Accurate L2 Production across Language Tasks: Focus on Form, Focus on Meaning, and Communicative Control

M. Rafael Salaberry; Nuria Lopez-Ortega


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Accurate L2 Production across Language Tasks: Focus on Form, Focus on Meaning, and Communicative Control

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Attention to form has been shown to be a direct predictor of accuracy in second language (L2) production (Ellis, 1987; Tomlin & Villa, 1994). However, Tarone and Parrish (1988) claim that communicative pressure (communicative demands of linguistic interaction) may be as important as attention to form. The present study analyzes the accuracy of L2 Spanish production across 3 different tasks (narrative task, multiple-choice cloze test, and fill-in-the-blanks cloze test) on 3 discourse-determined grammatical items (subject pronouns, articles, and past tense aspect) among 74 native (L1) English speakers (45 intermediate and 29 advanced students). The analysis of the data reveals different rates of accuracy in L2 production according to task type and grammatical item. The effect of functional focus on form (communicative pressure) may constitute one of various factors that affect accuracy in L2 production. The analysis of the data also considers other factors such as communicative control.

INTRODUCTION

Variation in second language (L2) production has been widely attested in studies of second language acquisition (SLA) by Tarone (1985), Ellis (1987), Bley-Vroman (1989), Crookes (1989), and Gregg (1990), among others. Even though the existence of variation in L2 is hardly controversial, the cause for variation can be attributed to an inherently "unstable" L2 system (viz., competence) as claimed by Tarone (1985) and Ellis (1987), or variation can be considered a mere byproduct of performance phenomena as presented in a Chomskyian framework (e.g., Gregg, 1990). In fact, both sides of this controversy agree that variation phenomena can be classified into three major categories: Gregg (1990) and Andersen (1989) agree on the existence of variation across speakers, across tasks, and across time for any given speaker. The types of variation occurring across speakers and across time are readily accounted for by the majority of linguistic theories. Variation across speakers is the subject matter of sociolinguistics, and variation across time constitutes part of studies of language development. However, variation across tasks can be considered the product of competence or performance, depending on the theoretical perspective of the researcher. For example, Andersen (1989) argues that a theory of SLA must search for the cognitive operating principles that guide the learner in the development of the interlanguage (IL) system: Variation due to cognitive and social interactional factors must be reduced to invariance. Gregg (1990) also makes a similar argument, yet states that variation is a surface phenomenon that is separate from the true invariant nature of the linguistic competence of the L2 speaker. This disagreement between variationist and nonvariationist positions might be more apparent than real, as Preston (1993) argues forcefully: "if UG..."
researchers would build into their programs room for processing, discoursal, low-level linguistic environmental, and even (shudder) interactional influences, they might be able to better isolate the UG effects they seek" (p. 170). A more integrative perspective on the nature of L2 variation accommodates both modular (nonvariationist) and nonmodular (variationist) approaches to language acquisition and use.

VARIATION IN L2 PRODUCTION

Attention to Form

The degree of attention to form is considered crucial among the general cognitive factors that cause variation in language. Krashen (1982), for instance, argues that attention acts as a "monitor" for the appropriate use and learning of some (simple) language rules. However, Gregg (1984) criticizes Krashen’s concept of a “monitor” for nonnative language use, on the grounds that “focusing on form is focusing on content” (p. 83). Gregg claims that the distinction between form and content is more apparent than real when the IL user is “trying to say what s/he means” (p. 83). According to Gregg’s perspective, L2 learners do not need to give any preferential attention to form to be able to acquire or use the target language (TL). However, Gregg’s argument is contradicted by the available data on L2 acquisition. For instance, most L2 language teachers know that adults are quite adept at communicating (focusing on meaning) without having adequate control of the formal means (grammatical rules) to achieve that goal. In fact, the anecdotal evidence from teaching circles has achieved the status of a formal hypothesis in the work of Labov (1972). Labov provides the groundwork on the analysis of style-shifting: The speech style of any single speaker can be placed on a continuum determined by the amount of attention paid to speech. Tarone (1983) extends Labov’s concept of style-shifting to argue for the existence of variation in the L2. This concept of variation is determined by the continuum that goes from unattended speech (vernacular) to most attended speech (careful style, grammatical intuitions). According to Tarone, the vernacular style should be considered as the basic variety—the real and authentic linguistic knowledge of the learner—underlying the IL system of the L2 grammar. Furthermore, the rules present in the highly “monitored” styles can eventually spread to the vernacular style across time (Gatbonton, 1978). Attention to form remains a very important concept for language acquisition and variation. Consequently, it is highly relevant to provide an adequate theoretical characterization of attention mechanisms in the processing of the L2.

Tomlin and Villa (1994) present a very useful characterization of the concept of attention. Their perspective is appropriate because it allows SLA researchers to integrate various features of the process of attention into one multifaceted concept. Tomlin and Villa define attention as a limited capacity system that is characterized by four distinct but interrelated features: awareness, alertness, orientation, and detection. From a pedagogical point of view, instruction affects awareness, motivation affects alertness, and focus of attention is connected to orientation. Detection is the central part of the system and is ultimately affected by all three of the above mentioned pedagogical manipulations. This framework of analysis allows the L2 researcher to isolate and identify the particular aspects of the attention process that should be considered relevant at different stages of the learning process. For instance, VanPatten (1989) analyzed the orientation of attention: Learners have to decide (consciously or unconsciously) which aspect of the language input (meaning vs. form) will receive a higher degree of attention. Schmidt (1990) has emphasized the feature of detection, noting that noticing is essential for learning. Sharwood Smith (1993) emphasizes the concept of input enhancement: Students can be made aware of those features of the input that are considered necessary for the processing of the L2 grammar. The important point to make is that variation in the IL may be a reflection of one or a combination of effects of all the features of the attention process presented by Tomlin and Villa.

Other Factors that Explain Variation in the L2

Alternatively, variation in L2 can be explained by the effect of factors other than attention. For instance, Gass (1980) argues that the nature of the language task is another factor that should be considered in the analysis of learners’ grammatical accuracy. Grammaticality judgment tasks might tap onto one aspect of the processing of the L2 competence of the learner (perhaps acceptability only), whereas a sentence-combination task affects a distinct processing mechanism (e.g., to produce a new grammatical sentence that keeps the meaning of the two isolated original phrases). However, in Gass’s proposal, the conceptual distinction between the attention process associated with each task is not very clear. It is possible
to argue that some features of Tomlin and Villa's model (1994) of attention are more prevalent in one task than in another. For instance, changes in the orientation of the participant's attention can be more important for the sentence linking task, whereas different degrees of awareness become more important for the grammaticality judgment task. Of course, this argument can become circular, because the relative weight of the different features of the attention system are also affected by type of task. Another possible factor in variation in L2 production is the emotional investment of the L2 learner (e.g., Eisenstein & Starbuck, 1989; Lantolf & Kanji, 1982). For instance, Eisenstein and Starbuck investigated the effect of interesting versus not interesting topics in the oral production of 10 English as a second language (ESL) learners. Their results showed that accuracy in grammatical form was lower for the task associated with the more interesting topic. Several other factors, such as level of stress and content knowledge, are possible causes for variation, but, as shown before, most of these factors can be considered the outcome of different degrees of attention according to the model of Tomlin and Villa.

Tarone (1985) argues in favor of a second factor that can cause variation in the L2: the discursive features of the L2 text. In her study, Tarone analyzed the accurate use of some grammatical features of English among native (L1) speakers of Japanese and Arabic: indefinite and definite articles, third-person singular -s marker in present tense, noun plural -s, and third-person direct object pronoun. A total of 10 Japanese and 10 Arabic L1 speakers participated in the experiment (all advanced learners of ESL according to standardized test scores). The participants were tested on three different tasks: a written grammaticality judgment test, an oral interview, and the oral narration of a short movie. The results of Tarone's study show that the students were more accurate in the use of articles and third-person direct object pronouns in the oral tasks than in the grammaticality judgment task. On the other hand, there was no change on accuracy for the use of the plural morpheme between tasks. However, it is important to note that these results were statistically significant only for the use of articles (pp. 381–387). Tarone argues that the results (related to article use only) are important for two main reasons. First, they challenge the notion that grammaticality judgment tasks reflect the learner's competence in the L2: No single task is sufficient to render an accurate description of the learner's knowledge of the L2 grammatical system. Second, Tarone claims that the explanatory power of the concept of attention to form is not enough to account for the outcome of her study. When the task requires an adequate use of discursive cohesiveness (interview and narration), the speaker will be more accurate in the use of structures that help maintain the cohesiveness of the narration: The discursive nature of the text is as important as is attention to form for the accurate use of L2 forms.

Ellis (1987) replicated Tarone (1985) and argued that attention and planning can be considered equivalent on methodological grounds. Following Sato (1983), Ellis states that there is no objective means of determining how much attention a participant pays to form in various tasks. Ellis claims that "(t)he planned/unplanned distinction is clearly much the same as the careful/ vernacular distinction discussed by Labov and Tarone" (p. 3). In his study, Ellis analyzed the use of English past tense verbs (regular, irregular, and copula) among 17 participants learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The participants were requested to narrate a story depicted in a series of still pictures. In the first part of the task, the participants looked at the series of pictures corresponding to Story 1, and they wrote their narration of that story (writing task). Subsequently, they were asked to narrate the same story orally (in a language lab). Finally, they were asked to perform an oral narration of a second story (Story 2). For this last task, the participants were given 2 minutes to look at the pictures, but they were not allowed to do the written narration before the oral one. The "planning time" variable was determined by the possibility of doing a written narration of the story before the corresponding oral narration.

The results of Ellis's (1987) study present two major findings. First, they show that style-shifting across the different tasks occurred most frequently for regular past tense forms, less so for past copula, and hardly at all with irregular past tense forms. In other words, attention to form—as reflected in the different amounts of planning time of the oral narrations—directly affects some forms, but not others. Second, Ellis argues that planning time had a clear effect on past tense markers (although not in one of its forms). In fact, Ellis claims that at least one previous study (Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984) supports his finding that the greatest difference in accuracy occurs when participants are under time pressure and they are focusing on form (as opposed to content). This difference is also the greatest in Ellis' study, in which his Task 1 (written task) al-
allows the participant to pay attention to form under no time pressure. Ellis claims that his data suggest that planning variability (i.e., attention to form) may be consistent across structures. On the other hand, Tarone’s (1985) results suggest that text type variability (the discursive cohesiveness of the text) can be “reflected in style shifting that follows opposite directions according to the discourse functions of different structures” (p. 13). In essence, there does not seem to be a major contradiction between Tarone’s and Ellis’s results, which show that both planning time and discourse type affect L2 accuracy.

**Communicative Pressure as a Predictor of L2 Accuracy**

In order to investigate further the role of factors other than attention to linguistic form and the cohesiveness of the discourse, Tarone and Parrish (1988) reanalyzed the data from Tarone (1985). The new analysis focused on the use of articles (the only grammatical item that reached statistical significance in the 1985 study) according to the model developed by Huebner (1983). Following Huebner, the semantic functions of the noun phrase (NP) are determined by the different combinations of two binary features of NPs: +/- information assumed known to the hearer (HK) and +/- specific referent (SR). There are four possible combinations of these features resulting in four types of NPs, as shown in Table 1.

NP types 2 and 3 are particularly important because they make reference to “subsequent mention” (the, known to the hearer and specific referent) and “first mention” (a, unknown to the hearer and specific referent) in the course of a narration: They are determined discursively. Tarone and Parrish (1988) analyzed the use of articles in association with the different types of NPs in the original three tasks of Tarone (1985): written grammar test, oral interview, and oral narrative. The reanalysis of the data showed that the different tasks elicited the use of different types of NP. In the interview, participants used articles with NPs of types 1, 2, and 3 in the same proportion (roughly 30% each), whereas in the narration task, learners favored the use of Type 2 (71%) and Type 3 (25%). The rates of accuracy of article use show that participants were most accurate with articles associated with Type 2 NPs in the narration task (92%), less so in the interview (86%), and least in the grammar test (50%). With reference to Type 3 NPs, students were most accurate in the interview (77%), less so in the narration (71%), and least accurate in the grammar test (46%).

Tarone and Parrish (1988) interpret these results in two different ways. First, they argue that both Arabic and Japanese speakers used articles more accurately in the oral tasks because the discourse requirements were the highest (discursive cohesiveness of the text). Second, the authors claim that there was greater accuracy of article use with Type 2 NPs on the narrative task compared to the interview task (92% vs. 86%). Tarone and Parrish argue that the more accurate use of the article system in a narration task is due to “communicative pressure.” That is to say, the participants in Tarone’s (1985) study were required to tell the story “face-to-face” to a listener who, in turn, had to perform a specific task according to the rendered narration of the original story. In order to be effective, the student narrating the story might have felt compelled to convey the subsequent mention nature of Type 2 NPs. Tarone and Parrish claim that, in the interview, the cohesion of the discourse was shared by both interlocutors, thereby relaxing the need to mark “subsequent mention” of Type 2 NPs as accurately as in the narration. On the other hand, Tarone and Parrish claim that the lower accuracy in the use of articles with Type 3 NPs in both oral tasks may have been triggered by less communicative pressure on the narrator, given that the students mark Type 3 NPs with 0 article without seriously compromising the cohesiveness of the text. In fact, the absence of the indefinite article a does not appear to make the text less comprehensible.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NP Type</th>
<th>Determiner</th>
<th>+/- HK / +/- SR</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (generic)</td>
<td>a, the, 0</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>Ø Tigers are dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (referential, def. 2nd mention)</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>The apartment is bright,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the student in the pink shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (referential, indef., 1st mention)</td>
<td>a, 0</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>My sister has a new house (1st mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (nonreferential)</td>
<td>a, 0</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>she doesn’t have a penny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Based on Tarone and Parrish (1988). HK = known to hearer; SR = specific referent.*
However, in empirical terms, the data in Tarone and Parrish’s (1982) study do not show statistically significant differences in the accurate use of articles between these oral tasks (interview and narration). Similarly, in theoretical terms, the literature on the role of the communicative demands of the language task does not offer support for the claim made by Tarone and Parrish. For instance, Eisenstein and Starbuck (1989) show that the emotional investment in a topic of discussion (closely associated with the communicative demands of a situation) may increase the cognitive load on the processing of the L2 grammar. Increased cognitive demands, in turn, may negatively affect the accuracy of TL form.

In Lantolf and Kanji (1982), five ESL speakers showed a higher degree of accuracy on language form on an oral narration task (based on the Bilingual Syntax Measure [BSM]) than in an interview. Lantolf and Kanji argue that the interview activity (based on the participants’ experiences with the American way of life) was less constrained than the narration. Consequently, the interview generated a higher degree of communicative pressure along the lines of the proposal of Tarone and Parrish (1988). However, the results of Lantolf and Kanji show that accuracy in language production was correlated negatively with communicative pressure, which is especially important because this study included the analysis of articles. Lantolf and Ahmed (1989) extended the scope of the previous finding by reanalyzing the data from one of the participants in Lantolf and Kanji’s study. The selected participant, M, was an Arabic student who had been in the U.S. for 10 months at the time of the interview and who was enrolled in an advanced-level English course. Lantolf and Ahmed compared the data from the previous study with an informal unplanned dialogue originated by the student on a topic of interest to him (religion). The analysis of the selected grammatical items (NP plural -s and articles) revealed that M’s performance decreased across the three tasks according to native speaker standards. It is interesting to note that the percentage of correct use of articles in English decreased from 65% on the BSM narration to 55% on the more informal interview to 35% on the unplanned dialogue. These results contradict the findings of Tarone (1985), and especially the reanalysis of Tarone and Parrish (1988), because the oral interview, where less attention to form occurs, should present higher levels of accuracy than the narration task.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In this study, we would like to provide additional empirical data in order to analyze the process of variation in L2 production across tasks. Tarone and Parrish (1988) argue that variability in TL (specifically the accurate use of L2 form) is due to the combined effect of three major factors: (a) attention to the linguistic form, (b) the cohesiveness of the discourse elicited by the task, and (c) the communicative function of linguistic form in discourse (communicative pressure). The role of attention to form as a predictor of accurate L2 production is hardly controversial (e.g., Ellis, 1987; Gregg, 1984; Krashen, 1982). The cohesiveness of discourse is directly related to the contextualized nature of the task (a highly plausible determinant of the accurate production of the TL). For example, Tarone (1985) compared the appropriate use of articles (L2 English) in a grammaticality judgment test (sentence level grammar) and an oral narration task (whole text discourse). It is quite clear that the cohesive nature of the discourse elicited by the oral task was an asset and not a liability for the processing of the L2 grammar. Hence, it is not implausible to ascertain that some students performed better in the more contextualized test (narration) in spite of the fact that attention to form may have decreased.13

The role of communicative pressure as a direct causal or predictive factor of accurate use of L2 grammatical rules is controversial. According to Tarone (1988), communicative pressure may be defined as the functional communicative demands placed on the learner depending on the nature of the specific task (from grammar task—lowest—to spontaneous conversation—highest). In Tarone and Parrish (1988), communicative pressure meant something very specific: the presence of a listener who needs the information that the speaker is giving in order to accomplish some task. For the interview task, the interlocutor had no clear need for the information the speaker was giving. In contrast, to accomplish the narrative task, the speaker needed to be clear in transmitting particular pieces of information, because the listener had a task to perform and could not do so without clarity on the part of the speaker. For the present study, a fourth theoretical construct will be analyzed: communicative control. This construct will be defined as the learners’ ability to manage and utilize their linguistic resources in the TL. For instance, a narration task will allow learners to have more communicative control over the task compared to a fill-in-the-blanks task:
The learner is "in control," or not using his or her linguistic knowledge. In this way, difficult or unstable aspects of the L2 system can be avoided, with the consequence that accuracy in L2 production is likely to increase. In the following section, we will describe the general findings of a pilot study that preceded the actual study reported in this paper.

Description of Pilot Study

Seven college students enrolled in an intermediate Spanish course and a privately tutored student at the same level participated in the study. The grammatical items selected for the study were: article use, gender agreement, subject pronoun use, and verbal morphology. Participants completed two tasks: (a) a grammar editing exercise (a story containing errors with the selected grammatical items), and (b) a written narration task based on a cartoon depicting a series of pictures (Quino's cartoons). The results show that attention to form was the major predictor of accuracy. Most important, it appears that discursive features of the L2—subject pronouns and articles—were not treated differently than localized grammatical features (verbal morphology and gender agreement) in both the editing task and the narration. In the grammar editing task, the highest rate of error identification was the article, followed by verbal morphology, gender, and finally, subject pronoun errors. On the other hand, the qualitative analysis of the narration task shows that students tended to avoid the use of null subject pronouns (or it was unsystematic). In general, students favored the use of overt subject pronouns and lexical subject NPs as cohesive markers:

"...un hombre buscó una persona. La persona próxima del hombre pensó... La chica próxima del hombre creyó... Pero cuando ella vio..." (Participant 2)

(A man looked for a person. The person next to the man thought... the girl next to the man thought... but when she saw...)

The analysis of verbal morphology and article use showed a tendency to alternate present and past tense in narrative context, and correct use of indefinite and definite articles in the discourse:

"su esposa y la niña llegan y él le da el regalo." (Participant 2)

(his wife and the girl arrive and he gives her the present.)

"Ella lo vio un otro hombre que se sentaba delante de una luz. Sra. Gómez deseó que la luz cayera en su cabeza!" (Participant 2)

(She saw him another man who was sitting in front of a light. Mrs. Gomez wished that the light fell on his head!)

In general, the results showed an unexpected clustering of localized, nondiscursive features (gender and verbal morphology) and one discursive feature (the article) receiving a high accuracy rate. On the other hand, the accuracy rate in the use of null subject pronouns—a discursive feature—was low. With regard to the experimental design, it appears that the students did not treat the grammar editing text as a cohesive text; instead, it seems that the learners analyzed it sentence by sentence. We concluded that the editing task was not a reliable measure for our purposes and that we needed a better operationalized measure to account for the learners' performance in both the grammar and the narration tasks for a full-scale study (see below).

Hypotheses of the Full-Scale Study

The following hypotheses guided the present study:

1. Attention to form (as defined by planning time and focus on the grammatical item) is directly related to accuracy in L2 grammatical performance.
2. Communicative pressure in L2 production (as defined by functional requirements of language task) is directly related to L2 grammatical performance.
3. Communicative control of the TL (as reflected in the unconstrained choices of grammatical means to communicate in the L2, including avoidance mechanisms) is directly related to accuracy in L2 production.
4. The effects of attention to form, communicative pressure, and communicative control of L2 grammatical performance will vary according to level of experience with the L2 (advanced learners will be less affected).

The present study differs from those carried out by Tarone (1985) and Tarone and Parrish (1988) in several respects. First, we have considered a single source language (all participants are NSs of English) and we have selected Spanish as the TL. Second, we have included students with two different levels of proficiency in the L2 in order to analyze the effect of developmental patterns in the participants' construction of the TL. Third, the target grammatical items of L2 Spanish selected for the study are determined by the discursive environment in which they function: past tense aspect, subject pro-drop, and
definite and indefinite articles. Fourth, two different types of written grammar tests were used to examine possible differences in the results due to different test formats (Tarone, 1985, p. 389). Fifth, the grammar texts were contextualized. This procedure helped to minimize the effect of potential differences not directly related to the variables of attention to form on communicative pressure (see testing procedure). Finally, we have increased the number of participants in our study (45 intermediate and 29 advanced students). 

Participants

The study was conducted with 74 English-speaking participants. They were all full-time college students. At the time of the study, 45 students were enrolled in four sections of an advanced beginners’ (third-semester) Spanish language course (Spanish 123). The four sections were taught by two different instructors. The remaining 29 students were enrolled in three sections of an advanced (sixth-semester) conversation and composition course (Spanish 311). These three sections were also taught by two different instructors. Before the test was administered, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding years of Spanish in high school and college semesters of Spanish, travel abroad, hours devoted to the study of the language, self-graded proficiency in Spanish, and self-graded performance (participation) in the course. Table 2 presents a summary of the results of the questionnaire.

All students agreed to participate in the study. One student in Spanish 311 did not finish the narration task. In addition, 10 native monolingual speakers of Castilian Spanish, ranging in age from 20 to 70 years old, served as a control group. The NSs received the same packet of materials with instructions in Spanish.

Materials and Procedure

Grammar Task. There were two versions of the grammar task: (a) a fill-in-the-blanks cloze test (FB) (see Appendix A) and (b) a multiple-choice test (MC) (see Appendix B). The text used for the grammar task consisted of a narrative text based on a captionless picture story (a cartoon from Quino; see Appendix C). The picture, the text, and the number of tokens for the two tasks (30) were identical. The MC task had four choices in parentheses with one correct answer per item. The instructions in the packet asked the participants to look at the picture story and understand it before starting the test. The time allowed for the task was 13 minutes. The three grammatical features under study were represented evenly in both versions of the grammar task: 10 tokens for obligatory use of article (definite and indefinite), 10 tokens representing obligatory use of past tense (preterite and imperfect), and 10 tokens representing the pro-drop feature (null subject pronouns and the optional use of overt subject pronouns). The reliability of the test was relatively high: The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of the grammar test was 0.82.

Narration Task. The students were also asked to write a narration based on a picture story (see Appendix D). The story had elements that could lead the students to use the three grammatical features under study. There were two female characters and one male character and there were background and foreground events and actions (aspect). Finally, first-mention and second-mention nominal phrases were necessary to refer to people and objects in the story (article and null subject pronouns). The students were asked to start with the phrase “ayer por la tarde…” (Yesterday evening . . .) in order to prompt the use of the past tense. The instructions asked the participants to look at a picture for 1 minute and to write a narration on the back of the page starting with the aforementioned phrase. Participants were allowed to look back at the picture as needed and were given 15 minutes to complete the task. All the participants were given the same narration task.

Two sections in Spanish 123 did the FB task (23

<p>| TABLE 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>High School (Years)</th>
<th>College (Semesters)</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Study (Hours)</th>
<th>Proficiency*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish 123</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish 311</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = Self-grade in overall proficiency in L2 and participation in course measured on a 1–5 rating scale.
students) and the other two did the MC task (22 students). In Spanish 311, one section (12 students) did the FB task and two sections taught by different instructors (17 students) did the MC task. This type of counterbalancing was done in order to control for possible classroom factors such as teaching style, emphasis on a specific grammatical aspect, and classroom dynamics between teacher and students. The study was conducted during regular class periods and the teacher and one of the researchers were present during the test. The students received the packets and after the researcher read the directions, they started the test. The total time of the test was approximately 30 minutes. The grammar and narration tasks were presented in counterbalanced order.

**Grammatical System of Spanish**

**Article Use.** The Spanish article system differs from the English system in the additional feature of gender. Furthermore, the use of zero article in Spanish is restricted to very specific cases, in contrast to the use of zero article in English with plural nouns. A sentence such as “0 Tigers are dangerous” would require the plural definite article in Spanish: “Los tigres son peligrosos” (Tigers are dangerous). In terms of the semantic “function” (Tarone, 1988) of articles in the NP, the Spanish article system follows the description and classification already proposed by Huebner (1983) and adopted by Tarone and Parrish (1988; see Table 1): four semantic types of NPs, with the binary features +/− SR and +/− HK. Formulaic article use as well as possessive modifiers are excluded from this classification.

**Subject Pronouns.** Subject pronouns are not required in Spanish because the verbal markers as well as tense features carry grammatical agreement. However, there are obligatory contexts for both the deletion of the subject pronoun as well as for its presence (see next section on scoring for criteria and specific examples). In terms of discourse structure, overt pronominal subjects are ungrammatical in nonobligatory contexts. Obligatory contexts are marked by the discourse in order to clarify, introduce a new subject in the sentence, or to contrast information.

**Lexical versus Grammatical Aspect.** In Spanish, past aspect is morphologically marked by the preterite and imperfect to denote perfectivity or imperfectivity, respectively. Verbal or grammatical aspect is generally associated with lexical or inherent aspect (Andersen, 1986). The preterite is used to denote punctual actions delimited by a closed and defined time frame (perfective actions). The imperfect denotes a less defined time frame and is used with iterative and habitual actions, as well as states (imperfective actions or states).

**Scoring**

**Grammar Task.** Both versions of the grammar task (FB and MC) contained 30 tokens: 10 article tokens (5 definite/5 indefinite), 10 subject pronoun tokens (5 obligatory pro-drop/5 optionally overt subject pronouns), and 10 past tense tokens (5 obligatory preterite/5 obligatory imperfect). The acquisition of a grammatical feature entails its accurate use in all possible syntactic environments. For instance, if the learner achieves 100% accuracy in the use of the preterite but 0% accuracy in the use of the imperfect, it is reasonable to argue that the learner has not achieved target-like use of aspectual distinctions in the I2. For that reason, the analyses of the two features of each grammatical notion were combined for the analysis of the data.

**Narration Task.** Tokens in the narration task were scored by use and error. Only the number of mistakes of intended use of the selected grammatical items could be computed in the narrative task. This is because in cases where the target grammatical item had not been used, it was not appropriate to assume that the learner knew how to use such a grammatical item (e.g., avoidance mechanisms).

**Scoring Procedure.** First, all instances of definite and indefinite articles, overt/pro-drop subjects, and past tenses as well as lexical NPs were counted. Raw scores were transferred into percentages for statistical analysis of the narration task. The criterion for error selection was based on the NSs’ performance on the same test and the experimenters’ native grammatical judgments. For the aspect feature, in particular, only those verbs that denoted a past action were counted. Preterite/imperfect tokens used incorrectly to convey mood (i.e., subjunctive) were not scored (i.e., an imperfect indicative verb used in place of an imperfect subjunctive).

For the scoring of article use, the following two procedures applied to indefinite and definite articles. First-mention NPs with indefinite article (− HK, + SR) were counted as correct when the indefinite article appeared in a first-mention NP. This is a Type 3 NP (see Table 1 and Tarone & Parrish, 1988):
Un viejo se sentó en una mesa del café... El viejo tenía una muñeca guardada en el bolsillo.

(An old man sat at a table in the coffee house. The old man had a doll in his pocket.)

Second-mention NPs with indefinite article (+ HK, + SR) were counted as incorrect when the referent was already known (an asterisk denotes an incorrect option):

Un viejo se sentó en una mesa del café... *Un viejo tenía una muñeca guardada en el bolsillo.

(An old man sat at a table in the coffee house. An old man had a doll in his pocket.)

The use of definite articles in second-mention NPs (+ SR, + HK) were counted as correct.

Un viejo se sentó en una mesa del café. ...El viejo tenía una muñeca guardada en el bolsillo.

(An old man sat at a table in the coffee house. The old man had a doll in his pocket.)

On the other hand, the use of definite articles in first-mention NPs (+ SR, – HK) were counted as incorrect unless they had a generic meaning:

Un viejo se sentó en *la mesa del café.

(An old man sat at the table in the coffee house.)

This rationale was followed for the correction of article use and article error tokens in both the grammar and the narration tasks, with the exception of one item in the narration task.

For the scoring of aspectual distinctions, all tokens were considered to have an obligatory context that delimited aspectual use. These contexts were provided linguistically and discursively by temporal adverbial phrases, as well as previous mention of either punctual or habitual actions that determined the grammatical aspect. Perfective aspect (preterite) denotes punctual events and actions, in a delimited time frame. The following example is representative of such a context.

El chico se aceró al viejo.

(The kid approached the old man.)

Imperfective aspect (imperfect and past progressive) is used with stative verbs and when the action is not delimited by a specific time frame or is simultaneous to another action.

El chico se acercó al viejo, que leía tranquilmamente el periódico.

(The kid approached the old man, who was leisurely reading the paper.)

Grammatical aspect, and not lexicon, was the relevant feature of the analysis. In the FB task, wrong lexical choices with the correct grammatical aspect and morphological marking that made sense discursively were considered as correct in the narration. Wrong lexical choices that seemed to contradict the story line or made little sense in the discourse were counted as incorrect.

For the scoring of null and overt subject pronouns, subjects in both grammar and narration task were represented as lexical nominal phrases, as overt subject pronouns, or as null subject pronouns. In Spanish, after first mention of the subject, and if no interference of another subject occurs, the null subject is considered the obligatory form.

Un viejo se sentó en una mesa del café. θ Pidió una copa de anís, mientras θ esperaba a que llegase su cita.

(An old man sat at a table in the coffee house. He / *θ ordered a glass of anisette while he / *θ waited to meet his date.)

There is a significant difference between Spanish and English in this respect: In English, second mention of a referent subject can have an overt subject pronoun; in Spanish, second mention of a subject must be a null subject pronoun, unless there are some other intervening contextual referents. For example, the following two options are possible in English, whereas only the first one is possible in Spanish:

Un viejo se sentó en el café y θ / *el pidió una copa de anís.

(An old man sat at the coffee shop and θ / be ordered a glass of anisette.)

The scoring rationale for the use of overt or null subject pronouns was as follows: Obligatory null subjects were assessed in impersonal phrases and consecutive, juxtaposed, or coordinated sentences where the subject had been mentioned previously and where no intervening noun phrase could create any confusion. For example:

“θ Parecía que...”

(It seemed that...) El mendigo salió y θ vio que...

(The beggar left and θ saw that...)

Optional contexts for null subjects were considered to exist when an intervening subject NP may create confusion.

el mendigo se llevó la mano al corazón. El hombre le dijo que cuando θ/el estaba alcoholizado...

(the beggar raised his hand to his heart. The man told him that when θ / be [the beggar] was intoxicated...)

Even though both options in the example above are possible (grammatically correct), all native speakers chose the null option. This suggests that the most common option is the null subject. Finally, an obligatory context for overt subject pronouns was considered to exist whenever pro-drop subjects created ambiguity or confusing meaning. In such cases, the null subject pronouns were counted as wrong.
In both tasks, the use of lexical NPs in second and subsequent references was assumed to demonstrate avoidance of the use of subject pronouns by the learners, which, while permissible as a learner's strategy, does not respect the cohesiveness of the text. In the grammar tasks, lexical NPs (full noun phrases) were counted as incorrect, given that their appearance contradicted our rationale for obligatory contexts for the use of null subjects (see section above). An example of this instance is the following:

De repente el mendigo abrió unos ojos grandes: *el mendigo había encontrado una solución a su problema.

(Suddenly the beggar looked with wide-open eyes: *the beggar had found a solution to his problem.)

In the narration task, lexical NPs were considered correct when they introduced a new referent, or when the already known referent was far back enough in the text so that its mention would make sense discursively.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The dependent variable was represented by the number of mistakes in order to compare data from the narrative and grammar tasks (see section on scoring, above). The summarized statistics of the results are presented in Table 3 (grammar task) and Table 4 (narration task). The tables include mean scores and standard deviations for each experimental cell, as well as the sample size for each cell.

The analysis of the data presented in Tables 3 and 4 reveals that the results of the narrative task were similar for the students who did the MC or FB grammar tasks. These results attest to the homogeneity of learners' proficiency across groups within each level (at least according to the narrative task). Hence, the differences between grammar tests (FB vs. MC) should be regarded as the outcome of differing degrees of demands of the specific language test. The graphical display

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Summary of Mean Number of Errors in the Grammar Task (Maximum = 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level</td>
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<td>Spanish 123</td>
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<td>Spanish 311</td>
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*Note. FB = fill-in-the-blank; MC = multiple choice.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Summary of Mean Number of Errors in the Narration Task (Maximum = 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish 123</td>
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<td>Spanish 311</td>
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*Note. Task section shows type of grammar test in which students participated. However, these results correspond to the narrative task only.*
of the overall results is presented in Figures 1 through 3, according to grammatical item.

The graphical display of the data (Figures 1 through 3) reveals that (a) accuracy of L2 production varied according to grammatical item, (b) the lowest number of mistakes for both Spanish 123 and Spanish 311 across all tasks occurred with the use of articles, (c) the number of mistakes across tasks for Spanish 311 did not show substantial differences for any grammatical item, (d) the number of mistakes was higher in the FB test than in the MC test across all three grammatical features for both Spanish 123 and Spanish 311, and (e) the differences between grammar (FB and MC) tasks and narration tasks were noticeable for Spanish 123 students for article and aspect marking only.

Tables 5 through 7 present the results of the statistical analysis of the differences in scores from task to task by grammatical feature.

The results of the statistical analysis revealed a complex picture depending on the type of test and the grammatical feature under analysis. For the use of aspectual contrasts, the differences in scores were significant for the comparison between MC grammar test and narrative task, but not for the comparison FB grammar test and narrative task. In contrast, for the use of articles, the differences in scores were significant for the comparison between FB grammar test and narrative task, but not for the comparison MC grammar test and narrative task. For the use of overt and null subject pronouns across tasks, none of the comparisons was significant. Finally, with regard to proficiency levels, the differences in scores across levels (Spanish 123 and Spanish 311) were significant for the use of both aspectual contrasts and articles for both MC-narrative and FB-narrative comparisons. There were no interaction effects except for the comparison between FB-narrative for article use.

DISCUSSION

Hypotheses

The analysis of the statistical significance of the data shows the following: (a) the accurate production of all grammatical items across all
language tasks varied according to level of proficiency, (b) the accuracy in the use of subject pronouns did not differ across tasks (for both levels), (c) Spanish 123 students showed higher rates of accuracy (in the use of aspect and articles) in the narration task compared to the FB grammar test (statistical significance for article use only), and (d) Spanish 123 students showed higher rates of accuracy (in the use of aspect and articles) in the MC test in comparison with the narrative task (statistical significance for aspect use only).  

These results lead us to conclude that: (a) even if cohesiveness of the text is controlled, attention to form (i.e., focus on grammatical choices exemplified by grammar tasks) is not the single best predictor of accurate L2 production (Hypothesis 1); (b) communicative pressure is not a direct predictor of accuracy in L2 production, although different degrees of communicative pressure exist across tasks (Hypothesis 2); (c) communicative control of the L2 grammar may be considered as an additional factor that may help explain variation in accuracy of L2 production (i.e., different degrees of accuracy generated by the different types of grammar tests; Hypothesis 3); and (d) variability across tasks decreases as the level of proficiency increases (Hypothesis 4).

There are several reasons that may explain the differences in the results of our study and the ones of Tarone (1985) and Tarone and Parrish.
(1988). First, in this study, all participants shared the same native language (L1 English) instead of two different ones (Japanese and Arabic in Tarone, 1985). Second, two different levels of proficiency (45 learners from a third-semester course and 29 from a sixth-semester course) were tested in order to analyze the effect of different degrees of experience in the L2. Third, the grammatical items chosen for our study—null subject pronouns, article use, and past tense aspect—are all determined discursively in Spanish. Fourth, one of the target grammatical items—article use—may be learned as a direct transfer from L1 to TL (see below). Fifth, the participants in the present study were classroom learners, whereas Tarone’s participants had been exposed to the L2 in a natural setting for some time (since their arrival in the U.S.). Sixth, the grammar tests—a FB cloze test and a MC test—were both contextualized. Both tests were based on the same narrative: a cartoon story with no captions. In order to complete the grammar task, the learners had to understand the picture as a story. The same degree of cohesiveness was also expected from the free narration task. Finally, the higher number of participants increases the power of the test statistics.

Differences across Grammatical Items and Tasks

With respect to the use of articles, it is possible that the different characteristics of the source and TLs create the mismatch between the findings of Tarone (1985) and Tarone and Parrish (1988) and our findings. In particular, the article systems of English and Spanish follow rather similar rules amenable to direct linguistic transfer or explicit conscious processing. On the other hand, the article system of Japanese and Arabic may differ from the one in English to the extent that the rules that govern the use of articles in both Arabic and Japanese become acquired rules and “cannot easily be retained consciously in memory” (Tarone, p. 390). For example, whereas the definite article in Arabic functions similarly to Spanish and English, the indefinite article is subject to case marking and case agreement within the NP.

However, the results of our data across grammatical items and tasks (especially the intermediate group) do not warrant such an assumption about the use of articles. The Spanish 123 group that received the FB cloze test did follow Tarone’s results. The accuracy in the production of the article of the students in the present study was higher in the narration task compared to the results of the grammar test. However, the Spanish 123 group that received the MC test obtained similar scores in the narration task and the grammar test. What is important is that the degree of accuracy in a grammar test varies according to the type of grammar test. The comparison grammar test and narrative task may be irrelevant if we do not consider the particular constraints imposed by the specific tasks. In essence, these results do not sustain the prediction originally made about the possible role of communicative pressure.

For the intermediate sections (Spanish 123), the FB test was more difficult than the MC test (as measured by number of mistakes). This particular trend is clearer for the use of past tense aspect where the apparent advantage for the narrative task (fewer number of mistakes) compared to the FB grammar test (not statistically significant) is reversed when we compare the MC grammar test and the narrative task (statistically significant). On the other hand, the outcome in the use of overt and null subject pronouns does not show any statistically significant differences across tasks (both levels).

Predictors of L2 Accuracy

It is important to mention that the degree of cohesiveness of the text used in both grammar tests was similar: Both the FB and MC tests included a picture story with no captions to help learners understand the story. Furthermore, the expected degree of monitoring (use of explicit knowledge) in each task was very similar. In spite of the similarity of conditions—contextualized nature of the task and similar degree of monitoring—students were less accurate in their choices of grammatically appropriate responses in the open-ended cloze test than in the MC one. In order to account for the distinct outcome of these results, we have claimed explicitly that any variation not explained by the factors of attention to form or text cohesiveness should be accounted for by other factors. Two possible predictors of accurate use of the TL are the functional communicative pressure of the task and the communicative control of the grammar resources (online process). Table 8 presents the relative effect of the factors that predict accuracy on L2 production.

Attention to form was highest in the MC task, where both planning time and focus on the target grammatical structure were available. In contrast, the FB task provided more planning time than the narrative task, but no explicit focus on the particular grammatical structure needed in each case (see below). In contrast, the functional focus on form (communicative pressure) was
TABLE 8
Relative Effect of Various Factors on Accuracy of Discursive Grammatical Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>MC Task</th>
<th>FB Task</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cohesive Discourse</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attention to Form</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional Focus on Form</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Communicative Pressure)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Control</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
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lowest for the MC task (constrained options as determined by multiple choices) and highest for the narrative task (the students had to lay out the plot of the story with no restrictions on the use of grammatical structures).25 Finally, the degree of communicative control was highest for the narrative task because avoidance of the target structure was a possible option in the management of linguistic resources. In turn, the MC cloze test did not allow for avoidance of the target structure (constrained selection determined by four options for each item), but it provided students with a finite number of choices, whereas the FB cloze test did not provide such help.

It is likely that the open-ended cloze test (blank spaces) constituted a very challenging task because it forces students to guess what the writer attempts to convey in a text that has been stripped of a number of words. In fact, this type of task is so difficult that some students became confused and wrote inappropriate grammatical categories (e.g., articles instead of pronouns, pronouns instead of verbs). Even advanced students and NSs filled in blank spaces that required zero pronouns with lexical items such as adverbs of manner (which were grammatical options as well). On the other hand, this type of mistake never occurred in the narrative when the students were in control of the task (laying out the plot). This shows that a FB exercise expands the cognitive problem space for the student at the same time that it forces the learners to use specific grammatical items that may or may not be under their control. Advanced students (Spanish 311) and NSs will be less affected by such a decrease in the number of options (otherwise available in an open narrative) because they already have a more adequate control over the number of options that are normally used in language interaction (e.g., more linguistic resources available). It is reason-
able to assume that the Spanish 123 students had less control over the linguistic forms that had to be used to fill in the empty spaces of the L2 text.

On the other hand, the students who completed the MC test made fewer mistakes than in the FB test because their task was simplified by the fact that only a few of the possible grammatical—or ungrammatical—options were presented to them in the form of four choices for each item: The problem space had been limited. In fact, there are no major differences between the two grammar tests in the more advanced group (Spanish 311). This is expected because the more advanced students have obtained a more precise control of the L2 grammar.26 On the other hand, the advanced students tended to make more mistakes in the narrative (effects of attention to form). Tarone (1985) recognizes that the effect of the “different degrees of speaker’s control of the discourse on the various tasks” (as argued above) may be the single factor that explains the types of style-shifting demonstrated by her participants. However, Tarone argues that communicative control by itself cannot account for the complexities of her data: “Why did articles and direct object pronouns behave differently from third person singular markers when speakers had different degrees of control over discourse?” (p. 392). Tarone surmises that these results clearly contradict the hypothesis of the speaker’s control of discourse. However, it is important to point out that Tarone’s data from the use of third person marker -s are not statistically significant.27 As a consequence, the hypothesis of the speaker’s control of discourse should not be dismissed.

CONCLUSION

Attention to form (as measured by planning time) has been shown to be highly predictive of accuracy of use of TL form (e.g., Ellis, 1987; Tarone, 1988). However, there may also be other factors that, if taken into account, could help us predict with a higher degree of precision how accurate L2 learners will be in their production of the TL (e.g., Tarone & Parrish, 1988). As shown above, communicative pressure (or the functional focus on form) does not appear to be as powerful a predictor of native-like L2 production. On the contrary, an increased reliance on the content of the message to be negotiated with the interlocutor—in this case, the reader(s) of the narration—may force the L2 learner to relinquish some of the cognitive effort placed on language form (directly or indirectly related to accurate L2 production). It seems contradictory to
argue that more attention on form will increase accuracy in L2 production at the same time that less attention to form (more communicative pressure) will increase accuracy in L2 production. In turn, the notion of communicative pressure may be viewed as one of the various factors (e.g., emotional involvement in the task, motivation to learn) that increase or decrease the degree of attention to form.

Communicative pressure will be conducive to higher accuracy in the L2 despite a decrease of attention to language form because the "communicative drive," a type of "attention" to communicative needs, introduces a new dimension to the processing of the TL (see also Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). It may be reasonable for this attention-focusing phenomenon to be absent in noncommunicative language drills or exercises (i.e., grammar tasks, see Tarone, 1985). In essence, the degree of accurate production of L2 forms seems to be "shaped" by attention to form for those features of the L2 grammar that can help the learner convey a particular message. On the other hand, the notion of communicative control of the L2 grammar system (or "speaker's control of discourse," in the words of Tarone, 1985, p. 392) may be an important alternative factor that may contribute to the identification of different degrees of accuracy in L2 production, as shown above. Notice that the effects of communicative control of the target grammatical structure are not necessarily mediated by attention to form. During online processing of the L2, the learners must make ends meet by relying on whatever grammatical resources they can manage and avoid the ones that they do not control. As a consequence, accuracy in L2 production is likely to increase.

The present study provides additional support for the already well attested finding that attention to form is a good predictor of accuracy among L2 learners (with at least some grammatical structures). This study also provides preliminary support for the hypothesis that the speakers' control of the grammatical requirements of the task allows them to manage their cognitive and intellectual resources, and thus to improve the accuracy of their L2 performance. Furthermore, the functional focus on the L2 may constitute an indirect measurement that may affect the focus of attention to form. These findings should be replicated in other environments representative of even higher degrees of communicative pressure (especially oral production) and task-based language interaction, as in Tarone and Parrish (1988).

NOTES

1 The distinction between conscious and unconscious processes is, to say the least, uncertain. However, for the purpose of the attention mechanism implemented by Tomlin and Villa (1994), the conscious or unconscious nature of the orientation of the learner should not invalidate the value of the behavioral outcome of the orientation mechanisms.

2 Gass and Selinker (1994) argue that Eisenstein and Starbuck's (1989) data provide additional evidence that attention to form will be hindered whenever the learner is involved primarily in the processing of meaning.

3 The term "text" in this context refers to the discursive features of the task, be it an interview, a narration, or a grammaticality judgment task.

4 Arabic speakers performed better on the use of the third-person morphological marker in the grammar test, whereas the Japanese speakers performed equally well on all tasks on this measurement.

5 From a pedagogical perspective, Tarone (1985) argues that written grammar tests should not be regarded as the true measurement of competence in the L2.

6 Similarly, Ochs (1979) argues for an alternative means (an indirect way) of determining the degree of attention to form: the control of planning time.

7 Vernacular style can be easily confused with "colloquial" style, but the two terms are not necessarily equivalent. For the purpose of this study, we define "vernacular" as the most natural and least monitored grammatical system. It is normally apparent in the L2 learner when the focus is on meaning and there is limited time available to plan the grammatical structure of an utterance. Colloquial style refers to a particular register of language.

8 It is possible to argue that the forms that require the use of rules (regular forms) demand more attention, whereas the forms that may be stored as lexical elements (more or less) will be less affected by processing time.

9 In the written grammar task, the distribution of NP types was predetermined by the format of the test: 40% of Type 2 and 60% of Type 3. As pointed out by Tarone and Parrish (1988), the type of test used in Tarone (1985) was not controlled by an adequate balance of the use of NPs of Types 1 and 4 (p. 33).

10 However, notice that the accurate use of articles with Type 2 NPs in both oral tasks is associated with a high number of tokens (439 tokens in the interview and 405 in the narration) compared to the total number of tokens from the grammar test (40). It is important to emphasize the fact that the grammar test included only five items that tested the use of articles and that only two of those items represented articles associated with Type 2 NPs. If we multiply 20 participants by two items we obtain the grand total of 40 tokens mentioned above. The difference in the number of tokens is substantial: The grammar test contains approximately 10% of the number of tokens of either one of the oral tasks.
count these items as correct instances of aspect use. In any event, wrong lexical tokens accounted for an insignificant proportion of the total number of tokens in the grammar and the narration tasks.

As mentioned before, the article system is the only grammatical item that can be transferred directly from the L1 to the L2. Aspernt endings and null subject pronouns constitute novel grammatical structures for English speakers.

Neither Tarone (1985) nor Tarone and Parrish (1988) provides any information about the length of time that their participants spent in the U.S. by the time of the tests.

As pointed out by Tarone (personal communication, October 26, 1996) the effects of attention to form on L2 accuracy constitute the mirror opposite of the functional focus on form (attention to meaning).

It is important to highlight once again that Tarone's (1985) participants were all advanced L2 English speakers who were living in an English-speaking environment.

Notice also that with third-person singular markers, Arabic learners performed worse in the oral tasks (interview and narration), whereas Japanese learners performed at the same level in all tasks (from grammar test to narration).

REFERENCES


Ellis, R. (1987). Interlanguage variability in narrative discourse: Style shifting in the use of the past
APPENDIX A

Fill-in-the-Blanks (FB) Exercise

Time: 13 minutes

Please take a look at the cartoon on the back of this page and do the exercise next to it. Please fill in the blank spaces with the appropriate word according to the context. Please use only one word per blank space.

When you finish, please wait until you get further instructions to continue with the second part of the activity. Please do not turn the page until you are asked to do so.

Ayer ____________ parecía que estaba hambriento y que no ____________ dinero. Se notaba que hacía tiempo que no se había afektado. ____________ mendigo ____________ a un restaurante de lujo. _______

__________ mesa, se quitó el sombrero y ____________ le pidió una monedas a ____________ hombre que tomaba un café en el restaurante. ____________ hombre lo ____________ enojado, se levantó y ____________ comenzó a gritarle. Le dijo que le pedía dinero para comprar vino porque él ____________ un borracho. Mientras tanto el mendigo lo
M. Rafael Salaberry and Nuria López-Ortega

APPENDIX B
Multiple-Choice (MC) Exercise

Time: 13 minutes

Please take a look at the cartoon on the back of this page and do the exercise next to it. Circle the option that best fits the context of the narration. Please select only one item. When you finish, please wait until you get further instructions to continue with the second part of the activity. Please do not turn the page until you are asked to do so.

Note: The only symbol used in the text is the following: Ó—nothing (no word necessary).

Ayer (un / el / la / de) mendigo (entra / entró / entrando / entramos) a un restaurante de lujo. (Ó / Él / Lo / Ello) parecía que estaba hambriento y que no (tenía / tuvo / teniendo / teníamos) dinero. Se notaba que hacía tiempo que no se había afearado. (Un / El / La / De) mendigo se acercó a (una / el / la / de) mesa, se quitó el sombrero y (Ó / él / lo / ello) le pidió una moneda a (un / el / la / de) hombre que tomaba un café en el restaurante. (Un / El / La / De) hombre lo (miraba / miró / mirando / mirábamos) enojado, se levantó y (Ó / él / lo / ello) comenzó a gritarle. Le dijo que le pedía dinero para comprar vino porque él (era / fue / siendo / éramos) un borracho. Mientras tanto el mendigo lo (miraba / miró / mirando / mirábamos) asombrado. El hombre continuó diciéndole que cuando (Ó / él / lo / ello) estaba alcoholizado, insultaba a las viejitas y les decía malas palabras. Además le dijo que (atacaba / atacó / atacando / atacábamos) a las niñas indefensas y que (Ó / él / lo / ello) les rompía las muñecas. El mendigo (abrió / abrió / abriendo / abriéramos) los ojos con horror. Finalmente, (un / el / la / de) hombre le dijo al mendigo que (un / el / la / de) alcohol lo convertía en un auténtico diablo. El mendigo (se levantó / se levantó / se levantando / se levantábamos) el sombrero y (Ó / él / lo / ello) se llevó la mano al corazón. Se tapó (un / los / las / de) ojos y (Ó / él / lo / ello) comenzó a llorar. El hombre (se dio vuelta / se dio vuelta / se dio vuelta / se dieron vuelta) se dirigió al mendigo y (Ó / él / lo / ello) le pidió más dinero que la primera vez. Esta vez el mendigo no quería dinero para (una / el / la / de) taza de café. Le dijo que finalmente comprendió que era un diablo y que necesitaba ayuda. ¡Le explicó que (necesitaba / necesitó / necesitando / necesitábamos) el dinero para visitar a un sicoanalista para dejar de ser un diablo!

APPENDIX C
Cartoon Used in Both Grammar Tests

Description of Cartoon:

A hungry-looking beggar enters a restaurant and, taking off his hat, approaches a customer at a table and begs for a few coins. The customer, apparently a rich person, gets angry at the beggar’s request for money and starts reproaching his behavior: The beggar is a drunkard, who harrasses young girls and insults old ladies; in a word, alcohol transforms him into a devil. The beggar stares at the man in amazement, drops his hat and, looking distressed, begs again for a lot of money but this time not for a cup of coffee, but to undergo therapy treatment to change the evil behavior described by the rich man.
APPENDIX D

Narration Exercise (Instructions and Cartoon)

Time: 13 minutes

1. Please take 1 minute to understand the story of the following cartoon.
2. Use the back of this page to narrate the story.
3. Please start your narration with the following words:
   *Ayer por la tarde...*

Description of Cartoon:

An old man is sitting at a table in a café. He looks at his watch often and seems to be waiting for someone; he has a doll hiding behind his back. An old woman sitting in a nearby table imagines a likely scenario: The old man’s granddaughter will show up soon and he will give her the doll. To the old woman’s amazement, a dazzling young woman with scanty clothes enters the café, hugs the man, who gives her the doll, and the two of them leave the café holding hands. The woman looks around in disgust and sees another man who is quietly enjoying his drink. This time, the old woman’s imagination pictures a different scenario: a lamp above the man falling right onto his head.

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AAUSC Calls for Articles for 2001 Volume on SLA and the Literature Classroom

*Second Language Acquisition and the Literature Classroom: Fostering Dialogues*
Editors, Virginia Scott and Holly Tucker

This volume will foster a dialogue in which researchers and practitioners in both literary studies and SLA can consider the points of overlap that unite us in order to increase our teaching effectiveness in both language and literature. At the heart of this volume is the notion that American students of FL literature at any level are, after all and always, language learners. For this reason, we must consider FL programs in terms of a continuum in which all levels of instruction are interconnected by issues of acquisition.

Contributors will be especially encouraged to consider literature instruction at the intermediate level, where the interrelationships between language and literature instruction are perhaps the most pronounced. The volume will address specifically how existing SLA research can inform the teaching of literature in multisection and single-instructor courses, and, conversely, what contemporary literary theory might bring to research and methodology in SLA. Particularly welcome are papers that consider curricular issues, models for empirical research design (quantitative and qualitative), methodology, and preparation of TAs and other instructional staff.

To reflect the collaborative spirit of this volume, researchers/practitioners in SLA and in literature are encouraged to co-author submissions. All papers must be reviewed by members of the AAUSC Editorial Board before they are accepted for inclusion in the volume.

*Submission* deadline: November 1, 2000 (earlier submission encouraged)
Suggested length: 15-35 pages; AAUSC (Chicago B) style.
Questions: scottvm@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu
Submissions: Virginia Scott, Box 6312-B, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, 37235