Lexical Inferencing in Second Language Listening Comprehension

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Abstract: This paper investigates the knowledge sources that L2 learners use to infer word meaning in listening comprehension, and how language proficiency affects their use of the knowledge sources. Data were collected from six subjects using the verbal reporting method. The results reveal that the most frequently used knowledge source was the local co-text. The subjects were also found to use co-text combined with world knowledge to infer word meaning. Morphology was also used to some extent. The importance of the interaction of the knowledge sources at different levels immersed.

Language proficiency is an important factor determining the use of the knowledge sources. The low proficiency subjects resorted to general world knowledge more frequently as a result of their weak linguistic processing abilities. In contrast, the high proficiency subjects were more able to use their linguistic knowledge (morphological knowledge) and combine relevant knowledge sources to infer word meaning.

The current study also informs the use of the verbal reporting method: verbal report offers researchers a database on the basis of which to reconstruct the thought processes, but not the exact reproduction of the processes, which requires an informed analysis of the data.

Key words: inferencing; knowledge sources; listening; word; co-text

1. Introduction

Inferencing is an important strategy that L2 learners use to handle unfamiliar words. However, most research on lexical inferencing has been conducted in reading comprehension (Bensoussan and Laufer, 1984; Haastrup, 1991; Haynes, 1993; Huckin & Bloch, 1993; Morrison, 1996; Fraser, 1999; Paribakht & Wesche, 1999; Vaurio, 1999; Nassaji, 2003; 2004; Bengeleil and Paribakht, 2004). Not much is known about how L2 learners infer word meaning in listening comprehension. As Ellis (1995) pointed out, how learners acquire vocabulary from oral input is a neglected area. The negligence on this issue has not changed in spite of the fact that “oral contexts are clearly vital for L1 learners and may also play an important role in L2 lexical development…” (Wesche and Paribakht, 1999:177). This study investigates lexical inferencing in listening comprehension.

2. Lexical inferencing

2.1. Previous studies on lexical inferencing in reading comprehension
Results of previous studies converge to indicate that learners used a wide range of knowledge sources to infer word meaning (e.g., Haastrup, 1991; Morrison, 1996; Paribakht and Wesche, 1999). However, there is conflicting evidence as to how they use the different types of knowledge sources. For instance, Haastrup (1991) and Morrison (1996) found that learners relied heavily on co-text to infer word meaning. However, Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) reported that the use of the context (by which they mean co-text in Haastrup’s (1991) terminology) was minimal. They showed that learners would first infer word meaning based on word form (i.e., the morphological constituents of the word, cognates, etc.) and often stuck to guesses based on the word form, ignoring clues in co-text. Along the same lines, Huckin and Bloch (1993) showed that when inferring word meaning, learners first studied word form to generate a hypothesis of word meaning. Haynes (1993) observed that when a hypothesis was formulated based on word form, it tended to override learners’ ability to use co-text.

In another study, Paribakht and Wesche (1999) found that learners used various knowledge sources, either linguistic or extra-linguistic, to infer word meaning. The major type of knowledge source that learners used was sentence-level grammatical knowledge (knowledge of relationships among sentence components, such as word-class information). They also observed that learners often used several knowledge sources together. However, in a more recent study, Nassaji (2003:656) found that learners did not use grammatical knowledge (“knowledge of grammatical functions or syntactic categories, such as verbs, adjectives, or adverbs”) to a large extent. He found that the most frequently used knowledge source was world knowledge; the next most frequently used knowledge source was morphological knowledge. The use of these two knowledge sources was associated with more successful inferences than other knowledge sources.

Previous studies revealed that when using contextual clues, learners tended to use local co-text clues, instead of global co-text clues, to infer word meaning (Huckin andBloch, 1993; Haynes, 1993; Bengeleil and Paribakht, 2004). For instance, Bengeleil and Paribakht (2004) found that learners would first study the sentence containing the target word and resorted to the co-text beyond the target word sentence only when necessary.

The role that language proficiency plays in learners’ choice of knowledge sources to infer word meaning is not clear. For instance, Haastrup (1991) and Morrison (1996) found that proficient learners used linguistic knowledge, such as morphological knowledge, more frequently than less proficient learners. Bengeleil and Paribakht (2004) reported, however, L2 reading proficiency did not significantly affect the types and proportions of knowledge sources they used.

These above contradictory findings may be the result of differences in the elicitation tasks, subjects’ language background, etc. For instance, the elicitation tasks used in the studies differ greatly in the richness of clues in the co-text. In Haynes’ (1993) study, all the target words have clues in the co-text. In contrast, Bensoussan and Laufer (1984), Huckin and Bloch (1993) include in their study a proportion of target words without clues from the co-text. In addition, the language backgrounds of the subjects in these studies vary greatly. In Nassaji’s (2003) study, the subjects were from different backgrounds (Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Portuguese and Spanish), whereas in Nengeleil and Paribakht’s (2004) study, all the subjects were native speakers of Arabic. These differences may contribute to the
differences in the findings of previous studies.

2.2 Previous studies on lexical inferencing in listening comprehension

Empirical studies specifically investigating unfamiliar word processing in listening comprehension are rare. However, there is an increasing body of studies examining the overall strategies used by L2 learners in listening comprehension (O’Malley et al, 1989; Goh, 1997; 1998, 2002; Vandergrift, 1996; 1997; 2003). Although these studies do not look at the lexical inferencing strategy in particular, they shed some light on this issue. For instance, Vandergrift’s (2003:495) observed that learners could use known words, tone of voice and/or paralinguistics, background sounds and relationships between speakers, and information beyond the sentence containing the target word to infer the word meaning. Although Vandergrift’s (2003) study does not offer a full-blown discussion of the use of the lexical inferencing strategy, his study points to some important findings: L2 learners are able to infer word meaning in listening comprehension; they use different types of knowledge sources to infer word meaning.

Summing up, most studies on lexical inferencing were done in the reading modality. The generalizability of their findings to the listening modality is unclear. Existing studies of listening comprehension strategies in general does not inform us adequately on the issue of lexical inferencing in listening comprehension. The current study was therefore conducted to examine the types of knowledge sources that learners use in listening comprehension and the role that language proficiency plays in the use of the knowledge sources.

3. The study

3.1 The research questions

1. What knowledge sources do L2 learners use to infer word meaning in listening comprehension?

2. Is there a difference in the use of the knowledge sources to infer word meaning between high proficiency learners and low proficiency learners?

3.2 Subjects

The subjects were six 2nd-year English majors at a university in Beijing, China. The six subjects were chosen from a pool of 80 students to represent two proficiency levels: high proficiency (HP) level and low proficiency (LP) level. The three HP subjects were those with a mean score of 90 or above on 19 listening tests and were placed into the HP group by the instructor. The three LP subjects had a mean score of 70 or below on the 19 tests and were ranked as LP subjects by the instructor.

3.3 Listening materials

In this experiment, subjects were asked to listen to four short conversations (each containing 25 words approximately), four short passages (each containing 30 words approximately) and two long conversations (each containing 150 words approximately). Each short conversation, short passage, and long conversation contains one word, two words and four words whose meaning is to be inferred respectively. (See Appendix A for a sample of each type.) Therefore the elicitation task contains 20 target words.
The materials were mostly selected from standard tests such as the TOEFL and listening textbooks. Slight modifications were made. To confirm the quality of the language after revision, an American linguist was asked to edit the language of the revised texts when necessary. Two native speakers of American English provided the recording for the test.

3.4. Procedure

Data were collected using verbal reporting methods in the form of the immediate retrospection procedure (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Wu, 1998). The experiment took the form of individual interviews. It is crucial that the subjects had no previous knowledge of the words. To test the subjects’ knowledge of the target words, an adapted version of the Wesche and Paribakht’s (1996) Vocabulary Knowledge Scale was used. (See Appendix B for the scale.) The subjects first listened to the target words spoken in isolation and responded to the scale.

After taking this test, the subjects listened to the conversations and passages one by one. After they listened to each conversation or passage, the subjects heard the target word(s) spoken individually. They were asked to report the meaning(s) of the word(s) and how they had arrived at the meaning(s) of the word(s). Subjects were at liberty to use either English or Chinese in the interview. The interviewer prompted the subjects when they had difficulty in reporting. Care was taken to make sure that the probing would result in the subjects’ reporting what had been going on in their mind.

3.5. Analysis of the tape transcripts

The tape recordings were transcribed and coded for knowledge sources in inferring word meaning. Based on Haastrup (1991), a new taxonomy of knowledge sources was developed, as is shown in Table 1. The chief improvement of this taxonomy is that the constituent knowledge sources are delineated more tidily such that the overlapping knowledge sources of the various categories are minimized. This taxonomy also incorporates some knowledge sources specifically adapted to the data collected in this study, i.e., the knowledge sources used in the listening modality such as phonetic and paralinguistic knowledge. Table 1 presents the taxonomy of the knowledge sources used in the final analysis of the study, with representative examples from the protocols.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Sources</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Co-text**                  | I: What does the word “gregarious” mean?  
S: Living together. It mentioned “elephants are gregarious”. Then they have to live in groups, that is fifty to one hundred. |
| **World knowledge**          | I: What does the word “proclaim” mean?  
S: To pronounce oneself as emperor. Napoleon first established an empire. The empire is a restored one. The former empire had been overthrown. Napoleon restored. I guessed from my background knowledge. |
| **Phonetics** (test word)    | I: What does the word “terminate” mean?  
S: I think it means “consider” or “solve”. I feel it should be similar |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I: What does the word “superfluous” mean?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morphology</strong></td>
<td>S: Advantage compared with other people. It sounds similar to “super”. “Super” means better than others, or something similar. “Superfluous” maybe is something better than others. So I guess the meaning as “the condition better than other people have”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word class</strong></td>
<td>I: What does the word “insipid” mean?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **test word**        | S: It is before “strange”, it must describe what she cooked. Then I thought of “strange” and words before it. It is an adjective, describes its taste. It means not suitable to people’s taste.  
*Note: This subject used both knowledge of the word class and co-text to infer the meaning of “insipid”.* |
| **Paralinguistics**  | I: What does the word “infuriate” mean?  |
|                      | S: Angry. Mainly according to the speaker’s tone. I feel when she said the word, the speaker was angry. |
The tape transcripts were analyzed by employing this taxonomy. To determine the intercoder reliability, an MA student in linguistics coded the data independently. We obtained an intercoder agreement of 97%. The inconsistencies were resolved by consulting another MA student in linguistics to reach 100% agreement among the three coders.

3.6. Results and discussion

The subjects’ responses to the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale indicate that among the total of 120 (20 words X 6 subjects) instances, in 112 instances the subjects chose option 1: “I don't remember having heard this word before”. In 8 instances, the subjects chose option 2: “I have heard this word before, but I don't know what it means”. This result indicated that all the words were unfamiliar to the subjects, therefore entered into the data analysis.

3.6.1. What knowledge sources do L2 learners use to infer word meaning in listening comprehension?

As the study involves a very small sample size, it does not lend itself to a statistic test. Therefore only descriptive statistics were performed. Caution should be exercised in generalizing the findings beyond our population. Table 2 presents the frequency of the use of the knowledge sources by the subjects. The percentage basis in the table is the total number of inferencing instances, i.e., 120 (20 items X 6 subjects). As the subjects often used the knowledge sources in combination, the total of the percentages exceeded 100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge source</th>
<th>Token</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-text</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World knowledge</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonetics (test word)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphology (test word)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word class (test word)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>163.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that co-text (79.2%) was the most extensively used knowledge source. The next most frequently used knowledge source was world knowledge (47.5%). Morphology (17.5%) and word class (10.0%) related to the test word were also used to some extent. The rest of the knowledge sources were not or minimally used.

The above results indicate that the subjects relied heavily on co-text and world knowledge, instead of the morphological knowledge related to the target word, to infer word meaning. This result is consistent with that of Haasturp (1991), but not with that of Benssousan and Laufer (1984). The less frequent use of morphological knowledge observed in the current study perhaps relates to the fact that it is difficult to segment morphological constituents in connected speech.

An examination of the protocols revealed that the subjects relied heavily on the local co-text, i.e., the sentence in which the target word appears, to infer word meaning, a finding consonant with Huckin and Block (1993), and Bengeleil and Paribakht (2004). A possible reason for this finding is that local co-text clues are usually close to target words, which are convenient to use. The following example illustrates the use of this knowledge source. In
In this example, the subject reported the use of her semantic knowledge of the oppositional relationship of the words 'young' and 'old' to infer the meaning of 'novice': She recognized the parallel relationship between the propositions expressed in 'young and old' and 'novice and expert', and the antonymic relationship between the words 'novice' and 'expert'. She deduced the meaning of 'novice' accordingly. The protocol records that the listener used not only her knowledge of individual words but also the semantic relations of the words to make sense of the target word. The use of this knowledge presupposes linguistic knowledge at other levels, including phonological knowledge (such as knowledge of English syllables), syntactic knowledge (such as word class and word order), etc., which is not reported in her protocol though. This example supports the claim that "meaning is a product of all linguistic levels" (Saeed, 2003:9). As observed by Wu (1998:24), the verbal report provides evidence about thought processes, rather than a complete record of the processes. Therefore the verbal report offers researchers a database to reconstruct the thought processes, but not the exact reproduction of the processes.

In a number of instances, the subjects used co-text, particularly local co-text, combined with world knowledge to infer word meaning. This finding is consistent with that of Paribakht and Wesche (1999) who observed that learners often used different knowledge sources together. In example (2), the subject was using this combined knowledge sources to infer the word meaning. In this example, the target word is "infuriated" and appears in the sentence "Later, when Napoleon proclaimed himself emperor, Beethoven was so infuriated that he tore out his work".

(2) I: What does the word "infuriated" mean?
S: Angry.
I: How did you get the word meaning?
S: If he were not angry, he won't tear his music work. I also heard of the story: when Napoleon became the emperor Beethoven was very angry.

In this example, the subject correctly decoded individual words in the target word sentence (such as "tear", "work"). He identified the semantic relationships among the words as well. The correct decoding of the words and word relationships, which should be based on her phonological and syntactic knowledge, helps her activate appropriate background knowledge (the fact that Napoleon proclaimed himself emperor irritated Beethoven) to infer the meaning of "infuriated". This example suggests that meaning is arrived at through the interaction of the various levels of knowledge sources.

The subjects also used their morphological knowledge to some extent, as is shown in the following example. In this example, the subject tried to infer the meaning of "proclaim";
the word appears in the sentence “Later, when Napoleon proclaimed himself emperor, Beethoven was so infuriated that he tore out his work”.

(3) I: What does the word “proclaim” mean?
S: “Proclaim” should mean “declare”. “Claim” means “say”. “Proclaim” must have some relationship with “claim”.

In this example, the subject used the morphological constituent “claim” to determine the meaning of “proclaim”.

To summarize, the subjects relied heavily on the local co-text to infer word meaning. They were also able to use co-text combined with world knowledge to infer word meaning. Morphology was also used to some extent. The importance of the interaction of the knowledge sources at different levels emerged.

3.6.2. Research question 2: Is there a difference in the use of the knowledge sources between high proficiency learners and low proficiency learners?

Table 3 compares the use of the knowledge sources by the HP and LP subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge sources</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Token</td>
<td></td>
<td>Token</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-text</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>87.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World knowledge</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonetics (test word)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphology (test word)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word class (test word)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>155.1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>172.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that both proficiency groups relied heavily on co-text to infer word meaning (71.7% versus 87.7%). Obvious difference was found in the use of world knowledge between the two groups: LP subjects (65.0%) used world knowledge more frequently than HP subjects (30.0%). Another obvious difference resided in the use of morphological knowledge of the test word. HP subjects (30.0%) used it more heavily than LP subjects (5.0%). Little difference was found in the use of the rest of the knowledge sources between the two proficiency groups.

As is shown in Table 3, all the subjects, regardless of their proficiency levels, used background knowledge to infer word meaning. However, LP subjects used it more frequently than HP subjects. The protocol data reveal that LP subjects’ frequent use of background knowledge often resulted from their inefficient linguistic processing, typically their weak word decoding ability. Unsuccessful word decoding determined that they were unable to establish a coherent mental representation of the information processed thus far. Therefore they had to use their background knowledge to make their understanding of the text coherent and to accumulate sufficient information to make sense of the target word. Protocol example (4) illustrates this point. In this example, the target word is “invigorating” and appears in the sentence “Yeah. My roommate is a lot of fun. Yesterday we went and had an invigorating swim in the lake at 5 a.m.”. In the case where Chinese is used in the protocol, the English translation is given, as noted in a parenthesis.
(4) I: What does the word “invigorating” mean?
S: It means morning exercise. He seemed to say 5 a.m. (in the morning). It perhaps means morning exercise or morning study. It is like that we learn shadowboxing. The word perhaps means morning exercise. (English translation)

The subject apparently did not decode the words well enough to allow her to achieve a basic understanding of the text and to infer the word meaning. He used the words in the target word sentence “5 a.m.” and her background knowledge “people exercise in the morning” to infer the meaning of “invigorating”. The reason why she related the target word “invigorating” to “5 a.m.” was perhaps because “5 a.m.” were prosodically salient, which easily caught her attention. “5 a.m.” then must have triggered her background knowledge of what people do in this early hour, which led to her further guessing. Since she had the wrong clue words to start with, the related background knowledge activated was inappropriate, and the inferencing was therefore incorrect. This example shows that the LP subjects were often weak in linguistic processing and hence failed to process meaning. In such a case, they tended to resort to salient words and related world knowledge to infer word meaning. However, when their linguistic processing was unsuccessful, the activated background knowledge was unlikely appropriate.

The above example indicates that linguistic processing plays a crucial role in lexical inferencing in listening. This is because successful linguistic processing is necessary for the activation of the correct background knowledge to infer word meaning. The current study disconfirms Nassaji’s (2003) observation that the use of world knowledge was related to more successful inferences than the use of other knowledge sources. Whether the use of world knowledge relates to successful inferences seems to depend on whether there are sufficient constraints of linguistic processing.

Another proficiency related difference is found in the use of morphological knowledge related to the target words. The protocol data reveal that the HP subjects are more able to use morphological knowledge to infer word meaning than the LP subjects, a result consistent with Haastrup (1991) and Morrison (1996). In addition, the HP subjects were more able to use their morphological knowledge and co-text or background knowledge jointly to infer word meaning than the LP subjects. This difference can be seen from the following protocol examples. As in example (5), the target word is “comprehensive”. The protocol segment of an HP subject is as follows.

(5) I: What does the word “comprehensive” mean?
S: “Comprehensive”, I have learned a word “comprehension” and “comprehending”. I think the word must mean “of comprehension”. I then found some words to explain this word in this dialogue, “that means” so and so. At least it is an adjective, not a noun, not an adverb. “Which means responsible for all the subject matter we covered this term”, “comprehensive” maybe it means “including all”. (Note: The italicized words “of comprehension” and “including all” are translations.)

Using her morphological knowledge, the subject guessed that “comprehensive” is related to “comprehension” or the adjective form of “comprehension”. However, she quickly found that such a guess did not fit in the co-text and abandoned it. She then inferred the word meaning based on information in the clause immediately following “comprehensive”. 

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This example is taken to imply that co-textual information can not only help us construct appropriate meaning, but can also override morphological information in determining the word meaning targeted.

An instance illustrating an LP subject’s inability to use co-textual clues to check her inference based on morphological clues is found in (6) below.

(6) I: What does the word “comprehensive” mean?
S: “Comprehensive”? It’s similar to “comprehension”. I feel it seems that there is some relationship between “comprehension” and “comprehensive”. Maybe they are cognate words. I think this word means *comprehension ability* *(Note: The italicized words “comprehension ability” are translations.)*

In this example, the subject simply determined the meaning of “comprehensive” by taking it to be the adjective form of “comprehension” and failed to change her mind by exploiting the co-textual knowledge source. This indicates when “morphological clues” are useless in helping one arrive at the correct word meaning, failure to use co-textual clues could be disastrous. The examples show that in addition to morphological knowledge, the ability to activate more than one knowledge source distinguishes the HP subjects from the LP subjects.

To sum up, LP subjects exploited general world knowledge more frequently as a result of their weak linguistic processing abilities. The importance of linguistic processing in lexical inferencing is borne out. In contrast, HP subjects were more able to use their morphological knowledge and jointly use their morphological knowledge and clues in the co-text or their background knowledge to infer word meaning.

4. Conclusions and pedagogical implications

This study reveals that the immediate retrospection procedure provides useful and rich data on lexical inferencing in listening comprehension. Specifically, the verbal report offers researchers a database on the basis of which thought processes can be reconstructed, and an informed analysis of the data is necessary for the reconstruction.

An implication derived from the study is that learners might be trained to make a better use of the inferencing strategy. For instance, teachers could develop their awareness of the use of the strategy and of the possible knowledge sources they could use in inferring word meaning. As less proficient learners are found to be less able to use linguistic clues to infer word meaning, teachers could perhaps work out ways to enhance their use of linguistic clues to infer word meaning.

**Note**
1. In Haastrup’s study, co-text (the linguistic context), which refers to the linguistic material accompanying the word whose meaning the reader is to infer, is to be distinguished from context, which is the general physical environment surrounding the word. Co-text is therefore just a part of the whole context. (See Yule, 1996 and Brown and Yule, 1983 for a discussion of this distinction.)

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二语听力理解中的词义推测

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摘要: 本文探讨了二语学习者在听力理解时运用哪些知识资源来推测词义，以及语言能力如何影响知识资源的运用。本项研究的数据取自六个受试的口头报告。分析结果显示，最常用的知识资源是局部上下文。同时也发现，受试在推测词义时会把上下文时和世界知识结合起来，形态方面的知识也有一定程度的运用。各层面知识资源相互作用的重要性已显现出来。

语言能力是决定知识资源运用的重要因素。受试语言能力较低，语言处理能力弱，因而更常依赖一般世界知识。而受试语言能力较高，就会运用语言知识（有关形态的知识）并结合相关知识资源来推断词义。

本项研究也谈到了口头报告方法的应用问题：口头报告为研究者提供一个数据库，籍之可以重建思维过程；但不是精确地复制这个过程，因为那要求全面掌握和分析数据信息。

关键词: 推测; 知识资源; 听力; 词汇; 上下文

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Appendix A

A sample short conversation:
- Professor Weston, we have a few minutes left. Would you please tell us something about next week’s exam?
- OK. The exam will be comprehensive, which means you will be responsible for all the subject matters we’ve covered this term.

A sample short passage:
A great deal is known about Beethoven, He wrote nine symphonies. The third symphony was originally written for Napoleon. Later, when Napoleon proclaimed himself emperor, Beethoven was so infuriated that he tore out his work.

A sample lone conversation:
- How are your new neighbors, Nancy?
- They seem nice enough, but they have a son who’s driving me crazy!
- He comes back every night around 10 with his car windows rolled down and radio blaring. It stops as soon as he turns the car off. But by then my children Brian and Lisa are wide awake.
- He must perturb you greatly!
- Oh, yes, sometimes it takes until midnight to get them settled down again.
- Have you tried talking to his parents?
- We haven’t even really met them yet except to say a quick hello.
- You are not going to like them if you keep on simmering.
- I know, but I feel stupid talking with them directly.
- Maybe you could go over sometime with a little gift. Then you could ask about their son and they’ll be sure to ask about yours!
- Yeah, and then what?
- Then you could mention that the hardest thing at this stage is getting your kids to go sleep at night.
- And keeping them asleep.
- That’s the idea. And you should do it instantaneously. The longer you wait, the harder it’ll be to do it politely.

Appendix B

1) I don't remember having heard this word before.
2) I have heard this word before, but I don't know what it means.
3) I have heard this word before, and I think it means_____. (synonym or translation)
4) I know this word. It means_____. (synonym or translation)
5) I can use this word in a sentence:_____.
   (Adapted from Wesche and Paribakht (1996))