

Focus on form through collaborative dialogue: Exploring task effects

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INTRODUCTION

In our recent research¹ we have been using tasks as a stimulus for generating talk among students (Swain and Lapkin, 1998). We have been interested in discovering whether, through output (the activities of talking and/or writing), learners notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge, triggering an analysis of input or of existing internal resources to fill those gaps (Swain and Lapkin, 1995); whether learners' output serves as a hypothesis of how to convey their intended meaning (Swain, 1995); and whether learners use language to reflect on their own (or their interlocutors') language use – that is, whether learners externalise their hypotheses about form and meaning, exposing those hypotheses to scrutiny and discussion (Swain, 1998; 2000). Our research has involved a search for tasks that will generate this sort of student talk with the goal of demonstrating its relationship to second language learning. The tasks we have used to generate such talk engage students in linguistic problem solving, are done collaboratively, and involve the production of a spoken and written text.

Studies such as those of Donato (1994), LaPierre (1994; see also Swain, 1998), Swain and Lapkin (1998) and Tse (1996) suggest that the talk which surfaces when students collaborate in solving linguistic problems encountered in communicative task performance represents second language learning in progress. In these studies, later language use has been traced back to dialogue occurring as the students worked collaboratively to express their intended meaning and carry out the task at hand. In these dialogic exchanges related to their ongoing language use, noticing, hypothesis formulation, and hypothesis testing have been observed to have taken place. These studies have relied on pedagogical tasks to serve as the stimulus to collaborative dialogue (Swain, 1997a).

One of the main rationales offered in the literature for using communicative tasks in language teaching is that second language acquisition is enhanced through the negotiation of meaning: '... language learning is assisted through the social interaction of learners and their interlocutors, particularly when they negotiate toward mutual comprehension of each other's message meaning'

(Pica et al., 1993: 11). According to Pica and colleagues, a jigsaw task – one in which each participant has some, but not all, the information needed to complete the task – is the type of task where opportunities for meaning negotiation are most likely to be generated.

With few exceptions (e.g. Fotos, 1994; Lyster, 1994; Swain, 1997b), definitions of communicative tasks emphasise the importance of a focus on meaning. Nunan (1989), for example, offers the following definition of a communicative task: 'A piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form' (p. 10). An alternative view,² however, is that a task can still be considered communicative even if learners focus quite explicitly on form (Breen and Candlin, 1980; Swain, 1997b). This explicit focus on form comes about as learners attempt to express their intended meaning as accurately and as coherently as they are able (Swain and Lapkin, 1995). Experimentation with several different types of classroom activity (Kowal, 1997; Kowal and Swain, 1997; Swain, 1998) suggested that, when completed collaboratively, they led to a focus on form as students engaged in constructing the meaning required by the task. We chose one of these task types (dictogloss, described below) to use in the current study, anticipating that it would elicit from our students a greater focus on form than would a jigsaw task which, as suggested above, provides greater opportunities for meaning negotiation.

In this chapter we report on a study in which two communicative tasks, similar in content³ but different in format, were used with adolescent learners of French. Our goal was to examine the data for instances of second language learning during task performance, anticipating differences due to the format (dictogloss vs jigsaw) of the task. Specifically, we anticipated that there would be less focus on form by students doing the jigsaw task, a typical meaning negotiation task, than by students doing the dictogloss task and that, therefore, the dictogloss task would provide more opportunities for language learning. This prediction was based on our earlier research using the dictogloss (e.g. Kowal and Swain, 1997). We also anticipated that because, with the dictogloss, a native speaker model text was provided, students' production would be more accurate. What we did not anticipate was that providing a text would focus the range of student performance in a variety of ways.

THE STUDY

Background

One purpose in conducting this study was pedagogical, since our interests focus on French immersion students, who, even after some eight years of comprehensible input, remain non-native-like in their spoken and written French (e.g. Harley and Swain, 1984; Swain, 1985). Although the instructional focus in immersion is primarily experiential or content oriented, there

is some formal teaching of grammar. It has been observed that grammar teaching often takes the form of presenting and practising isolated rules and paradigms, and manipulating form rather than relating form to function (Allen et al., 1990). In terms of the three goals of second language learning that Skehan (1996) discusses – i.e. fluency, complexity and accuracy – it can be argued that immersion students attain fluency early in the programme and linguistic complexity continues to develop to meet the cognitive demands of their academic curriculum. Linguistic accuracy remains a goal to be actively worked on. The need to address the teaching of grammar in immersion curricula is well established, but there is little consensus concerning the most effective ways of doing so (but see Lyster, 1995; Swain, 1996).

For these reasons, our recent research has been aimed at considering pedagogical ways to encourage immersion students to focus on the accuracy of their spoken and written French while still maintaining the philosophy of immersion education – that second language learning be embedded in a contextually rich, content-based curriculum. We therefore considered tasks that would lead these students to *focus on form* without losing sight of the meaning they are trying to convey. Thus, as noted above, we have begun to explore the implications of different task types, in this case with a common content, for encouraging a focus on form.

In the present study, we asked students to carry out two contrasting tasks. Class J did jigsaw tasks; Class D did dictogloss tasks. In both cases, the tasks were preceded by a short lesson on French pronominal verbs as an input enhancement activity. Our hypothesis was that students doing the dictogloss tasks would focus more on form than the students doing the jigsaw tasks. Furthermore, other differences in students' dialogues and written texts would become apparent due to the differences in the nature of the two tasks, in spite of the similarity of content.

TASKS

As indicated above, we collected data using two contrasting tasks – a jigsaw task and a dictogloss (Wajnryb, 1990). The jigsaw task we used involved pairs of students working to construct a story based on a series of eight pictures (Appendix 5.1) in a two-way information gap activity. One student in each pair held pictures numbered 1, 3, 5 and 7 and the other, those numbered 2, 4, 6 and 8. The students were required to construct the story told by the pictures by looking only at the cards each held. Typically the students worked through the cards sequentially, alternately telling each other what their pictures contained. Then they wrote the story. As noted above, this type of task is thought to maximally foster negotiation of meaning.

The dictogloss task we used involved students listening to a passage read twice at normal speed. Each student took notes on its content, then worked with his or her partner to reconstruct the passage in writing based on the two sets of notes. Since the dictogloss provides content in the form of a native

speaker text, we thought this task would cause students to focus their attention on the accurate use of linguistic form to a greater extent than the jigsaw activity.

To make the two tasks as comparable as possible in terms of content we proceeded as follows. We showed the series of eight pictures to three adult native speakers of French and asked them to narrate the story they saw unfolding. Combining their transcribed narratives gave us the text we used for the dictogloss (Appendix 5.2). The dictogloss text contains seven pronominal verbs (see note 4 on page 111), and the story told by the jigsaw pictures creates a similar number of contexts for pronominal verbs.

Participants

We worked with two grade 8 mixed-ability French immersion classes from the same school. Class D had 30 students and Class J had 35 students. The students were from a lower middle to middle class socio-economic background. The two classes were described by their teachers and the researcher who collected the classroom data as interchangeable. Also, the average pre-test scores of the classes did not differ statistically. (The pretest is described below.) These two classes of grade 8 anglophone students had been in a French immersion programme since kindergarten. Until grade 3, all instruction was in French; thereafter, English language arts was introduced, and from about grade 5 onwards, approximately 50% of instruction was in French and 50% in English. During the French portion of the instructional day, selected academic subjects were taught in French along with French language arts.

Time-frame and activities

Data collection took place over a five-week period. In the first week, we administered a pre-test (described below). In the second week, we conducted a session to familiarise the students with the type of task they would be doing. To do this, we focused on the agreement of adjectives (which vary in number and gender) in French. A member of the research team taught a short mini-lesson on adjective agreement and led the class in either a jigsaw (Class J) or dictogloss (Class D) activity that foreshadowed the data-gathering session which took place the following week.

In the third week, we focused on a grammatical point – the pronominal verb.⁴ A pre-recorded mini-lesson on French pronominal verbs (5 minutes) was shown on video. The video also showed two students working together on the relevant task (J or D), which served as a model for what the students were to do immediately following the viewing of the videotape when the new stimulus (jigsaw task or dictogloss passage) was introduced. The instructions were provided to the students for both tasks in French. An English translation of these instructions can be found in Appendix 5.3. The conversation of each pair of students was tape-recorded as they did their task.

During the fourth week, we transcribed the tapes. Based on the content of the dialogues of the student pairs, additional test items were developed and added to the pre-test items, producing a 'tailor-made' post-test for each class for administration in the fifth week of the study. Because the transcriptions and new item development were done under considerable time pressure, and because the identification of language-related episodes (LREs) in the conversations of these second language speakers turned out to be a complex and time-consuming task, only the most obvious and clear examples were incorporated into items for the post-tests. (Example 5 below is an LRE arising in the dialogue of one pair of students in Class J which formed the basis of the class-specific post-test item shown in Appendix 5.4, item type B.)

Pre- and post-tests

We conducted a pilot study with the set of pictures shown in Appendix 5.1 with a different class of grade 8 immersion students than the two used in the current study. Based on the transcribed, tape-recorded interactions of the students in the pilot classroom, and on the assumption that the content of some of these interactions would be similar between the pilot students and the main study students, a pre-test was constructed for use in the main study (see Swain and Lapkin, 1998). The three item types are illustrated in Appendix 5.4.

In item type A, because the student dyads often questioned the gender of nouns, a choice of masculine or feminine articles is provided to accompany each noun listed. Learners check the masculine or feminine article, or indicate that they do not know (*je ne sais pas*).

Item type B provides a 'certainty scale' where test takers make a judgement about the grammaticality of each sentence with respect to a picture, indicating that each sentence is definitely wrong (*certainement incorrect*), probably wrong (*probablement incorrect*), probably correct (*probablement correct*) or definitely correct (*certainement correct*). Students also have a 'don't know' option.

Item type C has a picture stimulus followed by multiple-choice answers. Students select the correct lexical item from among a set of four. Many of the distractors included were based on the dialogues of students in the pilot data.

The post-test contained all pre-test items in addition to the new tailor-made, class-specific items referred to above.

Scoring procedures for written narrative

The written narratives produced by each pair of students were scored by two experienced immersion teachers using five-point rating scales to evaluate content, organisation, vocabulary, morphology and syntax. (See Appendix 5.5 for the descriptors developed for the end points of the five scales and Appendix 5.6 for two writing samples, one from Class J and one from Class D, each with an overall average rating of 4 out of 5.) The two sets of ratings for each writing sample were averaged to produce the scores shown in the

relevant section below (see Table 5.3).⁵ One of the researchers also counted idea units⁶ to see whether the two tasks yielded substantially different content.

Language-related episodes

The initial transcripts were checked carefully for accuracy. Then we analysed them for language-related episodes. A language-related episode (LRE) is defined as any part of a dialogue where students talk about language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct their language production (Swain and Lapkin, 1995). LREs thus entail discussion of meaning and form, but may emphasise one of these more than another. In our analyses we distinguish 'lexis-based' and 'form-based' LREs. Lexis-based LREs involve searching for French vocabulary and/or choosing among competing French vocabulary items. Form-based LREs involve focusing on spelling or on an aspect of French morphology, syntax or discourse. Both types of LREs usually occur in the context of writing out the story rather than in the initial telling of it. Conferencing achieved consensus among the research team members in identifying and classifying LREs.

RESULTS

Task differences identified through analyses of LREs

As noted above, we hypothesised that the jigsaw task would produce more emphasis on meaning (more lexis-based LREs), while the emphasis in the dictogloss would be on form (i.e. Class D would produce more form-based LREs on average than Class J). Before turning to the quantitative results, we present some examples illustrating how task differences are reflected in the dialogues of the pairs of students. At least three salient differences between the tasks emerged from the qualitative analyses of LREs.

The first difference relates to the nature of the task stimulus: Class J received a visual stimulus, whereas Class D's stimulus was auditory. The eight pictures in Appendix 5.1 were very colourful, and this, along with the fact that in the training activity (second week of the study) adjective agreement was taught using colour adjectives (*rouge, brune* in Example 1 below), had an impact on what the pairs negotiated. The influence of the visual (Class J) and auditory (Class D) nature of the two tasks is evident in Examples 1 and 2 respectively.

Example 1

(Class J, Pair 2)

A: Réveille-matin.

(Alarm clock.)

B: Et il y a un réveille-matin rouge . . . sur une table brune, et le réveille-matin . . . dit six heures et c'est tout.

(And there is a red alarm clock . . . on a brown table, and the alarm clock says 6 o'clock and that's all.)⁷

Example 2

(Class D, Pair 9)

- A: But what's that thing that woke him up that, they said something mickanick, but I have no idea what that is.
- B: 'Mickanick?'
- A: Yeah, that's what it sounded like.

Example 2 involves an attempt to mimic a sequence of sounds heard in the dictogloss, the word *mécanique* (see Appendix 5.2 for the context).

A second important difference is that one task provides a linguistic model while the other does not. The dictogloss exposes students to a relatively sophisticated native speaker (or writer) text. No such model is available to Class J. Consider Example 3.

Example 3

(Class D, Pair 7)

- B: Une plume sort du réveil . . .
(A feather comes out of the alarm clock . . .)
- A: Et chatouille.
(And tickles.)
- B: Et LUI chatouille les pieds.
(And tickles her feet.)

The possessive adjective (**her feet**) is represented in French in the indirect pronoun preceding the verb (**lui chatouille les pieds**). These students use the structure correctly in their written narrative, and are the only pair in either group to achieve complete accuracy in this particularly difficult structure.

A third difference between the two tasks relates to the cognitive demands they entail. The most obvious difference observed in the data is that the jigsaw task, with its numbered pictures, does not require students to expend effort to sequence their stories. In fact, it is interesting to note that 6 of 12 pairs of students in Class J actually numbered the sentences in their written texts rather than writing their stories as paragraphs. All Class D pairs wrote their narrative in paragraph form. Unlike Class J, Class D has to rely on notes taken while listening to the story read aloud. These students do concern themselves with the discourse requirement to sequence events in the story, as shown in Example 4.

Example 4

(Class D, Pair 11)

- B: Isn't it ET se peigne les cheveux [**and combs his hair**], because it's the last one?
- A: Non. Peigne ses cheveux et prépare pour son chemin.
[**No, combs his hair and prepares for the road.**]
- B: Right.

Student B emphasises the 'and' (*et*) in the first utterance here because he intends it to introduce the last in a series of actions taken by the character in the story before leaving for school. Student A points out that 'combing his hair' is not the final activity; rather there is still the activity of 'preparing' for school. (The relevant part of the translated dictogloss text shown in Appendix 5.2 reads 'She brushes her teeth, combs her hair and gets dressed to go to school'.) This LRE is clearly concerned with temporal sequencing.

Task differences: language-related episodes

Table 5.1 shows the average number of LREs that students in Classes D and J generated, the average number of lexis-based and form-based LREs generated, and the average percent of LREs generated that were lexis-based or form-based. As Table 5.1 shows, no significant differences emerge between the pairs of students doing the dictogloss task and the pairs of students doing the jigsaw task. These results do not support our initial hypothesis that there would be more form-based LREs in the dictogloss task relative to the jigsaw task.

An interesting feature of the data that appear in Table 5.1 is that the standard deviations of Class D are, in general, considerably smaller than those of Class J. We conducted Levene's test for equality of variances, a statistical test which allows one to determine if there are statistical differences between groups in the spread of their scores. The results show that the range in the total number of LREs was smaller for Class D than Class J ($p < 0.05$, one-tailed test). This suggests that the dictogloss task constrains student responses to a greater degree than the jigsaw task. This makes sense given that students were provided with a specific linguistic text in the dictogloss task.

Table 5.1 Language-related episodes (LREs)

	Class J			Class D			Sig.*
	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	
Count of total episodes	12	8.8	8.0	14	9.2	4.2	ns
Count of lexis-based LREs	12	4.0	3.7	14	3.7	2.3	ns
Count of form-based LREs	12	4.8	4.5	14	5.5	2.9	ns
Percent lexis-based LREs	12	41%	21%	14	40%	19%	ns
Percent form-based LREs	12	59%	21%	14	60%	19%	ns

* Two-tailed *t*-test.

Task differences: time taken to do task

Table 5.2 shows the average amount of time the students took to do the task and the average amount of time students remained on task. These did not differ significantly between the classes.

Table 5.2 Time taken to do a task

	Class J			Class D			Sig.*
	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	
Total interactive time (minutes)	13	12.6	7.5	14	13.0	3.7	ns
Total time on task (minutes)	13	10.2	6.9	14	10.2	3.3	ns

* Two-tailed *t*-test.

The Levene test for homogeneity of variances shows the differences in variances for time on task to be highly significant ($p < 0.000$, one-tailed test), indicating a much smaller range for Class D relative to Class J. This might have been expected given the more open-ended nature of the jigsaw task.

Task differences: quality of written narratives

The narratives that the students wrote as part of the task were rated. Table 5.3 shows the average ratings given for each of content, organisation, vocabulary, syntax, and number of idea units. Once again, no statistically significant differences were observed between the stories written by the students in Classes D and J. The Levene test for homogeneity of variances was used to compare the variances for each variable rated. Although the range of scores was smaller for each variable in Class D relative to Class J (with the exception of number of idea units generated), a statistically significant difference was found only in range of vocabulary use ($p < 0.05$, one-tailed test). Again, this suggests that the language input provided to students focuses and constrains their language production.

Because the pronominal verb was the focus of the mini-lesson, we counted instances of pronominal verb use (correct and incorrect) in the written narratives of Class J and Class D. To control for length of the stories, we first

Table 5.3 Average ratings of written stories

	Class J			Class D			Sig.
	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	
Content*	12	2.9	1.2	14	2.4	0.8	ns
Organisation*	12	3.1	1.1	14	2.9	0.9	ns
Vocabulary*	12	3.1	1.1	14	2.9	0.7	ns
Morphology*	12	2.9	1.0	14	2.8	1.0	ns
Syntax*	12	2.8	1.2	14	2.7	0.9	ns
Idea units (max. = 21)	12	12.5	2.9	14	12.7	3.7	ns

* For each dimension, a five-point scale is used with '1' representing very poor performance, and '5' representing excellent performance. Only the end points of the scales have descriptors (see Appendix 5.5).

counted all main verbs and then calculated the ratio of pronominal verbs to total verbs. The proportions were similar for the two classes: 52.3% for Class J and 45.5% for Class D ($p > 0.3$, two-tailed t -test). However, of the pronominal verbs used by Class J, only 59.4% (SD = 32) were correct. Many of the errors were overgeneralised instances of the pronominal form (e.g. using *se sortir*, a non-existent verb in French, where the context required *sortir*). In contrast, 88.9% (SD = 20) of the pronominal verbs used by Class D were correct. The difference between these percentages was statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$, one-tailed t -test), underlining the importance of the dictogloss in providing grammatically accurate input for second language production.

Task differences: test outcomes

Direct comparisons of Class J and Class D post-test scores are possible only with the 'core items', that is, those items that were in both the pre- and post-tests. This is because, for the 'full' post-test, each class was administered a different version, one that incorporated items based on the particular LREs generated by students in each class. These latter post-test items have been used to trace occurrences of language learning in the dialogues of pairs of students (see Swain and Lapkin, 1998; and below).

We compared the average core post-test scores of Class J and Class D using a two-tailed test, and found no significant differences. We further compared the average core pre- and post-test scores for each class, and found no statistically significant differences, indicating that neither class made any measurable gain. However, we observed numerous occurrences of language learning in which students, as they wrote out their stories, encountered a linguistic problem and worked towards solving it (as seen in their LREs). We provide two illustrative examples below.

Example 5 illustrates one of the possible effects of the mini-lesson, namely overgeneralisation in the use of the pronominal form of the verb. This LRE occurs in the dialogue of a student pair from Class J.

Example 5

(Class J, Pair 4)

- B: Yvonne va à l'école.
(Yvonne goes to school.)
- A: Se part à l'école.
(Yvonne leaves [uses non-existent pronominal form] for school.)
- B: Oui. Elle . . . se marche
(She walks [uses non-existent pronominal form])
- A: Se part, parce que . . .
(Leaves [uses non-existent pronominal form], because)
- A: Est-ce que c'est part ou se part?
(Is it leaves or leaves [in the non-existent pronominal form])
- B: Part.
(Leaves.)

- A: Part? Just part?
 (Leaves? Just leaves?)
- B: Ya.
- A: Ok. Yvonne part à l'école, um ...
 (Yvonne leaves for school)

The French verb *partir* does not exist in the pronominal form; but clearly these students are hesitating, perhaps overgeneralising as a result of the mini-lesson they had just seen on the video. In any event, they agree on the correct form, and, on post-test item B shown in Appendix 5.4, they correctly identify *partir* as a non-pronominal verb and reject *se partir*, a non-verb in French. They also write the verb correctly in their story. For Example 5, unfortunately there is no pre-test item. We may infer, however, that learning has occurred from the post-test response to the relevant tailor-made item, and from the written text produced by the pair of students.

In Example 6, students from Class D negotiate the gender of the lexical item *la cloche*.

Example 6

(Class D, Pair 11)

- B: Puis, le cloche⁸ a sonné.
 (Then the bell rang [=the alarm clock rang].)
- A: LA cloche?
 (The bell [emphasis on feminine form of article].)
- B: La cloche, le cloche, je pense c'est LA.
 [Alternating masculine and feminine forms of article.]
- A: Oui.
 (Yes.)
- B: La cloche a sonné.
 (The bell rang.)

Student A questions the gender of *cloche* in line 2 of the example, but her rising intonation signals uncertainty. B then tries out both the feminine and masculine alternatives, and settles on the correct feminine form (*la*). For this LRE (Example 6), there are both pre-test and post-test data (see item type A, Appendix 5.4): one student got the pre-test item wrong and the other got it right. On the post-test, both students marked *la* as the correct choice. The gender is also written correctly in their story.

Examples 5 and 6, one from each class, illustrate language learning in progress. Both task types, therefore, are shown to engender learning.

Discussion

The two tasks used in this study generated fewer differences than we had expected. The most salient difference is that the dictogloss task imposed a set of constraints that were not imposed by the jigsaw task. The dictogloss task appears to have constrained the range of students' time on task, the range in

the total number of language-related episodes produced, and the range of student performance in their written narratives, in particular with respect to vocabulary use. This smaller range of behaviour observed among pairs of students in the dictogloss class suggests that the use of the dictogloss task may focus students' attention, thus constraining students' output somewhat more than the jigsaw task, which is more open-ended linguistically.⁹

Other task-related differences included:

1. *Accuracy*: The jigsaw students produced proportionately fewer correct pronominal verbs than the dictogloss students in their written narratives.
2. *Discourse structure*: Many jigsaw pairs of students numbered the sentences in their narratives, whereas dictogloss students wrote in paragraphs. Furthermore, jigsaw students did not need to attend to logical and temporal sequencing, whereas the transcripts of the dictogloss students' discourse show evidence of such attention.
3. *Nature of the language-related episodes*: On the one hand, jigsaw students were influenced by the visual aspects of the stimulus material, referring often to the colour of objects in their pictures. On the other hand, dictogloss students' attention to the spoken text influenced students' attempts at producing vocabulary and complex linguistic structures.

Contrary to our expectations, task differences were not reflected in the degree of attention students paid to language form. In particular, in carrying out either task, students focused equally on form as they collaboratively constructed and wrote out their stories. On reflection, we believe there are two reasons for this similarity.

One reason is that the mini-lesson given prior to actually doing the task served, as we had expected, to focus students' attention on language form. This is particularly clear in the stories of the jigsaw students who, even one week after having had a mini-lesson on adjective formation, made considerable use of colour adjectives in describing their brightly coloured pictures.

The second reason is that the tasks had in common the necessity to produce written language. As the students wrote, they questioned each other about how to write their story, focusing their joint attention on form. The activity of writing collaboratively led students to discuss their own language use as they encountered problems. They brought to conscious attention gaps in their own knowledge and worked out possible solutions through hypothesis formation and testing, relying on their joint linguistic resources.

The similarity in the types of LREs generated by the students may, in part, account for the reason that no quantitative differences in their written stories or their core post-test scores were observed. Furthermore, no improvement from pre-test to post-test scores was observed. We believe the reasons for this are three-fold. First, relatively few of the LREs were captured in the core test items, so the language learning we had hoped to test with the pre-test/post-test design could not be revealed in those items. Secondly, students only spent on average 10 minutes on a task, a very brief period indeed to lead to

quantitative differences on a test. Thirdly, the students' interlanguage, although non-native-like, was relatively stable.¹⁰ Both of the tasks, however, seem to have had the effect of focusing students' attention on their own language use with the effect, in some cases, of providing occasions for language learning to take place.

Our results do not imply that one task is better than another for pedagogical purposes. The value of the tasks depends upon the instructional goals of the teacher. Both tasks generated a similar and substantial proportion of form-focused language-related episodes. Within the context of French immersion programmes, this is a welcome finding. Additionally, the dictogloss enhanced accuracy in the production of pronominal verbs and led students to notice and reproduce complex syntactic structures. The jigsaw task led to a greater range of vocabulary use and language-related episodes, suggesting that perhaps its open-ended nature might inspire greater linguistic creativity. It may be that with greater variation in language performance there is a corresponding reduction in accuracy.

Although our original purpose in conducting this study was to relate language-related episodes to second language learning, the study plays its part in extending our understanding of how attentional processes can be channelled within second language instruction.

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NOTES

1. This research was made possible by a grant (No. 410-93-0050) to Merrill Swain and Sharon Lapkin from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
2. See also the introduction to this volume for a discussion of different definitions of task.
3. To our knowledge, other task comparisons in the literature have not controlled for content across task types.
4. Pronominal verbs in French can be grouped into four semantic categories (Connors and Ouellette, 1996). The pronominal verbs in the dictogloss text (Appendix 5.2) fall into the reflexive category (e.g. *se laver*, to get washed or to wash oneself). In the reflexive reading of a pronominal verb, the pronoun 'represents a Patient co-referential with the Subject Agent argument' (p. 216).
5. The two sets of ratings differed by more than one point in only 4% of cases.
6. Idea units were determined as follows. Three adult native speakers did our jigsaw task (their texts were used to develop the dictogloss passage). The transcribed version of the longest jigsaw oral narrative was broken into information 'chunks'

or idea units which constituted the key pieces of information needed to convey the story told by the series of eight pictures. There were 21 of these key pieces of information: sun rises, 6 a.m., alarm rings, Martine sleeping soundly, feet on pillow, head at foot of bed, does not want to get up, with big toe (or foot), shuts off alarm, falls asleep again, at 6:02, the perfect alarm clock, designed to prevent sleep, extends mechanical hand with feather, tickles her foot, wakes her up, finally (OR given no choice), she gets up, gets ready, for school, puts on her back pack (OR arrives in good time). A point was given for each idea unit, regardless of the accuracy of its expression.

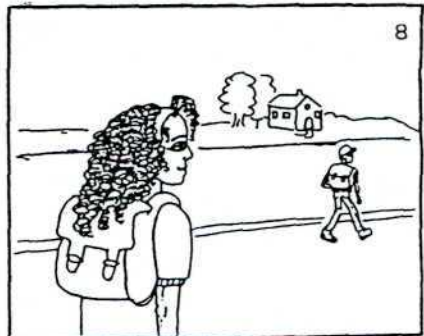
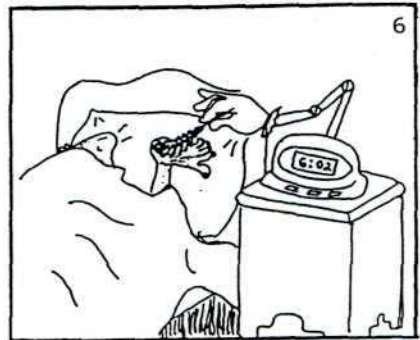
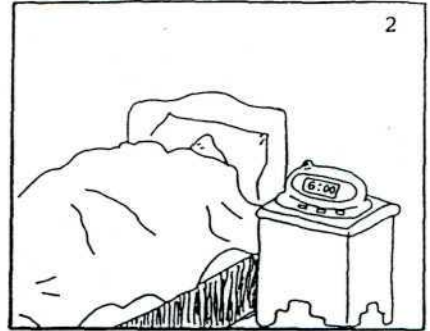
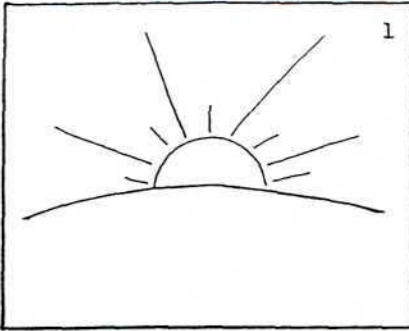
7. All the examples in this chapter, with the exception of Example I, constitute an LRE.
8. The correct lexical item for 'alarm clock' is *le réveil* or *le réveille-matin*. *La cloche* is best translated as 'bell'.
9. Bygate (1988) found that a guessing game task produced far lower standard deviations than a picture differences task on the incidence of a set of features.
10. Bygate (personal communication, 1998) suggests 'Another possibility is that language that was learnt in the context of task formats either was only partially learnt at the point (the learning process having been engaged but not resolved); or else the learnt material was available within the context of the task, but wasn't available for access in test contexts.'

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APPENDIX 5.1: PICTURES USED IN THE JIGSAW TASK



APPENDIX 5.2: DICTOGLOSS

Le réveil-matin de Martine

Il est six heures du matin and le soleil se lève. Martine dort tranquillement dans son lit. Elle fait de beaux rêves, la tête au pied du lit and les pieds sur l'oreiller. Quand le réveil sonne, Martine ne veut pas se lever. Elle sort son pied and avec le gros orteil, elle ferme le réveil. Elle se rendort tout de suite. Mais elle a le réveil qu'il faut pour ne pas être en retard. A six heures et deux minutes, une main mécanique tenant une petite plume sort du réveil et lui chatouille le pied. C'est efficace. Finalement Martine se lève. Elle se brosse les dents, se peigne les cheveux and s'habille pour prendre le chemin de l'école. Encore une journée bien commencée.

Translation of dictogloss task

It's 6 am and the sun is rising. Martine is sound asleep in her bed. She's having sweet dreams, her head at the foot of the bed and her feet on the pillow. When the alarm clock rings, Martine doesn't want to get up. She sticks her foot out, and with her big toe, she shuts off the alarm. She falls asleep again immediately. But she has the kind of alarm clock you need to prevent being late. At 6:02, a mechanical hand holding a small feather comes out of the alarm clock. It tickles her foot. To good effect! Finally Martine gets up. She brushes her teeth, combs her hair and gets dressed to go to school. Another great start to the day!

APPENDIX 5.3

Instructions for the dictogloss, translated into English

Now you are going to work in groups of two and you will reconstruct a story together that I'll read to you. While I read, take some notes – words or phrases to help you remember the story. Try to write the story exactly as I tell it, and then write it in excellent French. Try to use the exact words from the story as much as possible, but use other words if you forget the original words. Discuss among yourselves the grammatical decisions you take, and think above all, about the reflexive verbs that we have just looked at.

Instructions for the jigsaw task, translated into English

Now you are going to work in pairs to follow up on the lesson you just saw. This has two parts: first, you'll reconstruct the story together, based on the pictures you have. Then, you'll write the story out that you have created together.

Each of you will receive four numbered pictures. One of you will receive pictures 1, 3, 5, and 7; and the other, pictures 2, 4, 6, and 8. Without looking at each other's pictures, try to tell the story. Once you have done this, I want you to write out the story together. Remember that you are not just describing the pictures but telling the story that the pictures suggest. Also, because we

have just reviewed reflexive verbs, see if you can use them in your story. After writing your story, re-read it to make sure everything is correct.

APPENDIX 5.4

IV. Examples of Test Item Types

- A. Pour chaque mot français ci-dessous, choisissez la forme correcte de l'article indéfini (*un, une*) et cochez la case appropriée. Si vous ne savez pas, cochez la case *Je ne sais pas* à droite.

un	une	mot	Je ne sais pas
		couverture	
		gant	
		chandail	
		cloche	

- B. Pour chaque phrase ci-dessous, indiquez si la phrase est correcte ou incorrecte selon l'image. Indiquez jusqu'à quel point vous êtes certain de votre réponse en cochant la case appropriée.

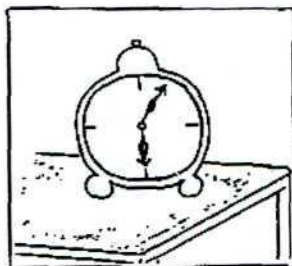
Dans chaque groupe il y a au moins une phrase correcte, mais il est aussi possible d'avoir plusieurs phrases qui sont correctes dans chaque groupe.



	Certainement correct	Probablement correct	Probablement incorrect	Certainement incorrect	Je ne sais pas
1. Les garçons parlent pour l'école.					
2. Les garçons se partent pour l'école.					

- C. Choisissez la meilleure réponse dans chaque groupe. Cochez la case appropriée à droite de la phrase.

1. Voilà mon horloge.
2. Voilà mon réveille-matin.
3. Voilà mon rêve-matin.
4. Voilà ma cloche.



APPENDIX 5.5

Written narratives: descriptors used for the end points of the five scales

Content

- 1 It's difficult to know what the paragraph is about; no story is told.
- 5 A 'complete' story is told; narrative is interesting and holds one's attention.

Organisation

- 1 Ideas are stated in haphazard order; or insufficient information is provided to assess organisation.
- 5 Information is clearly stated and sequenced; use of paragraph as appropriate for a narrative; presence of a title.

Vocabulary

- 1 Vocabulary generally impoverished; some reliance on English; overuse of some 'high coverage' terms.
- 5 Sophisticated vocabulary; precision in word choice; use of appropriate register.

Morphology

- 1 Many errors in gender; agreement errors (noun-adj.; person agreement in the verb; spelling of verb inflections, etc.).
- 5 High degree of accuracy in use of person, number, and gender agreement.

Syntax

- 1 Sounds more like English than French; many errors involving tense, articles, clitics; faulty word order, etc.
- 5 Quite idiomatic use of French; generally gets the structure of verbs and their complements correct; presence of one or two sophisticated syntactic structures.

APPENDIX 5.6

Two written narratives (exactly as written by the students)

Class D, Pair 5

Le Reveille-Matin de Martine

C'était 6 heures du matin et le soleil se lève. Martine dort tranquillement, elle fait de beau rêves. Sa tête sur le haut, ses pieds sur l'oreillé. Son reveille-matin

sonne, mais Martine ne voulait pas se lever. Son pied sort des couvertures et avec son grand orteille elle ferme le reveille-matin, et elle s'endort. À 6 heures et deux minutes un main mécanique est sorti et avec un plume a chatouiller les pieds de Martine. C'est efficace.

Martine se lève et elle se brosse les dents, se peigne les cheveux et s'habille pur prendre le chemin à l'école.

La Fin

Class J, Pair 4

1. Le soleil jaune se lève, c'est le matin.
2. Yvonne s'endort dans son lit avec une couverture bleue.
3. C'est 6:00 et la cloche sonne fortement. Ring! Yvonne se lève ses pieds sur l'autre côté du lit.
4. Elle pousse le bouton sur son cloche rouge avec son orteille rose pour arrêter le sonnement.
5. Yvonne s'endort encore.
6. La cloche voit que Yvonne s'est endormi pendant 2 minutes, alors il sort sont main mécanique qui porte un gant jaune, et le chatouille avec une plume noire comme les cheveux d'Yvonne.
7. Yvonne va au lavatoire et se regarde dans le miroir pendant qu'elle se peigne les cheveux et se brosse les dents. L'eau s'écoule basin.
8. Yvonne part à l'école avec une nouveau chandaille rose et un napsack bleu.