
What's the Problem? L2 Learners' Use of the L1 During Consciousness-Raising, Form-Focused Tasks

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This qualitative study provides preliminary insight into the role of the first language (L1) when pairs of intermediate-level college learners of French and Spanish are engaged in consciousness-raising, form-focused grammar tasks. Using conversation analysis of audiotaped interactions and stimulated recall sessions, we explored the ways students used the L1 and their second language (L2) to solve a grammar problem. Students who were allowed to use the L1 (Group 1) worked collaboratively in a balanced and coherent manner; students who were required to use the L2 (Group 2) exhibited fragmented interaction and little evidence of collaboration. Findings from the stimulated recall sessions suggested that reading, thinking, and talking appeared to be simultaneous and integrated processes for the students in Group 1, whereas these processes appeared to be sequential and competing for the students in Group 2. In addition to suggesting that using the L1 for these kinds of tasks reduces cognitive overload, these findings invite teachers to tackle the “problem” of the L1 in the foreign language classroom.

RECENT ATTENTION TO THE ROLE OF THE first language (L1) in second language (L2) learning has challenged long-held anti-L1 attitudes that have dominated foreign language (FL) pedagogy for several decades.¹ In particular Cook (1999, 2001), basing his idea on the premise that the L1 and the L2 coexist collaboratively in the learner, set forward the notion that L2 learners should be viewed as multicompetent language users rather than as deficient L2 users when compared to native speakers. Although this notion goes against communicative language teaching approaches that focus on the primary importance of L2 input and L2 interaction in L2 learning, it offers applied linguists and FL teachers the op-

portunity to grapple with the “problem” of the L1.

For more than 30 years, FL teachers have been in general agreement that the target language should be used as much as possible in the FL classroom. The teacher is, generally, the primary source of target language input and is therefore responsible for maximizing its use in the classroom. In fact, the measure of an FL teacher's success often is related to his or her ability to conduct the entire class in the target language (Koike & Liskin-Gasparro, 1999; Valdés, 1998). Some researchers have argued, however, that using the L1 in the classroom may facilitate L2 acquisition (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Artemeva, 1995; Cook, 1999, 2001; Levine, 2003). Yet, there is no agreement on this subject, and questions abound: When should the L1 be used? What is productive use of the L1, and what is too much? Is the use of the L1 a hindrance or a help in L2 acquisition?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF L1 IN L2 LEARNING

According to Atkinson (1993), the belief that L2 teachers and learners should use only the L2 in the classroom is founded on the notion that acquisition is better than learning. Referring to Krashen's (1988) monitor theory,² Atkinson pointed out that approaches to teaching FL that focused on a subconscious and spontaneous development of L2 competence (which was much like the way in which children acquire their L1) gained in favor over rule-governed approaches to developing L2 competence. Several well-known approaches to FL teaching stress the importance of using the L2³ and implicitly suggest that using the L1 may be detrimental to the acquisition process. Although nearly exclusive use of the L2 in FL teaching has been an unspoken rule since grammar translation approaches were largely abandoned in the 1960s, Atkinson argued that there was no research to support the requirement for L2 use 100% of the time.

Krashen's theories have played a significant role in underscoring the importance of using the L2 in FL teaching,⁴ and most practitioners would agree with this stance. Cook (2002) contended, however, that regardless of whether a language is acquired in an immersion or in a classroom setting, the L1 and the L2 (and the L3, etc.) relate in some way. In addition, Cook (2001) argued that the L1 may serve a useful purpose in FL teaching, particularly in task-based learning approaches: "Through the L1, they [students] may explain the task to each other, negotiate roles they are going to take, or check their understanding or production of language against their peers" (p. 418). Belz (2002) endorsed Cook's position on classroom FL teaching, and added that "L1 and/or multiple language use may provide insight into the ways in which multicompetent language users inhabit and relate to a pluralistic, multilingual world" (p. 216), creating "third places from which they could both play with and reflect on multiple linguistic identities" (p. 234).

In recent decades, an increasing number of studies have shown that multilingual functioning is a normal process that involves a nearly subconscious interaction between or among a person's different languages. Research on cognition and multilingual functioning has supported the view that two (or more) languages interact collaboratively in understanding and speaking both languages (de Bot, 1992, 1993; de Groot, 1993; Fabbro, 1999; Grosjean, 1997; Hermans, Bongaerts, de Bot, & Schreuder, 1998; Kroll, 1993; Kroll & Sunderman, 2003; Kroll & Tokowicz, 2001). Of

particular interest is Paradis's (2004) notion that bilingual functioning involves a complex set of independent systems (i.e., pragmatic, linguistic) that collaborate at every step of the microgenesis of an utterance. Indeed, there is some question as to whether bilingual people need, or are even able, to suppress their L1 during L2 retrieval tasks (Hermans et al., 1998).

RESEARCH ON L2 LEARNERS

Most research on the role of the L1 in L2 learning has been conducted from an interactionist perspective. Using this framework, various studies of L2 learners engaged in a variety of FL classroom activities have suggested that use of the L1 may make an important contribution to L2 learning. For example, Brooks and Donato (1994) incidentally found that metatalk (language talk to reflect on language use) in the L1 was productive in sustaining verbal interaction. Moreover, in a study on cooperative learning and small group work, Brooks, Donato, and McGlone (1997) observed that communication problems were often resolved when the learners reverted to the L1. Similarly, Swain and Lapkin (1998) found that the L1 was a "mediational tool fully available to [learners], to regulate their own behavior, to focus attention on specific L2 structures, and to generate and assess alternatives" (p. 333). A more recent study by Centeno-Cortés and Jiménez (2004) addressed the importance of the L1 during problem-solving tasks. They found that, during private verbal thinking—private speech that surfaces during problem-solving tasks, intermediate and advanced L2 learners of Spanish used both Spanish and their L1, English. Furthermore, they noted that although most of the advanced learners were able to use the L2 during the reasoning or problem-solving stage of the tasks, the intermediate learners conducted this process in their L1. The researchers concluded that "private verbal thinking plays a crucial role in the case of L2 speakers engaged in problem-solving, and therefore it should be recognized as very important in the process of learning" (p. 31).

Using a sociocultural interactionist approach to study how learners use the L1 when engaged in a collaborative meaning-based L2 language task, Antón and DiCamilla (1998) noted the benefits of L1 use for scaffolding and establishing interparticipant relations, in addition to its role in private speech. In particular, their study showed that the learners used their L1 to externalize their inner speech during a writing task. Drawing on a similar theoretical framework, Tomlinson (2000) stressed

the importance of the inner voice in L2 learning. His findings indicated that L2 learners make use of an L1 inner voice, often failing to develop an L2 inner voice. Although Tomlinson's goal was to underscore the importance of helping L2 learners develop an L2 inner voice, in this article he proposed that we "find out how we can help learners of an L2 to make use of their L1 inner voice" (p. 150). Storch and Wigglesworth's (2003) study of English as a second language students working on writing tasks, also conceptualized within a socio-cultural framework, investigated to what extent the students used the L1, what particular functions the L1 served, and the students' attitudes toward L1 use in the L2 setting. Their findings indicated that use of the L1 was significantly linked to the students' attitudes about the importance of using the L2 in the classroom setting. When the students used their shared L1s, they reported that it was useful for task management, task clarification, determining meaning and vocabulary, and explaining grammar.

These studies confirmed what most teachers already know: L1 use occurs in some form in the FL classroom. Students use the L1 to clarify vocabulary and meaning, to discuss grammar points, and to manage many kinds of classroom tasks. Chavez's (2002) analysis of FL students' views on classroom language use revealed that they did not consider the classroom a social arena or a simulation of the target culture in which the L2 should be used all the time. Rather, they preferred classroom speech that included using both the L1 and the L2 to achieve learning goals. In response to this pervasive use of the L1, Levine (2003) concluded that denying a role to the L1 is futile and that learners should play an active role in managing the use of the L1 and the L2 to create bilingual norms that are typical of multilingual environments outside the classroom. Moreover, he made a case for using the L1 as the marked code in the classroom to relieve anxiety. Furthermore, Macaro (2001) argued that no study has been able to demonstrate a relationship between exclusion of the L1 and improved L2 learning.

COLLABORATIVE, FORM-FOCUSED TASKS AND L2 LEARNING

Given the need for a more informed understanding of the role of the L1 in L2 learning, the current study was designed to examine how students use the L1 when they are asked to work collaboratively on form-focused tasks (Ellis, 1991, 2003).⁵ The benefits of collaborative tasks for both research and pedagogical purposes are well known (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; El-

lis, 2003; Long & Porter, 1985; Pica, 1994). In a classroom setting, these kinds of tasks offer students the opportunity to produce output, negotiate meaning, and focus their attention on L2 features they do not know. Form-focused tasks, which target the use of particular, predetermined L2 features, also may be done collaboratively. Swain and Lapkin (1998) argued that it is important to design output tasks that draw learners' attention to grammatical forms. They stated that such output tasks, during which students engage in collaborative dialogue in either the L1 or the L2, may be beneficial specifically because they stimulate reflection and metatalk about the L2. Although different task types may prompt students to use the L1 to different degrees (Swain & Lapkin, 2000), it has been documented that form-focused, language-related episodes tend to prompt switching to the L1. Swain (1998) defined language-related episodes as "any part of a dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct" (p. 70).

One way to construct a focused task is to make the L2 itself the content of the task. Ellis (1991) called these activities consciousness-raising (CR) tasks. Consciousness-raising instruction (Ellis, 1991; Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1985) recognizes that learner acquisition of grammatical aspects of an L2 takes place over time and in developmental sequences. Thus, consciousness-raising activities aim to promote awareness of new target language items. The value of consciousness-raising tasks in the FL classroom is that they may provide opportunities for the explicit learning⁶ of specific linguistic features, and, as Ellis (2003) explained, they "may even be necessary to ensure the acquisition of certain grammatical features" (p. 150). The outcome of a consciousness-raising task is, therefore, awareness and discovery of how a specific structure works. By talking about the linguistic form as an object, learners reflect on the form.

Various studies have shown the benefits of consciousness-raising tasks (Fotos, 1993; Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Mohammed, 2001). Mohammed (2001) observed, however, that consciousness-raising tasks may work better with high intermediate or advanced learners because these learners are more capable of engaging in the kind of sophisticated metalinguistic talk that is needed to accomplish the task than learners with a lower proficiency. Although this observation implicitly suggested that learners should use the L2 when engaged in consciousness-raising tasks, research has indicated that the L1 may be crucial in regulating thinking and in enabling learners to acquire new

knowledge (Brooks & Donato, 1994). According to Brooks and Donato (1994), L1 use “is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows the learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another” (p. 268). Thus, learner use of the L1 during consciousness-raising tasks may be effective not only for priming L2 learning, but also for regulating thinking. These functions of the L1 clearly fit well with the overall rationale for the task-based learning approach, which posits that learners acquire the L2 through tasks, or through doing something. The problem is, however, that researchers and teachers have largely discouraged learners’ natural tendencies to invoke the L1 during cognitively demanding tasks and that current pedagogy does not recognize the potential role of the L1 in the task-based FL classroom. As Cook (2001) pointed out, “bringing the L1 back from exile . . . may liberate the task-based learning approach so that it can foster the students’ natural collaborative efforts in the classroom through their L1 as well as their L2” (p. 419).

METHODS

Research Questions

This qualitative exploratory study was designed to provide insight into the role of the L1 when L2 learners are engaged in consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks. Two fundamental questions guided our inquiry:

1. How do learners use the L1 while working collaboratively in pairs on consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks in the L2?
2. What are the effects of prohibiting the use of the L1 when learners are working collaboratively in pairs on consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks in the L2?

Because the researchers teach in two different departments (French and Spanish), 12 students of French and 12 students of Spanish participated in the study. Participants were selected based on their native languages and prior experience with French or Spanish. English was the L1 for all participants, and prior language learning in French or Spanish in high school or college, or both, ranged from 2 to 5 years. All 24 intermediate-level (third-semester) college students volunteered to participate in the research project and signed voluntary participation forms. Of the 24 participants, 7 participants were male, and 17 were female. The students were randomly divided in pairs: 6 pairs of

French language learners and 6 pairs of Spanish language learners.

Materials

In designing the tasks for this study, we used Ellis’s (1991) description of consciousness-raising tasks in which (a) a linguistic point is isolated for focused attention, (b) the learners are provided with data that illustrate the targeted form, (c) the learners need to make a cognitive effort to understand the targeted feature, and (d) the learners may be required to verbalize a rule. The task designed for this study required the learners to talk about a specific grammar structure and to articulate a grammar rule in their L1.

We designed the same consciousness-raising grammar task for both French and Spanish (see Appendixes A and B). The goal of the task was to raise the students’ awareness of and elicit conscious reflection on a grammatical structure through a focus on the difference between the relative pronouns *que* and *dont* in French, and *que* and *cuyo/a/os/as* in Spanish. In French, *que* can be translated as ‘that’ or ‘whom’; *dont* can be translated as ‘of which,’ ‘of whom,’ or ‘whose.’ For the purposes of this study, however, *dont* was used only when it meant ‘whose.’ In Spanish, *que* can be translated as ‘that’ or ‘whom’; *cuyo* can be translated as ‘whose.’ Although students at the intermediate level are generally familiar with the relative pronouns *que* in French and Spanish, we know from our teaching experiences that the relative pronouns *dont* and *cuyo/a/os/as* are often difficult for students to learn and use spontaneously. In general, students of French and Spanish at this level of study do not fully understand the differences between these pronouns.

Procedures

Each pair of students (6 pairs of French students and 6 pairs of Spanish students) met with the investigator (either French or Spanish) in a small classroom. They were given a text containing the targeted structures used in context (see Appendixes A and B). The targeted structures were enhanced (in boldface type), and they each appeared three times in the text. The learners were asked to read the text and interact with each other to figure out both the meanings of the two targeted structures and the usage differences between them. The outcome of their task was to be a verbalized, written rule describing the meaning of the two forms and how they were used in the target language—French or Spanish.

The students were randomly divided into two groups: 3 pairs of French students and 3 pairs of Spanish students were assigned to Group 1, and the other 6 pairs (3 French and 3 Spanish) were assigned to Group 2. The students in Group 1 were allowed to use the L1 (English) to complete the task; the students in Group 2 were instructed to use only the L2 (French or Spanish). Time on task for both groups was limited to 5 minutes. Immediately following the interaction, each student was asked to write a rule in the L1 for both the meaning and function of the targeted structures. The main purpose of this written activity was to keep the students on task; the written products were not part of the data analysis for this study. After the students wrote the rule, the investigators asked them to reflect on their interactions while they were engaged in solving the problem.

Data Collection Procedures. All 12 interactions (6 French and 6 Spanish) were videotaped. Immediately after the task, the investigators (one for French and one for Spanish) showed each pair of students the videotape of their interaction and engaged them in a 20-minute stimulated recall session. The investigators asked questions and encouraged the students to pause the video whenever they wanted to comment on any of their taped interactions. Each of the 20-minute stimulated recall sessions was conducted in English and also was videotaped for later analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures. We analyzed the 5-minute talk-in-interaction sessions of the student pairs who were allowed to use the L1 and transcribed the portions of the sessions that offered specific insights into the uses of the L1 to solve the grammar task. Similarly, we analyzed the 5-minute talk-in-interaction sessions of the student pairs who were required to use the L2 and transcribed the portions of the sessions that offered specific insights into the effects of the exclusive use of the L2. We then identified, transcribed, and analyzed relevant portions of the corresponding videotaped stimulated recall protocols to determine how the learners described their use of either the L1 or the L2 while working on the task and to gain insight into their cognitive processing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer our first research question (How do learners use the L1 while working collaboratively on consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks in the L2?), we compared both the talk-in-interaction and the stimulated recall reflections

of the students who were allowed to use the L1 (Group 1) to those of the students who were required to use the L2 (Group 2). Our analysis revealed both similarities and differences. In order to assess the effects of prohibiting the use of the L1 when the learners were working on consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks in the L2 (our second research question), we compared the stimulated recall sessions of the students in Group 1 with those of the students in Group 2.

Similarities Between Groups 1 and 2

The analysis of the talk-in-interactions revealed general similarities between the students who were allowed to use the L1 (Group 1) and the students who were required to use the L2 (Group 2). Above all, both groups responded similarly to the task in that they understood the purpose of the task, they focused their attention on the enhanced structures, and they talked about the structures. In addition, 10 pairs of students reported during the stimulated recall sessions that they did not consider the content of the passages to be the subject of the interaction; only 2 of the 12 pairs of students made reference to the content of the passages about Aix-en-Provence or Cuzco. Because the content seemed irrelevant to the students, they did not concentrate their attention on discourse-level analyses but rather focused on sentence-level, form/meaning processing to execute the task.

The most important similarity between the two groups was that the L1 played an important role in the students' performance of the task. The stimulated recall sessions indicated that, regardless of the language of interaction, the students tried to complete the task by translating the enhanced structures into English (L1) in order to determine their meaning. The following excerpt is typical of the students in Group 1, who openly acknowledged that translation was an important strategy for solving the task.

EXCERPT 1

S1: I read the sentence and then translated it into English . . . because everything is positioned different in English.

S2: I pretty much do the same but then I found myself going back and going word for word around 'que' and 'cuyo' . . . and then I figured it out.

The same translation strategy was evident among the students in Group 2. In the following excerpt, 2 students in Group 2 respond to

the investigator's question about what they were thinking during a long silence.

EXCERPT 2

Investigator: What were you thinking about?

S1: Processing the words and translating them pretty much.

Investigator: Are you translating every single word?

S1: Uh ... no really ... just 'que' and 'dont.'

S2: I thought the text was pretty simple so I kinda just read it straight through and probably most of the time wasn't just as focused on the text as ... (laughing) ... how am I going to explain in French the difference between 'que' and 'dont'? So, I was really, mostly while I was reading it, I was thinking of 'que' and 'dont,' uh, in English, and I was trying to figure out if I knew all those words in French. ... I was gonna say 'introduce a description,' but then I decided to go with 'makes a description.'

Similarly, Excerpt 3 from a stimulated recall session indicates the students' compliance with the "Spanish only" rule for the task, but presents a forthright admission that English (L1) was consistently present.

EXCERPT 3

We did not say that 'que' is 'that' and 'cuyo' is 'whose' because you said we could not use any English ... but I knew that, I did it in my head, I mean, when I read "*una ciudad que*" I translated in my head 'a city that' I mean, I still think in English.

The stimulated recall sessions indicated clearly that all students—those who were required to use the L2 as well as those who were allowed to use the L1—relied on the L1 to carry out the task.

The analyses of the talk-in-interactions of the students in Group 1 provided clear evidence of the role of translation. The interactions in the L1 supplied repeated examples of students saying such things as "*que* is like that," "*dont* means which," "*cuyas* is whose." In some cases, such as in Excerpt 4, the interactions in the L2 reveal the same translation strategies and reliance on the L1.

EXCERPT 4

S1: *Pues ... yo pienso que 'que' is like 'that' in English, you know? Like "una ciudad que muchas turistas visitan" is like ... es como 'a city that many*

tourists visit.' It's the same thing, right? I mean, *en español, es la misma cosa, ¿sí?*

S2: *Sí, sí, y también "los turistas que yo veo" es ...*

S1: the tourists that I see ...

S2: that I see ... right ... *Sí!* ...

S1: '*cuyas*' is ... *es ...* 'whose,' like 'whose' in English, *porque "ciudad cuyas ruinas" ... city whose ruins ...*

S2: Yes, *Sí, y ... un amigo* (reading the passage) whose name is Roberto ...

(Translation:

S1: Well ... I think that '*que*' is like 'that' in English, you know? like "a city that many tourists visit" is like ... is like 'a city that many tourists visit.' It's the same thing, right? I mean, in Spanish, it's the same thing, right?

S2: Yes, yes, and also "the tourists that I see" I ...

S1: the tourists that I see ...

S2: that I see ... right ... Yes! ...

S1: '*cuyas*' is ... is ... 'whose,' like 'whose' in English, because "city whose ruins" ... city whose ruins ...

S2: Yes, yes, and ... a friend (reading the passage) whose name is Roberto ...)

Several students in Group 2 avoided both code-switching and using the L1 openly during their interactions, and their conversations were characterized by long, uncomfortable silences. Other students in Group 2 openly said, for example "*Je veux parler anglais*" (I want to speak English). Ultimately, both the stimulated recall sessions and the talk-in-interaction sessions of both Groups 1 and 2 indicated that all students used the L1 to determine the meaning of the targeted forms.

Differences Between Groups 1 and 2

A comparison of the talk-in-interactions of Groups 1 and 2 revealed four important differences (see Table 1). First, there was a difference in the fluidity of their interactions. Pairs in Group 1 engaged in smooth, continuous interaction. They talked while reading and reviewing the passage, and while discussing the target structures. By contrast, the interactions of pairs in Group 2 were characterized by frequent pauses and fragmented interaction. The students in Group 2 often laughed nervously and looked out the window during pauses, some of which went on for nearly 2 minutes. Although the majority of the students in Group 1 verbalized their thoughts in the L1, the students in Group 2 who were trying to use only the L2 had to translate their L1 thoughts into the L2 in order to be able to share them with their conversation partners.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Talk-in-Interactions Between Groups

Group 1 (L1)	Group 2 (L2)
Continuous interaction; few pauses	Fragmented interaction; frequent pauses
Balanced contribution to interaction	Unbalanced contribution to interaction
Ample evidence of collaborative dialogue	Little evidence of collaborative dialogue
Use of metalinguistic terminology	Little use of metalinguistic terminology

EXCERPT 5

S1: *Yo pienso que la uso de 'que' es ... (long silence) ... es use cuando tú ... (long silence) ... ten ... tengas un sujeto ... (long silence)*

S2: ... *sujeto, sí y ... ¿una cosa?*

S1: ... (long silence) *Ummmm dos sujetos ... (long silence)*

S2: *Oh, sí, sí ...*

S1: ... (long silence) *que sirve de un conexión ... (long silence)*

(Translation:

S1: I think that the use of 'que' is ... ([long silence] ... is used when you ... [long silence] ... ha ... have a subject ... [long silence])

S2: ... subject, yes, and ... a thing?

S1: ... [long silence] *Ummmm two subjects ... [long silence]*

S2: Oh, yes, yes ...

S1: ... [long silence] that serves as a connection ... [long silence])

In this excerpt, S1 abandoned interaction right after this exchange and, when asked during the stimulated recall session about this particular episode and her silences, she responded:

Whenever I started speaking in Spanish I had to stop because I had to think of the words to use before I speak ... it does not come just naturally to me ... I was trying to see if I could come up with something else and I could explain it to him ... like I realized that these forms agree, but I did not know how to explain it ... I was looking for the Spanish words, the right equivalent, to speak ...

During the stimulated recall sessions, several students in Group 2 voiced their frustrations while describing the reasons for their hesitations and silences:

EXCERPT 6

S1: I had the vocabulary to talk as I would in English, so I was trying to find the best way to explain ...

S2: We both knew what it is and we can't say it.

S3: Here I am just trying, you know, to explain more the difference ... but I just ... could not. ... It was very frustrating.

The second important difference between the two groups was the degree to which the conversation was balanced. Students in Group 1 participated nearly equally in the interaction, taking turns, often offering comments such as "I don't know," or "could it be," or "I don't think I have seen this word before." In all pairs of students in Group 2, however, the conversation was unbalanced with one student dominating the conversation. In the following example, S1 is controlling the interaction, and S2's contributions are limited to affirmations.

EXCERPT 7

S1: *Creo que 'cuyo,' 'cuyas' es posesión.*

S2: *Sí.*

S1: *¿Sí? Es como (reading) "los visitantes cuyo interés ..."*

S2: Right.

S1: *¿Sí?*

S2: *Sí.*

S1: *Es una relación entre los dos ... o "la ciudad cuyas ruinas" porque la ciudad tiene ruinas ...*

S2: *Mmm, uh, sí ...*

S1: *Pero cuando usas 'que' es más una relación entre los dos ... no posesión.*

(Translation:

S1: I think that 'cuyo,' 'cuyas' is possession.

S2: Yes.

S1: Right? It is like (reading) "the visitors whose interest ..."

S2: Right.

S1: Yes?

S2: Yes.

S1: It is a relationship between the two ... or "the city whose ruins" because the city has ruins ...

S2: Mmm, uh, yes ...

S1: But when you use 'que' is more a relationship between the two ... not possession.)

During the stimulated recall session, S2 from this excerpt reported:

I am just listening to what he is saying. . . . I know the explanation but I just can't explain it in Spanish so I listen to him and if he says more or less the same things I would say, I say yes or nod my head a lot . . . you can see.

Her frustration is clearly not linked to her understanding of the structure, but rather to her inability to articulate an explanation in Spanish. In this instance, S1's proficiency in Spanish allows him to talk more and may create the illusion that he knows more about the target structure than S2 does.

The fragmented, unbalanced interactions between the student pairs in Group 2, as shown in the previous examples, inhibited their capacity to engage in collaborative dialogue.⁷ This third difference between Groups 1 and 2 is central among our findings in this study. When required to interact exclusively in the L2, the students were generally less successful at collaborating productively to work on the task. The following excerpt clearly shows two individuals struggling side by side.

EXCERPT 8

S1: *Si . . . si éste tiene un 'cuyo,' ¿qué escribimos aquí para completar? "Cuzco es una ciudad cuyo" . . . or . . . no . . . tiene el 'cuyo' . . .*

S2: *'cuyo' va . . . con este, esto verbo . . .*

S1: *Si . . . cuyo . . .*

S2: *. . . con este . . . sus . . . sustantivo . . .*

S1: *Yeah, sí . . . es un . . . es un . . . es todo diferente . . . necesitas cambiar todo para . . .* (long silence)

(Translation:

S1: Yes . . . if this one has a 'cuyo,' what do we write here to complete? "Cuzco is a city cuyo" . . . or . . . no . . . it has the 'cuyo' . . .

S2: 'cuyo' goes . . . with this, this verb . . .

S1: Yes . . . cuyo . . .

S2: . . . with this . . . no . . . noun . . .

S1: Yeah, yes . . . it is a . . . it is a . . . it is all different . . . you need to change everything to . . . [long silence])

Although this excerpt is typical of students in Group 2, there was one pair of students whose level of proficiency in Spanish was high enough to support collaborative exchange:

EXCERPT 9

S1: *En mi opinión, el mejor diferencia en 'que' y 'cuyo' es las palabras después.*

S2: *Sí, sí . . . ahhh, 'cuya, cuyo, cuyas' se usa para describir características*

S1: *Sí y objetos . . .*

S2: *Es un adjetivo . . .*

S1: *Sí . . . sí*

S2: *Sí, un adjetivo . . . que . . .*

S1: *que describe un . . . nombre*

S2: *sustantivo . . .*

S1: *. . . o un sustantivo, sí*

(Translation:

S1: In my opinion, the greatest difference between 'que' and 'cuyo' is the words [that go] after.

S2: Yes, yes . . . ahhh, 'cuya, cuyo, cuyas' is used to describe characteristics

S1: Yes, and objects . . .

S2: It is an adjective . . .

S1: Yes . . . yes

S2: Yes, an adjective . . . that . . .

S1: that describes a . . . name

S2: noun . . .

S1: . . . or a noun, yes)

Although Excerpt 9 suggests that S1 and S2 were capable of working on the task collaboratively while using the L2 exclusively, their interactions are brief and telegraphic. It is not surprising that the students in Group 1 were able to engage in collaborative dialogue characterized by longer and more meaningful utterances:

EXCERPT 10

S1: *'Que' is like 'that.'*

S2: *Something like that. 'That' or 'which.'*

S1: *I translated 'dont' kinda like 'which.'*

S2: *I translated 'dont' like 'whose.'*

S1: *'Whose'? But isn't 'qui' 'who'?*

S2: *(Reads sentences in the passage with dont aloud.) It's kinda the same thing . . . 'whose' and 'which.' It seems kind of possessive, but I don't know . . .*

S1: *I thought of the word 'donc.'*⁸

This excerpt shows that S1 and S2 agree very quickly on the meaning of *que*. The next few exchanges show that neither of them is sure about the meaning of *dont* and that they engage in productive hypothesis testing together. By the end of the interaction, they come to a mutual agreement about the meaning of *dont* and express satisfaction with their work. Overall, use of the L1 helped the students maintain an equal level of collaboration, engage productively in a problem-solving activity, and build on each other's explanations to solve the task.

The fourth substantive difference between the groups was the degree to which they used

metalinguistic terminology. Although FL teachers may have differing opinions about when and how to use metalinguistic terminology when teaching grammar, this study showed that students try to use grammar terms to explain grammar problems. The students in Group 1 were frequently engaged and relatively confident in talking about the target structures. References to grammatical terms, such as *subject pronoun*, *possessive*, *preposition*, *proposition*, *main clause*, and *conjunction* recurred regularly in their discussions and seemed to help them clarify their understanding of the structures. During the stimulated recall session, one student from Group 1 explained that he felt fairly proficient in conversational Spanish, but did not believe he would be able to talk about grammar in Spanish:

Grammar rules are hard to get in Spanish ... if I was trying to explain this in Spanish. Like, I could describe something for you, I could use the vocab that I have ... do a lot of stuff in Spanish. But, like explaining a grammar rule ... I don't think I can do that in Spanish.

Most students in Group 2 had substantial difficulty using metalinguistic terminology to discuss the target structures. Their attempts to talk about the target structures were clumsy (“*de lequél ... um ... c'est la même chose que dont*” [*de lequél ... um ... is the same thing as dont*]), unclear (“*que et dont sont similaires parce qu'ils les deux fait une description de quelque chose*” [*que and dont are similar because they both do a description of something*]), and incomplete (“*creo que cuyo, cuyas es posesión*” [I think that *cuyo, cuyas* is possession]). During the stimulated recall sessions, students in Group 2 expressed their frustrations clearly. One student noted, “I mean, the explaining grammar in Spanish was just not ... happening.” In the words of another student, “If I had been able to use English, I would have explained it in English. ... I could have said, well, this is a noun, this is a verb, this goes here. ... I mean if you did not read what I wrote, and just listened to what I said, you would have thought I had no idea ... that I did not understand.”

Comparison of Stimulated Recall Sessions for Groups 1 and 2

During the stimulated recall sessions, the students were able to explain the strategies they used to work on the form-focused tasks and discuss what they were thinking during the 5-minute talk-in-interaction sessions. As indicated previously, the

students in both groups stated that they translated the enhanced structures to determine their meaning. In other words, translation was the dominant strategy used by all students to solve the task. Of particular interest, however, were the students' reports that they talked to themselves throughout the talk-in-interaction sessions. Students in Group 1 stated that they talked to themselves in the L1 while also talking aloud in the L1. This intrapersonal speech⁹ was both hidden and observable. When the students were talking to themselves out loud—vocalized intrapersonal speech—their voices became softer and reflective, and they appeared to be talking to the task on the page:

EXCERPT 11

S1: [Beginning of intrapersonal speech] But ... why can't you say '*cuyas*' like instead use 'whose many tourists' ... ah, that doesn't really make any sense I guess but ... like it is always good to know ... [end of intrapersonal speech]

[Later in the conversation:]

S1: '*Visitantes*' is the subject.

S2: Oh, OK, that's like a ... it's like a phrase, like a ... like a clause ... like a dependent ...

S1: a dependent clause ...

S2: Yeah, [beginning of intrapersonal speech] because you take that out and say "*los visitantes disfrutan*" ... but then inside you have "*cuyo interés*" ... [end of private speech]. Yeah, that's a clause!

It is evident in this excerpt that S1 and S2 are using their L1 to verbalize hypotheses about the meaning and use of the relative pronouns *que* and *cuyo*. At first, S1 is not talking to S2. She asks herself a question and then answers it after a brief pause. Later, S2 tests a hypothesis about the syntax of the sentence they are analyzing. These two examples of intrapersonal speech reveal productive cognitive processes that are experienced as spontaneous and natural.

The students in Group 1 also described being engaged in silent (nonvocalized) intrapersonal speech. One of the French students admitted that she did not know if the word *dont* was real or invented, but she did not dare voice her doubt aloud. During the stimulated recall session, she confessed what she had been thinking throughout the interaction: “I kept wondering if it's a real word.” Another student said “I just wanted to think about the task in English,” suggesting that she would have preferred to process the problem internally by talking to herself in English.

Like the students in Group 1, the students in Group 2 also talked to themselves in the L1. There

was, however, a significant difference in the content of their intrapersonal speech. Whereas the students in Group 1 talked to themselves about the task, the students in Group 2 talked to themselves on two levels, namely, about the task and about explaining it in the L2. Simply put, they used the L1 to think about the task and plan what to say in the L2. Excerpts from the stimulated recall sessions of two students make this complex cognitive process clear:

EXCERPT 12

Most of the time [I] wasn't just as focused on the text as ... (laughing) ... how am I going to explain in French the difference between 'que' and 'dont'? So, I was really, mostly while I was reading it, I was thinking of 'que' and 'dont,' uh, in English, and I was trying to figure out if I knew all those words in French. ... I was gonna say 'introduce a description,' but then I decided to go with 'makes a description.' (French, Group 2)

EXCERPT 13

I was trying to say 'one phrase refers to the other phrase' but I did not know how to say 'refers to the previous phrase,' so I was just there trying to figure out a way ... and I was nervous so I did not know what to say. (Spanish, Group 2)

The students in Group 2 experienced frustration and indicated openly during the stimulated recall sessions that they had wanted to be able to use the L1.

There is no question that the students in Groups 1 and 2 engaged in different cognitive processes (see Table 2). The students in Group 1 used the L1 to process the L2 input (the task). The specific strategies they used to process the input included translating portions of the passage, recalling what they knew about grammar that might

help in understanding the problem, and reviewing the task and information they exchanged. The output, or interaction, also was mostly in the L1. This set of processes—reading, thinking, and talking—appeared to be simultaneous and integrated. Like the students in Group 1, the students in Group 2 used the L1 to translate, recall, and review the L2 input (the task). Unlike the students in Group 1, however, they had the additional task of processing the L2 output. They used the L1 to translate and plan what they were going to say in the L2. This set of processes—reading, thinking, and talking—appeared to be sequential and competing. That is, the students in Group 2 had an added cognitive burden: In order to complete the task, they had to solve the problem and plan how to explain it in the L2.¹⁰

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings from this study indicated that learners use the L1 even when they appear to be operating exclusively in the L2. The students' reflections from the stimulated recall sessions indicated that when they are required to use the L2 during a collaborative consciousness-raising, form-focused task, they talk to themselves in the L1 as they translate the text, recall grammar rules, review the task, and plan what to say in the L2. In addition, the findings suggested that exclusive use of the L2 during consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks may impose cognitive demands on learners that may have a negative impact on the allocation of cognitive resources for the task. In particular, exclusive use of the L2 during this type of task appears to inhibit collaborative interaction, hinder the use of metatalk, and impede "natural" learning strategies. By contrast, use of the L1 for these kinds of tasks may reduce cognitive overload, sustain collaborative

TABLE 2
Cognitive Processing: L1 Versus L2

Group 1 (L1)	PROCESS L2 INPUT → OUTPUT		
	(L1)		(L1)
	Translate		
	Recall		
	Review		
	Reading, thinking, talking appeared to be simultaneous and integrated processes.		
Group 2 (L2)	PROCESS L2 INPUT → PROCESS L2 OUTPUT → OUTPUT		
	(L1)	(L1)	(L2)
	Translate	Translate	
	Recall	Plan	
	Review		
	Reading, thinking, talking appeared to be sequential and competing processes.		

interaction, and foster the development of metalinguistic terminology. In fact, the use of the L1 appears to be a natural and spontaneous cognitive strategy, which suggests that it may be futile to prevent learners from using the L1 during consciousness-raising tasks. This study offers evidence that learners' two languages function in tandem to complete a consciousness-raising, form-focused task when they are permitted to use the L1. By extension, this study suggests that when students are forbidden to use the L1, their two languages compete, causing frustration and cognitive strain.

As stated at the outset, we do not endorse random use of the L1 in the FL classroom. Quite the contrary, we are proponents of nearly exclusive use of the L2 for communicative interactions. Furthermore, we agree with a growing body of research that recommends the use of consciousness-raising tasks in the L2 classroom. When we engage students in this type of reflective inquiry about grammar structures, however, banning the L1 may impede the learners' ultimate success. If students are discouraged from using the L1 for quiet reflection and are not given the opportunity to verbalize intrapersonal L1 speech, they may not benefit from natural and spontaneous cognitive processes that support L2 learning.

Apart from the small number of participants, two other limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. First, we did not assess the participants' level of oral proficiency in either French or Spanish. Very much like the students in a typical intermediate-level FL class, the participants in our study had varied speaking ability. This variability may have had an impact on the results, especially for the students in Group 2 who were required to use the L2. A second limitation is that we did not assess the difficulty of the French and Spanish texts used for the task. Although we tried to make the texts simple and direct, it is possible that the participants had varied reading proficiency, which may have affected their ability to execute the task.

This preliminary exploratory study on the role of the L1 during form-focused, consciousness-raising tasks raises more questions than it answers. In particular, it would be important to investigate further the role of the L1 in cognitive processing when learners work independently (as opposed to collaboratively), the role of the L1 when learners are engaged in focused tasks other than consciousness-raising tasks, the role of the L1 when learners are engaged in other kinds of tasks with no predetermined grammar focus, and the ways that L2 proficiency affects the use of the L1 in cognitive processing. Ultimately, even if a cause-

effect relationship can be established to support the use of the L1 for explicit learning of L2 forms, we are still a long way from understanding the role of the L1 in the ultimate acquisition of target L2 forms. Finally, second language acquisition research that considers both cognitive and interactionist perspectives is needed to address the problem of the L1 in the FL classroom. In our view, it is essential that contemporary pedagogical approaches and practices be based on an informed understanding of the benefits of L1 use in the L2 classroom.

NOTES

¹We use the terms *L1* and *L2* to refer to first and second languages in a general sense. The term *FL* in this article refers to foreign language learning that takes place in a classroom setting.

²The "acquisition-learning distinction" is the first hypothesis of Krashen's monitor theory, described in his 1988 book.

³See, for example, Omaggio Hadley (2001), Lee and VanPatten (2003), and Shrum and Glisan (1994).

⁴It is worth noting here that, prior to Krashen's cognitive theories about L2 learning (or acquisition), behaviorist theories associated with the audiolingual method also endorsed principal use of the L2 in FL teaching.

⁵The term *form-focused task* should not be confused with Long's (1991 and elsewhere) *FonF*. In this article, the authors use the term *form-focused* to refer to any task designed to develop awareness of key aspects of the target language (see Ellis, 2003).

⁶See, for example, Robinson's (1996) study offering evidence that instruction with an explicit focus on form can be valuable for short-term learning for both simple and complex grammar rules.

⁷Our use of the term *collaborative dialogue* may be understood as interaction that involves the Vygotskian notion of scaffolded help (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). That is, students who engage in collaborative dialogue are likely to have different skills and be at different levels of ability. By working together, they co-construct a more complete understanding of the problem.

⁸The French word *donc* means 'therefore.'

⁹Our use of the term *intrapersonal speech* is similar to the Vygotskian terms *inner speech* and *private speech* in that it includes both silent and vocalized thoughts (Vygotsky, 1987).

¹⁰Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), had similar results, noting that one student in their study “composed part of the text for Task 1 in her head in the L1 and then verbalized her thoughts aloud in the L2” (p. 766).

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APPENDIX A

Maryse, une étudiante française, parle d'Aix-en-Provence.

Aix-en-Provence est une ville **que** tout le monde adore. Située dans le sud de la France, Aix est une ville **dont** la réputation est connue par les touristes et les étudiants. En été les touristes **que** je vois dans les cafés viennent pour profiter de l'ambiance charmante et les jours ensoleillés. Pendant l'année on trouve des étudiants de tous les coins du monde. Mon ami suédois, **dont** le nom est Sven, est venu à Aix pour faire ses études en droit. Je suis née à Aix (**que** vous prononcez comme <<ex>>), et l'artiste Paul Cézanne, **dont** les peintures sont très connues, était aixois aussi.

Answer the following question in English in the space below:

What is the difference between **QUE** and **DONT**?

[Translation: Aix-en-Provence is a city that everyone adores. Located in the south of France, Aix is a city whose reputation is known by tourists and students. In the summer, the tourists that/whom I see in the cafés come to enjoy the charming atmosphere and the sun-filled days. During the year one can find students from every corner of the world. My Swedish friend, whose name is Sven, came to Aix to study law. I was born in Aix (pronounced like "ex"), and the artist Paul Cézanne, whose paintings are well known, was also a native of Aix.]

APPENDIX B

Nicolás, un estudiante peruano, habla sobre su ciudad, Cuzco.

Cuzco es una ciudad **que** muchos turistas visitan cuando viajan a Perú. Situada al sur de Perú, es una ciudad **cuyas** ruinas incas son muy conocidas por todo el mundo. Los turistas **que** yo veo en Cuzco durante todo el año vienen especialmente para visitar las ruinas de Machu Picchu. Los visitantes **cuyo** interés es la arqueología disfrutan muchísimo de la visita a Machu Picchu. Un amigo mío mexicano, **cuyo** nombre es Roberto, viene a Cuzco todos los veranos para investigar en Machu Picchu. Aquí en Cuzco, **que** nosotros pronunciamos también "Cusco," hay muchísimas cosas que hacer y ver.

Answer the following question in English in the space below:

What is the difference between **QUE** and **CUYO/OS/A/AS**?

[Translation: Cuzco is a city that many tourists visit when they travel to Peru. Located in the south of Peru, it's a city whose Incan ruins are well known by everyone. The tourists that I see in Cuzco during the year come especially to visit the ruins at Machu Picchu. Visitors who are interested in archeology benefit a great deal from the visit to Machu Picchu. My Mexican friend, whose name is Roberto, comes to Cuzco every summer to do research in Machu Picchu. Here in Cuzco, which we pronounce "coosco") has many things to do and see.]
