

# Task Outcomes: A Focus on Immersion Students' Use of Pronominal Verbs in Their Writing<sup>1</sup>

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Grade eight French immersion students worked in pairs to complete one of two tasks (jigsaw or dictogloss) based on the same story, both involving the production of a written narrative. Before completing one of these tasks requiring them to reconstruct and write a story, either from visual (jigsaw task) or from auditory (dictogloss task) stimuli, two of the four classes viewed a videotaped mini-lesson on pronominal verbs. In this article we examine the learners' use and accuracy of pronominal verbs *within* each task, comparing the classes that did and did not receive the mini-lesson, and *across* tasks, comparing the jigsaw and dictogloss classes. We found that the mini-lesson had a significant impact on the students' use of pronominal verbs in their writing.

Des élèves de huitième année en immersion française ont travaillé à deux pour terminer l'une de deux tâches (jigsaw ou dictogloss) basées sur la même histoire, toutes deux comportant la production d'une narration écrite. Avant de faire l'un de ces exercices qui consistaient à reconstruire et à rédiger une histoire, soit à partir d'un stimulus visuel (tâche jigsaw) soit à partir d'un stimulus auditif (tâche dictogloss), deux des quatre classes ont visionné le vidéo d'une mini-leçon portant sur les verbes pronominaux. Dans cet article, nous examinons l'utilisation et la justesse des verbes pronominaux à l'intérieur de chaque tâche, en comparant les classes qui avaient reçu la mini-leçon à celles qui ne l'avaient pas reçue, de même qu'entre les tâches, en comparant les classes jigsaw et dictogloss. Nous avons constaté que la mini-leçon avait eu un impact important sur l'utilisation par les élèves des verbes pronominaux dans leurs écrits.

## Introduction

Tasks have been defined in a variety of ways in the second language pedagogical and research literature. Skehan (1998), summarizing the work of Candlin (1987), Nunan (1989), Long (1989) and others, lists characteristics of tasks within task-based instruction. These include that "meaning is primary" and "do not embed language into materials so that specific structures can be focused upon" (p. 95). Although we agree that meaning should be primary as students carry out an instructional task, we do not agree that it is inappropriate to embed a focus on a specific language structure within a task. In the research we report

on in the present paper, we intentionally focused the attention of some students on pronominal verbs by showing them a short lesson on video. As we will see, this mini-lesson had an impact on student performance.

Our interpretation of "making-meaning" is also somewhat different from that typically found in the task-based instructional and research literature. Typical is the view that the task must engage students in something that is of interest/has meaning for the students involved (e.g., Nunan, 1989). It is assumed that this "something of interest", however, cannot possibly be language itself. That issues surrounding language form and structure might be something that students actually find interesting and might be a topic around which lively discussion can take place seems not to have occurred to those supporting task-based learning. Our view, now supported by our research (e.g., Swain, 1995; Kowal and Swain, 1997; Swain and Lapkin, 2001), is that tasks can be structured such that students are likely to pay attention to language form because they are focusing on developing the meaning inherent in the particular task activity. The tasks we have been working with are ones where students work in pairs and are required to construct (or reconstruct) a story in writing. While they are writing the story, students will often encounter a linguistic problem that they need to solve and will interact to solve it collectively.

In this paper we will examine the stories the students wrote to determine if the mini-lesson or task type have consequences for their use of pronominal verbs, and by implication, for their enhanced learning of them.

## **Background**

It is a well-known research finding that the French spoken and written by French immersion students is fluent but not flawless (e.g., Harley, 1992; Genesee, 1987; Lyster, 1994). For this reason, we have become interested in pedagogical approaches or activities that encourage students to attend to the accuracy of their spoken and written French while learning the target language in a content-based curriculum. For about six years we have been examining and refining the construct of output through inspecting learners' interactions as they solve linguistic problems either individually (Swain and Lapkin, 1995) or collaboratively (e.g., Swain and Lapkin, 1998). Their output (Swain, 1995, 2000), in the form of collaborative dialogues and written products, allows us to document second language learning in progress as learners notice gaps in their knowledge, formulate hypotheses to fill those gaps, and test their hypotheses as they work to express their intended meaning.

## **Methodology**

We collected data in four classes, ranging in size from 12 (in a combined grade 7 and 8 class) to 35. The classes were four grade eight early French

immersion classes in lower-middle to middle-class schools. Until grade three, all instruction was in French, with English language arts introduced in grade four. From about grade five on, half of the instructional time was spent in English and half in French, with school subjects such as mathematics or history divided up between the two halves of the day. Average class scores on a French cloze test given as a pretest to all students in the four classes did not differ statistically.

Elsewhere (Swain and Lapkin, 1998, 2000, 2001) we have described the full range of analyses undertaken to date. In this paper we examine the written narratives with specific reference to pronominal verbs, the target structure required by each task and that formed the focus of the mini-lesson. The present paper includes data not previously presented for two of the four classes (J and D), as well as providing a qualitative analysis of pronominal verbs found in the written stories of the pairs of students in all four classes.

The four classes represented four conditions: Class J ( $n = 21$ ; we had audible recordings for six pairs) did a jigsaw task, Class J+ ( $n = 35$ , yielding 12 pairs) the same task preceded by a mini-lesson on French pronominal verbs; Class D ( $n = 12$ , yielding 5 pairs) did a dictogloss task, and Class D+ ( $n = 30$ , yielding 14 pairs) the same task preceded by the mini-lesson.

### *Tasks*

The jigsaw task involved pairs of students working together to construct, first orally and then in writing, a story based on a series of eight pictures (see Appendix A) in a two-way information gap activity. The dictogloss task involved taking notes individually on a text read aloud twice at normal speed. Students then worked with a partner to write the story they had heard, based on their two sets of notes.

#### **Figure 1: Le réveil-matin de Martine:**

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

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In designing the tasks for the main data collection we sought to make them as parallel as possible in terms of content. To arrive at the dictogloss text seen in Figure 1, we showed the series of eight pictures (Appendix A) to three adult

native speakers of French and had them narrate the story. We then combined their transcribed narratives to form the dictogloss text which contains seven pronominal verbs. Telling the story from the pictures in the jigsaw condition similarly creates a number of contexts for pronominal verbs.

### *Mini-lesson*

The mini-lesson was developed as follows: we went through a number of French reference grammars and some teaching materials intended for intermediate-level (grades seven through nine) FSL classes. We also asked six immersion teachers to participate in a session in which they brainstormed how they would approach the teaching of pronominal verbs. Following that, we compiled a list of relevant 'rules', for example:

Most French verbs that relate to personal care are pronominal, or as Ollivier (1999) puts it, "Quand le sujet fait l'action sur une partie de son corps, on emploie un verbe pronominal et l'article défini à la place du possessif." (p. 142; e.g., *je me brosse les cheveux*)

We gave the list of rules to one of the participating teachers who had agreed to do the videotaped lesson for us. He then developed his own script based loosely on these rules. In the actual lesson, the teacher emphasizes verbs relating to personal care and the form of pronominal verbs (clitic pronouns followed by the verb form) and how these are conjugated in the present (e.g., *je me lave, tu te laves*, etc.). He also notes that certain verbs (e.g., *s'évanouir*) are inherently pronominal (i.e., *s'évanouir* is never found in a non-pronominal form), whereas others occur in both the pronominal and non-pronominal form (e.g., *je me coupe les ongles/je coupe mon gâteau d'anniversaire*).

The mini-lesson was pre-recorded on videotape and lasted approximately five minutes (Appendix C provides the text of the mini-lesson.) The video also showed two students working together on a relevant task (a jigsaw or dictogloss that differed in terms of stimulus material from those used for the data collection). This served as a model for what the students were to do immediately following the viewing of the videotape when the new stimulus was introduced. This modelling of potential behaviour included dialogue about linguistic form and grammatical rules. The two classes (J and D) that did not receive the mini-lesson also watched a video in which students worked on constructing a story from pictures or a dictogloss passage without explicit reference to grammatical form.

### *Data processing*

The written narratives of the student dyads were scored by two experienced immersion teachers using five-point rating scales to evaluate content, organization, vocabulary, morphology and syntax. The two sets of ratings for each

Table 1: Average Ratings of Written Stories\*

| Dimension <sup>e</sup> | Class J <sup>a</sup><br>(n = 6 pairs) |     | Class J+ <sup>b</sup><br>(n = 12 pairs) |     | Class D <sup>c</sup><br>(n = 5 pairs) |     | Class D+ <sup>d</sup><br>(n = 14 pairs) |     |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|---|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|---|-----|
|                        | M                                     | SD  | M                                       | SD  | M                                     | SD  | M                                       | SD  |
| Content                | 2.8                                   | .6  | 2.9                                     | 1.2 | 2.2                                   | .3  | 2.4                                     | .8  |
| Organization           | 2.9                                   | .2  | 3.1                                     | 1.1 | 2.6                                   | .7  | 2.9                                     | .9  |
| Vocabulary             | 2.5                                   | .4  | 3.1                                     | 1.1 | 2.7                                   | .4  | 2.9                                     | .7  |
| Morphology             | 2.1                                   | .4  | 2.9                                     | 1.0 | 3.5                                   | .8  | 2.8                                     | 1.0 |
| Syntax                 | 2.1                                   | .4  | 2.8                                     | 1.2 | 3.0                                   | .4  | 2.7                                     | .9  |
| Idea Units             | 12.8                                  | 2.5 | 12.5                                    | 2.9 | 12.8                                  | 2.2 | 12.7                                    | 3.7 |

\*Note: The ANOVA showed no significant differences between or among scores.

<sup>a</sup> jigsaw task, no preceding mini-lesson

<sup>b</sup> jigsaw task with mini-lesson

<sup>c</sup> dictogloss task, no preceding mini-lesson

<sup>d</sup> dictogloss task with mini-lesson

<sup>e</sup> For each dimension, a five-point scale is used, with 1 representing very poor performance, and 5 representing excellent performance.

writing sample were averaged to produce the scores shown in Table 1. One of the researchers also counted idea units to see whether the two tasks differed substantially with respect to quantity of content.

For the qualitative analysis of pronominal verbs, a research assistant and one of the authors independently counted main verbs (see below) in six writing samples and then conferenced about their results. Thereafter, the research assistant completed the counts, consulting whenever there was an ambiguous case.

The following information is needed in order to understand the basis of the counts in Tables 2 through 5. With one exception (verbs in adverbial clauses — see below), we counted main verbs only. We omitted presentatives such as *il y a* (see a., below) because they are so frequent that they would skew the count, and were not the linguistic focus of our investigation. Other categories omitted were:

- c'est, il y a, être, avoir*
- verbs in adjectival clauses (e.g., *la fille qui dorme*)<sup>2</sup>
- infinitives (e.g., *pour arrêter le sonnement*)
- rève*, when used for *lève* (e.g., *le soleil se rève*)

In cases where infinitives were preceded by a 'semi-auxiliary' (e.g., *pouvoir + infinitive; vouloir + infinitive; essayer de + infinitive; commencer à + infinitive*) these verb phrases were counted as one verb (e.g., in *je veux partir, partir* was counted as the main verb). Finally, verbs (other than infinitives) in adverbial phrases were included in our verb counts (e.g., *Martin dort tranquille en faisant des rêves*).

**Table 2:** Aspects of pronominal verb use in written stories:  
Classes J and J+ (jigsaw task)

|   | Class J<br>(n = 7 pairs) |           | Class J+<br>(n = 12 pairs) |           | Sig.<br>(2-tailed) |
|---|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|   | <i>M</i>                 | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                   | <i>SD</i> |                    |
| No. of main verbs                                   | 11.29                    | 2.36      | 12.17                      | 3.16      | .532               |
| No. of pronominal forms                             | 2.14                     | 1.68      | 6.33                       | 2.31      | .001               |
| No. of correct pronominals                          | 1.29                     | 1.38      | 3.92                       | 2.75      | .031               |
| No. of obligatory contexts                          | 4.57                     | 1.28      | 4.83                       | 2.37      | .791               |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to total main verbs       | .18                      | .14       | .52                        | .13       | .000               |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to pronominal forms    | .57                      | .25       | .59                        | .32       | .034               |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to obligatory contexts    | .45                      | .32       | 1.56                       | .86       | .004               |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to obligatory contexts | .26                      | .24       | .73                        | .33       | .005               |

One of the D+ pair's written stories is reproduced in Appendix B, along with a key showing what verbs were counted in the various categories included in Tables 2 through 5.

## Results

Table 1 presents the average ratings of the stories written by pairs of students in the four classes. Analysis of variance revealed no differences on the five dimensions (content, organization, vocabulary, morphology and syntax) evaluated by our raters. There were also no differences in the average number of idea units in the narratives written by the four groups. This suggests that overall, as we had planned, the tasks made somewhat similar linguistic demands on the students, providing them with similar opportunities to construct meaning whether from pictures or oral text. However, a detailed analysis of the pronominal verbs (the focus of the mini-lesson) used by the students in the four classes reveals some noteworthy differences.

We will review the findings in terms of the following comparisons:

1. Does the mini-lesson affect the use and *correct* use of pronominal verbs in the students' writing? (Tables 2, 3 and 4)
2. Does the task affect the use and the *correct* use of pronominal verbs in the students' writing? (Table 5)

**Table 3:** Aspects of pronominal verb use in written stories:  
Classes D and D+ (dictogloss task)

|   | Class D<br>(n = 5 pairs) |           | Class D+<br>(n = 14 pairs) |           | Sig.<br>(2-tailed) |
|---|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|   | <i>M</i>                 | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                   | <i>SD</i> |                    |
| No. of main verbs                                   | 11.60                    | 2.88      | 11.00                      | 2.25      | .640               |
| No. of pronominal forms                             | 4.00                     | 1.58      | 5.07                       | 2.27      | .347               |
| No. of correct pronominals                          | 3.20                     | 1.30      | 4.29                       | 1.90      | .257               |
| No. of obligatory contexts                          | 5.40                     | 1.34      | 5.57                       | 1.29      | .803               |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to total main verbs       | .34                      | .09       | .45                        | .19       | .226               |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to pronominal forms    | .27                      | .06       | .38                        | .14       | .119               |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to obligatory contexts    | .72                      | .14       | .88                        | .33       | .320               |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to obligatory contexts | .59                      | .17       | .75                        | .27       | .255               |

**Table 4:** Aspects of pronominal verb use in written stories:  
Mini-lesson classes (J+ and D+) compared to non-mini-lesson classes (J and D)

|   | Class J,D<br>(n = 12 pairs) |           | Class J+,D+<br>(n = 26 pairs) |           | Sig.<br>(2-tailed) |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|   | <i>M</i>                    | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                      | <i>SD</i> |                    |
| No. of main verbs                                   | 11.42                       | 2.47      | 11.54                         | 2.72      | .896               |
| No. of pronominal forms                             | 2.92                        | 1.83      | 5.65                          | 2.33      | .001               |
| No. of correct pronominals                          | 2.08                        | 1.62      | 4.11                          | 2.28      | .009               |
| No. of obligatory contexts                          | 4.92                        | 1.31      | 5.23                          | 1.90      | .602               |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to total main verbs       | .24                         | .14       | .49                           | .17       | .000               |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to pronominal forms    | .18                         | .13       | .35                           | .17       | .005               |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to obligatory contexts    | .56                         | .29       | 1.19                          | .70       | .005               |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to obligatory contexts | .39                         | .27       | .74                           | .29       | .002               |

#### *Mini-lesson versus no mini-lesson*

Table 2 shows a set of comparisons between the students completing the jigsaw task who did not see the mini-lesson (J), and those that did (J+). Relative to the J class, the J+ class uses a greater number of pronominal forms, a greater number of correct pronominals, a relatively greater proportion of pronominal

**Table 5:** Aspects of pronominal verb use in written stories:  
Comparisons across tasks

|   | Class J,J+<br>(n = 19 pairs) |           | Class D,D+<br>(n = 19 pairs) |           | Sig.<br>(1-tailed) |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|   | <i>M</i>                     | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                     | <i>SD</i> |                    |
| No. of main verbs                                   | 11.84                        | 2.85      | 11.16                        | 2.36      | .21                |
| No. of pronominal forms                             | 4.79                         | 2.91      | 4.79                         | 2.12      | .50                |
| No. of correct pronominals                          | 2.94                         | 2.63      | 4.00                         | 1.79      | .08                |
| No. of obligatory contexts                          | 4.74                         | 2.00      | 5.53                         | 1.27      | .08                |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to total main verbs       | .39                          | .21       | .42                          | .18       | .34                |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to pronominal forms    | .23                          | .19       | .35                          | .13       | .02                |
| Ratio of pronominal forms to obligatory contexts    | 1.15                         | .90       | .84                          | .30       | .08                |
| Ratio of correct pronominals to obligatory contexts | .55                          | .37       | .71                          | .25       | .08                |

forms (to total verbs and to total pronominal forms), a greater proportion of pronominal forms to obligatory contexts and a greater proportion of correct pronominals to obligatory contexts.

Table 3 shows a similar set of comparisons between classes D and D+. As Table 3 indicates, there are no significant differences, although the trend is that the D+ group consistently performs better than the D group. When these data are combined across tasks as shown in Table 4, it is clear that the performance of the students who viewed the mini-lesson was superior to those who did not have access to it.

#### *Dictogloss versus jigsaw tasks*

In Table 5, the same set of comparisons is made between all the students who did the jigsaw task (under either a mini-lesson or no mini-lesson condition, i.e., J and J+) and all the students who did the dictogloss task (D and D+). Because in our previous work with some of the current data suggested more accurate use of pronominal verbs by dictogloss students relative to jigsaw students (Swain and Lapkin, 2001), we felt justified in conducting a one-tailed test in this set of analyses. As Table 5 indicates, only the ratio of correct pronominals to all pronominal forms is significant at the  $p < .05$  level. However, at the  $p < .10$  level, the dictogloss students produce more correct pronominals, create more contexts for pronominal verb use, and produce a higher ratio of correct pronominals to pronominal forms and obligatory contexts than the jigsaw students. (For one measure, ratio of pronominal forms to obligatory

contexts, the J groups obtained a higher score ( $p < .10$ ), possibly because they created fewer obligatory contexts for pronominal verbs than the D groups.)

There is another point of interest in Tables 2 to 5 that we illustrate in the next section with examples. Here, we will simply draw this point to the readers' attention. In general, the ratio of correct pronominal verbs to the number of pronominal verbs produced and the ratios of pronominals and correct pronominals to obligatory contexts, are less than one—an unsurprising finding. This is, however, not the case in three instances (see Tables 2, 4 and 5), all stemming from the greater use of pronominal forms relative to their obligatory use by J+ (Table 2). Our interpretation of this finding is that whereas the mini-lesson groups tended to overgeneralize the use of the pronominal forms to inappropriate contexts, the dictogloss (D+) group still had the native-speaker model as input to rely on, whereas the jigsaw (J+) group had no such input to constrain their (exuberant) attempts to use pronominal verbs.

Having noted the overall trends with respect to the use and accuracy of pronominal verbs, we now turn to a detailed examination of some key verbs, selected from those occurring in the dictogloss text.<sup>3</sup> In each case, we consider what insights can be gleaned from comparing the use and accuracy of these verbs by mini-lesson and non-mini-lesson classes (see Table 6). We also make some observations about across-task differences.

First, two verbs, *se brosser* and *se peigner* occur both in the mini-lesson and the dictogloss; their non-pronominal counterparts, *brosser* and *peigner*, are also found in the stories the pairs of students wrote:

1. *Martine ... se brosse les dents ...* (D+, pair 5)
2. *Il brosse les dents ...* (D, pair 11)
3. *... elle brosse ses dents ...* (D, pair 7; J, pair 7)

In (1) we see the accurate, standard use of *se brosser*, whereas in (2), the students clearly knew, or retained from the dictogloss text, the verb *brosser*, but used it incorrectly. In (3), we have a "non-standard" use of *brosser*, found in certain varieties of spoken Canadian French (Beniak, Mougeon and Côté, 1980), but unlikely to be taught in immersion. Table 6 presents the average number of uses of each of these verbs (*brosser/se brosser*) for the mini-lesson and non-mini-lesson groups, along with the number of pairs in each group producing each one. The mini-lesson groups use the pronominal verb more frequently than classes J and D combined, and the non-mini-lesson groups use *brosser* (the non-pronominal verb) more frequently than classes J+ and D+ combined. All groups have *brosser* in their lexical repertoire, but the instructed groups are presumably advantaged by their exposure to the pronominal form of this verb and others like it in the mini-lesson.

**Table 6:** Mean number of uses of individual verbs across mini-lesson and non-mini lesson groups

| Verbs <sup>a</sup>                     | Non-mini lesson J, D<br>n = 12 |          |           | Mini lesson J+, D+<br>n = 26  |          |           |
|--|--------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|
|  | No. of uses<br>(No. of pairs)  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | No. of uses<br>(No. of pairs) | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| <i>se brosser</i>                      | 1 (1)                          | .08      | .29       | 19 (17)                       | .73      | .60       |
| ( <i>brosser</i> )                     | 10 (8)                         | .83      | .72       | 7 (7)                         | .27      | .45       |
| <i>se peigner</i>                      | 1 (1)                          | .08      | .29       | 12 (11)                       | .46      | .58       |
| ( <i>peigner</i> )                     | 2 (2)                          | .16      | .39       | 2 (2)                         | .08      | .27       |
| <i>chatouiller</i>                     | 7 (7)                          | .58      | .51       | 15 (15)                       | .58      | .50       |
| ( <i>se chatouiller</i> ) <sup>b</sup> | —                              | —        | .00       | 4 (4)                         | .15      | .37       |
| <i>dormir</i>                          | 8 (7)                          | .67      | .65       | 15 (13)                       | .58      | .64       |
| ( <i>se dormir</i> ) <sup>b</sup>      | 1 (1)                          | .08      | .29       | 7 (6)                         | .27      | .55       |
| <i>s'endormir</i> <sup>c</sup>         | 6 (5)                          | .50      | .67       | 8 (7)                         | .31      | .55       |

<sup>a</sup> Verbs in parentheses are not found in the stimulus text of the dictogloss, but were used by the pairs of students in their written stories. Omitted here is any verb used only once across all four classes.

<sup>b</sup> Indicates a non-existent form in French. (*Se chatouiller* can have a reciprocal reading, but only if accompanied by the complement *l'un(e) l'autre*.)

<sup>c</sup> Includes one instance of *se rendormir*.

A similar pattern appears for *se peigner*: there is a higher percentage of use of the (correct) pronominal verb in the mini-lesson classes than in classes D and J, who received no lesson. (*Se peigner* is a less frequently occurring verb in French than *se brosser*, and in this regard it is interesting to note that the D classes (D and D+ together) make more use of the lexical verb *peigner* than the J classes which did not have the verb modeled for them. Specifically, of 19 D pairs (D and D+ combined), 9 used *se peigner* and 3 used *peigner*; whereas of 19 J pairs (J and J+ combined), only 4 used *se peigner* and 1 used *peigner*. These figures reflect an important across-task difference: the dictogloss provides lexical items that are not necessarily generated by the J groups working from a set of pictures. It must be noted, however, that while the dictogloss specified *Elle se brosse les dents, se peigne les cheveux*, one can convey the same information by using the more general (*se*) *brosser* in both contexts:

4. . . . *elle va au salle de bain pour brosser ses cheveux et dents* (J, pair 6)

Being exposed to the mini-lesson, as we have seen for *se brosser* and *se peigner*, can lead students to overgeneralize the pronominal form of the verb. Other such examples from the dictogloss text that we can examine include *chatouiller* (see footnote to Table 6) and *dormir*, as in (5) and (6):

5. *Finalemnt Martine se chatouiller les pieds et il se lève*. (D+, pair 6)

6. ... *quelqu'une se dorme à l'envers dans le lit* ... (J+, pair 1)

In the case of *chatouiller*, the average number of uses of this verb by mini-lesson and non-mini-lesson groups is identical (.58). The classes that received no mini-lesson did not use the non-existent *se chatouiller*, while four pairs of non-mini-lesson students did overgeneralize the pronominal form, using *se chatouiller* incorrectly. From an across-task perspective (not shown in Table 6), it is interesting to note that a similar number of pairs of students (12 of 19 jigsaw pairs and 14 of 19 dictogloss pairs) have *chatouiller* in their lexical repertoire.

The phenomenon of overgeneralization is striking in the case of *se dormir*, a non-existent form. There is negligible use of *se dormir* on the part of groups J and D; but six pairs of students in J+ and D+ combined use *se dormir*, presumably because the mini-lesson has served to promote overgeneralization of the pronominal form. (A second possibility is that *se dormir* is replacing *s'endormir*, to fall asleep, since it is never the case that both *se dormir* and *s'endormir* are used by the same pair.)

From an across-task perspective, we can make two final observations (note that these are not shown on Table 6). First, it is interesting to note that *se dormir* is used by only one pair of students in the D and D+ combined group, but by six pairs in the J and J+ combined group. The model provided by the dictogloss text undoubtedly plays a role in this across-task difference. Second, task effects are evident in the case of *s'habiller* (to get dressed): there is no instance of this verb in either jigsaw group presumably because the pictures imply but do not show that the character gets dressed. Just over half of the D and D+ pairs (11 out of 19 pairs) produce *s'habiller* in their written stories.

### Summary and Discussion

Global ratings on five scales used to evaluate the quality of the written narratives and a count of idea units revealed no statistically significant differences among classes. Detailed analyses of the pronominal verbs in the stories did uncover noteworthy differences both within task type and between tasks.

Within the dictogloss, the mini-lesson made no significant difference in the use and accuracy of pronominal verbs, possibly because both classes had access to a well-formed target text. In the case of the jigsaw, however, significant differences appear in favour of the J+ class on all the counts relating to pronominal verbs. With respect to across-task differences, the dictogloss classes tend to outperform the jigsaw classes.

Key verbs which occurred as pronominals (though not always correctly so) were also analysed descriptively by group. Comparing the mini-lesson to the non-mini-lesson groups, we found that classes J+ and D+ combined had an advantage in using common pronominal verbs (*se brosser*, *se peigner*), rather than their non-pronominal counterparts which occur with relatively greater

frequency in the non-mini-lesson classes (J and D). Classes J+ and D+, however, tended also to overgeneralize the pronominal form (*\*se chatouiller, \*se dormir*). Finally, the dictogloss provides a model of particular verbs which are appropriate to the tasks and tend to be absent from the jigsaw groups' narratives (*se peigner, s'habiller*).

Missing from our research was a component present in classrooms that is essential to the learning of correct forms: feedback from the teacher. We did not provide any feedback to students who may have resolved linguistic problems incorrectly as they did the task. Access to such feedback would undoubtedly enhance the learning of complex items like pronominal verbs. In future research we plan to add an additional step by reformulating the texts written by the students (in pairs and individually) so that they can compare their texts to native-speaker versions of them. We will record students' dialogue or think-aloud protocols as they carry out these comparisons in the hopes of shedding more light on their learning of pronominal verbs and other linguistic elements.

In general, as we have worked with data based on the two task types we used, we have been impressed by the power of the dictogloss to enhance accuracy by providing a grammatically correct and lexically rich model for students to emulate. In addition, it is clear that the mini-lesson in conjunction with either of these two tasks does focus students' attention on form and serves to make formal features of the target language the substantive content of the task.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This research was made possible by a grant (#410-93-0050) to Merrill Swain and Sharon Lapkin from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the annual conferences of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (1999) and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (1999). We wish to acknowledge the helpful feedback received on drafts of this article from Birgit Harley and Miles Turnbull, and the research assistance of Hameed Esmaeili and Katherine Rehner.
- <sup>2</sup> Where examples from students' written work are given, we have reproduced them exactly as written.
- <sup>3</sup> The selection of verbs included in the original statistical analysis was based on the verbs appearing in the dictogloss text. The performance of mini-lesson versus non-mini-lesson groups on the verbs selected for the analysis presented in Table 6 differed statistically ( $p < .10$ ) in a one-tailed test of significance (used because we hypothesized that the mini-lesson groups would do better in deciding where a pronominal or non-pronominal form of a specific verb should be used). One verb that fell into that category was omitted from Table 6 (*sonner*) because it did not meet the further criterion for our selection, i.e., that verbs chosen for commentary should yield some insights about the comparative performance of these groups.

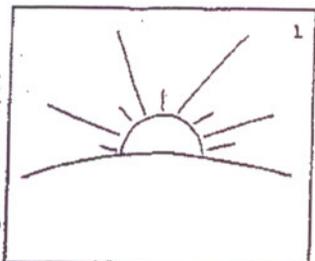
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Appendix A

Jigsaw Task Drawings

"The tricky star-w-chose."  
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**Appendix B*****Written narrative reproduced exactly as written by one pair from class D***

Il est 6h du Matin et la soleil se lève. Le reveille matin de Martin sonne. Il dors tranquillement. Il ne veut pas se lever. Il ferme le reveille. Il ne veut pas être en retard. Quelqu'un a lui reveiller. C'était Figace. Il a chatouiller ses pieds. Martin se lève. Il brosse les dents bain les cheveux. Il prend le chemin a l'école. Encore un journée bien commencer.

***Counts:***

- 10 'main' verbs: *se lève, sonne, dors, se lever (ne veut pas se lever), ferme, reveille (a lui reveiller = l'a reveiller), chatouiller, se lève, brosse, prend*
- 3 pronominal forms: *se lève, se lever, se lève*
- 3 correct pronominals: *se lève, se lever, se lève*
- 4 obligatory contexts: underlined in text produced by the students

## Appendix C

### *Text of Mini-lesson (transcribed from the videotape)*

Bonjour. Je me présente. Je suis M. Lapointe. Aujourd'hui je vais vous parler des verbes qui représentent une action réfléchi. Le premier exemple de verbe réfléchi, je vous l'ai déjà donné dans mon introduction. Lorsque j'ai dit: Je me présente (writing on board), j'ai utilisé un verbe qui exprime une action réfléchi. Je suis à la fois la personne qui fait, et qui subit l'action. Donc, pour les verbes réfléchis le sujet fait l'action sur lui-même.

On n'a qu'à penser aux soins corporels. Plusieurs activités que l'on exécute lorsque l'on fait sa toilette nécessitent l'utilisation de verbes réfléchis, par exemple, si je dis: je me brosse les dents, c'est un verbe réfléchi, ou une action réfléchi. Si je vous dis: je me brosse les cheveux, je me peigne, je me lave les mains, j'exprime une action réfléchi. C'est moi qui à la fois fais l'action et subis l'action.

Maintenant, voici d'autres exemples. Les actions non-réfléchies. Si je dis: je coupe mon gâteau d'anniversaire, ce n'est pas une action réfléchi. Par contre, si je dis: je me coupe les ongles, c'est une action réfléchi. Je fais l'action sur moi-même. Si je dis: tu prépares une salade, ce n'est pas une action réfléchi. Par contre, si je dis: tu te prépares pour l'école, c'est une action réfléchi. Le sujet fait l'action sur lui-même.

Maintenant, la forme du verbe. Un verbe qui exprime une action réfléchi est composé de deux éléments. Il y a le pronom réfléchi (writing on board) qui est suivi du verbe. Par exemple, si je parle d'un verbe qui exprime une action réfléchi, un verbe qui parle des soins corporels, le meilleur exemple ce serait: se laver. Je me lave, tu te laves, il ou elle se lave, nous nous lavons, vous vous lavez, ils ou elles se lavent. Alors, on peut remarquer ici qu'il y a effectivement un pronom réfléchi qui est suivi d'un verbe.

Maintenant, comment les reconnaître? Ils sont faciles à reconnaître. Puisque nous avons déjà les critères que nous avons élaborés: pronom réfléchi suivi du verbe. On les rencontre à l'infinitif (writing) sous la forme suivante. Par exemple: se laver, comme nous l'avons vu; se couper; s'évanouir; se préparer. Mais il faut faire attention, puisque certains verbes nécessitent la forme réfléchi comme s'évanouir, ou encore se souvenir, qui ne peuvent s'exprimer autrement. Ce ne sont pas tous les verbes qui expriment une action réfléchi, ou qui peuvent s'exprimer sous la forme réfléchi. Voilà — un pronom réfléchi et un verbe pour une action réfléchi.