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Consciousness of Contrast in Input Enhancement: A Case for Contextualised Re-translation as a C-R Technique

1. Introduction

Views on the role of explicit instruction in the acquisition of implicit knowledge, often taken to be the goal and product of L2 teaching and learning, continue to be a contentious issue in L2 methodology (cf. Pawlak 2006). As implicit knowledge of L2 correlates with fluent language proficiency, approaches advocating rich input and “learning by doing” have been favoured as the basis for developing L2 competence. However, as the critics of the structural and audiolingual methods noticed already in the 1960s, such methods teach “speech, not language” (N. Ellis 1994: 37). Generally speaking, approaches that depart from the teaching of metalinguistic rules, which often overemphasise the quantity of output at the expense of its quality, produce fluent speakers whose language may be riddled with lexical and grammatical mistakes. As Ammar and Spada (2006: 544) have observed:

although L2 learners in communicative classrooms attain relatively high levels of comprehension ability and, to some extent, fluency in oral production, they continue to experience difficulties with accuracy, particularly with respect to morphology and syntax.

The downplaying of the role of explicit instruction (and explicit learning) brings in its wake a downplaying of grammatical competence in general and accuracy of expression in particular. This is especially worrying from the point of view of long-term L2 development: gaps in language competence of relatively advanced language learners are particularly difficult to eliminate as they tend to stabilise. If inadequacy in performance is not seen as a problem already at the early stages of L2 teaching and learning, this may have a negative effect on subsequent language teach-

ing and learning: students who do not use varied metacognitive strategies in processing input and who in the absence of focus on forms instruction have been led to believe that their command of the target language is satisfactory, are frequently not willing to engage in grammar learning and exhibit negative attitudes in this respect, which further aggravates the situation. Additionally, there is no sufficient knowledge base to build on the morphosyntactic competence at more advanced stages of language learning, so the problem should be brought to the attention of both practitioners teaching students at intermediate and post-intermediate levels as well as experts involved in designing secondary school curricula and examinations.

We do not support the widespread view that L2 grammar can be expected to develop naturally and automatically from focus on communication tasks followed by focus on form activities. We believe instead that explicit grammar instruction has an important role to play in L2 teaching and learning, not only because of the pivotal interplay between declarative and procedural knowledge (cf. Pawlak 2006), but also for a number of other cogent reasons: explicit instruction provides shortcuts to mastering the target language forms, by enhancing input it equips learners with useful cognitive strategies facilitating conversion of input into intake, and moreover, it helps in developing learner autonomy. Furthermore, knowledge acquired in an elaborative process that falls upon metacognitive strategies can prevent learnt language from fading from memory.

The argument for the need of explicit instruction in the L2/FL classroom presented here is supported with an empirical study of selected lexical and grammatical mistakes culled from a written test assessing language competence of two groups of fairly advanced EFL learners. As teachers dealing with very advanced EFL learners, we have been witnessing a continuing decline in the levels of linguistic competence among English Studies students, whose high fluency in terms of comprehension and oral production is all too often marred by lexical and grammatical mistakes typical of intermediate (or even lower-intermediate) levels of language development. As a way of verifying our impressions, we engaged in a comparative study of lexical and grammatical mistakes gathered from tests taken by two sample groups of fairly advanced EFL learners: one pool of data was collected in July 2001 (upper-intermediate level) and the other sample almost a decade later in December 2010 (advanced students). A comparison of the results of the analysis shows some striking

commonalities and reveals substantial gaps in language competence of the subjects, which considering that the latter group is attributed a native-like competence in the target language, calls for some reflection and introduction of some counterbalance measures. We want to argue here that there is a need for drawing the learners' attention both to the semantic and to the formal features of linguistic forms throughout teaching and learning; we also want to point to the role of consciousness of contrast with the learners' mother language (L1) in SLA here. Our study thus supports James' (1996) argument that contrastivity with L1 has an important role to play in making linguistic input noticeable to the learner, which is a necessary (and a sufficient) condition for linguistic forms to serve as intake in language acquisition, a point raised also by Schmidt (1990) and others.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 overviews the reasons for the recent focus on grammatical competence and language accuracy in L2 pedagogy. Section 3 presents the empirical study of errors revealing gaps in linguistic competence of two distinct groups of L1 Polish learners of English and lists selected lexical and morphosyntactic features that are the likely source of the most common and persistent mistakes. The interpretation of the results is provided in section 4. In section 5 we offer some general comments on the types of errors attested and in section 6 we argue for (contextualised) re-translation tasks as a useful consciousness-raising (C-R) technique. Section 7 concludes.

2. To Foster or not to Foster Explicit Knowledge of Lexis and Grammar? Recent Changes in the Approach to Grammar Instruction in the L2/FL Classroom

A great deal has been written lately about grammar coming into focus in the process of L2 teaching and learning. The realisation that "proper understanding of the notion of communicative competence gives no endorsement for the neglect of grammar," to quote Widdowson's (1990: 40) words from more than 20 years ago, and that knowledge of syntactic structures in the target language will not simply emerge out of learners using it for communicative purposes, has resulted in growing emphasis on form in recent L2 methodology (cf., among others, Burgess and Etherington 2002; Doughty and Williams 1998a; Gascoigne 2002; Larsen-Freeman 2001; Norris and Ortega 2001; Mackey 2006; Spada and

Tomita 2010; Scheffler and Cinciála 2011). Apart from the fact that both theorists and practitioners currently agree that grammar instruction constitutes an indispensable part of L2/FL language learning, as without it an important component of communicative competence is missing, the emphasis on learners' cognitive development has contributed to upgrading the role of syntactic knowledge over the last 20 years or so. As Nyssonen (1995: 170) points out, learners necessarily need to find out about the "‘why’s and wherefores’ of particular language choices and develop prescriptions from descriptions."

While some researchers and language teachers see the balance tipped in favour of grammar as an important pillar in target language development, there are a number of unresolved controversies both at the theoretical and practical levels, to mention the implicit/explicit learning issue on the one hand (cf. DeKeyser 1998: 56–58; 2003: 321–334; Williams 2005: 269–272) and pedagogical decisions about which forms to teach, when, how and with view to achieving what specific curricular goals, on the other (cf. Dougherty and Williams 1998b; Pawlak 2006).

The controversy over the role of conscious and unconscious processes in knowledge acquisition notwithstanding, to the extent that L2 acquisition involves learners noticing or paying attention to their own linguistic output in order to monitor for the discrepancies with the output produced by other speakers in their environment for the purpose of analysis and restructuring of their own output as well as conscious learning processes of hypothesis formation, acquisition of L2 is impossible without attention to, or in other words, consciousness of what is being learned (as discussed in Schmidt 1994: 19). As learning is contingent on focal-attentive processes that require consciousness, Schmidt (1990) proposes that conscious cognitive effort that requires subjective (reflective) experience of noticing is necessary and sufficient for the conversion of input into intake. In the same vein, R. Ellis (1990) argues that explicit knowledge of L2 linguistic forms can develop into the intuitive knowledge of L2 at the point when the new knowledge can be accommodated by the learners into their own interlanguage systems. More recently, remarks along the same lines have been offered by Pawlak (2006). The results of a research synthesis and statistical meta-analysis of the efficacy of both explicit and implicit L2 instruction conducted by Norris and Ortega (2000, 2001) demonstrate that focused L2 instruction leads to large target-oriented gains, explicit instruction tends to be more effective than various implicit types of in-

struction in the L2/FL classroom, and focus on form and focus on forms are equally effective (cf. also Doughty 2003).

The question that arises is why explicit learning processes are necessary in SLA. According to N. Ellis (2008: 8), the reasons may include transfer, learned attention and automatization:

In contrast to the newborn infant, the L2 learner's neocortex has already been tuned to the L1, incremental learning has slowly committed it to a particular configuration, and it has reached a point of entrenchment where L2 is perceived through mechanisms optimised for the L1. The L1 implicit representations conspire in a "learned attention" to language and automatized processing of the L2 in non-optimal L1-tuned ways.

What this suggests is that in order to compensate for the developmental changes that put L2 learners at a cognitive disadvantage and to counterbalance the implicit learning processes that are nonoptimal for L2, L2 learners must fall back on explicit instruction to convert input to intake. As Schmidt (1990) argues, this is contingent on the learner's noticing requisite target structures in the communicative input. In other words, what is necessary for L2 learning is conscious registration of the grammatical structures that eventually come to underpin the grammatical competence of the L2/FL learner (for the meanings that they are mapped onto). According to Schmidt (1990), awareness of a grammatical aspect of the input depends on this aspect's frequency, perceptual salience and functionality. James (1996) adds contrastivity with L1 as another factor that makes target structures noticeable. Agreeing with N. Ellis (2008) that L1 transfer is an important factor in SLA, with DeKeyser (2005: 15) that "lack of salience plays an important role in acquisition difficulty," and with James (1996) that noticing contrast with the learners' L1 can make input (more) noticeable, we want to argue here that L2 teaching should contain a module whose aim is to draw the learners' conscious attention to salient differences in the linguistic forms, meanings as well as the form-meaning relationships between L1 and L2. In particular, we want to argue here that contextualised re-translation engaging learners in conscious input and output analysis accompanied by error recast and correction can facilitate noticing and learning precisely because re-translation makes the requisite linguistic features not only useful, but in fact essential for the intended meanings to be mapped onto appropriate linguistic forms. In addition, as re-translation is followed up by critical thinking tasks that

draw the learners' attention receptively to formal and semantic features of problematic structures, the relevant features are highlighted at the same time that the mapping of meaning onto form takes place and the meaning is still active in working memory. This contributes to optimising the form-meaning mapping for acquisition.

3. Empirical Data

3.1. Method and Subjects

A mini-empirical study we would like to report here aimed at identifying gaps in linguistic competence in the target language of advanced learners of English. To achieve this goal, the data obtained on the basis of a re-translation exercise were collected and analysed.

The re-translation data were collected from two captive groups. One (Group A in Table 1 in section 3.2. below) was a group of English Philology candidates taking their entrance examination in English as part of the admission procedure to the Jagiellonian University in summer 2001. They could be roughly placed at B2 proficiency level. Extreme scorers, that is those scoring less than 25% and more than 75% of the total on the test, were excluded from the original pool of empirical data, as not representative within the overall sample. From the remaining 480 or so test papers, 60 were selected at random to identify most obvious problem areas that the upper-intermediate learners of English might have. The other group (Group B in Table 1 in section 3.2. below) consisted of 33 students enrolled in the MA English Studies programme in autumn 2010, all of whom held BA degrees in English after completing a three-year academic programme in English. Their language level could thus be specified as C1. They were asked to do the re-translation task as part of their practical English class in reading.

In the re-translation exercise used in the present study, mini-texts in English identified as involving language forms potentially problematic for Polish learners of English due to the complexity and opacity of the form-meaning relationship and differences in the mapping of meanings onto forms in L1 and L2 had been translated into Polish and the subjects' task was to provide English equivalents of selected chunks in the context provided (cf. Appendix). The subjects were instructed to complete the English sentences providing accurate translation equivalents of the

relevant fragments without changing anything in the translations already provided. To avoid any misunderstanding, the instruction on task sheets was provided in Polish.

We believe that the re-translation task described above provides a valid measure of language proficiency and is a relevant tool to probe interference phenomena. Although re-translation does not assess proficiency on the basis of truly free constructed responses, but rather, on the basis of guided (constrained) constructed responses, it still escapes the criticism that language proficiency should not be assessed on the basis of limited response formats such as multiple response tasks, grammaticality judgements or metalinguistic judgements (cf. Norris and Ortega 2000). To our minds, the subjects' responses in the task are similar if not identical to the output they are likely to produce for the expression of the intended meanings in spontaneous communication. In addition, the errors made by a considerable percentage of the subjects sharing certain defining characteristics, such as the level of advancement in L2, age, and educational background, testify to their lack of awareness or insufficiency in the awareness of the relevant lexical and structural features of the target language.

The analysis of the results presented in the next section reveals that some English forms which are supposed to be mastered at the intermediate level were not internalised by many subjects. Considering the length of instruction in English that these learners had had prior to taking the test as well as the fact that most of them, if not all, had taken their school-leaving examination in English, their level of proficiency has revealed some systematic shortcomings.

3.2. *Data: Selected Errors*

The analysis of the empirical data culled from the two groups focuses on some selected errors in spelling, grammar and lexis. The table below displays the most conspicuous grammatical and lexical problems encountered in the analysed samples.¹ Recall that Group A is comprised of 60 subjects with B2 language level doing the re-translation task during their entrance exam to the Jagiellonian University in 2001 while Group B con-

¹ Only some erroneous forms are listed in the table as illustration of the problems attested. If the number of students who did a particular item in the task in Group B was not 33, the actual number is provided after a slash.

sists of 33 English Studies subjects with C1 proficiency level doing the task in 2010:

Table 1. Selected errors: Group A and B.

Item number	Error (example)	Group A No of students	Group A %	Group B No of students	Group B %
SPELLING					
2	complements	17	28.33	13	39.39
3	twenty four	23	38.33	15/26	57.69
6	phisic, phisiq	23	38.33	5	15.15
GRAMMAR					
3	loafs, breads	41	68.33	18	54.45
3	half a litre cream	31	51.67	9	27.27
4	laying, lied	27	45	13	39.39
10	half cheaper, twice cheaper	46	76.76	23	69.69
10	was too small	42	70	23	69.69
10	didn't buy it	54	90	28/31	90.32
3	had had	12	20	3	9.09
3	have had/made	7	11.67	8	24.24
5	hadn't let us	18	30	12	36.36
6	study	33	55	26	78.79
6	hadn't known/heard	43	71.67	20	60.6
3	(have) thought	15	25	9	27.27
3	would think	17	28.33	8	24.24
8	had left	19	31.67	6	18.18
4	he opened	10	16.67	2	6.06
4	he didn't open	11	18.33	3	9.09
4	didn't he open	5	8.33	1	3.03
9	did I remember	7	11.67	6	18.18
9	when I remembered	5	8.33	3	9.09
9	<i>it was</i> missing	28	40	14	42.42
LEXIS					
1	sailing along	12	20	3	9.09
1	flowing along	7	11.67	–	–
1	swimming along	9	15	1	3.03

Table 1. Selected errors: Group A and B – *continued*.

Item number	Error (example)	Group A No of students	Group A %	Group B No of students	Group B %
3	meet/meeting	11	18.33	5	15.15
8	crossing through	22	36.67	–	–
9	recalled to	5	8.33	1	3.03
9	reminded to	8	13.33	1	3.03
9	throw/put a coin	17	28.33	10	30.30

4. Analysis of the Results

4.1. Spelling

Systematic spelling problems were manifested in the written forms of the hyphenated numeral *twenty-four*, the school subject *physics* as well as in lack of discrimination in spelling of a pair of homophonous lexical items, *complements* vs. *compliments*. Although both numerals and names of school subjects are introduced early on in learning English as a foreign language, the high percentage of errors made in their spelling, especially in the less advanced group, shows that certain forms of language continue to cause problems until the late stages of linguistic proficiency. Assuming that better performance of Group B subjects with the spelling of the word *physics* compared with Group A can be related to differences in the experience with English, greater in the case of Group B, the above-mentioned spelling errors support a need to recycle the language already taught/learned at more advanced stages of language development. The spelling of the numeral *twenty-four* involves the hyphen, which is not used except in the written forms of compound numerals. This irregularity also indicates a need for explicit instruction aiming at the learners' noticing a particular formal aspect of the target language (the written form). Neither misspelling of the school subject or of the numeral mentioned above bears on the issue of comprehensibility, which is primarily focused on and evaluated in written production. On the other hand, the high number of errors encountered with *compliments*, which over 28% of the testees in Group A and over 39% subjects in Group B confused with *complements*, indicates a language difficulty caused by the fact that two

distinct meanings can be mapped onto one phonetic form. This suggests a greater need for learners to take notice of a contrast between words with non-identical but similar spellings (and identical pronunciation) so as to avoid a lexical deficiency and a resultant incomprehension or ambiguity. To avoid such errors, learners should be made aware of the difficulty and a possibility of mapping an intended meaning onto a written form that encodes a distinct meaning. In addition, the high percentage of incorrect spelling of *compliment* may reflect interference with its Polish cognate *komplement*.

4.2. Grammatical Problems

Most grammatical errors that were made in both groups concerned: 1) grammatical classification of certain nouns, 2) syntax of pseudo-partitive and comparative constructions, 3) formal encoding of the intransitive/transitive distinction with certain verbs, 4) tenses of the verb, 5) formal encoding of hypothetical meanings in English, and 6) syntax of emphatic information-packaging structures, which departs from the syntax of unmarked clauses.

The errors in the irregular forms of nouns and verbs (*loaves* and *lay*, respectively) clearly show a need for greater attention to irregularities. In the latter case, the error seems to suggest inadequacy in the form-meaning mapping relationship between the grammatically distinct intransitive verb *lie* and the transitive *lay*. The countable use of the noun *bread*, which is not licensed by linguistic convention in English, is suggestive of L1 transfer: in Polish the mass-to-count shift is pragmatically licensed and grammaticised with the counterpart of *bread*, the lexeme *chleb*. Although counting constructions with mass nouns occurring with measure nouns like *pint* or *litre* are introduced early on, many subjects failed to use the measure noun with the indefinite article (*a*) or the article was put in the wrong position in the structure (**a half litre*). In addition, the measure noun *pint* was used only by 10% of subjects in Group A and only 1 subject in Group B (in the incorrect expression **a half pint of fresh cream*), which clearly suggests a need for more attention to be paid in teaching and learning to culture-specific lexis. The Polish counterpart of the plurale tantum noun word *pyjamas/pajamas* is a countable noun *piżama*. The lexical item *pyjamas/pajamas* proved to be a problem for a high percentage of the subjects both as regards spelling and as regards knowledge of the grammatical classification of the word, showing that

more attention should be given to contrasting elements which seem similar across languages but are ruled by different constraints within each system so that learners can be made aware of potential problems (cf. Willim and Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1997 for some exercises in this area). The discrepancy in the number of subjects who could control subject-verb agreement with the noun *pyjamas/pajamas*, but failed to control anaphoric agreement with this noun, further suggests a need for drawing attention to all salient properties of linguistic forms. We think that if learners were in general engaged in linguistic analyses to a greater degree, they would be better assisted in developing target-like competence. Also pervasive problems with the use of the comparative construction *half the price of / half as much as / twice as cheap* demonstrate clearly that unless a contrast with the target language has been observed, learners will impose a native language structure on the meaning they are trying to communicate. Again, the relatively high percentage of failure suggests a need for drawing on the contrast with L1 to help learners notice the form of the comparative construction in question and alert them to the differences in the form-meaning relationship in L1 and L2.

The problems that the subjects demonstrated in their use of the grammatical tenses are evidence for overgeneralization. While the concept of anteriority with respect to the reference time of the cancelling event in the second clause (item 3) is called for and anteriority with respect to a past reference time is typically encoded with the Past Perfect Tense, this tense cannot be used in this context, as one cannot cancel a meeting one already had. On the other hand, the use of the Present Perfect tense to encode the appointment-making event reveals that a sizeable proportion of the students perhaps do not understand that the Present Perfect presents past events from the standpoint of the present, i.e. the utterance (speech) time. In test item 5, the use of the Past Perfect Tense with the expression *to let sb know* results in an illogical order of the events talked about in the sentence. In example 6, the Past Perfect Tense is inappropriate in the main clause, because the perfect in general presents a completed situation prior to reference time while knowledge of Midchester can hardly be viewed as a completed prior situation. In view of all of the above, it seems that the Past Perfect Tense is simply overgeneralised by the learners. A greater need for control over complex form-meaning relationships is also revealed by the misuse of the tense-form of the verb *to study* in example 6. The context of this example suggests clearly that the speaker has

moved to Midchester only recently and hence, the verb should preferably be used in the Present Continuous Tense. Still, the Simple Present Tense was used by 33 subjects (55%) in group A and as many as 26 (78.79%) in Group B, which suggests a backsliding effect.

Furthermore, the errors made in examples 3 and 8 demonstrate inadequacy in the form-meaning relationship in the expression of hypothetical meanings in English. The mapping of counterfactual meanings onto syntactic (conditional) structures is especially difficult for Polish learners, because Polish does not distinguish formally counterfactuals with present time reference from counterfactuals with past time reference. In addition, the use of the Past Perfect Tense in example 8 reveals a problem with recognising the difference between counterfactuality, where the speaker expresses negative truth commitment, and factuality, where the speaker presents the situation as a fact (hence, the truth commitment is positive). Clearly, there is a need for focusing on the meaning, the form, as well as the form-relationship here, as unintended meanings may be conveyed. Without doubt, conditional clauses are one of the best examples showing that success in communicating meaning cannot be achieved without emphasis on the form.

Finally, while lack of subject-auxiliary inversion triggered by preposing the negative adverbial *not even when* is a source of more errors in Group A compared with Group B, which may indicate a difference in the experience with language, both groups demonstrate a serious inadequacy in their use of the special *it*-cleft construction for foregrounding information in a sentence. The latter structure shows that if learners lack a particular syntactic structure and/or lack awareness of its formal complexity, they will tack words and phrases together in an improvised way, producing sentences like **So only not until several seconds after I was put through I recalled to insert a coin*; **So I remembered not until several seconds after I got put through to insert a coin*; **So it was not until several seconds after having the connection did I remember I should have put a coin*. The question is whether the ability to produce utterances of this sort is “real communication.” We believe that a balanced emphasis on form can in fact facilitate rather than hinder fluency and that it is necessary until the most advanced levels of L2 learning: 4 (21.05%) out of 19 (57.58%) subjects in Group A who used the *it*-cleft construction used *when* instead of *that*; in addition, out of 14 subjects who did not use the *it*-cleft, 8 (57.14%) did not use subject-auxiliary in-

version in the presence of a preposed negative adverbial. This clearly indicates a need for explicit instruction and drawing the learners' attention to the form-meaning relationship in the case of the information packaging *it*-cleft construction, but also in ordinary constructions in which particular constituents are placed in untypical positions, triggering inversion.

4.3. *Lexical Problems*

As argued by N. Ellis (1994), if words are learned for their meanings, explicit learning processes are essential for acquiring the semantic and conceptual aspects of vocabulary. These explicit processes include "inferring word meanings from context, semantic or imagery mediation between the FL word (or a key approximation) and the L1 translation, and deep processing for elaborating of the new word with the already existing knowledge" (N. Ellis 1994: 51). The analysis of the lexical errors found in the empirical data points to problems with all of the above mentioned aspects of vocabulary learning. On the one hand, the data reveal that there is a need for teaching/learning vocabulary not just for the gist of the meaning but rather for all the relevant aspects of meaning if relevant information is to form the basis for the working definition of the word's meaning in memory and for old information to be successfully related to already existing information (cf. also Lewis 1993; Nizegorodcew 1996). In other words, learning vocabulary requires learning the semantic and conceptual underpinnings that determine the place that a word has in the overall linguistic (lexical) and conceptual structure. On the other hand, words have syntactic properties which need not be inferable from their semantic properties and these must also be noticed and learned. These two challenges may additionally be compounded by transfer, as learning the meaning of the L2 word requires an analysis of its L1 equivalent for both the commonalities and the differences. For this reason, it seems that explicit instruction in the form of consciousness-raising tasks focusing on the complexity of meaning, the complexity of form, and on the complexity of the form-meaning relationship can facilitate vocabulary acquisition.

In example 1 (cf. Appendix), the context creates a need for a particular verb of movement; since here movement is on the surface of water, effected by the current rather than by the arms and legs, *to float* or *to drift* should be used while *to swim* and *to sail* are not appropriate mappings of the intended meaning onto form. The lexical deficiency that the

errors demonstrate seems to be caused by the lack of understanding of the fine-grained semantic distinctions there are between various verbs of movement in a common medium (liquid). Hence, if a word lexicalises certain distinctive concepts within a particular lexical field, the distinctive concepts and their patterns of lexicalisation should be brought to the attention of the learner if he/she is to learn the word successfully. In addition, interference with L1 should be controlled: as it happens, four English verbs of motion: *to swim*, *to float*, *to swim* and *to flow* can be rendered with the single verb of unidirectional movement *plynąć* in Polish in context. A longer experience with language and better developed cognitive and metacognitive skills are most probably the reason why the percentage of errors was much higher in Group A than in the more advanced group B. A similar problem arose in example 8, where a number of errors were caused by the choice of the incorrect preposition only in Group A, which also shows that exposure to language matters and that increased exposure can help learners eventually learn the differences in the semantic and conceptual properties of the prepositions *across* and *through*. In example 3, a comparable percentage of subjects from both groups failed to distinguish between *appointment* and *meeting*. Example 9 (*remember: recall: remind*) also shows a need for learning the mapping of a similar concept onto distinct linguistic forms. In addition, the different linguistic forms have distinct grammatical properties and the complexity of the form-meaning relationship poses a more serious problem for the less than for the more advanced learners. The inflexibility of the form-meaning relation that is observed in the case of collocations is probably responsible for problems with the fixed expression *to insert a coin*: in this case, the use of an inappropriate verb may be related to negative transfer from the learners' L1, as in the Polish collocation the meaning of *to insert* is rendered with the verb *wrzucić* "to throw." The percentage of errors made in both groups clearly suggests a need for drawing the learners' attention to the linguistic form that the meaning is mapped onto in the case of collocations in L2 and L1.

5. General Discussion

As the discussion in section 4 has revealed, many of the upper intermediate and advanced subjects engaged in performing the re-translation task demonstrated considerable inadequacy in language proficiency. On the

whole, the subjects showed greater difficulties with grammar than with lexis, but this may well reflect the design bias of the task itself. Thus, the finding of the present study corroborate earlier findings of studies into the relationship between fluency and accuracy in immersion (“grammar-free”) language programs (cf., among others, Swain 1998). The above discussion of some serious problems of the supposedly upper-intermediate as well as advanced students suggests that grammar still seems to be “in sight, perhaps, but not in mind,” to repeat the point made by the eminent educationist Widdowson (1990: 41) in his critique of communicative language teaching. Attaching too much importance to communicative use (i.e. production) of the L2 or FL in classroom teaching may result in neglect of important features of target language forms and prevent full attainment of proficiency, proving an insufficient curricular goal (cf. Long and Robinson 1998: 21). While the content of communication may be the primary objective in learning and teaching a second language, if communication is to be “real,” it must be free from lexical and grammatical deficiencies and ambiguities, especially those causing potential incomprehension or communication of unintended meanings. To this end, a fair amount of linguistic analysis is necessary in learning and teaching an L2 and explicit focus on formal features can facilitate acquisition (cf., among others, R. Ellis 2002: 225; Ellis *et al.* 2002: 420; Nassaji 2000).

As James (1996) points out, linguistic analysis plays two important roles in language teaching. On the one hand, linguistic analysis in the language classroom helps in developing and clarifying the knowledge that speakers already have, that is it serves as a means of making implicit knowledge explicit. On the other hand, it has a role in making certain features of language noticeable to speakers who fail to notice them, and as a result, are not in command of some skill(s) (cf. also Chan and Li 2002).

It must be stressed that linguistic analysis activities should aim at getting the student to identify and think about particular features of language form and use with a view to gaining a deeper understanding of their semantic meaning and pragmatic uses, which is the essence of what Long (1991, in Doughty and Williams 1998a: 3–4) has called focus on form. In pursuing this goal, linguistic analysis activities provide learners with opportunities to systematise and build on the grammar they already know as well as to make and test hypotheses about the grammar they still don’t know. Furthermore, such techniques aim at increasing the learners lexical resources, since syntactic structures, even when the learner has perfected

them, need to be filled with lexical items and part of learning a word is finding out how it is to be used with other words in sentences. To give an example, whereas the words *seek* (as in *to seek justification*) and *search* (as in *search for justification*) are synonymous, they cannot be used in the same syntactic contexts. Likewise, the semantic difference between *to forget doing something* and *to forget to do something*, is grammaticised. While in traditional communicatively-oriented language practice emphasis is on perfecting learners' production, in analyses of language material, emphasis is on drawing attention to forms as they realise meanings in a given communicative context with the goal of broadening the understanding of how the system works. By helping students get insight into the target language code, linguistic analysis contributes to upgrading and improving their language proficiency.

When is language upgraded and improved? When learners communicate clearly and in accurate language appropriate to the circumstances. This suggests that there is a need not just for fluency but also for accuracy in language production and, in the first place, in language instruction. The learner's noticing a discrepancy between his/her present state of knowledge and the target language norm helps him/her put the deficiency right (cf. Mackey 2006; Schmidt 1990; 2001). In this way emphasis on accuracy builds up confidence and facilitates learning.

6. Re-translation as a Useful Classroom Technique

We believe with James (1996) that balanced contrastivity with the native language contributes to the understanding of the target language and, in the long run, facilitates learning. At this juncture we would like to argue that re-translation exercises, such as those involved in the task that served as the empirical basis for the research presented above, can be fruitfully used for teaching purposes in the L2 classroom. Widely used in the Cognitive Code methodology in the old days, the technique fits in perfectly with organic grammar teaching (cf. Rutherford 1987: 147–155) and seems to be worth bringing to the teachers' attention for a number reasons. Firstly, re-translation exercises involve students with language forms in context: learners engage in producing forms that map onto intended meanings within mini-text or mini-discourse units. Thus students find out how grammar features in "the very achievement of meaning" (Widdowson 1990: 96), and in this technique focus on form embraces

focus on meaning at the same time (Thornbury 1999). Secondly, when engaging in mini-contrastive analyses of this kind, which can be classified as problem-solving tasks, learners not only embark on rational enquiry but also get a chance to attend to detail through juxtaposing sense and form relations in L1 and L2. In this way they come to a more precise realisation of how the two systems existing in their minds function. We would also like to suggest that this kind of technique makes it possible for students to see obvious similarities between the native and target languages. Since L2 learning, whether language teachers like it or not, necessarily tends to be L1-driven (N. Ellis 2006; 2008), it seems advisable to capitalise on the analysis of contrasts in the process of building up larger language competence. In fact, re-translation activities are very much in line with postulates of cognitive skill acquisition, according to which explicit teaching of grammar and instilling in the learners knowledge of the rules (declarative knowledge) should be followed by focus on form activities which will lead to proceduralisation (procedural knowledge) and finally, automatisisation (cf. DeKeyser 1998: 47–62; Nassaji 2000: 243–244). It is precisely in re-translation tasks of the type discussed here that students draw on the knowledge of rules, that is declarative knowledge, and consciously apply them to render the required meaning, in this way developing proceduralisation, that is awareness of how to encode meanings in the target language (cf. Pawlak's recommendations for form-focused instruction, 2006: 477–483). In this kind of approach, grammar is no longer treated as a body of knowledge of language structures, or a product transmitted onto the learner by the teacher. Rather, it is seen as knowledge of how the target language system works. It involves getting to know something and being able to do something with that knowledge (Widdowson 1990: 157). Thus, teaching grammar is perceived as a process, in which the teacher and the learner interpret language material cyclically and in which they discover how grammatical rules and lexical resources can be used in communicative contexts to transmit meanings (Widdowson 1990). In other words, as it is proclaimed in modern methodology literature, if this kind of technique is part of the teaching/learning repertoire, grammar is approached as a means and a facilitator of learning, rather than as an end to be pursued and achieved (cf., for example, Rutherford 1987; Widdowson 1990; Larsen-Freeman 2001). Thus re-translation facilitates the implicit-explicit knowledge interface, which seems crucial for the development of L2 competence (cf. N. Ellis 1994 and 2005; Erlam 2006: 465;

Hulstijn 2005: 130–132). Moreover, re-translation activities, in which errors are immediately recast and repaired while the meaning is still active in the working memory are optimised for acquisition (committing fine-grained information about how the target language works to memory). Finally, in such tasks students work on authentic language samples, which instantiate real communication.

To conclude, all the above suggests that incorporating the re-translation technique into second language classrooms can contribute to restoring the equilibrium in the interaction-and communication-oriented methodology that lacks adequate system-based foundation, in the spirit of Lyster and Mori's (2006) counterbalance hypothesis.

7. Conclusion

There is no escape from explicit instruction in the school environment, where language abilities developed for interactive communication and discourse management require adequate grammatical and lexical resources. In addition, language proficiency continues to be assessed based on “the accurate application of grammar rules and the effective arrangement of words in utterances,” while the lexical resources are assessed with reference to “the ability to use a wide range of vocabulary interpreted at the particular level” (*Guidelines for the Revised CPE 2002*). Thus we would like to issue a warning against the popular attitude that “language mistakes are creative experiments” (Lewis 1993: 172). Indeed, unlike Lewis, we believe that consciousness of form and control over the form-meaning relationship should not be taken to be characteristic and striven for at final stages in language development. The role of accuracy and adequate attitude towards it must be developed from the early stages of foreign language development, but, of course, it must be appropriately defined, balanced and promoted. The bottom-line is that second language leaning should be approached both as “a mental process of acquiring systems of knowledge (morphosyntactic, phonological, lexical), which make up the target language . . . [and as] something inter-mental, embedded in social interaction” (Foster and Ohta 2005: 402–403). The more the teaching and learning process will be motivated by this fundamental realisation, the more likely will it be to achieve the goals it sets out to achieve.

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Appendix

Re-translation Task

Uzupełnij podane poniżej tłumaczenia zdań na język angielski. Nie wolno niczego zmieniać we fragmentach podanych już w języku angielskim. Uzupełnienia mogą być dokonane w miejscach wykropkowanych. Poprawne tłumaczenie musi niekiedy znacznie się różnić od zdania polskiego, np.:

W przyszłym roku będzie miała 17 lat.

She will be seventeen next year.

Tłumaczenie musi być wierne, ale jednocześnie musi być poprawne pod względem gramatyki, ortografii i stylu.

“Complete the English sentences providing accurate translation equivalents of the relevant fragments. Do not change anything in the translations provided. The correct version must sometimes depart from the Polish language form, e.g.

W przyszłym roku będzie miała 17 lat.

She will be seventeen next year.

Your translation must convey the exact meaning and must be grammatically and stylistically correct.”

1. Sen nagle się zmienił. Przedtem przez wiele godzin błąkałem się bez celu po sosnowym lesie, a teraz byłem sam w małej łódce wolno płynącej obok zalesionych wysp. Prąd musiał być silny, ponieważ łódka płynęła cały czas do przodu.

The dream suddenly changed. Before I had been/was wandering through a forest of pine trees for hours. Now I was alone in a small boat which was slowly floating/driftng along past tree-covered islands. The current must have been strong, for the boat kept moving forward.

2. Twoja siostra w ogóle nie zwróciła uwagi na moje komplementy. Pewnie już się przyzwyczaiła do tego, że ją chwala.

Your sister didn't pay attention to my compliments at all. She must be accustomed / have become accustomed / have got used by now to being praised.

3. – Jutro jedziemy na piknik – powiedziała pani Nowak. – Czy chciałabyś pojechać z nami?

Miałam już umówione spotkanie z fryzjerką, ale zgodziłam się je odwołać. Pani Nowak uśmiechnęła się i wręczyła mi listę dwudziestu czterech produktów (w tym krewetki, pół litra świeżej śmietany, cztery krojone bochenki pełnoziarnistego chleba), które należało dostarczyć do piątej. Nigdy bym nie przypuszczała, że tak wiele rzeczy może być potrzebnych na zwykły piknik.

“We are going for / are having a picnic tomorrow,” said Mrs Nowak.

“Would you like to come with us?” I had already made an appointment / had a previous appointment with the hairdresser but I agreed to cancel it. Mrs. Nowak smiled and handed me a list of twenty-four (food) items / products (including shrimps / scampi, half a litre of fresh cream and four sliced loaves of wholemeal / whole grain / full-grain bread), to supply / be supplied before five o’clock. I would never have thought that so much stuff could / would be needed for a simple picnic.

4. Paul leżał, marząc, na stercie siana. Nie otworzył oczu nawet wtedy, kiedy mucha zaczęła mu pełznąć po twarzy. Był tysiąc mil stąd, w świecie wiecznych lodów. Dopiero gdy na sąsiednim polu zaczął pracować traktor, uświadomił sobie, jak bardzo jest mu gorąco.

Paul lay (day)dreaming / was lying (day)dreaming on a bundle of hay.

Not even when a fly started crawling / creeping over his face did he open his eyes. He was a thousand miles away, in a / the land / country of perpetual / eternal / permanent ice. Not until a tractor started working in the next field did he realise how hot he was.

5. Cieszę się, że nam nie powiedziałaś, dopóki nie skończyliśmy. Nigdy bym nie przyjął twój go zaproszenia, gdybyś mi powiedział, co mnie czeka.

I’m glad that you didn’t let us know until after we had finished.

I would never have said yes to your invitation if you had told me what I would be in for.

6. Studiuje fizykę w Midchester. Nic nie wiedziałam o Midchester, zanim tu przyjechałam, ale powiedziano mi, że to jest dobry uniwersytet. Żałuję tylko, że nie dowiedziałam się wcześniej, jak bardzo tu pada.

I am studying / reading physics / Physics at / in Midchester. I didn’t know anything about Midchester before I came here but I was told it was / is a good university.

I only wish I had found out earlier how much it rained / rains here.

7. Kiedy Wilhelm Zdobywca najechał Brytanię w roku 1066, Lewes było jednym z pierwszych miasteczek, które zostały zdobyte. W tych czasach Lewes była tylko

małą wioską, ale musiała stawić znaczny opór, skoro Wilhelm kazał zbudować tu zamek.

When *William the Conqueror invaded Britain in 1066, Lewes was one of the first towns to be conquered / captured. Lewes was a small village then but it must have resisted quite strongly / must have put up considerable resistance because William had a castle / ordered a castle to be built here.*

8. Jeśli statek wypłynął wczoraj z Plymouth, w tej chwili jest w Hiszpanii. Jutro o tej porze będzie płynął przez Atlantyk, a za najdalej pięć dni pasażerowie zobaczą Statuę Wolności.

If the ship left Plymouth yesterday, it is / must be / will be in Spain now. This time tomorrow it will be crossing / sailing across the Atlantic and in five days' time at (the) most the / its passengers will see / be seeing the Statue of Liberty.

9. Nie jestem przyzwyczajony do korzystania z telefonów publicznych, więc dopiero kilka sekund po tym, jak uzyskałem połączenie, przypomniałem sobie, żeby wrzucić monetę.

I'm not used / accustomed to using public (tele)phones so it was not until several seconds after I had got through that I remembered to insert a coin.

10. Piżama była za mała, więc jej w końcu nie kupiłam. Za to kupiłam tę bawełnianą marynarkę. Była o połowę tańsza od tej skórzanej. I tak jestem splukana.

The pyjamas were too small so in the end I did not buy them. I bought the / this cotton jacket instead. It was half the price of / half as much as / twice as cheap as the leather one. At any rate, I'm broke / I'm broke, anyway.