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Corroborating the role of L_1 awareness in FL pedagogy

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ABSTRACT:
Underlying the mainstream of current SLA research is the Ansatz that some level of attention to the formal aspects of language is necessary for acquisition to take place. It is self-evident and commonsensical that focusing on specific linguistic aspects helps the learner to acquire and internalise them. Numerous recent studies investigated the complex relationships between the role of cognitive processes (consciousness, attention, awareness, detection…) and the process of language learning, and there is nearly global consensus among researchers that some degree of attention to problematic aspects of the input seems be essential for understanding and learning to occur.

At the same time, learning invariably proceeds by relating new facts to the already familiar (which is why we learn in terms of prototypes). This is particularly vital in the process of foreign language learning (FLL). In this context the familiar is, of course, the student's mother tongue (L_1). It is therefore incumbent that this resource be actively capitalised on by the teacher. Drawing on the learner's L_1 (or another mastered language) and showing comparisons and contrasts between this and the target mirrors, facilitates, and accelerates the processes which occur independently in his/her mind. The role of pedagogic intervention is unquestionable, as transfer of operations from the L_1 to the FL usually requires additional correction and clarification (*cf.* A. A. Leontiev 1981:28).

This is not, however, the end of the story. The basic reason why we look for familiar orientation points and similarities when in new circumstances is our natural need for safety. We feel more comfortable and at ease at home, in our district and city, than at a new venue, even though the latter may be objectively better-appointed, more attractive and safer, just because in the former we could take more things for granted. This is also why the target language should *literally* be taught in the framework of the learner's L_1 – as in the Language Interface

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Model (LIM; Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003a). This proceeds from an *explication* of how grammar rules operate in the learners' L_1, through an *explanation* of relevant L_2 rules and subsequent modification of the L_1 rule to accommodate L_2 data, with practice first expecting the learner to apply the FL rules to L_1 (!) examples, to finally end with *competence expansion*. The LIM allows the learner to link new language items with his/her present knowledge or experience; i.e., placing them within his/her Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky 1934/1962). By such a gradual, multi-stage method the learners gain command of the FL system before actually starting to use the operational principles in the TL itself. The juxtaposition and use of L_1 and L_2 rules alongside help the latter merge with the former (leading to the development of linguistic multicompetence) and thus, hopefully, submerge to the subconscious, indicating that the material has become successfully automatized and internalized. This novel, eclectic method is supplemented with learner-friendly insights from generative syntax and cognitive semantics. A controlled longitudinal classroom experiment carried out on secondary-school students (n=284) across a representative range of grammar areas reveals appreciably improved results of experimental groups over control groups not only in a follow-up test, but also in a deferred post-test, thus corroborating the importance of explicit learning, attention, and L_1 awareness in interlanguage development.

1 Introduction

It is an empirically supported psychological fact that learning always progresses by relating new information to the already familiar, relying on prior knowledge to facilitate new learning (that is why we learn in terms of prototypes); the inherent comparative expectations evident in the very question "What does it look like?" Meaning is constructed when the brain perceives relationships, relevant or meaningful connections motivating it to focus and activate prior knowledge (Caine & Caine 1994:4). The very essence of learning lies not just in taking in new knowledge, but in linking it with the already known, and subsequently—with time—extending it to new situations, refining its range of

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application, and employing it in appropriate ways. Constructing meaning involves the cognitive skills of:

- focusing;
- predicting;
- inferring connections;
- organizing information;
- generalizing;
- analyzing;
- sorting relevant and irrelevant information;
- evaluating; and
- labeling. (Jackson 2002:4)

Even a cursory analysis of the nature of these skills and strategies will reveal that crucial to all is the ability to draw upon prior knowledge. This general truth has been incorporated in Chapter 5.1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages under the label of 'savoir apprendre'—the ability to learn, knowledge how to learn effectively—which is recognized as part of the general (i.e. not limited to the linguistic domain only) competences of a language learner/user:

> In its most general sense, *savoir-apprendre* is the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge, modifying the latter where necessary. (CoE 2001:106)

Part of savoir apprendre, of immediate relevance to language pedagogy, is language awareness together with communicative awareness: what languages are, how they work, how they are used and can be learnt (Mariani 2004:32). This transfer of general skills is, of course, no CEF discovery. As we will learn from Coe *et al.* (1983), for instance, in late 1970s and early 1980s skills and strategies used when performing a listening, speaking, reading or writing activity were frequently taught through specific materials, where the interaction between the pupil and an authentic

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text was treated as a communicative act, and the students encouraged to recognize that they already possessed skills in their L_1 which they could transfer into the TL (Keddle 2004:45). By the same token, learners who are already bi-/multilingual are more aware of the learning and communication strategies which they had developed over time, and are able to apply these to yet another language.

2 The familiar in FLL

Thus, new knowledge is acquired by relating it to the already available. At the same time, we will successfully learn only what we consider relevant to our needs (with externally motivating factors usually conducive to at least short-term achievement). The familiarity and relevance are equally vital in the process of foreign language learning (FLL). In this context the familiar is, of course, the students' mother tongue, which is why—whether they are ordered or forbidden—they will inevitably try to explain a new L_2 item to themselves and make sense of it in NL terms and comparing it with their L_1, as well as fall back on translation (especially at the earlier stages of proficiency).[1] FL learners invariably attempt to incorporate the new language in the framework of the known one; they seek a safe passage from the TL to their mother tongue:

> Starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experience, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English. (Auerbach 1993:29)

> Most of us are comfortable with the familiar and cautious about anything we perceive to be new or different – we feel more comfortable with friends than strangers,

[1] FL learners with different mother tongues behave differently with respect to certain linguistic properties.

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> more relaxed in our own country than abroad… Similarly, faced with what is new our only strategy for making sense of it is to relate it to our previous knowledge and experience. In this way we make the unfamiliar familiar, with a consequent lowering of our anxiety. (Lewis 1993:66)

The most likely strategy for the learner is to make a conscious (albeit perhaps unarticulated) link to the L_1. These attempts are instinctive and made irrespective of the classroom methodology employed; learners compare languages with or without being instructed to do so, as proven by experiments from various disciplines (*cf. e.g.* Williams & Hammarberg 1998; Franceschini *et al.* 2003; de Bot 2004). Oxford (1990), for instance, estimates the proportion of learners reliant on interlingual strategies at 60% (which is not to mean that the remainder do not fall back on the L_1; rather, it refers to the stratagems employed consciously!). Consequently, while their performance is permeated with interference errors on the one hand, facilitative transfer on the other frequently helps them overcome gaps in their FL competence. Drawing on the learner's L_1 (or another mastered language) and showing comparisons and contrasts between the languages mirrors, facilitates and accelerates the processes which occur independently in his/her mind. If our learners had no benefit of having been raised in a multilingual environment, the teacher should be obliged to make them at least partially conscious of their L_1 competence through metalinguistic awareness-raising. The role of pedagogic intervention is unquestionable, as transfer of operations from the L_1 to the FL usually requires correction and clarification (*cf*. A. A. Leontiev 1981):

> the transition [from operations in the mother tongue to these used in the foreign tongue] is not automatic, and the learner will not immediately or without effort come

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> up with the foreign equivalent to the utterance in the mother tongue, remember the rules, and successively apply them. (*op. cit.*:27)

Yet this recognition has been surprisingly uncommon among language instructors. Paradoxically, where most teachers are more than content when their students display the ability to transfer skills or extend strategies taught to new contexts, this has seemed not to concern language teachers, with late 20th-century ELT methodology discouraging the use of the L_1 in the classroom. This practice needs to be redressed, especially with advocates of language awareness highlighting the benefits of the forgotten resource (*cf. e.g.* Franklin 1990; Long 1991; Cook 1997; Macaro 1997; Pratt-Johnson 2006).

The overwhelming majority of language course books and grammar reference materials on the market (with a few notable exceptions where contrastive grammar boxes are present) provide English-language explanations and totally ignore the relations holding between the students' L_1 and the TL. Such mainly Euro- or Amerocentric books moulded in the generic approach are, using James' (1980:24) term, "universally valid [but] for purely commercial reasons." Many students—and teachers as well—are not fully aware of the common properties of the TL and their L_1, which could be beneficially put to use in the teaching and learning process. A truly pedagogical grammar should be contrastive (especially with linguistically homogeneous FL groups). This entails that competence in the FL should be built by exploiting the common ground, relating TL facts to NL—or another known language—experience (what is known as the *extension hypothesis*). As Singleton (2005) observes, even with the Audiolingual Method, where no occasions were provided for making semantic-associative links between L_2

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and L_1 words, such links were undoubtedly forged anyway. This links with the observation made by Wolff (2005) that learners can only comprehend items which they can assimilate with knowledge already available. *Ergo*, the corollary is that a successful FL teacher ought to be reasonably proficient in both the L_2 *and* L_1 of the learners in order to be in a position to both perceive and cater for areas at risk from interference, and utilize the benefits of positive transfer. While not a groundbreaking postulate *per se*, it seriously undermines the assumedly superior position of the native-speaker teacher.

3 Effects of formal instruction on the route of SLA

Similarity in the course of syntactic FL development between classroom and naturalistic learners is typically only reflected in unmonitored, spontaneous comprehension or production. When the data collected are heavily controlled and represent a focus on form, they indicate that differences in the type of input that learners receive in the classroom (structured) and naturalistic (unstructured) settings *have* bearing on the course of IL development. Formal instruction *can* develop L_2 knowledge, even if this may manifest itself in language use only where the learner is attending to form (e.g. in translation, discrete-item grammar tests, or grammaticality judgement tasks, which apparently involve skills that have to be specially learnt). This is no trivial matter, for during speaking and writing, for instance, we are able to deploy skills enabling us to increase accuracy that are not part of our subconscious communicative competence. Even if formal instruction may have no major effect on the overall sequence of development associated with natural unplanned communicative language use at the *vernacular*, unmonitored

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edge of the stylistic continuum,[2] it does impact the *careful* one (what Ellis (1994:654*f.*) calls the *variability hypothesis*).

4 Explicit *vs.* implicit and declarative *vs.* procedural dichotomies

Bialystok (e.g. 1981) develops a model of SLA based on two interacting types of mental representation of linguistic knowledge: *implicit* and *explicit*, corresponding to Krashen's 'acquired/learnt' dichotomy. *Implicit* knowledge is "the unconscious knowledge of a much larger body of information that is the basis of automatic, spontaneous use of language" (Little 1994:103), which is intuitive, tacit, and proceduralised. It can be accessed without much conscious deliberation, but it is frequently *unanalysed*, and then—as in the case of most native speakers (NSs)—we can safely say that it is not available for conscious inspection and the speaker does not know what it is that s/he knows, or is unable to verbalise it. Linguistic forms and structures are internalised and used by the learner without him/her being able (nor, as a matter of fact, finding it necessary) to reflect upon their underlying rules. Implicit knowledge is the principal knowledge source drawn on in on-line communication where there is little planning time available. It comes in two types (Ellis 1994:355): *rule-based knowledge* (i.e. internalised, generalised grammatical principles) and *formulaic knowledge* (i.e. ready-made chunks).

Explicit knowledge is the conscious, cognitive knowledge of grammatical facts, which exists in an analysed form that we are able to articulate informally in our own words if the need arises, and may be the result of formal instruction.

[2] Actually, formal instruction can have an *in*direct effect on the vernacular style, in that forms which have entered the learner's IL in the careful style gradually become available for use in unplanned discourse: Tarone (1983) proposes diffusion along the stylistic continuum over time, while Dickerson (1974) claims that sustained advancement on the careful end may have a 'pull effect' on the other.

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The learner discovers patterns and pigeonholes their underlying rules. This kind of knowledge is available to the learner as a conscious representation, hence the speaker knows what it is that s/he knows. The weakness of explicit knowledge is that it cannot be readily accessed in real-time interaction.

Bialystok suggests that implicit knowledge can be accumulated *in duplo*: (1) by 'unconscious acquisition', and (2) by automatising explicit knowledge through practice (to a point where its usage will "no longer diminish our pool of attentional resources"; Dakowska 2005:128). Thus, 'acquired' and 'learnt' knowledge can be related in terms of automaticity (McLaughlin *et al.* 1983:142). Bialystok's revised (1994) theory, in contrast to her (1978) model, emphasises the explicit representation of linguistic knowledge: language-specific explicit knowledge is so from the very beginning, while implicit and universal linguistic and conceptual representations evolve from initial implicitness to growing explicitness (access to consciousness in the sense of 'awareness'): this "increasing explicitness can almost serve as a definition of what we mean by 'learning'" (1994:567). Han and Ellis (1998:6) recognise two more criteria that the explicit/implicit dichotomy entails: *awareness* and *accessibility*: implicit knowledge, held without awareness, is accessible without difficulty, while explicit knowledge, which is stored consciously, can only be accessed with controlled effort.

This begs the valid question whether the terms 'explicit' and 'implicit' can be used interchangeably with 'declarative' (characterised by Anderson 1983 as "knowledge that," consisting—in the case of language—of factual, content information about the L_2 that has not yet been integrated or automatised, but that is available to retrospection and

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theorising) and 'procedural', as they oftentimes are[3]. Ellis prefers to draw a distinction between these knowledge types:

	Declarative	Procedural
Explicit	Type A Conscious knowledge of L_2 items	Type B Conscious knowledge of learning, production and communication strategies. The learner can use explicit knowledge easily and rapidly.
Implicit	Type C Intuitive knowledge of L_2 items	Type D Ability to employ learning, production and communication strategies automatically. The learner can use intuitive knowledge fluently.

Table 1: Differences between explicit/implicit & declarative/procedural knowledge (after Ellis 1993:94)[4]

What is interesting for us in EFL settings is the question whether one can progress from Type A knowledge to Type D knowledge, and this is where most disagreement lies. According to Krashen's non-interface position, Type D knowledge could only derive from Type C knowledge (yet, according to his (1989) *skill-building hypothesis*, rules are first learnt consciously to be gradually automatised through practice). In the weak interface position, Type A knowledge is allowed to turn into Type C knowledge as long as the learn-

[3] For instance, although procedural knowledge is *generally* acquired implicitly, it does not render consciousness unnecessary in the process (Baars 1988). An additional difference between declarative and procedural knowledge is that whereas behaviour underpinned by the former can be readily adapted to changed circumstances (Kirsh 1991; Karmiloff-Smith 1992), the latter is largely specific to the particular skill it underpins, and cannot be harnessed to other adaptive purposes (Karmiloff-Smith 1992; Sun 1997).

[4] Yet, even this attempt at an improved account of the knowledge types is not quite correct; 'procedural' and 'declarative' are *not* in opposition to each other, as while the former relates more to the 'automatised' (*vs.* 'controlled') edge on Anderson's continuum, the latter might be conceived as lying on its either end (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, p.c., Dec 6 2006).

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ers are ready to accommodate it into their IL system. According to the proponents of the strong interface position, Type A knowledge can be converted into Type D knowledge through practice (Ellis 1993). In this respect, Dakowska (2003:132) makes the following observation:

> In typical human communication, automatic processing is not unconscious. It is subconscious in the sense of being the least attentional, and too fast for noticing – with decisions taking place in fractions of seconds.

McLaughlin and McLeod (1983) claim that "complex skills are learned and routinised (i.e. become automatic) only after earlier use of controlled processes." Thus, the learner must go through a conscious stage of processing a grammar rule deeply and thoughtfully before being able to control grammatical structures automatically. Similarly, summarising recent psychological theory and research on the issue of consciousness in LL Schmidt (1990:149) concludes that "subliminal language learning is impossible, and intake is what learners consciously notice." He bears out the view that a consciousness-raising process is necessary for adults to learn FL form, especially for redundant and communicatively less important features. This, coupled with a thorough review of relevant research findings, favours conscious grammar learning.

5 Conscious *vs.* unconscious and the significance for FLL

While some consider linguistic knowledge to be mostly sub/unconscious, "more incidental than intentional" (Kumaravadivelu 1991:98), this can probably only hold for *acquired* knowledge. In a *foreign* language context conscious attention is generally assumed to be a prerequisite for learning the language. In lieu of the opaque and multifaceted terms 'conscious', 'subconscious', and 'unconscious' one

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can adopt psychoanalyst Reber's view of "a continuum of cognitive functions that has elements that are utterly opaque to consciousness at one end and … utterly transparent … at the other" (1993:133). This latter edge of the spectrum would then be understood as involving a number of cognitive functions which "allow us to modulate and refine the actions of the self" (*ibid.*).

A slightly different view of the term is proposed by Schmidt (1990, 1994a), who suggests a process- rather than product-oriented perspective and makes a theoretical distinction between four types of consciousness:

- as '*intentionality*' – referring to what is commonly referred to as purposefulness, described as planned, deliberate conception (as opposed to incidental learning[5] with the primary attention focused elsewhere; thus somewhat akin to Eysenck's (1998) distinction between *focused attention*, where only one input is processed, and *divided attention*, where more are responded to);
- as cognitive '*control*' – the effort to 'beat it'. Langer's (1989) and Heckhausen and Beckmann's (1990) research on action slips revealed the consequences of the absence of such control: when action schemata, scripts and frames happen without controlling consciousness, interactional slips happen. Consciousness as control, together with automaticity (Schmidt 1994a:21; House 1996) is closely tied with fluent production. House (1997:70) puts forward the hypothesis that spontaneous, automatic linguistic performance can be traced back to earlier stages of conscious language control;

[5] Actually, such occurrences may prove quite profitable, especially where the novelty of a new linguistic feature makes the learners attentive and focused (Jerzy Zybert, p.c. Dec. 8 2006).

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- as '*attention*' – subjective, selective, oriented concentration, similar to the idea of 'stream of consciousness', which can partly be controlled by willpower. With respect to FLL this is relevant to the hypothesis (*cf*. e.g. Schmidt 1990, 1993a, b, 1994a, b) that attention is necessary to convert input into intake. The difference between attention and control lies in that the former can be described as 'input processing',[6] whilst the latter as 'output processing' (monitoring oneself);
- as '*awareness*' – we are conscious of our existence and our surroundings. Access to consciousness as awareness is controlled by consciousness as attention. Awareness leads to a subjective experiencing; it is also responsible for the process of 'noticing the gap' in one's IL (Klein 1986; Schmidt & Frota 1986): when trying to say something for which the appropriate linguistic means are lacking, when the speaker does not understand or is not understood, or when becoming cognizant of the difference between one's own linguistic performance and the observed performance of other speakers.

It is the last two concepts that are relevant for formal instruction: "[w]hile the intention to learn is not always crucial to learning, attention (voluntary or involuntary) to the material to be learned is," rationalizes Schmidt (1992:209) validating the necessity of focal attention. This definition may be reminiscent of 'input-salience-creation' and 'input enhancement' proposed by Sharwood-Smith (1991:120 & 1993:179, respectively). Consciousness identified with

[6] A few years earlier Miller (1987:8) wrote in this regard: "Only information in focal attention can be verbalized, and it appears in focal attention only when information processing is under cognitive control, not when it is executed automatically."

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awareness, in turn, denotes explicit as opposed to implicit learning.

The importance of underlying understanding, meta-cognition, and reflection on one's own learning and achievement is also manifested in the distinction between 'deep' and 'shallow' or 'surface' learning, drawn by F. Marton (1975), F. Marton and Säljö (1976a & b, 1984), Entwistle and Ramsden (1983), Ramsden (1984, 1988), and Entwistle (1981, 1998). According to Marton and Säljö (1984:36–55), 'surface learners' try—and generally fail—to retain the material held in short-term memory (owing to information overload), while 'deep learners' attempt to understand and encode material so that it can be transferred to long-term memory and more effectively learnt (see Table 2). As opposed to learning topics superficially with extrinsic motivation driving routine memorisation intended to reproduce aspects of the subject matter, 'deep' learning is characterised as active involvement stemming from interest in the content. Most of these factors are indispensable during post-pubescent learning of grammar, as well as in achieving Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence.

Surface approach	Deep approach
Passively reproducing	Actively transforming
Intention:	
merely to cope with course requirements	to understand the material for oneself
Treating the material as unrelated bits of knowledge	Relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience, using organising principles to integrate them
Memorising facts and carrying out procedures routinely	Looking for patterns and underlying principles
Finding difficulty in making sense of new ideas presented	Checking evidence and relating it to conclusions
Seeing little value or meaning in either the course or	Examining logic and argu-

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the tasks Studying without reflecting on either purpose or strategy Feeling undue pressure and worry about work	ment cautiously and critically Interacting with the content; monitoring and testing the level of understanding reached Becoming actively interested in the course content

Table 2: Surface and deep approaches to learning (after Marton & Säljö 1984 & Gipps 1994:24; see also Goldring 1995)

There is still no consensus among linguists and psychologists over the role of attention in the FLL process. While some believe that long-term storage of linguistic material is attainable via implicit learning alone, without the presence of conscious hypothesis-testing processes, others claim that even apparently implicit learning is nevertheless conscious (Ellis 1997:56).

6 Noticing

Having mentioned the role of conscious processes in the learning of a FL one cannot but revert to the notion of noticing. In a detailed diary study of Robert Schmidt's 22-week stay in Brazil and his acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese over that period, Schmidt (1990) reported his conviction that he usually noticed—and subsequently began to acquire—forms in out-of-class input only after they had been taught. Schmidt and Frota (1986) substantiate the hypothesis that in order to acquire communicative aspects of linguistic competence, the learner's attention must first be directed to them, causing noticing. Their (1986:310) 'notice the gap' premise posits two kinds of noticing that are necessary for acquisition:

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1. in order for the input to become intake, learners must attend to the linguistic forms and features therein;[7]
2. in order to make progress, learners must notice the 'gap' between their output (their developing IL) and the input (the TL system; *op. cit.*:311; Swain & Lapkin 1995:388); what has also been called 'matching' (Klein 1986:62) or 'cognitive comparison' (Ellis 1995:90)[8].

As Lewis (1993:154) notes, the "process of acquisition is best aided by making students aware of features of the target language, and, in due course, of how their production of the target language differs from its norms." This important point gains validation from Sajavaara's (1981:115) remark that at the onset of SLA, the learner's perceptual ("cue detection") mechanisms are tuned to the phenomena and processes available in his/her L_1, and *not* to picking up relevant TL features! Thus, the learner will tend to hear the TL utterances in terms of categories and structures of his/her NL, and substitute its elements for the target ones.[9] This belief was reiterated by White's (2000:137) assertion that the L_1 functioning as an active filter may prevent aspects of L_2 in-

[7] This is why Ellis (1989: 305) uses the term 'explicit instruction' interchangeably with 'external manipulation of the input'.

[8] Widdowson (1978:13; 1979) distinguished two kinds of rules: *reference rules*, *in absentio*, knowledge of the FL (imposed by the teacher) to which reference can be made when required, constituting the learner's linguistic competence, and *expression rules*, *in presentio*, assumed by the learner to be the norm in a given situation, which determines what the learner actually does with the language and allows him/her to generate linguistic behaviour meeting the communicative needs even without sufficient linguistic competence (Krzeszowski 1977/81:75). Consequently, with a constant deficit of reference rules, "a learner's errors are evidence of success and not of failure [because it is] the consequence of success in developing context rules" (i.e., IL; Widdowson 1979:190).

[9] A similar hypothesis is now being entertained in explaining the difficulty of acquiring native-like pronunciation: it is conceivable that once the child becomes accustomed to a certain range of phonemes, his/her 'mental phonetic perception grid' becomes filled, not allowing new forms to enter and seeking their closest retrievable form for substitution.

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put from being noticed (and hence lead to fossilisation) – thus presenting an L_1-mediated UG access perspective which, under this view, is practically tantamount to no access[10] (Romuald Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, p.c., 2007, Feb. 19).

Noticing requires the allocation of focal attention (attentional resources) and rehearsal in short-term memory (Robinson 1997a:225); hence, detection alone without conscious registration is not conducive to learning (Schmidt 1993b; 1994:17). Language tasks designed with the aim of promoting noticing should make the learner devote some attention to form, and facilitate comparisons between IL output and TL models. Reformulation, where students' flawed performance is compared with a well-formed model and where they obtain the chance to draw conclusions and learn from the comparison is very suitable here (Piechurska-Kuciel 1999:18). The dictogloss, where the learners reconstruct a previously heard (or read) text is another useful task, as it helps them attend to and recognise linguistic problems (Swain & Lapkin 1995:373).

Conscious attention also plays a role in the acquisition of TL pragmatics, broadly defined as

> the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication. (Crystal 1997:301)

Arguing that a connectionist framework is a suitable representation for noncategorical knowledge (such as pragmatic

[10] Since resorting to L_1 mechanisms is less costly than preserving and accessing UG once the mother tongue has been established, and in most cases it is practically impossible to determine which of the two is at play during SLA (Romuald Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, p.c., 2007, Feb. 19).

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knowledge) Schmidt (1993b) makes the case that conscious attention (explicit learning) is necessary to establish connections and acquire pragmatic competence in the L_2, with mere exposure to pragmatically significant experience *in*conducive to learning. Thus, the learner should not only have a knowledge of the linguistic resources available for realising particular communicative intentions and pragmatic effects, but also knowledge of their appropriate socio-contextual use (Barron 2003:10).

7 The utility of formal instruction and focus on form in language teaching

Essential to most studies of SLA/FLL is the issue of the degree of explicitness necessary to draw learners' attention to the targeted linguistic features. This can take the shape of either regular formal instruction, where a specific area of the TL constitutes an item in the syllabus, or of focus-on-form instruction—FonF—attempting to accentuate the formal features of the TL as they arise incidentally in a lesson whose overriding focus is on meaning and use, or communication (for a review of focus-on-form instruction see e.g. Doughty & Williams 1998; Ellis 2001, 2002). The latter thus involves occasional shifts of learners' attentional resources to the linguistic code whenever a problem arises with comprehension or production (Long & Robinson 1998).

In both instances, it remains unquestionable that "[b]efore the learner can begin to be communicative … he needs to obtain at least some minimal competence in L2 and this can be provided most effectively through the presentation and practice of formal language items" (Ellis 1984:141). Ellis (1985:229) adds that "to deny that instruction can help learners to acquire a L2 is not only counter-intuitive, but contrary to the personal experience of count-

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less teachers and students." While classroom communication renders it possible for second (L_2) and foreign (FL)[11] language learners to acquire *basic* grammatical competence, acquiring *full* systemic proficiency seems unfeasible. Research findings in both experimental (e.g. Doughty 1991) and immersion settings (e.g. Swain & Lapkin 1998) indicate that meaning-focused instruction alone may be insufficient for the learners to acquire the linguistic code of the TL, suggesting a positive correlation between explicit instructional conditions—or 'input enhancement' (Sharwood Smith 1991)—and L_2 development: a range of studies (e.g. Gass 1982; Pienemann 1984; Zobl 1985; Eckman *et al.* 1988; Tomasello & Herron 1988, 1989; Alanen 1995; De Graaff 1997; Robinson 1997b; Harley 1998; Rosa & O'Neill 1999) have concluded that learners whose attention had been drawn to the formal properties of the TL outperformed those exposed to implicit learning conditions only[12]. The implicit instruction strategy of visual input enhancement (techniques purported to present the targeted language feature implicitly

[11] With regard to the environmental factors and interaction types that occur in the process of language learning, a distinction is often drawn between L_2 and FL. L_2 denotes language which is used as a means of wider communication outside the classroom in an untutored ('naturalistic') environment (an immersion situation, e.g. that of immigrants), where input takes the form of exposure and L_2 knowledge is developed through interacting in the TL. FL refers to a language learnt in a tutored ('classroom') setting—particularly through the means of formal instruction—which is not important for the learners outside the classroom. Yet L_2 here and throughout will frequently, for convenience' sake, be used as embracing both 'second language' and 'foreign language'. (A third, 'mixed' type of acquisitional setting may also be distinguished, where the learners receive both instruction and natural exposure to the target language, but this is irrelevant for the topic of this paper.)

[12] Although some of these studies failed to demonstrate long-term effects (*cf.* e.g. Harley 1989; White 1990, 1991; White *et al.* 1991; Carroll & Swain 1993; Schwartz 1993; Sheen 2003; Mackey *et. al.* 2004; Birdsong 2006), this need not mean a failure to alter the learners' IL (Schwarz & Gubala-Ryzak 1992). Besides, even if linguistic knowledge learnt via explicit focus on form may not affect learners' underlying linguistic competence, if it can affect metalinguistic knowledge which may successfully take over the role of UG, formal instruction has fulfilled its role.

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through increasing its perceptual salience by textual manipulation: bolding, capitalising, enlargement, underlying, etc.) has likewise been demonstrated to be insufficient to trigger restructuring of learners' IL systems (Jourdenais 1998; White 1998; Izumi 2002). There are several reasons responsible for such a state of affairs (Paradowski 2007:68-89).

7.1 The poverty of the stimulus: the insufficiency of natural exposure in the classroom

Classroom discourse is usually distorted and reduced when compared with naturally occurring discourse, to the effect that the resulting input is impoverished and not sufficiently robust nor varied, affording the learner limited opportunity for hypothesis formation and testing. Low discourse frequency of copious constructions (past tense forms[13], embedding, relativisation, the passive voice, inversion, stylistic devices…) will fail to warrant a sufficient input-basis for target-like competence, with the consequence of prolonging some transitional developmental patterns (say, the use of intonation questions) and slowing down the emergence of other grammatical structures (e.g. past tense forms). Formal instruction expedites and assists acquisition; providing rules is a contrivance, a shortcut to learning (*cf.* voices that discovery-based teaching is 'a charade of pseudo-enquiry'). Secondly, in such circumstances the learner's attention to form will not be constant or sufficient (if present at all). Explicit instruction is thus necessary as a means to promoting awareness and control over the developing L_2, before this awareness becomes automatic allowing the learner to shift the focus on communication. Furthermore, it appears that although greater length of exposure to the L_2 is conductive to greater success, this may be restricted to the general

[13] In communicative classroom speech present temporal reference tends to predominate.

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communicative ability rather than grammatical or phonological accuracy – abundant quantities of comprehensible input accompanied by ample opportunities for meaningful exchange have proven insufficient for reaching higher levels of accuracy.

7.2 Input *vs.* intake; the role of attention and noticing in language learning

Underlying the mainstream of current SLA research is the Ansatz that some level of attention to the formal aspects of language is necessary for acquisition to take place (Radwan 2005:70). Numerous recent studies investigated the complex relationships between the role of cognitive processes (consciousness, attention, awareness, detection…) and the process of language learning, and there is nearly global consensus among researchers that some degree of attention to problematic (fragile, crucial/non-salient) aspects of the input seems be essential for understanding and learning to occur (*cf.* e.g. Brewer 1974; Lewis & Anderson 1985; Dawson & Schell 1987; Schmidt 1990, 1993a; Tomlin & Villa 1994; Robinson 1997b; DeKeyser 2001; Ellis 2001; Radwan 2006).

Not all the available raw input data are processed or 'let in' by the learner; mere 'exposure' to new linguistic material—although necessary—is insufficient for acquisition to take place. First, it may not be understood; it must be made learnable, i.e. comprehensible (adequately simple in structure and vocabulary, contextualised, or elaborated), before the new language forms and structures used to encode the meaning can be internalised. This was considered the driving force behind language acquisition in the early versions of the Interaction Hypothesis (Krashen 1985; Long 1983a, 1983b).

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However, even then it may not become processed by the learner's internal mechanisms when it is not attended to – noticing is constrained by working memory limitations regarding the amount of information that can be held and processed during on-line (real-time) computation of the input for comprehension (VanPatten 2004:7). First, conscious noticing of new language is a necessary preliminary stage—*condicio sine qua non*—for acquisition[14]:

> It would seem fairly obvious that in order for our students to learn something new, they need to be first able to perceive and understand it… Raw, unmediated new input is often incomprehensible to learners; it does not function as 'intake', and therefore does not result in learning. (Ur 1996:11)

Only when the two conditions—understanding and noticing—are satisfied can acquisition begin to take place. Schmidt (1990) distinguishes perception, noticing, and understanding as the steps leading to language consciousness. In an elaborate analysis of the role of conscious processes in SLA, he maintains that noticing—the conscious process defined as the "allocation of attentional resources to a stimulus and [identification of] the level at which perceived events are subjectively experienced"—is a necessary (and sufficient) requirement for the conversion of input[15] into intake[16] (Schmidt 1990:129, 1993a). A focus on form thus acts as an

[14] In the realm of phonology, research suggests that e.g. accurate perception of segmentals leads to more accurate production of these (Flege & Eefting 1987; Schneiderman *et al*. 1988; Ingram & Park 1997; Chan Pik Ha 2001), while training in speech perception leads to improvement in both perception and production of English sounds (de Bot 1983; Champagne-Muzar *et al*. 1993; Cenoz & Lecumberri 1999).

[15] The L_2 data the learner is exposed to. It could also be defined as a "finite randomly ordered sequence of noisy form:meaning pairs" (Briscoe 2006).

[16] That portion of the input which the learner actually notices, takes into temporary memory, and—usually—subsequently assimilates into long-term memory and feeds into the IL system; the input that learners pay attention to and use to establish form:meaning connections.

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intake (or *acquisition*) *facilitator*, helping the learner to perceive the feature under explanation (which would otherwise go unheeded) in subsequent meaning-focused input, which can then become intake and—partially or completely—retained and internalised, whereupon restructuring—or overhaul—of the IL system may come to pass. Even if formal instruction does not actually cause new linguistic features to become part of the learner's IL, it aids SLA by provides the learner with "hooks, points of access" (Lightbown 1985; termed the *selective attention hypothesis* by Ellis 1994:656*f.*), initiating the acquisition process.[17] Prior grammar instruction grooms learners for detecting what might otherwise have gone unnoticed: "instruction may have a priming effect, increasing the likelihood of noticing features in input through the establishment of expectations" (Schmidt 1990:143).

In light of the insufficiency of input comprehension to SLA (Pica 1992), later research found that certain forms of even implicit negative feedback, such as recasts—corrected repetition of the learner's ill-formed utterances—can lead to better development by highlighting specific forms in the input (e.g. Long *et al.* 1998; Mackey & Philip 1998; Mackey 1999; Iwashita 2003; Leeman 2003). While incipient SLA thinking (e.g. Krashen 1980, 1985) held comprehension to be a necessary condition for learners to gain access to TL forms, Pica suggests that "learners' comprehension of meaning can be the *result* of their access to L2 form rather than its precursor" (1994:507*f.*; emph. added). Schmidt (1993a) goes on even as far as to say that understanding—involving restructuring of the IL system and the application of conceptually-driven processes such as hypothesis formation and testing—is unnecessary for the process of SLA to take place.

[17] Moreover, being more perceptible, items seem to stick in memory.

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From yet another standpoint, White (1987:95) argues that "the driving force for grammar change is that input is incomprehensible, rather than comprehensible …" In other words, the learner may be forced to pay closer attention to the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of a message that s/he had failed to understand. This may well be true; after all, teeth grow when offspring try to bite on everything they encounter, not when they are fed pup, and in everyday life we get by and understand utterances even without necessarily obtaining all the linguistic information—as is the case in noisy settings or when our attention is divided, but where context disambiguates potential uncertainty—which of course does little to promote language development. Long (1996:451), quoting Braidi (1992) adds that necessary for acquisition are both comprehensibility and complexity.

On the other hand, researchers such as Tomlin and Villa (1994) critique the coarse-grained analysis of the role of attention in language learning, proposing a functionally-based one wherein three components of the concept are distinguished:

- alertness,
- orientation, and
- detection – an unconscious process whereby exemplars become registered in memory, therefore becoming available for further processing.

An attempt at a reconciliation of the two positions can be found in Robinson (1997a), who concurs with Schmidt in repudiating any dissociation between learning and awareness, asserting that a given form in the input needs to be consciously noticed before it can be processed further, whilst allocating detection to a learning stage prior to noticing, the latter defined as "detection plus rehearsal in short-term memory, prior to encoding in long-term memory." At

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the same time, Robinson (1997b) and Radwan (2005) disagree with Schmidt's dismissal of the role of understanding in SLA, demonstration that a mere *noticing* of a form does not correlate with progress in language learning, where the strongest predictor of success is awareness at the level of *understanding*. This finds support in Alanen (1995), who showed that those learners who are able to verbalise the rules governing the use of targeted features perform significantly better, as well as in Leow (1997a) and Rosa and O'Neill (1999), who—despite espousing Schmidt's noticing hypothesis—also found different levels of awareness leading to differences in processing (which was explained by postulating that higher levels of awareness might have induced the learners to employ the conceptually-driven heuristics of hypothesis formation and testing) and, more importantly, metalingual awareness contributing to increased recognition and accurate production of the forms. Rosa and O'Neill (1999) also demonstrated that learners receiving explicit instruction manifested higher levels of intake than learners under implicit conditions.

After noticing, language material needs to be gradually sorted and restructured[18]. Explicit formal instruction assumes the role of an *advance organiser*[19], segmenting a text in order to render the input more accessible for subsequent

[18] Restructuring can be defined as the cognitive process whereby learners generalise about the TL system on the basis of specific input data, with the result of qualitative changes taking place in their IL (*cf.* e.g. McLaughlin 1990).

[19] A psychological device (also known as *anticipatory schemata*) with the preparatory function of presenting a synthesis—providing some orientation in and enhancing the organisation—of relevant concepts and ideas in advance of the learning material itself, building a link between the material to be learnt in detail in subsequent lessons and the learner's current knowledge (Dakowska 2005:60*f.*), thus helping to bridge the gap between what is and is not yet already known to the learner, in order to successfully teach/learn the task at hand. It is generally presented at a higher level of abstraction, generality, and inclusiveness than e.g. a preview of the learning material (W. Marton 1979/81:177).

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acquisition of the language. Only then can it be proceduralised (organized and stored it in a user-friendly mode as a large network of routines, which can be derived from memory in a short period of time to be employed in the cut-and-thrust of real interaction) and automatised. Batstone (1994:225*ff.*) depicts the principal stages in the learning process in the following schematic way:

NOTICE → STRUCTURE → PROCEDURALISE[20]

Figure 1: Stages of proceduralisation (Batstone 1994:227)

Therefore, product teaching should not be undervalued as it provides a clear framework within which grammar items can be made as salient and noticeable as possible. If students are repeatedly provided with carefully designed language material, they can continue to re-notice it and restructure their working hypotheses, eventually approaching TL competence. To this end, a product approach activates two learning mechanisms: memory, responsible for the accumulation of language structures and patterns, and the capacity for analysis, which allows the learner to segment language into its component constituents and then combine these creatively to produce novel utterances. Without a metalinguistic compo-

[20] It is possible that content-bearing lexical items—in contrast with grammatical markers—are noticed more easily in the input and therefore do not require targeted instruction to the extent that grammar does. Supportive evidence is gleaned from the observation of the acquisition of past-tense forms, where atomistic, irregular verbs appear in the learners' productive repertoire long before the regular, systematic *·ed* suffixation (it is thus conceivable that they may initially be treated as devoid of the [+interpretable] T feature, which may at that stage of acquisition be inaccessible to the learner's mental grammar). This would also account for the disregard of grammatical correction but acknowledgment of semantic rectification manifested in L1A. From a historical perspective, the relatively high frequency of Saxon irregular forms may also be due to their economy over the regularised Romance or Latinate equivalents. (Incidentally, it seems that children do not memorise irregular forms individually; rather, perceive patterns, which they can extend over to new forms, coming up with suppletive *bring-brang, bite-bote*, or *wipe-wope*; *cf.* e.g. Pinker 1998.)

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nent, a language course will not facilitate linguistic awareness and reflection.

An interesting investigation of the degree of facilitative effects of various types of (explicit and implicit) attention-drawing instructional treatments on the acquisition of English dative alternation by 42 23-year-old ESL learners (Radwan 2005, 2006) revealed that those learners who received explicit form-focused instruction[21] in the form of metalinguistic explanation of the TL features (rule-oriented group; ROG) significantly outperformed those exposed to less explicit forms of instruction (textual-oriented input enhancement (TEG) and content-oriented input flooding) in their accuracy of responses to various delayed assessment tasks (grammaticality judgment, preference, and picture description), with modest gains displayed by the TEG group in an immediate follow-up text almost completely lost on the deferred post-test. Apart from being able to maintain their progress, the ROG group was also able to successfully generalise the use of the target features to novel contexts not addressed during the treatment sessions. To boot, the study demonstrated that higher levels of awareness (understanding as opposed to mere noticing) correlate positively with language development; awareness at the level of noticing only failed to result in any significant improvement in the participants' performance, whereas awareness at the level of understanding as manifested in the subjects' ability to verbalise the rules governing the target features had significant effects on their ability to judge and produce the target linguistic

[21] For the purpose of this chapter, form-focused instruction will be taken to denote (after Spada 1997:73) any pedagogical endeavour whose aim is to draw the learner's attention to language form (either implicitly or explicitly); thus encompassing both the direct teaching of structure, and reaction to the learner's performance.

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form. Similarly, integration of focus on form[22] in content-enriched[23] lessons of intermediate L_2 French in Canada facilitated the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary by the learners (Grim 2006).

7.3 Fossilisation

The omission of form-focused explanation and tasks and inordinate reliance on lexical clues in FLL may—and will—irrevocably result not only in the lack of progress in terms of overall language ability, but more importantly in what, after Selinker (1972), came to be called *fossilisation*[24]—or 'bastardisation'—i.e. automatisation of incorrect forms at dangerously low levels. There are compelling arguments to support the view that without attention given to grammatical form learners are unlikely to progress beyond the level of 'airport English', where mastery of a handful of formulaic

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[22] Regular focus on *forms* is sometimes distinguished from incidental focus on *form* (FonF) that forms part of task-based teaching (Long 1991; Doughty & Williams 1998; Robinson 2001); the latter is usually undertaken by the teacher as intervention on demand, when difficulties emerge in the comprehension or production of the learners in a meaning-focused lesson, whereupon s/he guides their attention to the problematic feature of the linguistic code (although it may also take place proactively in anticipation of the problem; Doughty & Williams 1998). This conception was developed with an SLA environment in mind (Dakowska 2003:129).

[23] In *content-enriched instruction* each lesson of an early-level L_2 course is dedicated to a specific topic or theme appropriate to the linguistic, cognitive, and affective needs of the learners, introducing motivating cultural and other real-world information in the TL, with grammar and vocabulary relating to it (Ballman 1997). As such, it differs from *content-based instruction*, which emerged in immersion and bilingual programs (in Canada and the U.S., respectively), where language served predominantly as a relay medium, mostly at higher levels of instruction (e.g. le français des affaires or literature courses), at the same time attempting to ameliorate its drawback of not helping learners develop linguistic accuracy (Grim 2006).

[24] Selinker used the term to refer to the automatisation of both incorrect and correct TL forms. Similarly, Vigil and Oller (1976) and Wysocka (2006) support the extended definition of fossilisation portrayed as both erroneous and non-erroneous, the latter of which is manifested in correct language behaviour, such as the appropriate use of prefabricated patterns, routine formulae and fixes expressions. However, following many current researchers, I choose to use the notion in reference to the former only.

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sequences will suffice to get by.[25] It is also believed that successful use of communicative strategies by the learner may sabotage acquisition altogether:

> A learner may become so skilful in making up for lack of linguistic knowledge by the use of various communication strategies that the need for hypothesis formation and testing is obviated (Ellis 1985:187)
>
> language use … does not lead to the development of an analytic knowledge system since meaning distracts attention from form (Skehan 1998:27)
>
> 'pick it up as you go along' learners reach a language plateau beyond which it is difficult to progress (Thornbury 1999:15)

Fossilisation (cessation of learning) can occur when the learner abandons testing out hypotheses and learning effort because s/he is content with his/her existing FL competence which already enables him/her to communicate sufficiently effectively (here, the learner's affective domain rather than the cognitive one is culpable, as s/he exhausts his/her motivation for learning; Zybert 1999:120).

Research findings also indicate that comprehension alone is insufficient for IL development and that it does not lead to linguistic competence. The comprehension process utilises non-linguistic (contextual, situational) rather than linguistic knowledge, because this proves more effective during real-time processing (parsing) of information. Learners may reach the goal of understanding a message without reference to its syntactic and morphological features and *eo ipso* fail to develop their IL – according to VanPatten's (2004:18) Preference of Non-redundancy Principle, learners

[25] Selinker (*op. cit.*) observed that as many as 95% of FL learners fail to reach the end of the IL continuum, i.e. to converge on full NS competence. (On the other hand, the IL continuum—be it for L_1 or FL—probably never has the further end…)

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are more prone to process non-redundant meaningful grammatical forms before processing the redundant ones. Communicative effectiveness, granted priority by e.g. Stephen Krashen and Michael Lewis, may be achieved with the use of communicative strategies relying on more easily accessed lexical units—the Primacy of Lexis Hypothesis (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003a:141): the load of lexical information suffices and suppresses the recognition of functional clues—which is a Pyrrhic victory impeding IL progress in the long run. The strategies allow the learners to be perceived as proficient communicators and worthwhile interlocutors in the TL, however, regrettably, their communicative effectiveness does not come hand in hand with progress in their grammatical competence but merely—and even there only to a limited extent—in discourse competence. Students who are balanced in their analytic profile of skills or whose knowledge of grammar surpasses their fluency and vocabulary resources continue to advance and are less prone to fossilisation, whereas the progress of those learners whose vocabulary and fluency are initially a considerable cut above than their grammatical competence becomes impeded – after all, many fossilised learners display an impressive lexical repertoire. Higgs and Clifford (1982) conclude that the latter adapt strategies which exert impact on their language system in a way that defocuses and bypasses the structures of the underlying language system, with the dénouement that assuming successful communication as the pivotal aim of their utterances and disregarding TL grammar, students eventually become premature fossilisers.

Furthermore, even the prolonged absence of a given form or construction in a standard "acquisition-poor" classroom environment will not suffice to eradicate undesirable utterances. The provision of negative feedback (direct nega-

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tive evidence, i.e. overt corrections – not to be confused with criticism or punishment) may postpone fossilisation by demonstrating to the learner that s/he is not fully competent yet. Explicit teaching of grammatical forms makes learners realise that they still have not mastered the whole TL system and helps them stay open to the development and restructuring of their interlanguage. Noticing the *gap* between one's current language output and the language encountered is a prerequisite for linguistic development; only then are learners more apt to strive to improve their performance and self-correct.

Finally, input of good English is insufficient in the classroom because the learners also encounter the interlanguages of their friends, which will always comprise tainted and ill-formed constructions; that is why they need the provision of negative as well as positive evidence. Even though learners may realise that a certain structure is ungrammatical or unseemly—or in isolated cases notice the non-occurrence of some forms in the input—they cannot be expected to be able to do so on a regular basis.

7.4 The natural order hypothesis revisited

It has sometimes been posited that since L_2-ers progress along the IL continuum passing through a more or less fixed standard order that is not amenable to pedagogic intervention, an explicit overt teaching of structures has a very limited role to play. This position can be disputed on a number of grounds.

7.4.1 The validity of different data types

First, the evidence for the reported universality of the general sequence of development came from morpheme order and longitudinal studies, which were of either pure naturalistic or mixed SLA, so it should not be used to refute the assumptions of traditional classroom language pedagogy.

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Moreover, it is tenable that the 'natural' route is only a reflection of one particular type of language use, *sc.* spontaneous speech. In styles tapped in non-spontaneous guided elicitation (i.e. techniques where the learner is asked to perform a certain task) the natural pattern of language is disturbed: performance becomes erratic, with increased transfer of L_1 forms, avoidance of certain constructions, primitive, developmentally earlier IL forms[26], unique structures, and more advanced forms intermittently surfacing. Thus, the claimed 'natural' order may only be an artefact of the elicitation instrument employed, measured by methods and in conditions that precluded any other result. Consequently, even if formal instruction could not aid spontaneous production (though, as we have argued above, it does), it may help learners perform in other types of language use, for instance in situations associated with planned discourse (i.e., "discourse that has been thought out and organized prior to its expression," as opposed to unplanned "discourse that lacks forethought and organizational preparation;" Ochs 1979:55).

7.4.2 Accuracy order *vs.* acquisition order

Moreover, the morpheme studies reported a surface *accuracy* order, which was equated with *acquisition* order on the grounds that the accuracy with which learners use morphemes must correspond to the order wherein they are acquired. Again, there exists no sufficient theoretical base for such a supposition. As Ellis (1985:69) explains, case studies have shown that a learner may begin to use a certain grammatical form *lege artis* "only to regress at a later stage, which makes a mockery of attempts to equate accuracy and

[26] Corder (1981) suggests that the FL learner *regresses*, i.e. unconsciously retreats through the stages of development that characterised his/her early acquisition of the language.

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acquisition."[27] Evidence gleaned from longitudinal studies of the vertical development of individual learners ran counter to that of cross-sectional horizontal studies, conclusively demonstrating that 'accuracy order' is not the same as 'acquisition order' (one could also consider here Hawkins and Chan's (1997) Failed Functional Features hypothesis).

7.4.3 Sequence *vs.* order, rate, and success of SLA

Furthermore, even if the *route*—the general sequence or specific order of acquisition—of linguistic development remained unaltered by instruction, as Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith (1985:275) state in their *pedagogical grammar hypothesis*, explicit explanation of the TL and enhanced input accelerate the *rate* of acquisition—the speed at which learning takes place—compared with that where attention to form is sporadic and minimal. "A number of studies have suggested that learners exposed to formal instruction about the syntactic properties of the L_2 develop unconscious knowledge of these properties more quickly than learners exposed to samples of the L_2 in naturalistic settings" (Hawkins 2001:21). Ellis (1993) likewise contends that implicit instruction is usually slow and laborious, requiring more time and input to become effective.[28] Formal instruction develops communicative competence and it may have a significant postponed effect (the so-called delayed-effect hy-

[27] Ellis probably meant that such attempts were made on the premise that one can talk of the acquisition of a given form once the subject begins to use it (I am grateful to Romuald Gozdawa-Gołębiowski for bringing this issue to my attention). If that was indeed the underlying conjecture, speakers' volatile performance was not the only factor invalidating it; another would be the fact that an item may not appear in production, although it has de facto been acquired – Hawkins and Chan's (1997) Failed Functional Features hypothesis is just one pertinent example.

[28] As shown by Doughty and Varela (1998), implicit focus on form (intonational focus plus corrective feedback) incorporated into a content-based, communicative classroom and conducted *over a relatively long period* (six weeks) can result in ostensible improvement in terms of accuracy and the total number of attempts at the target feature (past time reference).

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pothesis, advocated by Patsy M. Lightbown and Herbert W. Seliger; *cf.* Ellis 1994:621, 1997). Countless cases of classroom learners testify that even if the L_2 knowledge derived from formal instruction is not *tout de suite* available for use in spontaneous speech—a common enough experience of innumerable teachers—it may soon become serviceable:

> Pointing out features of the grammatical system … may not lead directly and instantly to the acquisition of the item in question. But it may nevertheless trigger a train of mental processes that in time will result in accurate and appropriate production (Thornbury 1999:24)

Form-focused instruction "can improve acquisition with respect to the speed of acquisition, the frequency of rule application, and the different contexts in which the rule has to be applied" (Pienemann 1988:99).

Formal instruction also assists the development of implicit knowledge on which spontaneous language use depends, and has an effect on the *success* of development (i.e. the ultimate proficiency level achieved). Learners who receive formal instruction outperform those who do not in that they progress more rapidly and reach higher levels of ultimate achievement. Countless available studies comparing naturalistic, classroom and mixed L_2 exposure revealed a positive effect of formal instruction on proficiency test scores (and oral tests as well; *cf.* e.g. von Elek & Oskarsson 1972), particularly with adult students. In addition, it has been discovered that grammar instruction not only helps increase the accuracy of TL usage, but also inhibits the use of ungrammatical albeit communicatively successful constructions. In an assessment of some of these studies Long (1983c:374) concludes that the effects of formal instruction are comprehensive and all-pervasive (i) holding irrespective of (a) the age of the learners and (b) their level of profi-

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ciency, and that neither (ii) the type of test (integrative or discrete-item) employed to evaluate their performance nor (iii) the type of environment (acquisition-rich or -poor) alters the above claim. Point (iii) is a contradiction of a hypothesis marshalled by Krashen to the effect that instruction will be of significant value only in acquisition-poor environments, where the learner may be unable to obtain sufficient comprehensible input via exposure. Long's thorough synopsis of FL studies lends credence to the commonsensical assumption that where the tempo and success are concerned, instruction is facilitative.

7.5 Enhancing the processes of hypothesis formation and testing

One could at this point ask the question: Why should grammar instruction provide a shortcut to the acquisition, learning, production, and comprehension of linguistic forms and structures that the learners may even not have ever encountered before (as it unquestioningly does)? What is of interest to us now is not so much *whether* but *how* formal instruction facilitates the rate and success of SLA. The most comprehensive answer is that "drawing the learner's attention to linguistic patterns and providing them with the underlying rules and principles can add to, conform or modify the rules which the learners discover by themselves through the natural process of hypothesis formation and testing" (Mohammed 1996:283). Focusing learners' attention on syntactic patterns and supplying them with the underlying rules and principles can enhance the learning process as even in the classroom context learners usually attempt to discover rules from the language data by themselves irrespective of grammar instruction. L1A and FLL seem to be governed by similar underlying mechanisms, procedures and strategies. Given that in classroom learning situations learners' exposure to

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the language is usually confined to a few hours per week, the hypothesis formation and verification process may be very slow, as the basic requirement for *acquisition* is the steady opportunity to interact with others via language. Since the learners' predictions and preconceptions about the way language is organised are feedback-reliant, here is where the teaching of grammar comes in, enhancing learning by supplementing their natural heuristics and reacting to their output. Thus, it may be seen as a logical extension of the perception phase. This is also why Ellis (1994:659) says: "[f]ormal instruction is best seen as facilitating natural language development rather than offering an alternative mode of learning." Providing contrastive data from the L_1 and negative evidence on how the TL does *not* function generally constrains the learner's hypotheses pertaining to the workings of the system. The teaching of grammar acts similarly to error correction in that it helps the learner modify his/her erroneous hypotheses, but also contributes by the addition of new rules and confirmation of the correct ones. It thus at once promotes the transition from the teacher-centred approach towards learner autonomy.

7.5.1 The 'garden path condition'

I did not deceive you, mon ami. At most, I permitted you to deceive yourself.
—Hercule Poirot in Agatha Christie's (1920) *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*

Tomasello and Herron (1988, 1989) found that the 'garden path condition', a trap-setting procedure whereby learners are deliberately induced to make overgeneralisations or transfer errors only to be immediately corrected by the teacher, facilitates the acquisition of TL structures that are often involved in transfer errors. This technique luring learners into misapplying their developing rule system,

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thereupon providing negative feedback which in turn forces them to re-think their initial hypothesis, and thus anticipating instances where they might overgeneralise has been shown to be a more effective teaching strategy than structuring the presentation so that the learners are *prevented* from making the error. Moreover, "[a] guided discovery approach forestalls the learners' natural tendency to stick with their first – usually quick-and-easy – hypothesis" (Thornbury 1999:40). Such a strategy may also be employed within the Language Interface Model, especially in a discovery-learning approach (where not just the teacher, but also peers may rectify false hypotheses).

7.6 Formal instruction compensates for lack of intuitions

Sine scientia ars nihil est.
[Without knowledge, skill is nothing]
—Jean Vignot, Parisian Gothic architect, on appraisal of the work on Milan cathedral in 1392

It is also my contention that explicit rule formulation helps learners develop and sharpen intuitions; it seems to me that nearly all natural language use in FL learners—barring distortions brought about by performance factors—constitutes a reflection of underlying (once overt) rules. More still, (in accordance with the Partial Access hypothesis) there are forms and structures that will never be acquired *naturally* after a certain age, e.g. communicatively redundant inflectional properties of grammar—such as the English 3rd person sg. pres. *·s* 'maverick form' (Jackson 1981:202*f.*), a relic which invariably resists acquisition. Even drilling may not help if the learners cannot see the underlying principles; *cf.* English articles (here I contest the view presented by Dulay *et al.* (1982) that they can only be acquired via natural exposure to the language), or anaphora. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski (p.c., *cf.* also 2003a:140) suggests that bridge constructions

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such as (1) will never be worked out by a Polish learner him-/herself:

(1) Who$_i$ do you$_j$ want t_i to give you$_j$ a kiss?

because the rules of anaphora co-indexation in English and Polish have different parameter settings and parameters in late SLA cannot be switched[29] without the crutch of formal instruction. According to Chomsky's Principles and Parameters (P&P) view of language, anyone starting to learn a FL already has a number of 'switches' set in accordance with the settings of his/her L_1. Learning another language inevitably requires resetting some of them (perhaps only ostensibly, with the help of general cognitive mechanisms), for instance through direct negative evidence in cases of contrast between the L_1 and the TL. The absence of applications of a rule in input data does not suffice for the learner to conclude that it is not operative in the language at all. S/He needs to be told so directly or s/he will never unlearn the rule from positive evidence alone, and certainly not when it becomes deeply entrenched and ingrained in his/her IL. The distribution of adverbs in English and Polish is another example of an interlingual contrast substantiating the case in point. Without the teacher's intervention, word order constraints will not be easily deduced by the learner. In her discussion of Krashen's Input Hypothesis, White (1987) argues that in SLA comprehensible input, in and of itself—i.e., without the provision of negative evidence—will not preclude false overgeneralisations (even when the UG is still believed to be in operation).[30] The null subject (pro-drop) parameter is yet another case in point. The general rule concerning binary

[29] Or, if we assume that—in the absence of UG—the learner operates linguistically non-specific cognitive mechanisms, reset by means of such a surrogate system.

[30] For further arguments against Krashen's (1981, 1985, 1989) Input Hypothesis see e.g. Gregg (1984), Sharwood Smith (1985), Færch & Kasper (1986), Gass (1988), or Ellis (1990).

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parameter setting is that it is advisable to start with the more constrained, generating language (here: English) and then move to the more inclusive one (Polish). While an English-speaking learner of Polish will soon extend the application of the L_1 rule finding an abundance of relevant examples in the input, a Pole must be taught the new distribution explicitly, with the provision of direct negative evidence. Positive stimuli alone contain no counterevidence and may suffice to show the learner what *is* licensed, but not what is *not*. Focusing on form helps learners build a propositional representation of L_2 knowledge. Another point is that students will be unable to learn the intricacies and complexities of the language system if these are not explained to them – a case in point could be the dative alternation in English. Additionally, as Seliger (1979) observes, pedagogical rules can serve as mnemonics for retrieving features of an internal rule which, although acquired, are still only 'shallow' and rarely used by the learner. A detailed analysis of syntactic structures enhances learners' recognition and recall of these features when needed.

Last, but not least, I agree with W. Marton (1979/81:173, 176) that in the case of many syntactic structures, the difficulty may be more conceptual, connected with mastering an unfamiliar grammatical notion or principle (e.g. that of ±definiteness, grammatical gender, or number)[31], than formal (e.g. articles). Accordingly, the primary task of the instructor is to make this concept/rule as clear as possible to the learner, subsequently helping him/her grasp

[31] Unfamiliar in the sense of being invisible in the surface structures of utterances, rather than the language *in toto* – after all, every Polish speaker will be able to distinguish the relative (in)definiteness of NPs in his/her speech, each speaker of English will be able to assign a gender to English NPs (e.g. when pronominalising; even though cross-linguistic correspondences need not be completely 'logical' here for everyone), and Lado (1968) pointed out that he can perfectly understand the distinction in the Hopi plural between *ten men* (an aggregate) and *ten days* (a sequence).

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and internalise it, making it operative in language performance. Teachers thus act as very powerful mediators, facilitating the assimilation and retention of sometimes very abstract concepts and principles, providing condensed and representable rules.

7.7 Recapitulation

Thus, it cannot be denied that form-focused instruction does affect language acquisition and language learning (*cf.* also Komorowska 1975, 1985 for a thorough discussion). Additional support comes from:

- Pienemann's (1998) *Teachability Hypothesis*[32], claiming that FonF is necessary at least with some aspects of the TL;
- French immersion programs (e.g. Swain 1998);
- further experimental research (e.g. Alanen 1995; Leow 1997a, b; Robinson 1997a, b; Rosa & O'Neill 1999).

Both the research and the favourable attitude to explicit formal instruction exhibited by the vast majority of both instructors and students (*cf.* also e.g. Burgess & Etherington 2002; Hyland 2003) reinforce the position of grammar as an indispensable component of the language-learning experience. The obvious fact that the presence of metalinguistic knowledge in the learner need not necessarily result in its correct use cannot be ignored; this issue, however, goes beyond the scope and purpose of the current work.

8 Concentrating on foreign language learning

All the aforementioned factors are particularly consequential in FL *learning*, where the environment differs substantially from that in *SLA*, rendering direct evidence inevitable.

[32] This "predicts that instruction can only promote acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting" (Pienemann 1985:37).

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Firstly, with a limited attention span, learners happen not to pay too much heed to what is going on in the classroom, and even if they do, they focus on the propositional content of the utterance rather than form (VanPatten's Primacy of Meaning Principle; 2004:18) and fail to retain the structure. This is our universal propensity: we listen to language predominantly to understand the message, paying little attention to the precise wording; in Wilberg's (1987) words, "we eat the sweet but discard the wrapper."

Secondly, while in an immersion situation learners have ample opportunity and time for out-of-school interaction with NSs and repeated and varied exposure to a very robust linguistic environment and will, hopefully, ultimately absorb a lot (which is why Krashen dubs natural settings 'acquisition-rich environments'), this is not readily available in the conventional classroom (educational settings constituting an 'acquisition-poor environment'), not least because the time factor does not allow sufficient exposure.

And, thirdly, indirect linguistic evidence need not necessarily be 100% well-formed.

There is one more reason why I concentrate on language *learning*. The critical/sensitive period hypothesis claims that after puberty a language cannot be acquired *naturally*. At the same time, adolescent and adult learners are already holders of a 'driving licence'[33] in one language—their NL—and will have some assumptions and expectations concerning the TL (Łukasiewicz 2006:8). If we agree with Schachter that Universal Grammar only controls core linguistic competence and that the bulk of language

[33] This knowledge of *language*, including some awareness of deep structure phenomena, may be called—extending Rusiecki's (1980) term beyond the realm of vocabulary—*latent bilingualism*. The learning difficulty would then be seen as lying in discovering the idiosyncratic rules whereby the L_2 relates DS to SS and the phonetic representations (Zybert 1999:24).

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data, "up to two thirds of the contents of the pedagogical grammar" can*not* fall within its scope (1996:72), it follows that the overwhelming peripheral idiosyncrasy of language—whether in L1A, SLA, or FLL—simply has to be *learnt* anyway, irrespective of the age of the learner.

While teaching should not be limited to formal instruction, formal instruction should not be excluded from the language syllabus either. After prolonged debate, recent research has positively settled the case for form-focused instruction (*cf.* e.g. Doughty 1991; Harley 1998; Radwan 2005, 2006 for further exploration).

It is also received wisdom that mastering the grammatical system of a foreign language poses countless problems for the learner; a fact that needs to be addressed by the teacher. Universal Grammar, or the innate faculty[34] enabling us to acquire our mother tongue effortlessly and without the presence of overt instruction, ceases to become operative or at least loses some of its grip as puberty advances (in line with the current treatment of UG as a finite set of *constraints* which circumscribe the possible characteristics of natural languages and prevent the language learner from forming 'wild' grammars, rather than the somewhat more vague and liberal designation 'principles' intended to capture commonality among human languages).

Without full access to UG and prolonged access to indirect positive evidence, the grammatical system of a FL will never be internalised without the compensatory remedy of formal instruction, a 'catalyser' in the words of Maria Dakowska (p.c., March 12 2007). Somewhat in a vicious-circular fashion, the success of grammar teaching is to a cer-

[34] A fact corroborated by the discovery of the *FOXP2* gene, which apparently steers the development of the parts of the brain responsible for our speech abilities and the mutation of which causes problems with the articulation and formulation of sentences (Lai *et al.* 2001: 519).

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tain extent dependent on specific characteristics of the learner.

9 The Language Interface Model

This is not, however, the end of the story. The basic reason why we look for familiar orientation points and similarities when in a new situation is our natural need for safety. We feel more comfortable and at ease at home, in our district and city, than at a new venue, even though the latter may be objectively better-appointed, more attractive and safer, just because in the former we could take more things for granted that would occupy our mind elsewhere. This is also why the target language should *literally* be taught in the framework of the learner's L_1 – as in the Language Interface Model (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003a), which proves appreciably more successful than other approaches, with the results and enhanced retention preserved long after the instruction period has ended. The method bases on the model of pedagogical grammar charted in Gozdawa-Gołębiowski (*op. cit.*:201–9; 2003b), with a couple of minor modifications and expansions on my part.

What is so new here? The model builds upon the long-known Contrastive Analysis, but in a completely novel fashion, by forging an interface between the learner's L_1 and the TL. This is supplemented (especially in areas not fully amenable to interface instruction, but also in others as an auxiliary measure) by an explication of the underlying grammatical system, thus leading to an enhanced understanding of the '*how*'s' and '*why*'s' of the material to be mastered. But let us first delineate the *modus procedendi* step by step:

1. The method usually commences by *initial exposure* (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003a:196*ff*; 2003b:*passim*; James 1994:210; 1998:261) of new language material in a natural context, accompanied by its direct translational

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equivalent, but without aiming at structural decomposition. Preferably—for the learner to pay attention to the relevant grammatical information given the limited capacity to process information—the context should be a short sentence, as such are easier to process than discourse (Wong 2004:38–42);

2. *Imprinting* – the same invariant sequence of words will be exposed to the learner a few more times at reasonable intervals until TL-NL meaning equivalence has been established; for instance, moving from the sentence to a passage or connected discourse (as recommended by *e.g.* Wong, *ibid.*) into which the language point has been written. The new structure is intended for holistic (*gestalt*) processing and easy recall;
3. *Explication* of how the rules of a given grammar area operate in the learners' steady-state L_1: examining, demonstrating, and bringing to the surface relevant facts and rules in the source language that are only subconsciously known to the learners, thus leading to L_1 *awareness*[35]. That is, the learner is introduced to rules and facts s/he intuitively knows and subconsciously applies in performance, but which s/he may have never consciously pondered upon. More attention here is being paid to higher-order rules of use than lower-order rules of formation.

Thus, the first major step is getting the learners to observe and notice patterns in their NL. This finds support e.g. in Gabryś-Barker's (2005) evidence that source language proficiency is influential on L_2 development. Things that have once been explicated have the preponderance of not becoming obliterated and can be recalled

[35] Language awareness means sensitisation of the learner to the functioning of a mastered language, "an ability to contemplate metacognitively a language over which one has therefore developed a coherent and relatively stable set of intuitions: '*implicit* knowledge that has become *explicit*'" (James 1994:209; emph. added).

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as the need arises. This has one more advantage: we can explicate only those L_1 items that are relevant to the L_2, disregarding ones that may cause confusion. We should also bear in mind the fact that learners often cope with structures that are totally different from their equivalents in the students' native language precisely because they are so unexpected and 'bizarre' and stick in the memory, which can thus further enhance retention (what and how well is remembered overtime).

4. A passage is subsequently made to the *explanation* of relevant L_2 regularities – something more novel this time, being the target proper of the instruction. Since the learners are already *au fait* with some representative exemplars of the construction in question, the anxiety before having to master some new principles is reduced appreciably, with the reassuring feeling of a *déjà vu* (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003b:126) or *déjà entendu*. What happens now is raising the learners' *consciousness* of FL features—accumulating insight into what the learners do not yet know in the FL, without necessarily directly instilling the rules (Rutherford 1987; James 1998:260)—revealing the underlying TL pattern and offering a rule, but without losing sight of the L_1 principle, showing parallels between both languages. New knowledge representations are not assimilated and stored in an isolated area of the brain, but will always be related (by neural circuits or other means) to areas storing some other information – for instance, implicit L_1 knowledge that has become explicated (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003b:123). This is necessary for making the new knowledge structures available for effective and efficient recall. The NL and TL facts are presented as systemically and systematically related (*op. cit.*:126). Language-awareness tasks sensitize

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the learner to language phenomena which are present in both his/her L_1 and the TL, but whose overt realization in the two languages may differ. Learners discover whether the L_1 rules are operative in the L_2 and vice versa.[36] The teacher's task is to demonstrate to the learners through comparative analysis that they already know something which they have so far regarded as mysterious. This eases the burden and is greatly facilitative in lowering the affective filter – a factor not to be disregarded.

It is essential to note at this point that at the two stages—especially at early levels of proficiency or where the subject-matter is complicated or would require the introduction of complex taxonomy otherwise—in order to maximize efficiency the explanations had preferably be formulated in the mother tongue of the learners "as a more accessible and cost-effective alternative to the sometimes lengthy and difficult target-language explanation" (Ur 1996:17; *cf.* also *e.g.* Wilen *et al.* 2004, or Temple *et al.* 2005). Using the learner's L_1 to provide examples and clarify explanation saves time, makes the input more comprehensible than might be possible with the "sink-or-swim English-only approach" (Temple *et al.* 2005:498), and relieves frustration caused by not understanding classroom instruction presented in the TL only (Balosa 2006). Humans are limited capacity processors – when learning to drive a car, we will not be taking a turn at a busy crossroads, glancing in the rear-view mirror, keeping a conversation going, operating the CD player, and applying mascara (the fairer sex) all at the same

[36] The use of mother-tongue exercises is also recommended to effectively help students realise that what works in their mother tongue may not work in the L_2.

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time,[37] unless our destination is massacre. When introducing a new concept or piece of information about the language system, care should be taken not to rock the boat too much, to ensure that the learners concentrate on the content of the rule, rather than direct all intellectual effort at painstakingly deciphering its metalinguistic wording. As a rule it is more important for the learners to understand a concept or grammar point than it is for it to be explained exclusively in the TL. A FL learner will—even at very advanced stages—still think in the L_1 when performing more and less complex mental operations, such as *e.g.* mathematical calculations (only 23% of the full-time first-year students at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw who were asked by the author in an anonymous questionnaire in which language they perform simple addition, subtraction or multiplication tasks when abroad, indicated English). Similarly, many errors had better be discussed in the L_1.

5. Once the relevant material has been explained, an *interface*—a contact area between the two language systems—is forged, usually consisting in modifying the L_1 rule to accommodate relevant L_2 data (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003a:206). This has already been advocated by Leontiev, though surprisingly the implications of the relevant passage have gone unnoticed in the literature and praxis:

> As teachers, our task is to 'get rid' of the intermediate stage as quickly as possible and to bring the psychological structure of the utterance in the foreign tongue as close as possible to that which operates in the mother

[37] Attention may be freed up to focus on these other matters while weaving through the traffic "non impediti ratione congitatonis" [unencumbered by the thought process; as goes the motto of radio show *Car Talk* broadcast from Cambridge, MA] only once the routine has been automated.

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> tongue. This means providing the student expediently with a system of operations which will not only correspond to the real psychological structure of the speech act, and will be easy to convert and put into effect, but will also ensure maximum support from the habits for the construction of utterances in the mother tongue. In this way we can make the student's subsequent work much easier. The learner should not so much be acquainted with the rules of translation from the mother tongue to the foreign one … as, more importantly, with the rules governing the *transition* from the speech operations of the mother tongue to those of the foreign one. (A. A. Leontiev 1981:27; emph. added)

The Language Interface Model meets these postulates successfully, allowing the language learner to link new language items with his/her present knowledge or experience; i.e., placing it within his/her Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1934/1962), taken to denote "the layer of skill or knowledge… just beyond that with which the learner is currently capable of coping" (Williams & Burden 1997:40); "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1934/1978:86), thus somewhat reminiscent of Krashen's 'i + 1' axiom. The construct has been connected to the input and practice opportunities that are afforded by different participation structures (Shea 1994). The rationale can be lucidly represented in the following manner:

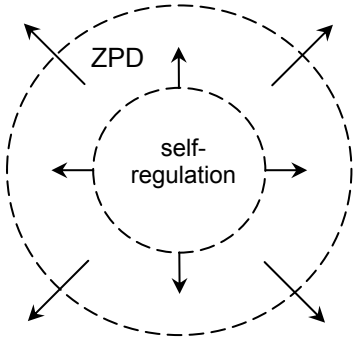

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Figure 2: The Zone of Proximal Development

The inner circle of self-regulation denotes the learner's *independent* mental capabilities, e.g. strategic behaviours engaged in by learners with the aim of helping them to guide and monitor their actions when confronted with difficulty in performing a task. Beyond this area lie activities which can only be performed with external assistance. In the case of language learning, a new item can be internalized when the learner is able to link it with his/her present knowledge or experience; i.e., when it lies within the person's idiosyncratic ZPD; any goal beyond is inaccessible (van Lier 1996:190–1). Naturally, with the aid of pedagogical intervention, or scaffolding—the support given to the learner to help him/her progress to the next developmental level—the learner's command and comprehension of the FL system gradually expands, s/he can carry out tasks at higher levels without the guidance of the teacher, slowly approximating to the TL system. Thus, pedagogic intervention ought to be tailored to the learner's needs, so as to help him/her "find ways of moving into their next level of understanding of language" (Williams & Burden 1997:66). This postulate logically connects with the cognitive mediation theory of Israeli psychologist Reuven Feuerstein (Feuerstein *et al.* 1980), which takes the role of the mediator (teacher) to be the key factor in the process of learning, placing him/her between the learner and the material. His/her role is to select, sequence, pace, frame, highlight, compare, interpret,

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review, break down, synthesize and present stimuli in a way most apt to facilitate optimal learning, making them both accessible and meaningful; to diagnose the learning potential and then provide support in transforming it into performance (Salo 2006). This includes taking into account the learner's current knowledge and past experiences[38] (which also implies the mother tongue!). This is also why "success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language" – this observation made by Vygotsky as early as in 1934 (1962:121) is only recently being recognized as a novel discovery by numerous researchers. Knowledge of the mother tongue serves as a springboard for FL development as "interlingual associations … provide a *key* to the mysteries of the FL" (James 1994:212).

Subsequent carefully monitored practice first expects the learner to apply the FL rules to L_1 (!) examples. Precisely that: foreign rules are to be applied to mother-tongue texts. Focusing on the meaning *and* form at the same time overcomes the problem mentioned by Niżegorodcew (2005) that form-oriented input is unsuccessful if not interpreted as such. Only then does the teaching move to more traditionally sanctioned TL exercises, but even then in a progressive, transitional fashion: the first assignments being translational equivalents of the L_1 ex-

[38] The teacher's task is, therefore, also to identify how to tap into the strengths within each learner's repertoire as well as the weaknesses. In the Feuersteinian approach emphasis thus shifts from product to process, where developing learning strategies assumes at least as crucial importance as the subject knowledge itself, with the goal of the qualitative teacher-learner interactions to equip the latter with skills and strategies strengthening his/her personal motivation and competence to learn, thereby helping him/her move along the continuum "from dependence *on* the mediator to independence *from* the mediator" (Levine 2001:4), when the learner has internalised the strategies taught and can apply them to contexts outside of the instructional content. Mediation can thus be seen as promoting learner autonomy, assisting him/her in the acquisition process (Williams & Burden 1997:67–8).

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amples (in order to preserve the familiarity appeal), subsequently moving on to entirely novel ones, where the learner tackles the tasks without the aid of a *déjà vu* – as in real-life contexts.

This may look like building the L_2 on the L_1—which, to a certain extent, it is—but the mother tongue only acts as a scaffolding or bridge to be dismantled or burnt when no longer necessary, or, another valid metaphor, the foundations upon which the construction proper is mounted, which with time become invisible, but remain present at all times.

6. *Competence expansion* – making the learners collapse their already conscious knowledge of the FL system with their already explicit representations of their subconscious L_1 competence and integrate the rules, ultimately expecting submersion and subconscious absorption thereof, bringing about multicompetence effects and allowing for the obliteration of the rules governing the structure of the utterance from the learner's conscious mind (A. A. Leontiev 1981:23). This is consistent with James' (1998:263) observation that "explanation is, in effect, comparative description: quite simply EA [error analysis]." Although formula memorization poses a lighter learning burden, rule internalization is undeniably more successful. James (1994) also maintains that in order to forge the interface a 'common denominator' has to be discovered. Metacognition can be this denominator as one can have metacognition of both the native and foreign language. The resulting L_1:L_2 merger is expected to become automatised and—with sufficient frequency of use—proceduralised, thus conducive to accuracy-*cum*-fluency and compensating for the lack of native intuitions (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski 2003b:*passim*).

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10 The assets

Life is a process, not a result.
(attribution unknown)

By such a gradual, multi-stage method the learners gain command of the TL system before actually starting to use the operational principles in the TL itself. A cognitive inferential (deductive) approach gets them—at least mentally—more engaged in the learning process ("you learn best what you've done yourself"), while the juxtaposition and use of L_1 and L_2 rules alongside help the latter merge with the former (leading to the development, or expansion, of linguistic multicompetence) and thus, hopefully, submerge to the subconscious, indicating that the material has been successfully automatised and internalised. By first practising the TL rules in the safe grounds of the L_1, the learner feels more comfortable and at ease (this reducing the affective filter), while consciousness-raising (C-R) coupled with negative evidence elucidates the gap between the learner's production and the model one. The position ties in with both a recognition of the personal and social factors highlighted in the community-oriented cultures of eastern and northern Europe, and with the emphasis prevalent in the US on the inborn learning patterns and the organization of the brain (as distinguished by Anna Stetsenko). The model meets all of Ellis' (1997:119) requirements for converting language input into explicit knowledge through:

- noticing (initial exposure and imprinting stages),
- comparing (input to current IL knowledge; explanation stage; but I would also emphasise cross-linguistic comparisons in the explication and interface formation stages as well), and
- integration (of new information into the existing mental network; IL expansion stage).

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If the model is successful enough to encourage transfer of training, it also enhances *incidental learning*, strengthening *spontaneously* established rules by referring them to existing systems (*cf.* Łukasiewicz 2006:38).

Comparing two languages, and conscious knowledge about the structures which are different in the L_1 and L_2 and therefore prone to be transferred, does not constitute an impediment to fluent language usage; W. Marton reminds us of one of the fundamental psychological laws of learning: "The way we learn something does not forever determine the way in which we put this knowledge to use later on" (1973/81:153).

Only in this way can we compensate for the alleged (by some) unavailability of UG mechanisms. We can also quote here the argument for the study of grammar of the FL raised by the Grammar-Translation Method that focusing on grammar in such a contrastive way will familiarise students with that of their own language, which may—in turn—help them speak and write more skilfully in their mother tongue: language awareness in the L_2 does result in increased L_1 accuracy (Ewert forthc.).[39]

When the learners remember, internalise, proceduralise and automatise the rules on the go, we can profess that we teach grammar as process, not merely as content, even if eventually arriving at a product. Adhering to this procedure the teacher may trust the learners know more than just the surface structure of the utterances taught: the deductive, process approach does not merely lead to the acquisition of structure and lexis, but to the development of meaning, to the formation of generalizations that stand behind a word

[39] Blum-Kulka and Shefher (1993) demonstrate that acculturation to L_2 pragmatics can also affect the speaker's L_1.

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and, consequently, to the raising of FL consciousness (Vygotsky 1934/1962; A. N. Leontiev 1998/2005).

Interfacial C-R contrasts with traditional grammar instruction in that it devotes much greater attention to form-function relationships. On top of that, it attains to situate grammatical forms and structures within a broader discoursal context. It enables the learner to see how grammar operates in discourse and how meanings are realised by grammatical features. Rutherford (1987:26) believes that C-R may result in improved production and a wider scope of contexts in which the learner will be capable of employing the rules. While this prospect has not been investigated in the empirical project, it is to this end that the initial practice stage requires the learner to apply target language structures in a familiar L_1 framework.

Rather than as a productive skill, C-R views grammar as a receptive skill. In contrast to traditional practice exercises, although consciousness-raising may not demand of the learner to actually produce sentences for immediate mastery, it will instead get him/her to notice and understand a particular grammatical feature (*cf.* the delayed-effect hypothesis) and to apply cognitive strategies to systematise the language. While production practice amplifies the learner's control over grammatical structures, input-oriented practice develops deeper *understanding* of the meaning and function of the structures and in so doing increases learners' confidence in using them. Thus, the two approaches ought to complement each other. Grammar practice activities must involve both process- and product-oriented perspectives and recognise both productive and receptive skills; both perspectives are, again, incorporable within interfacial instruction.

11 Not just the L_1

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English grammar is so complex and confusing for the one very simple reason that its rules and terminology are based on Latin – a language with which it has precious little in common. In Latin, to take one example, it is not possible to split an infinitive. So in English, the early authorities decided, it should not be possible to split an infinitive either. But there is no reason why we shouldn't, any more than we should forsake instant coffee and air travel because they weren't available to the Romans.

—Bill Bryson, American writer, editor, and journalist (1990) *The Mother Tongue*

In improving language learners' skills we may fall back not only on the knowledge of the learners' L_1, but equally well apply analogy learning with other languages that our learners are familiar with, their cumulative linguistic experience – this inclusion of more than just the first language in the FLT classroom, establishing connections between languages acquired earlier and later, is being proposed by several researchers (e.g. Meißner 1999; Neuner 2001; Gabryś-Barker 2005; Marx 2006). The results of a longitudinal study carried out by Marx (2006) comparing two heterogeneous learner groups from mixed L_1 backgrounds indicated higher scores in the target language on various traditional measures of proficiency where learners' awareness was raised of *all* the languages in their command. Additionally, the learners developed enhanced ability to perceive language as a logical system, and to compare linguistic systems with one another.

Actually, it is not even certain *whether* the role of the L_1 is more important than that of other already mastered languages; as House (2004) points out, in the process of learning further languages it may not be the mother tongue, but primarily the knowledge of the languages that are perceived as 'foreign' that is drawn upon. House puts forward the highly plausible hypothesis that the awareness of one's learning processes, strategies, and competence in the L_{2+} is developed better than of those of the L_1—which are typi-

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cally unconscious and automatic (e.g. advanced L_2-ers were found to significantly outperform long-time immigrants in acceptability judgement tasks in areas of grammar which are highly enforced in classroom instruction; *cf.* e.g. Cuza, subm.:33)—and the learners are better-trained in monitoring and ameliorating their deficits and expanding their strengths. This is consistent with data collected by Gabryś-Barker (2005), which showed that multilinguals perform better in their L_3 if they transfer their learning experiences from the context of the L_2.

Moreover, we will be able to find similar constructions as well as examples of syntactic, morphological, phonological and lexical relatedness among all syngenetic languages deriving from the same family roots. Congruence is manifest in copious structures across languages. However, when presenting learners with comparisons of two structures in their non-native languages, one must set about it cautiously in order to prevent negative transfer from occurring in other constructions. If the learners begin to rely too much on another language, transfer will be very difficult to confine, since learners will be impacted much more by the L_3 than the L_1, as things acquired consciously will be more entrenched.

12 Coda

The findings of a prolonged controlled classroom experiment indicate enhanced performance and retention in experimental groups taught via the Language Interface Model over control groups even in a deferred post-test, 2 to 5 months after the instruction in the grammar areas taught was over (Paradowski 2007:149-200). The model can also successfully be implemented in other fields of FL communicative competence. Thus for instance in a course on L_2 writing conventions, discourse organization, structure of informa-

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tion and information packaging, the learners could first experimentally be taught the principles and asked to apply these in their mother tongue—say, a guided composition or two—before struggling with composing an English text, which will probably provide several other challenges than just requiring to remember the principles that were mentioned during one or two classes at most. If the learners manage to successfully apply L_2 strategies in L_1 texts, thus becoming better trained in learning to 'think' in the way preferred in the target language, success lies within reach. By such differences I mean for instance, in terms of clause combining, the preference for coordination in English contrasted against more intensive use of subordination devices found in French, as pointed out by Chuquet and Paillard (1987), or the English preference for non-finite clauses vs. tensed ones in French, mentioned by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958).

Similarly, if not more importantly, a crucial part of expertise in ELF is 'pragmatic fluency' (House 2006). The importance of developing pragmatic competence—the ability to employ TL resources in an appropriate way for particular contexts—has been ascertained in current models of communicative competence. Contrastive language instruction should go beyond the purely linguistic plane of classroom instruction, to extend to the pragmatic sphere of communicative use of language in context. House's examples demonstrate that even in so closely related languages as English and German the communicative styles differ considerably – to what extent would that have to be between typologically distant languages, with totally different cultural traditions to boot (2003:131)? Thus, the awareness of pragmatic and discourse phenomena in FLL should include an understanding of the contrasts and similarities in these

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areas between the TL and the L_1 (L_2, L_n…). Pragmatic competence would yield perfectly to the language-interface rationale; an appropriate research project is being prepared in this regard. If the learners transfer pragmatic patterns anyway, let us enable them to transfer those which will be appropriate.

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