

The dialogical nature of language use in interactive listening: revisiting meaning in context

Adopting a broader dialogical conceptual lens on interactive listening, this study examines advanced adult learners' language use and thought processes during a problem-solving task. Twenty English as a second language (L2) students from a Scottish university participated in the study. They worked in pairs on the task before taking part in retrospective interviews. In contrast to previous studies which investigated peer interactions, the participants in the present study were from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The analysis shows that L2 listeners utilise a range of verbal and non-verbal discursive practices, including reception strategies, as they negotiate and co-construct a shared understanding. Furthermore, their language use is embedded in an understanding of the sociocultural and discursive norms of both the settings of this study and the backgrounds of the interlocutor. The findings also indicate that rather than being static, listeners' perceptions of themselves and the others are contingent upon the dynamic interpersonal relationship in communication. The article argues for a need to broaden our understanding of what meaning-in-context in interactive listening entails: when listeners take on an active role, not only do they listen in the conventional sense, but they also become the co-regulator of the discourse.

Keywords: language use, interactive listening, dialogical approach, sociocultural theory, metacognitive awareness, social interaction

Introduction

This article reports a study on the language use of adult English as a second language (L2) learners studying at a university in Scotland. More specifically, the focus is on the way in which they engage in interactive listening and the thought processes underpinning their discursive practices. A review of the literature in the field suggests that there has been a growing number of research investigating L2 listening in recent years (e.g. Rost, 2016; Vandergrift & Baker, 2015; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). In language awareness (LA) research, however, listening has received the least attention of

all four language skills (Svalberg, 2016). The majority of these studies were informed by a cognitive understanding of the listening process – the most well-known being the comprehension processing model (Flowerdew & Miller, 2010; Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002). This model outlines three interconnected phases of listening comprehension: perception, parsing and utilisation (Goh, 2008; Lynch, 1998). Drawing from Anderson's (1995) cognitive psychology theory, the perception and parsing phases are concerned with the listener attending to and segmenting phonemes and words. The third phase, utilisation, allows the listener to form a conceptual framework, which is more associated with a top-down approach to processing where the application of prior knowledge is central for comprehension (Vandergrift, 2003). In her investigation of L2 listeners' real-time listening comprehension problems, Goh (2000) identified 10 problems related to cognitive processing phases. She also concluded that listeners with lower language proficiency experienced more low-level processing problems, such as speech recognition. In a more recent study examining the variables which contribute to the development of L2 listening ability, Vandergrift and Baker (2015) provided evidence for the importance of general skills (auditory discrimination and working memory) as well as more specific language skills (vocabulary knowledge).

This article, however, adopts a broader conceptual lens underpinned by a sociocultural and dialogical perspective on thought and communication (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; Wertsch, 1985, 1991). Research on L2 listening from such a perspective highlights the exploration of how meaning in context is co-constructed and negotiated. To date, this approach to L2 listening has received relatively limited attention (e.g. Bern, 2004; Cross, 2010; Rost, 2014). Scarvaglieri (2017) notes that the transformation of academic knowledge about language to the use of language in everyday social interaction is a critical issue in LA research. The significance of the present study,

therefore, lies in an in-depth examination of language use in social interaction as a way to investigate L2 interactive listening. This study also explores participants' awareness of intercultural competence, which is the awareness of using knowledge of one's own culture and that of other culture to develop an understanding of the social and discursive norms of the cultural backgrounds of the interlocutor (e.g. Byram, 2012; Deardoff & Jones, 2012). By looking at how L2 users interact with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, this study provides some insights into the intertwining of the interaction processes as well as the cultural products and practices between intercultural interlocutors (see also Byram, 1997).

Sociocultural theory as an explanatory conceptual framework underlines 'not only how individuals learn from interacting with each other, but also how collective understanding is created from interactions amongst individuals' (Mercer & Howe, 2012, p. 13). It posits that language as a cultural and psychological tool is key to mediating the relationship between individual processes of thinking and social interaction. To date, very few studies on listening in the L2 context have explored the listening process from a sociocultural perspective. Cross's (2010, 2011) studies adopted a sociocultural approach, although they had a particular focus on one-way (non-reciprocal) rather than interactive (reciprocal) listening – this is what the present study aims to highlight. Cross (2010) investigated peer-peer dialogue as an artefact for mediating the construction and co-construction of metacognitive awareness of L2 listening. He found that learners who worked in pairs constructed and co-constructed metacognitive awareness in terms of strategy awareness, comprehension awareness and text awareness in dialogue. Similarly, framed within Wells' (2002) joint activity system model, Cross (2011) used L2 learners' dialogue as a data source, along with the analyses of their written journals and interviews, and examined the social-cultural-historical contradictions which played

both a driving and inhibiting role in learners' metacognitive development. He concluded that learners' metacognitive awareness tends to be shaped by their social-cultural-historical experiences.

Language use in interactive listening

The confluence of listening and speaking has been underlined by a number of L2 researchers (Flowerdew & Miller, 2010; Rost, 2016). According to this perspective, listeners are no longer viewed as passive recipients of the message, who merely interpret the meaning of the utterance; they are regarded as active participants in the interaction. They use a variety of reception strategies (verbal and nonverbal) in order to signal temporary confusion, to acknowledge the receipt of the message and to negotiate meaning (Farrell & Mallard, 2006). Moreover, listeners who engage in interactive listening play the dual role of listener and speaker, which affords them the opportunity to respond to the cognitive and social demands of the listening process as well as to shape the discourse pattern of the conversation (Vandergrift, 2007; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). When discussing interactive listening, Buck (1995) outlines the 'unspoken rules' (p. 116). The rules underline the importance of listeners as agents and the role they play in cooperating with the interlocutor. This view goes beyond language processing for comprehension, highlighting the dialogic process in listening. Swain's (2000, 2006) work on languaging expands on such a view. Defined as 'the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language' (Swain, 2006, p. 98), languaging generally refers to instances where learners verbalise their language use when encountering linguistic problems in order to negotiate the solution(s) to problem-solving tasks. According to Swain and colleagues, the verbalisation process is crucial as it shows how learners work collaboratively. The notion of languaging also

recognises the ‘dynamic, never-ending process of using language to make meaning’ (Swain, 2006, p. 96). In particular, the emphasis is placed on the (re)shaping effect of speaking (and writing) on cognition with respect to learning. Languaging, along with concepts such as collaborative dialogue and language-related episodes (e.g. Swain, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1998), has provided the foundation for understanding the language use in interactive listening.

Vandergrift (1997) underlines that responding is an indispensable part of interactive listening. The obligation to respond increases the cognitive load significantly because the listener must allocate his or her limited attentional resources to both comprehension and production (Farrell & Mallard, 2006). For example, as the listener goes through the process of establishing and updating mental representation of utterances, s/he also has to attend to the way in which it may affect the relation between the listener and the speaker (Rost, 2016). For advanced L2 listeners, linguistic knowledge enables them to allocate attentional resources to discourse level regulation such as forward references and signals for continuation (Rost & Ross, 1991). Therefore, they use a variety of reception strategies in order to clarify understanding of an earlier difficulty or to provide receipt tokens to carry the discourse forward. For a detailed discussion of backward oriented and forward oriented listeners’ responses, see Vandergrift and Goh (2012, p. 30–32). While such categorisation provides us with insights into the cognitive and discursive functions of reception strategies, very little research has been conducted to explore L2 listeners’ language use from a dialogical perspective.

When studying listening as a part of social interaction, it is also important to consider the social and affective domains in which it is situated. Social factors including cultural differences, power relationship between interlocutors, and personality variables

may have an impact on the ways in which listeners employ reception strategies in listening. Rost and Ross (1991) proposed a social-cognitive model to listening, which integrates cognitive and social factors. According to this model, instead of signalling lack of comprehension to the interlocutor when there is non-understanding or uncertainty, the listener may choose to fake or feign understanding. This is more likely to happen if the participants are not well known to each other. As the non-understanding is building up, it may trigger his or her strategy to seek clarification which subsequently initiates negotiation of meaning. Reception strategies therefore can be socioculturally bound (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). The relationship between the interlocutors, for example, may have an impact on L2 learners freedom to negotiate meaning (Vandergrift, 2007). In Rost's (2014) discussion of the conversation patterns between a native speaker of Japanese and his homestay mother in New Zealand, he highlighted that when L2 listeners observed sociocultural norms and maintained a goal orientation, they were likely to be successful in their communication and develop their relationship with the interlocutor. Similar to social factors, affective factors such as willingness to take risks, fear of losing face, assertiveness, may also influence the patterns of the interaction (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Rost (2016) argues that in order to achieve positive affective outcomes, L2 listeners often have to attend to the asymmetries in interaction settings both in terms of how they feel during and after the interaction.

Meaning in context – a dialogical approach

A sociocultural view of meaning underlines its embeddedness not only in terms of linguistic forms, but also in terms of social and cultural contexts (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; Rommetveit, 2003; Wertsch, 1985). Rommetveit (1990) adopts a pluralistic approach and maintains that meaning potentials are derived from and contingent upon

their contextual settings. This view resonates with Hanks' (1996) argument regarding the shaping effects of context on meaning. Hanks argues that meaning potentials underscore 'intersubjective contracts, ongoing discourse and a horizon of background experience' (p. 86). Thus context, inherent in the negotiation process, is inextricably fused with meaning potentials. Such an understanding of meaning extends beyond what its semantic forms might entail. In L2 research, Donato (2000) argues that dialogically derived cognitive processes tend to manifest themselves in the interactions among learners who participate in problem-solving tasks. The collaborative knowledge-building activities provide the environment in which learning is mediated by the use of language. In the same vein, Swain and Lapkin (1998) suggest that the dialogue between learners is 'an enactment of cognitive activity' (p. 322). They also posit that the building of linguistic knowledge takes place as learners collaborate with each other through social interactions. This involves the gradual internalisation of cognitive skills situated in the wider social context to be displayed in the future independent thinking in language learning.

Mercer (2000) defines the term 'context' as a mental phenomenon that consists of 'whatever information listeners (or readers) use to make sense of what is said (or written)' (p. 19). This definition suggests that earlier parts of the conversation provide shared contextual foundations for the listeners' understanding of the conversation that follows. Hagtvet and Wold (2003) further elaborate on the relationships between meaning and context in discursive practices by highlighting the 'dialogically established setting' which foregrounds the potentialities of a word (p. 191). Thus, rather than perceiving meaning as a static or fixed entity, a dialogical perspective on meaning recognises the changing nature of meaning in situ. Context, therefore, is dynamic and provides a resource for us to construct meaning (Linell, 2009). In recent years, there has

been a growing body of literature which examines the concept of ‘co-construction’ and how it indicates the alignment of understanding between interlocutors (Clancy & McCarthy, 2015; Family, Durus & Zieger, 2015). Co-constructions are morpho-syntactic structures in which the second speaker in the interaction often builds on the preceding incomplete utterance by the first speaker and adds something new or relevant. Learner (2004), for example, argues that the second speaker’s utterance is limited in the sense that it is still within the context of the first speaker’s utterance, therefore the second speaker’s utterance still ‘belongs’ to the first speaker. The first speaker then evaluates the second speaker’s utterance, and may or may not provide confirmation or rejection of the co-construction in the next turn. Co-construction of utterances are an indispensable part of natural conversation and can often lead to the creation of a shared understanding between the participants.

An inherent feature of the dialogical approach to interactive listening is perspectival relativity. Rommetveit (1990) notes that ‘any given state of affairs is contingent upon the position from which it is viewed’ (p. 87). It can therefore be postulated that to achieve reciprocity and mutuality, both the speaker and the listener will need to afford the other the chance to take perspectives. In other words, to understand a message, the listener has to adopt the speaker’s perspective; reciprocally, the speaker has to adjust his/her positions so that they attune to each other when working towards joint goals. The dialogical approach also recognises that communication is often accomplished with asymmetrical knowledge exchange and participation where practical responsibilities for the speaker and the listener are distributed unevenly (Linell, 1998; Linell & Markovà, 1993). The listener, as Rommetveit contends, is ‘an indispensable contributor to and indeed a main co-author of its [the word] linguistically mediated meaning’ (Rommetveit, 2003, p. 215).

Intersubjective understanding in communication is achieved through the mutual assumption of meaning, which often entails the ‘attunement to the attunement of the other’ (Rommetveit, 1974, 1992). This concisely summarises the fundamental pragmatic underpinning of human communication. As individuals work in a joint effort, a temporarily shared world ‘triggers anticipatory comprehension’ of the interlocutor (Rommetveit, 1974, p. 88). The listener, in particular, engages in the dialogue actively while forming a certain expectation of the other(s). The formation of expectation, which may be implicit and sometimes taken for granted, is contingent upon mutually assumed meaning potentials. In other words, the co-construction and negotiation of shared understanding may rest on ‘what is taken for granted’ under joint perspective taking and setting (Hagtvet & Wold, 2003, p. 193). This dialogical understanding of meaning in context and co-construction of utterances is consistent with the view of listening as a joint venture as was discussed in the earlier section.

The present paper draws on data from a larger study which investigated and re-conceptualised L2 learners’ metacognitive awareness in the listening process. The framing and analysis of the current paper seeks to reflect our current understanding of L2 listening comprehension in peer interaction settings, but adopt an expanded view on the co-construction and negotiation of meaning drawing from sociocultural theorising and dialogic perspectives. To this end, the research question guiding this exploratory study is: How do L2 learners co-construct and negotiate meaning in interactive listening? Highlighting the language use in L2 listening, this paper explores in depth the conceptual importance of and provides the evidence for: (1) listening as a dialogical endeavour; and (2) the interplay between discourse, thought and social-affective considerations in collaborative meaning co-construction and negotiation.

Methodology

Participants

Participants included 20 students who were studying at a Scottish university at the time of data collection. Convenience sampling was used to recruit the participants. They were international students (3 males and 17 females) studying for a university degree (from undergraduate to doctoral levels), aged between 19 and 37 ($M = 26.02$, $SD = 4.49$). The first language of the participants ranged from European languages and Asian languages to African languages (see Appendix 1). Their English proficiency was upper-intermediate to advanced (IELTS 6.5 or above)¹ levels.

Procedure

Prior to the study, ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the researcher's institution. All participants were provided with sufficient information about the study and written consent forms were signed. The data were gathered in two stages. Participants first worked on a problem-solving task in pairs (Appendix 2), which lasted for 8 to 10 minutes. Rost (2016) suggests that an important tool for achieving understanding is problem-solving tasks. From a psycholinguistics perspective, inferencing is always a problem-solving process (Barbey & Barsalou, 2009). The task asked students to negotiate their understanding of the various flat-sharing issues that university students face. In addition, the participants were instructed to draw on their own experience and agree on a solution towards the end of their discussion. The interactions were video recorded. For the second stage, each participant watched the video recording of the interaction in which they had just participated with the

¹ Level of English was not the primary focus of the present study. IELTS 6.5 was the minimal English language entry requirement to the university at the time of the study.

researcher. The interview (Appendix 3) was semi-structured so that both the participant and the researcher had the freedom to pause or rewind the video if necessary. The semi-structured retrospective interview followed the stimulated recall procedures as were outlined by Gass and Mackey (2000) and Bowles (2010). As a type of retrospective methods, stimulated recall interviews used the video recording of the interaction data as prompts to facilitate the participants' reflection. Such a methodological decision for data collection is less obtrusive than concurrent verbal protocols which may interfere with participants' ongoing thought processes. The stimulated recall interviews were conducted after the problem-solving task. This not only ensured that the verbal interaction was not disrupted, but also gave the researcher and the participants subsequently a chance to explore the otherwise tacit thought processes in listening.

Data analysis

In this study, thematic analysis (e.g. Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Charmaz, 2006) was used to analyse how L2 listeners regulated their thinking processes while engaging in a problem-solving task. Data included video transcripts of interaction and audio transcripts of the follow-up retrospective interviews. The analytical approach was guided by the assumption that human interaction is fundamentally dialogic rather than idiosyncratic (Linell, 2009). As Linell argues, 'humans are always interdependent with others, although the degree and kinds of interdependencies will of course vary with individuals, cultures and situations' (p. 13). To this end, a key focus is on the interdependence of the listener and the speaker. Moving beyond the analysis of what had been said and how it had been said, the analyses set out to capture how L2 learners' understanding of the regulation of discourse and thought was jointly constructed and

negotiated and how it was exemplified in the discourse.

The analytical procedures for the interaction data were broadly informed by Linell and colleagues' work on dialogism and aspects of conversation analysis (CA) (Jefferson, 2004; Liddicoat, 2007; Schegloff, 1996). For transcription conventions, see Appendix 4. More specifically, the analysis drew on Linell's (2009) notions of communicative projects (e.g. opening, questioning, answering, clarifying, explaining) and activity types (e.g. a negotiation, an interrogation, a casual exchange) as units of analysis. It is important to note that complex nesting may occur: one communicative project may be used in different activity types, and within one activity type, there might be multiple communicative projects. With the aim of making a clear connection between listening and meaning-making, the present study is mainly concerned with identifying and synthesising patterns of interaction and language use (e.g. reception strategies). CA is one of the most widely used methods for analysing spoken discourse. According to this tradition, social actions are accomplished in and through talk-in-interaction (Schegloff & Sacks, 1974). This method is primarily concerned with the identification of organised and recurrent features of naturally occurring data, and such features include turn taking, overlap, interruption, repair, etc. The key analytical orientation in CA relevant to this study is the notion of the 'context sensitive-context renewing' character of the interaction (Heritage, 1984, p. 254). Each utterance displays an understanding of prior, present and subsequent utterances, which may be subject to strategies such as clarification or repair. Moreover, as speakers develop an understanding of the ongoing interaction, mutual understanding can be achieved. The development of such a mutual understanding, which applies to both the comprehension and the production of utterances, is termed by Heritage (1984) as the building of the 'architecture of intersubjectivity' (Potter, 2004).

While acknowledging the merits of using conventional CA methods for analysing spoken discourse, the analytical framework developed for this study went beyond the scope of merely explicating fine-grained discourse features and patterns. As is outlined below, the analytical framework not only aimed to capture the dialogical nature of language use in interactive listening, but also tapped into how L2 listeners' understanding of meaning in context is socially co-constructed and negotiated. The framework enabled the researcher to closely examine the local nuances in the discourse such as responses, turn takings and pauses. More importantly, it supported the analysis of L2 listeners' evolving understanding of how (meta)cognitive resources were orchestrated in relation to language use and discursive practices. To this end, the data analysis was carried out on three levels:

- The discourse level - language use such as turn takings, pauses, repetitions and other discourse features;
- The pragmatic level - pragmatic functions such as clarification, (dis)agreement, politeness, and;
- The retrospective level – linking the findings from the preceding levels to the retrospective interview data.

Findings and discussion

The findings presented in this article are part of a larger study which investigated second language learners' metacognitive awareness in the listening process (see Huang, 2015, 2018). This section presents the findings in relation to L2 learners' language use and their awareness of the co-construction and negotiation of meaning in context. In the

extract below, Nicole and Gary discuss one of the flat-sharing issues in the problem-solving task - the stolen butter issue. This is the beginning of their conversation. Gary is a Hindi speaker, and Nicole is a Mandarin speaker. The extract demonstrates the listeners' use of responses to form part of an overlapping completion in the interaction. In conjunction with the interview data, the analysis indicates that the listeners' active monitoring, predicting and reflecting as well as the use of interculturally adaptable strategies may contribute to the co-construction of shared understanding.

Nicole-Gary, interaction

Gary: Yesterday you found the butter you left in the fridge was gone, but you remembered clearly that you had only used half of it - possible solution?

Nicole: I have friends who used to have this problem that people [sharing

Gary: [people stealing food yeah

Nicole: Yeah, bread, milk, (and other) things.

Gary: Uh put laxatives in the butter or milk so that you know who's stealing your butter, and they will

Nicole: <laugh> Yeah.

Gary: Possible solution is I think the best solution is just face like just have a meeting with your flatmate and [saying

Nicole: [yeah sit down and see

Gary: Sit down and say, well this is the problem and this needs to stop, and if it continues, then yeah you take it up with someone else, and when you were sharing the flat with someone it might... I don't know.

In this extract, there are two instances in which Gary and Nicole jointly create a shared understanding during the listening process. Firstly, Nicole reflects on her prior knowledge about the topic in her response. Gary then completes the second half of Nicole's utterance by predicting Nicole's unfinished preceding utterance and complementing it with 'people stealing food yeah'. Nicole acknowledges Gary's completion with 'yeah' and finishes the rest of her utterance. In the second instance, Nicole completes Gary's utterance by saying 'yeah sit down and see'. Compared to

Nicole's acknowledgement of Gary's completion in the first instance, here Gary acknowledges Nicole's verbal contribution and incorporates it into his utterance that follows (Hanks, 1996; Rommetveit, 1990).

It is worth noting that the collaborative completions discussed above are also overlaps. The analysis of these two instances exemplifies the two distinct ways of listener using reception strategies (e.g. Farrell & Mallard, 2006) in order to acknowledge the interlocutor's contributions: Nicole acknowledges Gary's completion by stating 'yeah' before completing her original utterance; Gary, on the other hand, acknowledges Nicole's contribution by incorporating it into his original utterance. Both discourse patterns (maintaining the original sentence structure and modifying the original sentence structure) produce syntactically and semantically coherent utterances, which suggests that shared understanding is achieved to a certain degree (Clancy & McCarthy, 2015; Family, Durus & Zieger, 2015).

Linking the analysis of the interaction data to participants' accounts in the interviews, the study is able to provide insights into the ways in which both participants co-ordinate the monitoring and control in the listening process. In the following comment, Gary illustrates his strategy to reflect on his prior knowledge, and compare it to Nicole's utterance during the listening process:

Gary, interview

I kind of knew where she was going with it. I was just reiterating what I thought as well because that same situation has happened to me before at university, so I was kind of agreeing with her in a way.

I was expecting some kind of response to that, but I never got the response, and hence the silence. Yeah, I think so [having a response is important], because then you know, you know that the other person is understanding what you are saying.

The excerpt shows that not only does Gary monitor and predict Nicole's ongoing and

emergent speech, but he also reflects on his own prior knowledge. This active monitoring, predicting and reflecting on oneself as well as the other contribute to the formation of a shared understanding between the two. This is in line with what L2 listening researchers posit: the inferential process which listeners often go through entails that they draw on both linguistic knowledge and world knowledge in order to support comprehension (Rost, 2016; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Being an advanced listener, Gary is able to orchestrate his prior knowledge effectively as he predicts Nicole's intended meaning. From a sociocultural perspective, Wertsch (1985) suggests that meaning is derived from the relationship between language and the context in which it is situated. The inherent connectedness between language and context is also highlighted by Vološinov (1973), who postulates that 'the sign and its social situation are inextricably fused' and that 'consciousness becomes consciousness only in the process of social interaction' (p. 11). Such dynamic approach to language and social interactions suggests that individuals become more aware of their own cognitive state through interacting with others. Apart from belonging to the individuals, this awareness constitutes the collective communities in which it is jointly created and shared (Säljö, 2009).

Moreover, Gary comments that his overlapping completion signals agreement and that his reformulation of Nicole's idea is a way of confirming this agreement. Goh and Hu (2014) suggest that 'responses, which indicate partial agreement or disagreement, are particularly interesting because they indicate a lack of certainty and these items can be useful talking points in the discussion about listening processes' (p. 271). In the present study, Gary's discussion about the degree to which he agrees with Nicole reveals how he monitors and manages (dis)agreement and its links to the listener reflecting on prior knowledge. Nicole, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with

comparing the L2 culture and her own culture. In the following excerpt, she comments:

Nicole, interview

Sometimes when I try to describe things, I use very poor or segmented sentences. If people help me by predicting what I'm going to say, it's going to be a lot of help for me, in English that is. But probably if I think of my own language, my mother language, that would kind of imply like, [if] you speak when other people are still speaking, yeah like you interrupt people when they are still speaking, that'll be sometimes considered as impolite.

In this extract, Nicole comments on the overlaps in the interaction. She contrasts the overlapping interruptions in English and Mandarin. For Nicole, the fact that her partner predicts the content, overlaps and completes her utterance is helpful. If the overlap happens in Mandarin, however, Nicole would regard it as impolite. This shows that Nicole is aware of the intercultural pragmatics between the embedded social and discursive norms in English and her native language. The ability to handle cross-cultural interactions in today's multilingual world has been underlined by Rost (2014), who further argues that plurilingual communication skills are key to 'modern communicative competence' (p. 132). In the present study, Nicole is able to adapt the ways in which she listens in the interaction accordingly (Rost, 2016; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Her positive attitude towards Gary's 'help', as was mentioned in the comment, contributes to the joint creation of shared understanding. Gary's and Nicole's use of a range of discursive practices as they attempt to establish a connection between reflection on prior knowledge and co-construction of understanding is an example of L2 listeners being more aware of the interdependence of language use and regulation of thoughts.

Therefore, the analysis supports the notion that listening is a dialogical process in which the listener predicts the other's utterance while reflecting on his or her own prior knowledge and seeking agreement. Buck's (1995) 'unspoken rules' regarding

interactive listening highlight the role that the listener plays in the co-construction of a successful conversation (p. 116). Similarly, in Rehbein, ten Thije and Verschik's (2012) discussion about modes of interpretive processes of the listener, they argue that the listener must be able to form a plan which serves as a precondition for responding. In forming such plan, a dialogical understanding of the listening process requires the listener to adapt his or her discourse strategies so that successful communication can be achieved. It also requires the listener to develop an awareness which manifests itself through dynamic discourse patterns such as overlaps and collaborative completions. Although Nicole and Gary may have seemingly different perceptions towards discourse features at a local level (see the discussion earlier about asymmetrical knowledge and participation in communication), they are able to think beyond language processing for comprehension, and co-construct a shared understanding (Linell, 1998; Linell & Markovà, 1993).

Similar to Nicole's understanding that the listener predicts and completes the other's utterance in overlaps and completions according to the prevailing social and discursive norms, the following extract demonstrates that Yuzuki's strategy to overlap is dependent on her partner's linguistic background and the wider sociocultural contexts within which the interaction is situated. Yuzuki is a Japanese speaker, and Savannah is a German speaker. In the following extract, Yuzuki and Savannah also discuss the stolen butter issue.

Savannah-Yuzuki, interaction

Yuzuki: Yeah, how how about you?

Savannah: Not really, not really no. We have like a fridge,

Yuzuki: Mm

Savannah: and there are like 4 compartments in the fridge,

Yuzuki: Mm

Savannah: and everyone has their own like everyone has their own <gesture> like everyone has their own butter and, my food [was never

Yuzuki: [How how do you manage this, the kind of [divide the area into

Savannah: [Yeah you know there are like little cupboards,

Yuzuki: Uhuh

Savannah: and I put my food on the very bottom,

Yuzuki: Uhuh

Savannah: and then there's another one, there are like four of them.

Yuzuki: You put the name on it?

Savannah: No, it was just decided when we moved in,

Yuzuki: Uhuh

The overlaps in the extract may indicate that both Yuzuki and Savannah are actively engaged in the conversation. Yuzuki is interested in the situation that Savannah is describing. Hence, her question ‘how do you manage this’ can be considered as a strategy to show interest and request for more information. A similar pattern is repeated later in the conversation ‘you put the name on it’. They show a reciprocal active listenership in which the listener not only monitors the utterances, but is also actively engaged with his or her conversation partner. Yuzuki is conscious of the way she interacts with her partner. As Rommetveit (1985) states, mutual commitment in dyadic communication control is rooted in the listener’s reciprocal understanding of perspective taking. In other words, the listener monitors his or her own understanding in conjunction with the monitoring of the other person’s thoughts and understanding. According to the comment below, Yuzuki adjusts her strategy to overlap (interrupt) based on the cultural background of her conversation partner:

Yuzuki, interview

I don't hesitate to interrupt someone, because most of my friends here are from England, Scotland or Ireland, and for people from Western culture, they are always interrupting and interrupting. That's the way the conversation goes here. But if I

talk to a Chinese student or students from any other Asian cultures, I think I'd wait for them to finish their sentences. Yeah I shift between culture to culture.

Some of my friends here told me 'you don't talk much.' That was a great surprise for me. I'm a very chatty girl in Japan, so I think that was a cultural difference. I have or I need to interrupt them to join the conversation, otherwise they feel a bit weird or strange. In my understanding, it's more polite to interrupt them.

The extract shows that Yuzuki is aware that simultaneous speech is part of the social norms to join conversations in the Western culture. This finding provides evidence for Rost and Ross's (1991) social-cognitive model of language use in interactive listening (reception strategies in this case). As a native Japanese speaker, Yuzuki recognises the differences between the way she listens and responds in her home culture and in the West. That is, Yuzuki's strategy to interact changes based on the interlocutor's background. Therefore, Yuzuki has developed discursive practices that are socioculturally adaptable and interpersonally relational, prioritising the cultural aspects of communication. This echoes what Rost (2016) outlines: the common ground between the listener and the speaker, including shared concepts and routines as well as the way in which they interact in the world, plays a key role in helping listeners develop their understanding. Similarly, Linell (2009) notes that the common ground between participants in a dialogue is essential to the communicative process. The common ground may provide shared contextual basis for participants to develop a shared understanding (Mercer, 2000; Hagtvet & Wold, 2003). Meanwhile, in Savannah's interview, she confirms her awareness of Yuzuki's overlapping utterances in the extract:

Savannah, interview

She is really interested as to how we do it, because she doesn't know it. She doesn't live with other people... Now I'm no longer the only one asking the question. She interrupts me and says 'well how do you really do that?' So yeah, we are more interacting with each other I would say... I think it also has something to

do with her being from Japan that this is a cultural thing, because the way I perceive people from Asia generally, very friendly, very quiet people that are not necessarily as open as I am, or other people from Western Europe.

At an affective level, Savannah monitors the extent to which Yuzuki is engaged in the interaction by inferring her interest from overlaps and the way in which she interacts more broadly. Foster and Ohta (2005) suggest that L2 listeners' strategy to provide certain responses could be linked to their way of expressing interest and giving encouragement in the interaction. These responses created a supportive environment which might be conducive to increased L2 learning (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Rost, 2016). By monitoring Yuzuki's interest, Savannah is able to articulate how affective factors, such as interest, contribute to the metacognitive experiences in the listening process (Efklides, 2008).

For Savannah, not only do Yuzuki's overlaps signal her interest in the topic, but they also indicate that the discourse pattern is changing globally - from the initial mechanical question-answer-question pattern to the more interactive pattern as is described in her comment above. This is in line with what Swain and Lapkin (1998) have noted – affective variables may have an important impact on the patterns and dynamics of the dialogue. As the interview extract suggests, Savannah is more concerned with the development of discourse patterns, and is able to compare and contrast patterns across different stages in the interaction. Furthermore, Savannah's preconception of her partner's background also underpins the way that she interacts with Yuzuki. In a way, both Savannah and Yuzuki show high level of awareness in terms of the impact of social and affective factors on the way in which the listener contributes to the development of discourse patterns. Reception strategies, such as overlaps, interruptions and questioning (Rost & Ross, 1991; Farrell & Mallard, 2006),

are potentially shaped by their wider social and affective understanding of themselves, their partners as well as the wider sociocultural norms.

The findings of the interaction data also suggest that L2 listeners' awareness of collaborative completions as a discourse pattern may help to shape cognitive attunement (Rommetveit, 1974, 1992). In other words, the process of L2 listeners contributing to collaborative completions could also signal agreement which may serve to regulate the discourse at a global level. In the following example, Mara and Harry discuss the stolen butter issue. Mara is an Arabic speaker, and Harry is a Spanish speaker.

Harry-Mara, interaction

Mara: Yeah, did you just talk to him about it and stuff? Did your whole flat talk to him about it or?

Harry: Well there's a problem there, because there's an issue with Chinese people and confrontation.

Mara: Oh yeah

Harry: Culturally speaking, they do not want to confront people. They are not

Mara: the confronting type

Harry: the confronting type. I think that that might be a cultural thing. In my case, since I'm from Latin America, you just went like that <gesture>,

Mara: That's not okay.

Harry: probably like yeah you have to respect people's things, and you know,

Mara: Yeah

Harry: but anyway.

Prior to this extract, Mara only provides minimal responses to Harry's account of his unhygienic flatmate. Her questions at the beginning mark the fact that the interaction has become more interactive. Furthermore, Mara's utterance 'the confronting type' complements Harry's previous unfinished utterance, which is an example of Mara actively participating in the interaction. Harry subsequently confirms Mara's completion by repeating it. Mara comments on this instance of completion in the following comment:

Mara, interview

I guess it was to show that I understood what he wanted to say. Yeah, it just began to show him that I did understand what he was saying and I did agree with him.

For Mara, the function of collaborative completions is to signal understanding and agreement. Mara's response 'the confronting type' therefore, apart from acknowledging her own understanding of the preceding utterance, also provides Harry with the information about the degree of cognitive attunement between the two. This cognitive attunement contributes to the regulation of their follow-up interaction at a global level. Rost (2014) outlines that L2 listeners tend to make strategic adjustments to their listening style in order to become more efficient listeners. These adjustments have the potential to improve connection with the speaker and enhance the attention and comprehension (Rost, 2016). The verbal and non-verbal back-channelling in the form of collaborative completion in Mara and Harry's case represents one way of L2 listeners attuning to each other at a cognitive level as they adjust the use of reception strategies during the interaction (Farrell & Mallard, 2006). This is in line with Vandergrift and Goh (2012) who suggest that interactive listening allows listeners to predict information, to assume common understandings without them being explicitly stated, to monitor interpretation during ongoing interaction. Harry echoes Mara's understanding in the following comment:

Harry, interview

She was affirming to my statement... It shows she can connect to what I'm saying, and it probably shows that she has had some similar experience... she made me feel that she understood the situation.

In Harry's comment above, he shares Mara's view on collaborative completions in interaction. For Harry, Mara's completion may indicate that she is able to establish a link between her understanding of the preceding utterance and her prior knowledge. The

cognitive attunement between Harry and Mara therefore is reflected in the collaborative completion delineated above. This temporary attunement is the result of reciprocal monitoring and control between both participants (Rommetveit, 1974; Linell, 1998; Linell & Marková, 1993). The inferential process of active monitoring, predicting and reflecting on prior knowledge which contributes to the formation of a shared understanding is often the result of the listener negotiating meaning in context (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). The present study confirms the findings by Farrell and Mallard (2006). Listeners may use reception strategies to clarify meaning and advance the conversation without specific strategy training. The participants in this study not only used the three main strategies (backchannels, hypothesis testing, reprises) identified in Farrell and Mallard's study, they also used other strategies, namely questioning, overlaps, and collaborative completions.

Conclusion

The article contributes to L2 listening research by arguing for a need to broaden our understanding of what meaning-in-context in interactive listening entails. The findings presented have explored the ways in which L2 learners/ users achieve 'reciprocal active listenership' in which listeners can also be perceived as the co-regulator of the discourse. When listeners take on an active role in the listening process, they not only *listen* in the conventional sense, they also participate in the co-construction of meaning in context. The co-regulation in interactive listening is an interpersonal endeavour in which listeners monitor and evaluate the other on an ongoing basis. This is in accord with the dialogical view of listening as was discussed earlier (Linell, 1998; Rommetveit, 2003). Analyses of the interaction and interview data reveal that L2 listeners may regulate their role in relation to the other throughout the course of the interaction; they may also shift the role when necessary. Therefore, rather than being static, listeners'

perceptions of themselves and the others are contingent upon the dynamic interpersonal relationship in communication.

By investigating the dialogic nature of language use in interactive listening, this article contributes to a better understanding of the multifacetedness of metacognitive awareness in L2 listening. In particular, the exploration of participants' discursive practices and reflections on the communication process suggests that further examination of L2 social interaction from different perspectives, including an ecological approach, is needed (see Zhang, et al., 2018; Zhang, et al., 2017). Understanding of discourse and thought processes of interactive listening also has implications for pedagogical task design in classroom settings. For instance, when selecting tasks in L2 classrooms, teachers should prioritise real world problem-solving tasks which require students to co-construct and negotiate a shared understanding. Furthermore, it is crucial to embed activities where students can analyse their language use and reflect on the thought processes of language use and intercultural communication in general.

When interpreting the findings, the limitations of the study must also be acknowledged. Given the simulated nature of the problem-solving task, the discursive practices produced by the participants should be considered as quasi-experimental. In other words, they do not truly reflect the way in which L2 interlocutors would behave in real world settings. In addition, the delay between the problem-solving task and the retrospective interviews might have contributed to the limitations of the study. Future research may consider sampling a larger and more linguistically diverse population and measure participants' discursive practices and thought processes using quantitative approaches. The present exploratory study was not an attempt to generalise the language use for L2 learners/ users, but it lays the theoretical and analytical foundations for further studies to do so. Specifically, the use of Linell's dialogical approach to

communication in line with sociocultural theorising helps us to better understand the process of meaning-making.

The dialogical perspective on human interaction and sense-making reflects the interweaving of a number of theoretical threads - linguistic, cognitive and metacognitive (e.g. Marková, 2003). Rather than viewing language use in interactive listening as either purely linguistic or viewing thoughts/ cognitions as purely psychological, the arguments advanced in this paper call for examining discursive practices and thoughts processes as socially constituted endeavours (Linell, 2009). In sum, despite the limitations of this exploratory study, it offers wider implications both in terms of how awareness of language use can be theorised and the importance of considering the dialogic nature of meaning co-construction and negotiation in pedagogical task (re)design in the language classroom. It is hoped that the current study can help second- and foreign language pre-service and in-service teachers to prepare students for intercultural encounters in face-to-face and digital environments.

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