Towards a framework for assessing English through drama: A dynamic assessment approach

Michelle Reyes Raquel
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Abstract

When students learn a second language, their ability is assessed either summatively (their final performance), or continuously (through completion of mini-tasks such as script-writing to assess writing skills, or reading aloud to assess pronunciation). Although these assessment methods are effective in taking a 'snapshot' of students' current proficiency level, they only reflect what students demonstrate in performance and do not take into account other second language gains that develop as they engage in other activities in the learning environment. This study aims to examine the feasibility of adopting Dynamic Assessment (DA) as a framework for the teaching and assessment of English learnt through participation in full-scale theatrical productions. DA is a development-oriented assessment approach that aims to promote L2 development by directing teaching and assessment to the development of students' potential ability. Using a case study, I investigated the interactions of Hong Kong Chinese tertiary students engaged in performing scripts for an audience. The data reveals that directors, as mediators, used an interactionist approach to DA in the process of preparing students to perform in a theatrical production. Teaching and assessment of English is a dialectic activity that is critical for students' development of dramatic and English skills. Furthermore, this assessment framework views linguistic expression in the context of aesthetic expression in contrast with other assessment approaches that view it as a dichotomy. The collaborative dialogue between directors and actors in this case study serve as a basis for the development of a DA framework for the teaching and assessment of English through theatre productions.

Keywords: *second language learning, dynamic assessment, theatre productions, drama*

Author bio:

Michelle R. Raquel is an English language instructor at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania, Australia. She specializes in teaching ESL through drama and language assessment. She has also directed and co-directed numerous theatre productions at both secondary school and tertiary levels. Her research interests include second language acquisition through drama and theatre and English language testing and assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment of second language (L2) gained through theatre constitutes a neglected area. Previous research on the use of theatre productions for L2 development mainly focuses on specific rehearsal techniques (e.g. hotseating, warm-ups) that could impact on L2 proficiency. The isolation of particular techniques from the total context of a production creates a simplistic understanding of the possible relations between L2 learning and theatre. They do not however provide any insight into the process by which theatre achieves this. In theatre productions, there is a special type of language learning that results from the context of linguistic expression in aesthetic expression. In theatre, the linguistic and the aesthetic cannot be separated and assessment should take this reality into account. This article proposes an assessment framework grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, which will address these problems.

Drama and L2 learning

Drama[1] pedagogy is a holistic learning approach that involves intellectual-linguistic properties, kinesthetic and emotional dimensions that makes learning an intensive and meaningful experience (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). In the area of L2 learning, drama has been successful as a teaching technique because drama goes beyond learning grammatical structures to immerse students in second language literature and culture (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Winston, 2012). It also creates a learning environment that focuses students on authentic language use. More specifically, learners involved in a theatre production learn a second language because theatre activities parallel language learning and teaching activities (Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo, 2004; Smith, 1984).

L2 learning through theatre productions happens because activities within a theatre production immerse learners in the target language in two learning contexts–the text (script) and the production environment–which allows students to acquire and learn the target language implicitly (Raquel, 2011; Wessels, 1987). In the process of studying a script, learners are exposed to structures of authentic spoken language and contextualised vocabulary (Hayati, 2006; Kempe, 2003). In the process of learning how to act, learners develop performance skills that also target their oral proficiency skills (i.e. fluency, pronunciation, stress and intonation), and non-verbal communication skills (i.e. facial expression and body language) (Banning, 2003; Bernal, 2007; Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo, 2004). Preparing technical aspects of the production also makes the activity a social, goal-oriented one that fosters camaraderie between learners and teachers (Moody, 2002). Finally, performance in front of an audience boosts learners' confidence and intercultural competence as proficient second language speakers (Dodson, 2002; Fernández García & Biscu, 2008; Yoshida, 2007).

Carkin (2008) proposed a more fundamental link between L2 learning and drama by drawing parallels between Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning (SCT) and Stanislavski's system of acting. According to Vygotsky (1978), language learning occurs when words, as symbols, are linked to signs and, when used in action, evoke emotion. Carkin (2008) claims that L2 learning through drama is effective because acting replicates this language learning process. If actors adopt Stanislavski's system of acting, L2 learning occurs because actors are required to consider words in the text as symbols that are linked to signs, action and emotion. This process starts with text analysis whereby an actor identifies the 'subtext' (meanings behind words) of each dialogue in the script and expresses them to an audience. Drama is effective for L2 learning because it provides the dramatic situation or context that triggers this process.

Assessing language gains through drama

The studies so far demonstrate the potential of theatrical productions as a means for L2 development. L2 learning in these studies were measured by summative (e.g., assessment of final performance) or continuous assessment (e.g., assessment of performance of mini-tasks such as script-writing or reading aloud) instruments such as standardized tests or performance-based assessments to measure L2 ability gains before and after a dramatic project. Standardised tests were used when one wants to measure L2 ability gain with the use of valid and established instruments that determine L2 ability (e.g., TOEFL, Metropolitan Readiness Test). This required learners to take pre- and post-tests and the difference between these are measured through statistical modelling (O'Gara, 2008; Podlozny, 2000).

Performance-based assessments (e.g., writing a script, participating in an interview) were used when one wants to determine L2 ability gain in the process of completing authentic communicative tasks (Shohamy, 1995). Tools such as rubrics, portfolios and evaluation sheets were submitted as evidence of L2 ability gain. Teachers use scales and descriptors, with categories for dramatic and language skills to evaluate this evidence. For example, Mattevi (2005) designed a rubric that assessed the final performance of students on a 4-point scale with the following categories: costume, body language, memorisation, and pronunciation. Kempston (2012) investigated the use of a standardised rubric with a 6-point scale that assessed the following: pronunciation and delivery, communication strategies, vocabulary and language patterns, and ideas and organisation.

A key principle of assessment, however, is that assessments must be linked to teaching and learning objectives (Bachman & Cohen, 1998). Standardised tests do not meet this criterion because there is a clear dichotomy between assessment and learning activities; the tests are separate from the project's learning objectives. Performance-based assessments have been preferred over standardised tests because (i) there is a clear relationship between assessment tasks and learning objectives; (ii) it allows one to evaluate integrated skills in a systematic manner; and (iii) because it can serve as a teaching tool when teachers involve learners in the evaluation process (i.e. formative assessment). Although performance-based assessments provide a closer link between assessment and teaching objectives, teaching and assessment are still considered two separate activities and thus only reveal a learner's current ability. Furthermore, there is an assumption that all students develop in the same manner when in reality, individual differences account for much of the variance in L2 development (Poehner, 2008).

The issues above are not limited to the assessment of L2 learning through drama. In other L2 learning contexts, dynamic assessment (DA) been utilised as an alternative means of assessing and promoting L2 language development as a dialectic activity (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). The next section explains the features of DA and why it is proposed as an alternative means of assessing L2 language gains through drama.

Dynamic Assessment

DA is a qualitative assessment method grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning (SCT). From an SCT perspective, L2 learning happens when learners interact with more proficient users of the target language in a social environment. Through constant mediated interaction, they are socialised into the learning environment and consequently its semiotic systems. This process of socialisation happens through the internalisation and externalisation of the target language (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

Figure 1 sets out the process of L2 learning within an SCT framework. Within an L2 social context are L2 socially constructed artifacts (signs and symbols), which exist in the expert and the learning environment. The L2, as a cultural artifact, is considered as the central tool of this process. It is not considered an object to be transmitted from expert to learner, but rather a tool that is appropriated and transformed in the process of mediation. Vygotsky (1978) defines inner speech as thoughts or pure meanings that are structured through words. *Private speech* is verbalised words addressed to oneself and used in the process of regulating one's thinking. External speech is also verbalised words but addressed to others and used to communicate with the world around him. In

L2 learning, learners initially use their first language (L1) inner speech and private speech as the tools to internalise the L2. Simultaneously, the expert uses his/her inner speech, private speech, and external speech to externalise meaning. This process of internalisation and externalisation occurs during socially mediated activity that allows the learner to use the L2 for other-regulation, self-regulation, and ultimately as a resource that allows one to have impact on the social context. This is a holistic process that involves: (i) the L2 social context which includes cultural, historical and institutional elements (i.e., sociocultural factors); (ii) the quality and quantity of interaction between a learner and L2 artifacts and/or L2 speakers; and (iii) the sociocultural characteristics of the expert and the learner (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). As L2 learners interact with experts and other artifacts, their zone of proximal development (henceforth ZPD) is activated.

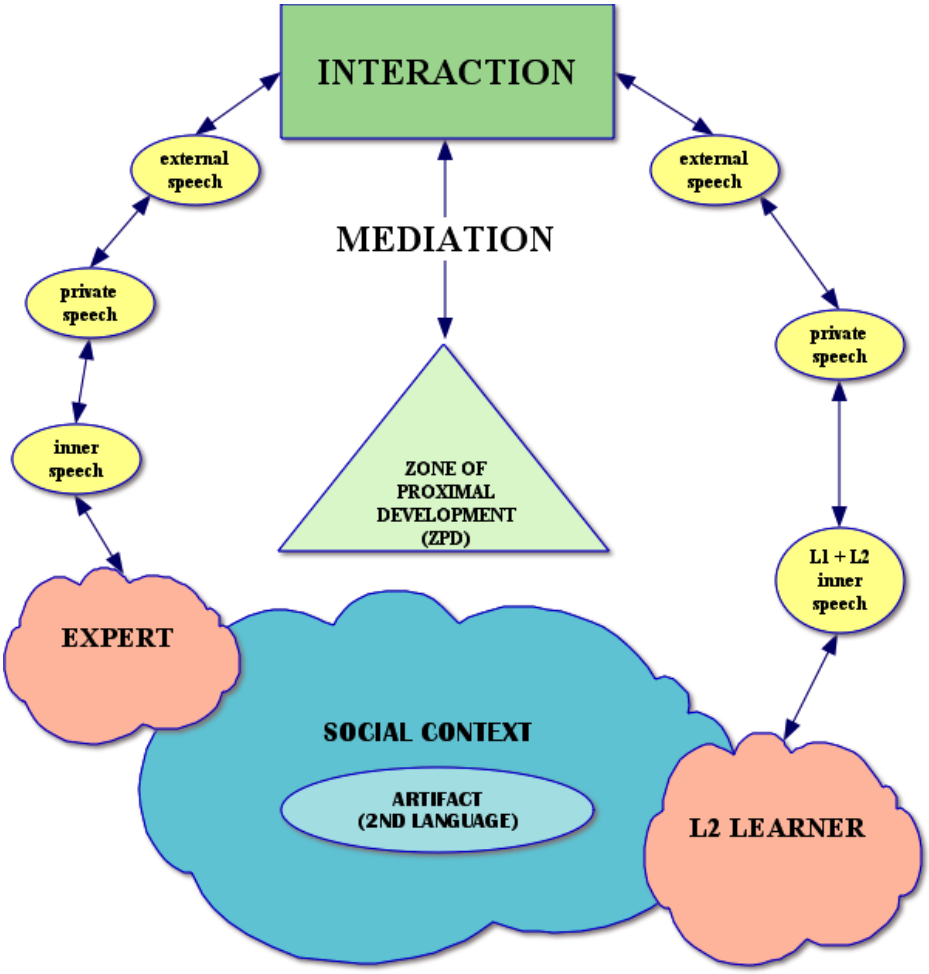

Figure 1. Second language learning from SCT perspective

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of

potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). With regard to L2 learning, a ZPD activity is the interaction between the learner and the expert where a learner's actual L2 proficiency level and potential L2 proficiency level becomes observable (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Within the distance or gap of learning potential is the mediation process that happens when the expert and novice interact through collaborative dialogue to achieve a task or solve a problem (Donato & McCormick, 1994). In the ZPD, a mediator could give feedback, use scaffolding, and use repetition as mediation strategies to assist a learner achieve a task (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Hartshorn et al., 2010; Ohta, 2001). On the other hand, a learner could use imitation, repetition and languaging as forms of mediation for L2 internalisation (Ohta, 2001; Swain, 2006). The mediation experience within the ZPD allows the learner to internalize and utilize language for his/her benefit (Wells, 1999).

DA is a systematic way of thinking about ZPD activity in terms of assessment and teaching as a dialectic activity (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011). It is a development-oriented assessment approach that aims to promote learner development by directing teaching and assessment to the development of students' potential ability. Cognitive development is a function of human interaction, and so development is always a mediated activity in the learner's ZPD. Development is thus dependent on how the teacher, as a mediator, and the learner, operate in the ZPD; as students attempt to complete tasks, teachers provide mediated assistance by engaging students in collaborative dialogue. DA is thus a ZPD activity that facilitates internalisation of the target language.

There are two types of DA, *interventionist* and *interactionist* (Poehner, 2008). Interventionist approaches rely on standardized protocols that focus on developmental progress of students (e.g., Swanson-Cognitive Processing test (Swanson, 1995)), while interactionist approaches focus on collaborative dialogic interaction to promote individual development. Assistance is more fluid and varies from case to case (e.g. Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience). In the field of L2 learning, interactionist approaches have been more utilised because they allow a mediator more flexibility in adjusting and responding to learners' needs. The following principles must be observed in interactionist DA activities: (i) the quality of the mediator-learner dialogue must have the intention of promoting development with the learner having the freedom to respond to mediator intervention; (ii) DA interactions should be coherent in that it is progressive not stand alone activities; and (iii) the objective of DA programs should be

the negotiation of meaning and the internalisation of conceptual knowledge (Lantolf, 2004; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005).

Several studies attempted to implement DA principles in L2 classrooms. This usually involved structuring classroom activities to accommodate DA. For example, Hill and Sabet (2009) investigated the feasibility of DA to assess the English speaking proficiency of Japanese university students. They structured four DA assessments over a one-year course. Each assessment had the following components (i) students were asked to do role-plays that increased in level of complexity; (ii) students received mediated assistance in the form of recasts, prompts, comprehension checks, and/or negotiation of meaning; (iii) learners were paired with different partners of different proficiency levels; and (iv) there was collaborative engagement between the learner and the mediator. The results of their study showed that role-plays that increased in level of difficulty were an effective means of assessing development of speaking. In addition, pairs observing other students perform contributed to the development of the group ZPD and learner reciprocity.

Lantolf and Poehner (2010) investigated a teacher's attempt to implement DA principles in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in an elementary classroom. The teacher studied principles of DA and designed a syllabus with assessment tasks that progressed in levels of difficulty. To measure L2 ability gain, she prepared a list of mediation prompts to use when she engaged learners in collaborative dialogue and used an interaction grid to record the number of prompts and the object of the mediation used to assist students in each assessment task. This data, together with a close investigation of teacher-learner interactions, elucidated the process in which the learners developed through DA interactions.

Poehner (2008) proposed to systematically investigate DA interactions in stages of performance. Based on Gal'perin's (2009) research, Poehner identified three stages of performance that learners experience in an attempt to complete a task. The *orientation stage* refers to the process when a learner prepares and attempts to understand the task. *Execution* is stage two and occurs when a learner attempts to accomplish the task with or without mediation. The final stage is the *control stage* where the learner's level of control of a particular feature previously negotiated is checked for stability. This is stage when the learner evaluates his/her own performance and makes necessary revisions or asks for further assistance. In Poehner's (2008) study of French L2 students, DA interactions in each stage of performance revealed different aspects of L2 development and gave insight into cognitive processes that signalled internalisation.

Using these stages of performance, Poehner (2008) proposed a framework for profiling learner development according to the quality of mediator input and learner response to the mediation. Development in one DA session is determined by the quantity of explicit or implicit feedback the mediator gives and the degree of eagerness a learner responds to the mediation. In other words, a person who requires less explicit feedback and responds positively to the mediation is considered more competent than a learner who requires more support or a learner who refuses to respond to the support provided. The verbalisations of learners during the interaction are also part of the framework. They are viewed as tools for self-mediation and also serve as evidence of performance during mediation. To determine development across DA sessions, DA interactions should also be structured in a 'coherent' manner because it will allow for learners to demonstrate transcendence. This characteristic refers to the ability of the learner to apply recently mediated conceptual knowledge to the performance of similar or more complex tasks.

The studies above demonstrate the impact of DA as a teaching and assessment framework on classroom L2 learning. I argue that adopting Dynamic Assessment (DA) as a framework to the teaching and assessment of L2 through theatre productions is an advancement because it allows for a stronger link between learning objectives and assessment. Furthermore, DA requires teachers to act as mediators and assist students to achieve a task during the assessment, which can give insight into learners' potential ability and also reveal processes of L2 development among individual students.

METHODOLOGY

This study is part of a larger study that traced the experience of Hong Kong Chinese tertiary students of varying levels of English proficiency and theatre experience, engaged in the process of preparing to perform Rob John's *Living with Lady Macbeth*. Using a case study approach (Stake, 1995, 2006), video recordings of rehearsals, director and student journals, and four in-depth interviews (pre-, during, and post-production) were collected throughout the production process and analysed for potential DA interactions. To identify DA interactions, activities in the learning environment were analysed for the following DA elements: task characteristics, stage of performance, quality of mediator input, degree of learner reciprocity, and the object of the mediation. These elements were recorded and tracked across interactions to provide a micro-genetic analysis[2] (Vygotsky & Wertsch, 1981) of learner development throughout the production process.

The case study involved 17 students and three staff members of different nationalities of a Hong Kong tertiary institution. There were a total of 17 students: eight were Hong Kong locals whose native language was Cantonese, six were from Mainland China and spoke Mandarin, and three were bilinguals from other countries (Malaysia, Canada, and India). Fourteen of these students were actors and three signed up to be part of the technical team. There were two directors–myself, an English instructor, and Matthew DeCoursey, a Canadian professor of English literature. This mix of nationalities brought about a combination of English and non-English speaking people but perhaps because the directors were English teachers, the official language of the production was English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The directors structured the project with the goal of teaching students how to create their own theatre productions in the future. Although they were aware of the principles of DA, they did not alter the rehearsal process to accommodate a DA program. Instead, they structured rehearsal activities following the standard practice of drama educators, but aimed to make interactions with students collaborative and focused on promoting learner development through mediation.

The project was five months long (Sept 2010–Feb 2011) and divided into three phases: teaching theatre basics, building a theatrical interpretation of the text, and rehearsal for the final show (see Figure 2). Before the three phases commenced, two weeks were spent advertising and recruiting volunteers.

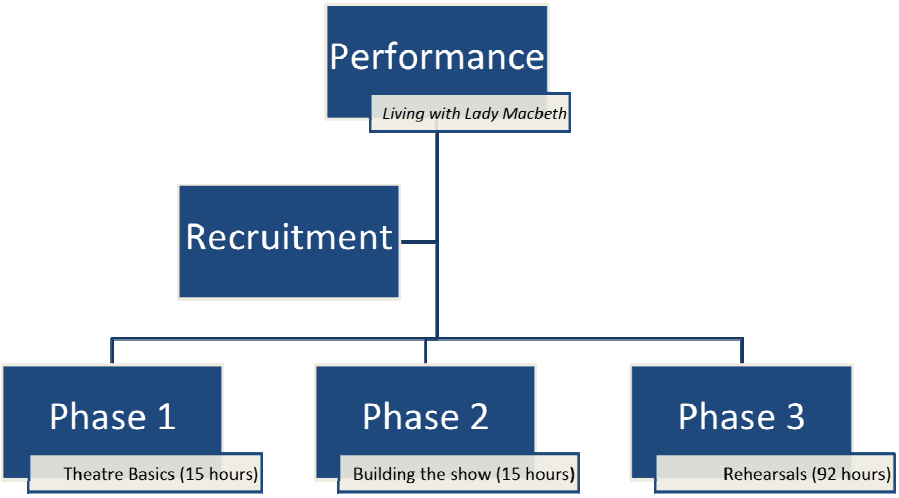

Figure 2. Components of production process

This paper focuses on DA interactions that learners experienced in the completion of one task during the first phase of the production. It focuses on drama activities that the directors organised to train students in the fundamentals of the Stanislavksi system. Both directors believed that because they were performing a psychological play, the acting must be realistic to be able to fully communicate the essence of the play. Realistic acting meant realistic characters on stage feeling real emotions. It is important to note that the directors only intended to introduce a simplified version of the System to the students (see Figure 3).

During this phase of the production, the directors asked students to perform two scripts of increasing levels of difficulty to demonstrate their acting ability. In each lesson, the directors introduced an acting skill in the form of a lesson and students performed a script to demonstrate competence of the skill just taught. Student performance was assessed on the skill just learnt together with the previous skill learnt. A student was considered a successful actor if the audience believes s/he is able to integrate all acting skills taught, and makes the script come alive on stage.

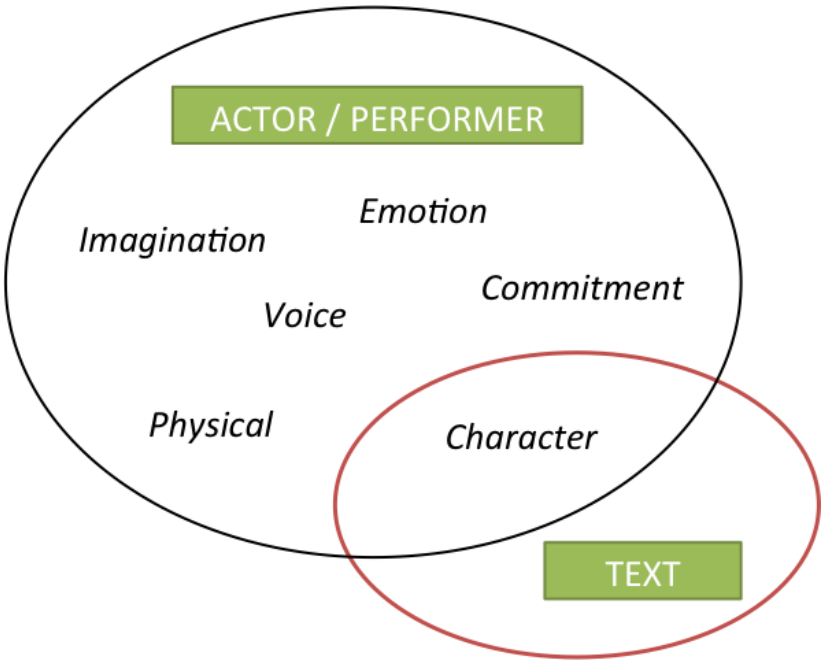

Figure 3. Elements of the Stanislavski system students learnt

Example of Group DA interaction

Analysis of interactions during this phase of the production revealed the process in which the directors, despite not intentionally including DA during rehearsals, had carried out DA in an attempt to teach students the Stanislavski system of acting. Below is an outline of DA interactions between directors and students in the performance of *Dog Accident*.

Dog Accident (Saunders & Rook, 1997) was the second script to be performed in the first phase of the production process. *Dog Accident* is a story about four friends in a city rushing to catch a movie but on their way, saw a dog that was run over by a car. They have a heated discussion on whether they should help the dog or just leave it and the conversation reveals much about how they think and feel towards each other and towards the helpless animal. The story reaches its climax when everyone has to make a decision about what they should do. The story concludes with two characters leaving the dog and two others staying to watch it die.

The students were asked to focus on the use of their voice to create a realistic character on stage by performing a radio play version of *Dog Accident*. The directors decided to use this text because its length allowed for them to teach the use of voice and character development on a full play instead of just a scene. They felt that based on their previous performances, a complete text would help students visualise changes in character

motivations. They also selected this script because it was a naturalistic play similar to the first script used but involved more characters making interactions on stage more challenging. The script also uses colloquial language and either males or females could play the characters.

The rehearsal for this radio play was divided into three parts–direct instruction, rehearsal time, and performance and happened over two rehearsal days. Prior to the performance of this script, the students demonstrated their ability to use imagination, emotional memory, physical movement and commitment to character to enhance their acting. The next two rehearsals were dedicated to the use of voice and so direct instruction focused on voice techniques such as breathing, articulation, projection, and use of voice for expression (control of intonation & stress) to create character.

After direct instruction, the cast was divided into four groups of four and given 30 minutes to study the script and rehearse. Analysis of data revealed that all groups engaged in the same process to prepare for performance. First, students sat together in groups and randomly assigned characters to each other. Then, they all first read the whole script out loud with attempts to put expression in their voice. After reading the script once, they paused for a while and individually noted places in the text where they had difficulties with vocabulary, and/or understanding the script. They then spent a couple of minutes asking each other how to solve these problems. After this short discussion, they read aloud again. This cycle was repeated for the duration of the rehearsal time.

The first rehearsal day ended with one group performance. The directors asked a group to perform so that they may evaluate the progress of the students and simultaneously attempt to demonstrate to the whole cast the level of performance they wanted. After the performance, the directors gave group and individual feedback while the rest of the cast listened. The rest of the groups were asked to perform in the next rehearsal.

These results demonstrate how group ZPD was developed because whole cast and peer collaborative activities allowed for directors to teach and assess students' acting skills. First, it showed how DA activities could exist in a production process without having to restructure rehearsal activities. Group ZPD was developed because the structure of rehearsals to teach the Stanislavski system allowed for students to demonstrate transcendence (Poehner, 2008). The lesson and script performance prior to the performance of *Dog Accident* served to indicate to the directors the group's current ability in acting. It seems that they found the students quite capable of performing short

texts and felt that they were able to handle more complex tasks and achieve a higher level of acting. Thus, they asked students to perform a more challenging text and asked them to work in larger groups (groups of four instead of pairs). Their expectation of student performance was also higher, challenging students to give more realistic performances.

In addition to directors' intentions, small group activities during rehearsals also served as DA activities. When students were preparing to perform the script, they worked collaboratively with their peers and assisted each other to perform to the best of their ability. Reading the script out loud, working out vocabulary, and peer feedback were some of the mediation strategies used to assist each other. It seems that within groups, students were determined to help each other be better actors because they knew the group would be assessed as a collective.

Example of Individual DA interaction

Individual DA interactions were also present in the data. This process is illustrated through the case of Jasmine (a pseudonym), a year one English major student. Jasmine is from Shanghai and came to Hong Kong to study to become an English teacher. Her first language is Mandarin and she first started learning English in kindergarten. Her interest in the theatre project started when she watched a previous production a year before. Although she had no experience in drama and had not attended drama classes before, she was motivated by the success of her classmates in the previous show.

Jasmine's primary goal was to learn English through the production. She knew that the environment would concentrate on English use and so she wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to practice her English and be involved in something new. She particularly wanted to improve her speaking skills and perhaps learn different accents. About drama itself, she wanted to learn how to act and portray a character and she believed this could be her biggest challenge.

Jasmine's group was the second group to perform in the second rehearsal day. After having watched two groups already and listening to the directors' comments, she had a better idea of what was required of her in this task.

> *I really enjoyed the part that we prepare for our script. At the beginning, none of us know the character of different roles. So we just guess it. After we analysed it, we know the characters respectively. Actually, as long as I know the character, my attitude and intonation changed suddenly. And after I have watched the demonstration for the first group, I understood the "Matt" much deeper. Besides, during demonstration of reading*

sentences, I heard lots of styles of the same sentences. Actually, it's fantastic and it is a kind of enjoyment.

Jasmine's journal entry reveals how much watching other people perform has helped her in her own performance. She had a clearer idea of what her character could be like and she heard different ways a line could be interpreted and read. She found this experience of watching others perform enjoyable and educational.

Her intentions to improve were reflected in her group's performance. After their performance, the directors commented on how, compared to other groups, Jasmine's group gave a better performance because they had more consistency in characterisation; individual characters remained distinct throughout the performance. The pace of the whole scene was also much better. However, an area of improvement would be voice projection, and their ability to sustain the reality of the scene such as realistically miming actions like pointing at the dog when someone says to 'look at the dog'.

Apart from group feedback, they also addressed students individually. The directors thought that Jasmine still did not know how to create a character in her mind because she delivered her lines just as she did in the previous performance. While she was committed to staying focused throughout the task, she was not able to execute a believable character through her voice.

1	*DIR 1*	*I didn't get strong sense of character. I get the feeling it's you. You're modulating intelligently but you're still speaking as yourself.*
2	*J*	*I think Matt is very smart and brilliant character but only cares about himself.*
3	*DIR 1*	*Ok. That's A good observation but I didn't hear it. Let's hear it again.*
4	*J*	*[Reads text "That car should've stopped!"]*
5	*DIR 1*	*Bigger...*
6	*J*	*[Tries again]*
7	*DIR 2*	*You're slurring the words.. I didn't mean faster. Put more effort in the emotion. If you'd say that he's smart. You would think he's maybe.. a snob?*
8	*(audnc)*	*Stuck up?*
9	*DIR 1*	*Yeah! Supposing he's somebody who always accuses people of doing terrible things. And so, that car should have stopped. I want to hear the resentment that there are terrible people in this world who would do such a thing... do it again.*

10	*J*	*[Tries again with a bit more emphasis]*
11	*DIR 1*	*That's not big. Okay we'll work on this.*
12	*DIR 2*	*[to DIR 1] She's not using stress. That's why. That's what's happening.*
13	*DIR 2*	*[to Jasmine] Try stressing the word 'that'. Imagine you saw the car pass by.*
14	*J*	*[Tries again with limited success]*
15	*DIR 1*	*It helps...*
16	*DIR 2*	*[to DIR 1] It's partly the power...*
17	*DIR 1*	*[to DIR 2] Yeah, partly power...*
18	*DIR 1*	*(to Jasmine): Ok. Remember the line? Look at me. I have... I've done something you really resent. Your good friend Sherry here? You love her. I just smacked her in the face. [audience laughs in the background]. I want you to express your hatred to me.*
19	*J*	*[Tries again]*
20	*DIR 1 & DIR 2*	*Better!!! [everyone claps]*

The dialogue between the directors and Jasmine reveals that Jasmine's problem was not in visualising a character in her mind but using her voice to communicate this vision to an audience. The directors tried to assist her understand this connection by offering assistance. They first checked if she had an acceptable concept of her character (line 1). She gave an adequate answer and so the director turned her attention to the use of her voice to express this vision she had in her mind (lines 3–4). It worked somewhat but the directors thought it was not enough and so asked her to do it again (lines 5–6). Then they asked her to focus on the emotion of the words. They tried to help her by helping her have a more vivid imagine the personality of her character (lines 7–10). She tried again and still failed. Then they asked her to stress a particular word (lines 11–15). She was partly successful and the directors speculated that part of the problem was her projection (lines 16–17). Matthew [DIR 1] though thought of another approach. He asked to imagine a situation that was more vivid, more immediate than the one asked to perform (line 18). She tried again and this time, Jasmine was successful (lines 19–20). It seemed that what helped Jasmine succeed was to imagine a situation that required her to produce a similar response to what is required in the dramatic situation.

Now that the whole group had a demonstration of what the directors expected, they asked the whole group to repeat the first scene of the text. Jasmine was successful at the beginning; her voice had more expression than the previous performance. Unfortunately, she was only able to sustain this after reading a couple of lines. Perhaps given time to mentally prepare, she could have done a better job.

> *I learnt a lot in today's rehearsal. At the beginning, when I played "Matt", I confused about the relationship between Matt and John, I think Matt thinks he is the most talented and brilliant person among four. But they're still friends. But Matthew [DIR 1] and Michelle [DIR 2] wanted me to change my intonation.*

Jasmine's journal entry at the end of that rehearsal confirms the challenge that Jasmine had when trying to perform that text. She knew she had a suitable concept of her character but she lacked the skill to control her voice to express the emotion required. Working with the directors though, helped her understand what she needed to do. Through the prompts of the directors, she was able to say that one line 'That car should've stopped!' with the emotional expression that the audience can feel. Specifically, it was the prompt of asking her to imagine a situation that she was more familiar with that helped her succeed.

Jasmine demonstrated development in this task in two ways: first, in her demonstration of control of previously mediated skills, and second in her ability to use her voice to create character with the help of the directors. The training session prior to the performance of *Dog Accident*, provided Jasmine with a clear vision of what the directors meant by acting. She was able to understand that acting was more than just reading the script out loud but an activity that involved imagination, emotion, and physical expression. Although Jasmine had initially fallen back on the same routine she used to prepare for performance (i.e., reading the text aloud several times), there was more effort to conceptualise character. When she watched another group perform, she mentally critiqued their performance and listened to the comments of the directors, and subsequently thought about ways to enhance her own performance. She demonstrated development because she actively and independently thought of ways to enhance her own performance

After her performance, the discussion with the directors revealed an area of potential development for Jasmine. Through a series of questions and prompts, they discovered that it was lack of ability to use her voice for expression that was lacking and not character concept. Through collaborative dialogue between the directors, peers, and prompting to use emotional memory, Jasmine was able to successfully express her character through her voice. To perform a more complex task, Jasmine needed a mediator to prompt her to use emotional memory and apply it to the text she was supposed to perform. In addition, finding her voice also became her method of finding her character. The dialogue revealed that Jasmine had already sufficient control in her

ability to conceptualise character but the developing skill was her ability to use her voice. If the directors took Jasmine's performance at face value, they would have just assumed that she just lacked ability to conceptualise character.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated how unlike continuous or summative assessment, DA integrated L2 instruction and assessment in rehearsals for theatrical performance. Guided by DA principles, the directors were able to teach students how to perform while they are assessing students' capabilities. Analyses of rehearsal interactions showed that a combination of group and individual mediations provided by directors and peers allowed for the internalisation of dramatic and L2 skills as a unified construct. DA was particularly successful in this case study because of several elements in the learning environment. First, there was the presence of directors that were committed to providing opportunities for learner development. The acting lessons mediated learners' understanding and competence of L2 and acting skills and rehearsals engaged students in collaborative dialogue as they prepared to perform. Performances on the other hand, served as opportunities for learners to demonstrate current level of ability and a chance to develop individual and group acting skills. Because of the DA approach taken by the directors, the activity of studying a script and performing it gave students opportunities to internalise and utilise the target language; as students read, understood, interpreted, and memorised the script, they were using the target language as both the object and the means to achieve their goal.

This paper was focused on exploring the use of DA to determine L2 gains in a theatrical production. The forms of mediation used to assist learner development serve as a basis for the creation of a DA framework for the assessment of L2 gains in a theatrical production. Areas of future research include the feasibility of a full DA programme whereby students could demonstrate their ability in more than one task. An inventory of mediation strategies that move from implicit to explicit feedback could also be explored for the possibility of tracing L2 development through a DA programme.

REFERENCES

Ableeva, R., & Lantolf, J. P. (2011). Mediated dialogue and the microgenesis of second language listening comprehension. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 18*(2), 133-149.

Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J. P. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the Zone of Proximal Development. *The Modern Language Journal, 78*(4), 465-483.

Bachman, L. F., & Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Interfaces between second language acquisition and language testing research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Banning, Y. (2003). Learning to Act in L 2 English: An ethnographic comparison of the experience of two students in a South African university drama department. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance, 8*(2), 183-201.

Bernal, P. (2007). Acting out: Using drama with English learners. *English Journal (High school edition), 96*(3), 26-28.

Carkin, G. (2008). *Drama, Language and Thought: Stanislavski, Vygotsky and You*. Paper presented at the The Third International Conference for ESL and Drama, Tainan, Taiwan, 17 May 2008. Retrieved from http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EVO_Drama_2008/files/

Dodson, S. L. (2002). The educational potential of drama for ESL. In G. Bräuer (Ed.), *Body and Language: Intercultural Learning through Drama* (pp. 161-206). Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing.

Donato, R., & McCormick, D. (1994). A sociocultural perspective on language learning strategies: the role of mediation. *The Modern Language Journal, 78*(4), 453-464.

Fernández García, M. I., & Biscu, M. G. (2008). Intercultural settings for language mediation: Evaluation of a research project on language mediator training through theatre. *International Journal of Learning, 15*(1), 51-63.

Hartshorn, K. J., Evans, N. W., Merrill, P. F., Sudweeks, R. R., Strong-Krause, D., & Anderson, N. J. (2010). Effects of Dynamic Corrective Feedback on ESL Writing Accuracy. *TESOL Quarterly: A Journal for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and of Standard English as a Second Dialect, 44*(1), 84-109.

Hayati, M. (2006). Take 2. Act 1: Feeding two birds with one scone! The role of role-playing in teaching English. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 5*(2), 209-219.

Heathcote, D., & Bolton, G. M. (1995). *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's 'Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education'*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Hill, K., & Sabet, M. (2009). Dynamic speaking assessments. *TESOL Quarterly, 43*(3), 537-545.

Kao, S.-M., & O'Neill, C. (1998). *Words into Worlds: Learning a Second Language through Process Drama*. Stamford, Connecticut: Ablex.

Kempe, A. (2003). The role of drama in the teaching of speaking and listening as the basis for social capital *Research in Drama Education, 8*(1), 65-67.

Kempston, T. (2012). Using drama to enrich School Based Assessment in the Hong Kong secondary school English language classroom. In J. Winston (Ed.), *Second Language Learning through Drama: Practical Techniques and Applications* (pp. 92-103). Abingdon, England: Routledge.

Lantolf, J. P. (2004). Dynamic assessment of L2 development: bring the past into the future. *Journal of Applied Linguistics, 1*(1), 49-72.

Lantolf, J. P. (Ed.). (2000). *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. Oxford, England; New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from http://library.ied.edu.hk/record=b1283966~S5.

Lantolf, J. P., & Poehner, M. E. (2010). Dynamic assessment in the classroom: Vygotskian praxis for second language development. *Language Teaching Research, 15*(1), 11-33.

Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural Theory and The Genesis of Second Language Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mattevi, Y. (2005). *Using Drama in the Classroom: the Educational Values of Theatre in Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Stony Book University.

Moody, D. J. (2002). Undergoing a process and achieving a product: A contradiction in educational drama? In G. Bräuer (Ed.), *Body and Language: Intercultural Learning through Drama* (pp. 135-160). Westport: Ablex Publishing.

O'Gara, P. (2008). To be or have not been: Learning language tenses through drama. *Issues in Educational Research, 18*(2), 156-166.

Ohta, A. S. (2001). *Second language acquisition processes in the classroom: Learning Japanese*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Podlozny, A. (2000). Strengthening Verbal Skills through the Use of Classroom Drama: A Clear Link *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 34*(3/4), 239-275.

Poehner, M. E. (2008). *Dynamic Assessment- A Vygotskian Approach to Understanding and Promoting L2 Development*. PA: Springer.

Poehner, M. E. (2009). Dynamic assessment as a dialectical framework for classroom activity: Evidence from second language (L2) learners. *Journal of Cognitive Education & Psychology, 8*(3), 252-268.

Poehner, M. E., & Lantolf, J. P. (2005). Dynamic assessment in the language classroom. *Language Teaching Research, 9*(3), 233-265.

Poehner, M. E., & Lantolf, J. P. (2010). Vygotsky's Teaching-Assessment Dialectic and L2 Education: The Case for Dynamic Assessment. *Mind, Culture & Activity, 17*(4), 312-330.

Raquel, M. R. (2011). Theatre production as a language learning environment for Chinese students. *Journal of Drama and Theatre Education–Asia, 2*(1), 93-120.

Ryan-Scheutz, C., & Colangelo, L. M. (2004). Full-scale theater production and foreign language learning. *Foreign Language Annals, 37(3)*, 374-389.

Saunders, J., & Rook, R. (1997). *Playforms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shohamy, E. (1995). Performance Assessment in Language Testing. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 15*, 188-211.

Smith, S. M. (1984). *The Theater Arts and The Teaching of Second Language*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Swain, M. (2006). Languaging, agency and collaboration in advanced second language proficiency. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Advanced Language Learning* (pp. 95-108). London: Continuum.

Swanson, H. L. (1995). Using the Cognitive Processing Test to assess ability: Development of a dynamic assessment measure. *School Psychology Review, 24(4)*, 672-693.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S., & Wertsch, J. V. (1981). The genesis of higher mental functions. In *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology* (pp. 144-188). Armonk, NY: Sharpe.

Wells, G. (1999). The complementary contributions of Halliday and Vygotsky to a "Language-based theory of learning" In G. Wells (Ed.), *Dialogic Inquiry: Toward a Sociocultural Practice and Theory of Education* (pp. 3-50). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wessels, C. (1987). *Drama*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Winston, J. (2012). *Second language learning through drama: Practical techniques and applications*. Abingdon, England: Routledge.

Yoshida, M. (2007). Playbuilding in a Japanese college EFL classroom: its advantages and disadvantages. *Caribbean Quarterly, 53*(1/2), 231-256.

Notes

[1] In other contexts, drama and theatre are used interchangeably. In this article, theatre refers to the performance of scripted text in a full-scale theatre production.

[2] Micro-genetic analysis is a methodological approach that studies learner development of specific processes 'in the process of change' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 65).