second language writing have been taken on, using a few theoretical as well. Several studies have applied DA to contexts of L2 writing, most notably (Anton, 2009; Kushki, Nassaji, et al., 2022; Kushki, Rahimi, et al., 2022; Nassaji et al., 2020; Shrestha & Coffin, 2012). For example, taking a comparative, Nassaji et al. (2020) and Kushki, Nassaji, et al. (2022) administered both interactionist DA and interventionist DA with EFL learners in an Iranian university. Nassaji et al. (2020) found that interactionist DA afforded more diagnostic insights into the learners’ emerging writing abilities than interventionist DA. Kushki, Nassaji, et al. (2022) further reported that interactionist DA was more effective in fostering learner argumentative writing abilities over time.

As pedagogical frameworks, including learning-oriented language assessment (LOLA; Hamp-Lyons, 2017) and formative assessment (Barlow et al., 2007; Fernando, 2018). DA was also has been explored as a whole-class procedures (Poehner et al., 2018) or administrated via computers (Shrestha, 2020).

All in all, DA research on L2 writing has explored the role of the assessment in providing an in-depth and progressive view of learners’ evolving abilities and has provided empirical evidence that the procedures mediated learning supported learners’ development in terms of diminishing number and phases of support or scaffolding provided. Given that most of these studies have been administered short period of interventions, whether such an intervention is sufficient to elicit developmental changes in learners’ language abilities and whether the progress that learners demonstrated persist over time.
2. DA and Second Language Listening

Second language acquisition has sparsely been examined in terms of its potential intersection with SCT. More specifically, the current lack of diagnostic assessment in language instruction and the development of listening proficiency has hardly been put in perspective. That is, the potential extension of the traditional understanding of listening assessment in foreign language contexts to the application of DA to the development of learners’ listening ability has been far and between (e.g., Aleeva, 2010; Roohani et al., 2018). DA is grounded in the Vygotskyan concept of ZPD and prescribes mediated instructor-learner dialogue during the assessment. The study by Abeeva (2010) investigates the effects of dynamic assessment on improving listening comprehension of intermediate university students learning French as a foreign language. The study compared the results in a traditional test of listening comprehension. The study demonstrated that DA, due to the mediated dialogue, shed lights on the sources of unsuccessful performance that usually go unnoticed during conventional assessments, which are non-dynamic in nature. DA, on the other hand, is able to inform the instructional process regarding specific areas where learners need improvement and during that process, it allows for appropriate intervention to help learners tackle and overcome these problems. The results of the study indicate that, through dialogic interactions in the ZPD, DA allows an instructor (moderator) to ascertain not only the actual proficiency level of learners’ listening ability but also to diagnose the potential level of their listening development, while at the same time promoting this development through problem-contingent scaffoldings.

One of the rare studies of the role and influence of DA in second language listening was conducted by Zhang (2023) based on the construction of a model of mediation grounded in DA for EFL listening comprehension. The model was implemented in a 1-semester comparative experimental study in 2 parallel classes of Grade 8 in a middle school in China. For mediation, the experimental class (EC) received four DA sessions adjusted to the learners’ emerging abilities at all listening stages. Statistical results showed that students in EC significantly outperformed those in the control class in both a posttest and a near transfer assessment test, a more complex task intended to assess development in a more accurate manner. Although they showed no significant edge in the delayed test, microgenetic analysis of the development of nine students demonstrated that the mode of mediation used during enrichment allowed the teacher to identify students’ listening problems, including their struggles with phonological, lexical, grammatical, strategic issues.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

Two tertiary-level students from a general English (Movie Talk) class participated in the present study. The instructor and researcher met with each student via Zoom once a week over 6-week period. Movie Talk was geared towards providing students with learning opportunities to practice listening comprehension and critical thinking using English-medium films. The first female student, Hayoon (aged 21) was a sophomore majoring in sports management. She had an experience of a listening comprehension class in the previous semester. Hoon (aged 23), a third-year male student was majored in business management at the time of data collection. To determine their overall listening comprehension, they took an IELTS listening sample test offered by the British Council. Hayoon scored 32 points out of 40 and Hoon scored 22 in the listening comprehension test.

2. Materials

For the six Zoom-mediated sessions, a clip from TED Talk (www.ted.com) was selected by the instructor considering the participants’ level of English and topic of interests and issues relevance to their lives. The clip chosen was titled Why Domestic Violence Victims Don’t Leave presented by Steiner (2012). The clip revolved around domestic violence that the speaker underwent and the process how she was led into being victimized by the partner. The clip was chosen from a pool of TED Talk selections by the instructor/researcher and another experienced EFL
listening instructor. The selection was based on the frequency of predicted difficult or unknown words and the comprehensibility of the audiovisual clip. The instructor and researcher went through 15 clips from TED talks on a variety of topics including psychology, environment, education, literature, international affairs, and medicine. Then these clips were ordered in terms of predicted comprehensibility and predicted frequency of unknown words. The two instructors produced separate lists of orders of the 15 TED talk clips and later discussed and resolved their differences. The clip finally opted for was placed in the 10th in terms of the number of predicted unknown words (the higher, the higher the frequency of difficult words) and the third in terms of comprehensibility (the higher, the more difficult). The selected clip for the present study was then sectioned into several approximately 15 to 25 second-long portions deemed retrievable for their short-term memory capacity. To control for the potential effects of visual clues, the clip selected for the present study involved only one monolingual speaker who recounts her story about the domestic violence.

3. Procedure

A total of 12 Zoom-mediated sessions were held over 6-week period (six sessions per each student) during the semester. Each session lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. Each portion of the audiovisual clip was played by the instructor/researcher twice and the participant was supposed to tell what they comprehended. Note-taking was allowed, and it was used as additional data to delve into what the participants focused on while listening.

Upon listening to the target portion, the instructor/researcher asked what the portion was about and listened to what the participant comprehended. Once the participant signaled an obstacle in comprehension, the instructor/researcher provided a general and comprehensive scaffolding and induced comprehension. However, the provided scaffolding did not help get the participant through an unknown word, more specific scaffolding tailored to the problem in question was given. The number of occurrences of interactionist scaffolding provided to the participant varied within and across individuals since lexical level and overall listening comprehension of them were different. Table 1 summarizes the procedure. The interactionist dynamic assessment sessions were all conducted in Korean, the participants mother tongue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Interactionist Dynamic Assessment and Provision of Scaffolding on Emerging Issues</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steps</td>
<td>Instructor/ listener</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Instructor/ listener</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Listener</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>Listener</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Phase 6 | Instructor           | A) Once the listener resolves the issue, the instructor asks the listener to explain the process they inferred the target word(s).  
|          |                      | B) If the listener fails to resolve the lexical problem, the instructor provides more direct and specific scaffolding. |
| Phase 7 | Instructor/ listener | Once the listener made a right inferencing of the unknown/mis understood word(s), the instructor asks the listener to elaborate as to how they made the right inferencing (e.g., clues he/she made use of, context they inferred from, or linguistic knowledge the listener used). |
| Phase 8 | Instructor           | The instructor explains the type of lexical inferencing the listener succeeded or failed and discusses possibility of application of this inferencing strategy/approach for the future occurrences. |

4. Data Analysis

A total of 6-hour long Zoom recordings were first transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcribed dialogue between each participant and the instructor/researcher was read through several times in an exhaustive manner. The
episodes were then identified and further analyzed in terms of the number of successful and unsuccessful interventional scaffolding were counted. Each episode of the participants was then analyzed in terms the lexical problem the participants were faced with, and the incremental scaffolding provided in accordance to whether or not the participants successfully made inferencing of the word(s) and in turn reached correct comprehension.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The Extent of Correct Inferencing and Incremental Scaffolding

The number of correct inferencing and incremental scaffolding are summarized in Table 2. The number of interventional DA episodes that Hayoon made ranged from 2 to 4 (out of 4 to 6). As presented in Table 2, while Hayoon demonstrated increasing pattern in the number of successful inferencing when provided and induced by interventional scaffolding upon her lexical problems, Hoon remained at a similar level (1 or 2) throughout the 6-week period. The result appears reasonable given the fact that Hayoon showed better performance (30 out of 40 points) than Hoon (19 out of 40 points) in IELTS listening test administered in the beginning of the data collection. It may be a legitimate consequence since Hayoon already had a certain repertoire of listening comprehension strategies that enabled her to overcome and resolve lexical issues. On the other hand, Hoon, who had lower level of listening proficiency, did not strategic repository which includes inferencing skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Session 3</th>
<th>Session 4</th>
<th>Session 5</th>
<th>Session 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hayoon</td>
<td>2(4)</td>
<td>3(4)</td>
<td>3(5)</td>
<td>3(4)</td>
<td>5(6)</td>
<td>4(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoon</td>
<td>0(4)</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
<td>1(5)</td>
<td>2(4)</td>
<td>2(6)</td>
<td>1(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The numbers refer to the numbers of the episodes in which successful inferencing took place. The numbers in the parentheses refer to the total number of inferencing episodes that took place per session.

Table 3 below represents the number of interventional DA episodes of dialogic interaction with Hayoon that ended up in successful inferencing. The number of interventional scaffoldings varied from 1 to 4, with 1 standing for the most general and comprehensive scaffolding and 4 referring to the scaffolding that began with general and developed into considerably direct and containing near-to-answer scaffolding. The interventional DA dialogue with Hayoon demonstrated certain pattern of changes. That is, as sessions progressed, the dialogue involved fewer number of scaffoldings, which means that Hayoon became capable of inferencing unknown or uncertain word(s) more effectively with less specific scaffolding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>The number of episodes per session (The number incremental scaffolding provided)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Episode 1(5)/ Episode 2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Episode 1(4)/ Episode 2(3)/ Episode 3(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Episode 1(4)/ Episode 2(3)/ Episode 3(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Episode 1(4)/ Episode 2(3)/ Episode 3(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Episode 1(4)/ Episode 2(1)/ Episode 3(1)/ Episode 4(3)/ Episode 5(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Episode 1(3)/ Episode 2(1)/ Episode 3(2)/ Episode 4(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, as Table 4 briefs, notwithstanding considerably fewer number of successful inferencing episodes, the interventional scaffolding provided for Hoon remained relatively high (4, meaning considerably specific scaffolding) across sessions. It means that Hoon was able to successfully infer words only when near-to-answer specific scaffolding was provided across sessions. It seems that listening proficiency might have interfered with one of the essential skills of inferencing.
TABLE 4

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<td>4</td>
<td>Episode 1(4)/Episode 2(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Episode 1(3)/Episode 2(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Episode 1(4)</td>
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The results seem to be in line with those of previous research findings especially in L2 writing (e.g., Kushki, Nassaji, et al., 2022) that reported that interactionist DA was more effective in fostering learner argumentative writing abilities over time.

2. The Type of Inferencing

This section addresses the type of inferencing that the two L2 listeners during the interactionist DA.

1) Inferencing Using Clues From Immediate Context During the Interactionist DA

The most frequently used inferencing that occurred involved the use of immediate contextual clues. The following episodes between the researcher and Hayoon and Hoon illustrate this point. The following portion of the TED Talk clips was given by Steiner (2012) titled Why Domestic Violence Victims Don’t Leave.

I’m here today to talk about a disturbing question, which has an equally disturbing answer. My topic is the secrets of domestic violence, and the question I’m going to tackle is the one question everyone always asks: Why does she stay? Why would anyone stay with a man who beats her? I’m not a psychiatrist, a social worker, or an expert in domestic violence. I’m just one woman with a story to tell. I was 22. I had just graduated from Harvard College. I had moved to New York City for my first job as a writer and editor at Seventeen magazine. I had my first apartment, my first little green American Express card, and I had a very big secret. My secret was that I had this gun loaded with hollow-point bullets pointed at my head by the man who I thought was my soulmate, many, many times. The man who I loved more than anybody on Earth held a gun to my head and threatened to kill me more times than I can even remember. I’m here to tell you the story of crazy love, a psychological trap disguised as love, one that millions of women and even a few men fall into every year. It may even be your story. I don’t look like a typical domestic violence survivor. (Steiner, 2021)

Instructor: Why do you think the speaker is giving the talk in TED Talks?
Hayoon: It seems that she wanted to talk about crazy… hard… difficult love… She also said that a lot of women fall into that crazy love every year. It is true for a number of women every year, right?
Instructor: Yes, you are close! What comes after that?
Hayoon: I think a psychological…something (pronounced “trap” but was not aware of the word)… I cannot figure it out… I think I heard that a number of women and men follow the suit.
Instructor: (1) That’s right! What then do you think it means by the word “disguised?” given the psychological trap that precedes it.
Instructor: Are there any words you don’t understand?
Hayoon: (2) First of all, psychological… well, psychology? I cannot think of the word…yes, a rat…a trap! A psychological trap? Right?
Instructor: You are on the right track! Then, can you re-listen to the sentence and recapitulate it for me?
Hayoon: Yes, she fell into that trap of love and… I am not sure about how the word relates to love and I am not sure about the word that begins with “dis”…
Instructor: (3) Then think of what precedes this sentence and what it follows. Try to infer from the previous and following sentences.
Hayoon: (4) In the previous sentence, she said that her boyfriend pointed a gun to her and threatened to kill her. So, she now wants to talk about this trap that she fell into.
Instructor: (5) Exactly! That’s correct. What do you think is the relationship between this psychological trap and love?
Hayoon: (6) Given that “love” follows it, and it should have an opposite meaning from the words psychological trap. The word that begins with “dis” should seem to relate these two words.
Instructor: (7) That’s right! Then, what do you think should the word that begins with “dis” mean, given the context?
Hayoon: (8) I think I figured it out! Doesn’t it mean that it is love that pretends to be love? It’s not real love but a fake one!
Instructor: You are right! The word “disguise” means to pretend or to mask. What we can tell from this inferencing episode is that when you come across a word that you don’t understand, it is not exact meaning that matters but to make a broad inference that leads to approximate comprehension.
Hayoon: Yes, I see it now.
Instructor: Can you reflect on how you inferred the word “disguise?” This episode and your experience of making inferences using clues from neighboring contexts may help you resolve a lexical problem in the future.
Hayoon: Yes, I kept the topic in mind and inferred the meaning of an unknown word using the clues from the previous and following parts. I also thought of the relationship between words, here the relationship between “psychological trap” and “love.” I may not be able to figure out the literal meaning of it, but I learned that. I can still figure out meanings that doesn’t block comprehension. I think the meaning of prefix “dis” that refers to something opposite or negative also contributed to figuring out the meaning of the word.
Instructor: Yes, you did a very good job!

(Hayoon, session 1, episode 1)

As can be seen in the excerpt of the dialogic interaction above between the instructor and Hayoon, a total of 5 incremental scaffoldings were provided one at a time, carefully assisting Hayoon to narrow down from a broader context (violence and threat the speaker was exposed to). Then the instructor induced Hayoon to analyze what she previously figured out in relation to the overall flow of the meaning (1). Once Hayoon started to narrow down the word using broader context clues (2), the instructor began to provide more specified scaffolding (3) with which Hayoon got to think about the relationship between “psychological trap” and “love” that followed (4). Following the instructor’s scaffolding to reconsider the relationship between the two meanings (5), Hayoon was slowly able to figure out that the two words must be in contrast in terms of the meanings (6) and made a successful inferencing that “disguise” means to look like something although it is not exact literal meaning of “disguise” (8), in response to the instructor’s reminder of the word in question (7). During reflection, the instructor asked Hayoon to reflect this particular episode of inferencing she successfully made, Hayoon understood that a broader context should be kept in mind throughout comprehension, which determine the relationship between words. She also went on to make an important reflection that given the suffix “dis-” made her able to infer that it must have been a negative word.

2) Inferencing Using Clues From Broader Context

The second pattern of inferencing frequently observed during the interactionist DA was the use of broader contextual clues to a particular word issue. The following excerpt is the instructor-L2 listener dialogue during the interactionist DA episode. The portion in question was concerned with how the violent partner gradually began to abuse her.
I met Conor on a cold, rainy January night. He sat next to me on the New York City subway, and he started chatting me up. He told me two things. One was that he, too, had just graduated from an Ivy League school, and that he worked at a very impressive Wall Street bank. But what made the biggest impression on me that first meeting was that he was smart and funny, and he looked like a farm boy. He had these big cheeks, these big apple cheeks, and this wheat-blond hair, and he seemed so sweet. (Steiner, 2021)

Instructor: What kind of person was Connor?
Hoon: Ivy league, I’m not sure. I think he went to an Ivy league school. And he also worked at Wall Street.

Instructor: What was her first impression of Connor?
Hoon: She said the word “farm.” Did he work at a farm? It’s right because she also said that he worked.
Instructor: Anything else that you heard?
Hoon: I hear the word “apple cheek.” I can’t tell what she meant by “apple cheeks.”
Instructor: Okay, let’s go back to that part. Let’s go back to that apple thing. What aspect of Connor is she describing?
Hoon: She’s talking about his appearance.
Instructor: Then, what should cheeks in “apple cheeks” mean? In a broad sense.
Hoon: I think she’s saying that he is a kind person, had a blond hair and have a red-colored face?
Instructor: That’s correct! Like a flush!
Hoon: I see! A flush! It relates to a farm boy! A farm!
Instructor: That’s correct! Well, done!
Instructor: Can you explain to me how you figured out the word “cheeks?”
Hoon: He looked sweet and had blond hair and I related the word apple cheeks with a farm boy! I guess out the red cheeks from the word apple.
Instructor: That’s correct! Words like a “farm boy,” “apple,” and “sweet” enabled you to make an inference of a word (apple cheeks) that you didn’t know before.
Hoon: I see! Clue is not located just in a previous sentence. I should look for clues from a broader context.
Instructor: That’s correct!

As can be construed from the dialogue during the interactionist DA session, another frequently identified pattern of inferencing was inferencing with the use of broader contextual clues. Hoon had problem with “apple cheeks” which remained unclear to him as he recounted his comprehension of the portion. Then, the instructor began with more general scaffolding by setting the semantic boundary (1) of “apple cheeks” and reminded the listeners of the broader context. The instructor took a step further by asking Hoon what “apple cheeks” should roughly mean in the context of appearance. Then Hoon made an association between the color of red from the word “apples” (2) and finally related to the preceding word of “farm boy” (3) and finally inferred that “apple cheeks” has to do with Connor’s appearance and more specifically facial appearance. Hoon figured out that “apple cheeks” has to do with Connor being from countryside where apple cheeks are often related to less sophisticated and countryfied face (3). Then the instructor confirmed Hoon’s inference and provided easier example.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study sought to explore the possibility of setting second language listening comprehension in a rather foreign context of interactionist DA grounded in the underpinnings of SCT. The research purported to add empirical evidence to support and uncover the potential of DA, interactionist DA, to be more specific, to inferencing of unknown or uncertain words during listening comprehension process, which poses substantial obstacle to second
language listeners. The analysis of the protocols of Zoom-mediated dialogic interactions during the interactionist dynamic assessment sessions revealed that over the 6-week period (approximately six hours per participant), second language listeners demonstrated somewhat idiosyncratic pattern of development. While Hayoon exhibiting progress in inferencing unknown or uncertain words, taking advantage of problem-contingent mediation (scaffoldings) provided by the instructor as comprehension problems emerged, Hoon, with relatively lower listening proficiency, did demonstrate conspicuous progress over the course of time. Given the data analyzed covered only a part of the longer study that took 15 weeks, it may be too soon to argue that interactionist dynamic assessment was effective. However, it appears that constructive pedagogical implications were demonstrated when gradational scaffoldings contingent on specific inferencing problems that listeners varyingly displayed.

Second language listening, often thought of as an innate skill that is not teachable, can be positively intervened by effective mediations as demonstrated in the present study. Interventionist DA which may be more plausible of the classroom situation where a group of second language listeners collectively listen and often unilaterally provided with answers upon listening to an aural or audiovisual materials.

The present study aimed to propose a possibility of adopting and complementing conventional second language listening with timely dynamic assessment, either it being interventionist or interactionist, so that listeners can be guided through their learning process with concrete mediation and repertoire of listening strategies. Through the dynamic assessment procedures, second language listening comprehension is not a solo act independently of any assistance in performance as well as long-term development of the skill.

It also appears to present a crucial alternative teaching insights into listening pedagogy that has predominantly focused on listening and finding correct answers. For practical reasons, listening comprehension in general English curriculum has been designed to fit a whole class instruction. However, as it is the case with writing and the empirical evidence that support the conducive role of one-on-one writing conferences, listening comprehension tutorials may serve the needs of L2 listeners and instructors. The study suggests further quantitative empirical research on the effects of dynamic assessment and then move on to comparing the effects of the two DAs (interventionist vs. interactionist).

REFERENCES


