Text Chat-Mediated Dynamic Assessment Towards Self-Regulation in Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Even though the importance of corrective feedback (CF) is widely recognized, there is no agreement on the most effective type of CF for promoting self-regulation. Thus, this study adopts a sociocultural perspective on learning and employs dynamic assessment (DA) as a CF form. DA is considered a theoretically promising approach to CF as it focuses on the learning process rather than the end product. Instead of the common teacher-learner interaction, this study initiates a teacher-learner group interaction with the support of text chat. Text chat helps teachers to cater to all students in the class simultaneously through several chat groups. This longitudinal study was part of an ongoing, university-level three-month English-as-a-second-language course. The findings demonstrate that this collaborative approach facilitates self-regulation through teacher mediation and peer scaffolding, and that the text chat supports implementing DA in the classroom while its features support mediational and reciprocity moves of the DA process.

KEYWORDS

Collaboration, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, Dynamic Assessment, Mediation, Self-Regulation

INTRODUCTION

Dynamic Assessment (DA), which could be considered a blend of both assessment and assistance, has most often been discussed as an alternative strategy for traditional assessment which aims to assess the learners' current level of knowledge (Poehner et al., 2017). DA challenges the conventional view of assessment and presents the argument that teaching and assessment should not be separated but integrated to help learners stretch beyond their current level. However, DA is not only a form

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of assessment; it has also been presented in the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) literature as a feedback strategy with the work of scholars like Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), and Poehner (2009). They argued that corrective feedback (CF), whether it is implicit or explicit, would focus on the product, not the learning process. Lantolf and Poehner (2011), and Price et al. (2013) reiterated that learning could be best promoted by changing the focus from the product to the learning process. Thus, DA has gained increasing attention in SLA as it focuses on the learning process instead of the product while helping learners to reach self-regulation with graduated and contingent support.

The implementation of DA in the classroom is considered challenging due to the difficulty of facilitating one-to-one interaction between teacher and student (Lantolf, 2012). Computerised Group DA is one approach increasingly used by researchers in recent years to tackle this issue. However, it has been realized that the human mediator is of crucial importance and could not be replaced by a computer application (Tzuriel & Shamir, 2002) and that pre-scripted scales cannot always identify the needs of a learner (Zhang & Lu, 2019). Thus, computerised Group DA has its own limitations. Apart from computerised Group DA, two other approaches have been introduced: concurrent Group DA and cumulative Group DA (Poehner, 2009). In concurrent DA, the teacher starts the interaction with one individual and gives him or her feedback but quickly shifts the focus to the entire class, when a situation arises where that learner's issue, question or struggle make the space for others to contribute. Consequently, the whole class benefits. In cumulative Group DA, each student takes turns for one-to-one interaction with the teacher to complete an activity.

In this study, we used a *collaborative approach* to Group DA, which allows learners to work collaboratively and interact with the teacher as one group. We believe this approach could promote not only teacher mediation but also peer scaffolding. We used text chat as the communication platform for teacher-learner group interactions because text chat has always been appreciated for its ability to implement synchronous communication (Andujar, 2020) and overcome space and time constraints (Andujar & Salaberri-Ramiro, 2021). Text chat has also been discussed as a more effective platform for DA than face-to-face interactions (Kavesh & Rassaei, 2022). Thus, we presumed that text chat would help overcome the challenge of implementing DA in the actual classroom. The three-step regulatory scale developed by Udeshinee, Knutsson, Barbutiu, et al. (2022) was used by teachers to provide feedback to the learner group. This scale was employed in the study because it is designed for the text chat platform and combines both interventionist and interactionist approaches.

Using sociocultural theory as it promotes praxis (an integration of theory and practice) (Lantolf, 2012), the present study examines how DA could be implemented in the ESL classroom setting using collaboration between student groups and teachers.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Dynamic Assessment

This study is informed by one of the central tenets of Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory, dynamic assessment (DA). DA is a process that dialectically integrates instruction and assessment that provides graduated support to learners (Poehner, 2007). Through DA, the mediator can explore the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the distance between learners' independent performance and assisted performance. According to Vygotsky, to assess the full cognitive abilities of the learner, both their actual and potential development should be assessed(Vygotsky, 1998), and DA is the means to achieve this goal. This assessment could be done only through mediation and reciprocity; two sides of the same coin of DA (Grigorenko, 2009). Through mediation, the mediator can instruct the learners, while learners' responsiveness or reciprocity will help mediators assess the learners and determine their potential abilities.

We use DA in this study as a form of feedback strategy rather than a form of assessment. We focus on the learning process rather than the end product because DA as a form of feedback strategy can

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