8 “In German I Have to Think about It More than I Do in English”

The Foreign Language Classroom as a Key Context for Developing Transferable Metacognitive Writing Strategies

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Introduction

Writing is a skill which is actively developed by both first language (L1) and foreign language (FL) teachers, and indeed one which permeates the entire school curriculum, yet surprisingly few cross-curricular links are made, particularly within secondary school education in England. L1 teachers, who can often assume a certain level of proficiency among learners, are more likely to take a subconscious, synthetic, top-down approach, while FL teachers tend to take a more conscious, analytics, bottom-up approach (Kecskes and Papp 2000). It would seem logical, therefore, that FL teachers, who are able to focus more explicitly and consciously on the development of transferable metacognitive strategies, are in a unique position to contribute to the overall improvement in writing standards more generally. This chapter reports on data from a study examining how an explicit focus on metacognitive strategy use within a secondary school FL (German) classroom in England impacted students' strategy development and writing in the FL, and whether any such effects transferred to the L1 (English). This is explored here primarily through an in-depth case study of one student's trajectory through the process of developing and transferring metacognitive strategies between FL and L1 writing.

Literature Review

Developing Metacognitive Writing Strategies

This study is situated within the broader theoretical framework of language learning strategies, which aim to “enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of new information” (O'Malley and Chamot 1990, 1). For Cohen (1998, 4) it is “the element of consciousness” and the learners' ability to identify it which distinguishes a learning strategy from a more automatic or

subconscious process. These definitions arise from a series of assumptions about the way in which human beings process information, and therefore reflect the origins of language learning strategies in the field of cognitive psychology. Another key characteristic of learning strategies as emphasised by Wenden (1987), Oxford (1990), Cohen (2011) and Grenfell and Harris (1999), is their close link with increasing learner autonomy, which has become a significant concern in modern classrooms. Over the years, numerous efforts have been made to classify such strategies according to a range of factors, such as by function (e.g. cognitive, metacognitive or social) or skill area (e.g. listening, speaking, reading or writing) (Cohen 2011; Oxford 2017). This study, however, focuses particularly on strategies with a metacognitive function related to the skill of writing (see Knospe 2018, this volume, for another empirical study on metacognition and the development of writing skills in a FL, and Zhang and Qin 2018, this volume, for a study on EFL learners' metacognitive awareness of writing strategies in multimedia environments).

The theoretical rationale behind the categorisation of metacognitive strategies was undoubtedly influenced by the work of Brown (1987) and Flavell (1979), who distinguished between normal cognitive processes and the overarching, reflective functions that control and monitor these processes (Desautel 2009). Within the framework of language learning strategies, metacognitive strategies are defined as those which “involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring of comprehension or production while it is taking place, and self-evaluation after the learning activity has been completed” (O'Malley and Chamot 1990, 8). However, it is important to acknowledge that the distinction between cognitive and metacognitive strategies is often blurred and the same strategy may function at different levels of abstraction (Cohen 1998). This can also be linked to the distinction made by Anderson (1985) between declarative knowledge, what we know *about*, which is often learned in an explicit manner and can be acquired quite quickly, and procedural knowledge, what we know *how to do*, which is unanalysed, automatic knowledge, often requiring extensive practice. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) further develop this by suggesting that strategies which begin as declarative knowledge can become proceduralised with practice. It is important to note therefore, that strategies in themselves are not inherently metacognitive; rather it is the approach learners take to a strategy and their awareness of engaging in that strategy which makes it metacognitive.

The decision to focus primarily on the metacognitive aspect of strategy use in the current study was influenced by three main factors. Firstly, it is important to note that O'Malley and Chamot (1990) established a positive relationship between learners' success and metacognitive strategy use, stating that “students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction and ability to review their progress, accomplishments, and future learning directions” (6), a link which has also been acknowledged by Cohen (2011), Griffiths (2013) and Oxford (2017). Secondly, metacognitive strategies have been identified as a vital component of any

form of strategy use; it is the metacognitive element which helps learners to use and combine strategies effectively, and to transfer them to new tasks (O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Grenfell and Macaro 2007). Thirdly, Macaro (2001) makes an interesting distinction between 'natural' and 'taught' strategies, the implication being that metacognitive strategies, which are more conscious and easier to articulate than purely cognitive strategies, therefore lend themselves more easily to classroom-based strategy instruction. This also has important practical implications for conducting empirical research with young learners.

The decision to focus particularly on the skill area of writing was similarly influenced by several factors. Within the context of secondary school language classrooms, developing competence in writing represents a particular challenge for many learners, especially in a FL, but often also in their native language. Unlike speaking, which can be acquired naturally provided that there is a sufficient level of input and exposure, writing is a cognitively demanding skill which has to be learned and consciously developed. As such, the luxury of time to consciously monitor language production while writing is particularly conducive to the investigation and development of important metacognitive skills.

Research into writing strategies has been ongoing since the 1980s, yet has been primarily concerned with the identification, description and comparison of strategies of and between L1 and FL writers, and in particular the difference in strategies used by 'good' and 'poor' learners (e.g. Jones and Tetroe 1987; Raimes 1987; Zamel 1983). More recently, focus has shifted to the active development of strategies through programmes of strategy-based instruction (SBI). As a result, there have been several intervention studies which have provided evidence to suggest that the explicit teaching of metacognitive learning strategies in L1 and FL classrooms has the potential to positively impact the development of writing strategies in their respective contexts (for L1 intervention studies see De La Paz and Graham 2002; Graham and Harris 2003; for FL intervention studies see De Silva and Graham 2015; Macaro 2001; Sasaki 2000, 2002).

Strategy Transfer

It is important to note that the vast majority of the research outlined above has taken place within a single context of either L1 or FL education and has had a tendency to neglect any potential interactions between the two. In addition, it is almost taken for granted within the literature that any reference to transfer between these two language contexts implies the mono-directional transfer of existing skills and strategies *from* the L1 *to* the FL. Yet L1 strategies may not necessarily be effective and learners may not automatically transfer them from one context to another (Rubin et al. 2007). L1 strategies may also have become proceduralised to the point where students may not be consciously aware of them. The focus of this study, therefore, emerged from a hypothesis that, if the use of metacognitive writing

strategies is explicitly developed within the FL classroom, then it seems logical that this knowledge not only could benefit FL writing tasks, but also may positively affect L1 writing.

While studies into such reverse transfer are limited, some evidence of FL-L1 transfer in writing has been detected by Berman (1994), Kecskes and Papp (2000) and Kobayashi and Rinnert (2007) in relation to essay organisation skills, use of syntactic structures and transfer of rhetorical features respectively. Although not situated within the framework of strategy research, the findings from these studies suggest that FL teachers, who are able to focus more explicitly on the development of language learning strategies, are in a unique position to contribute to the overall improvement in writing standards. As stated by Pomphrey (2000):

The very act of consciously learning a language in the classroom implies a distancing of the self from the usual unconscious habits of everyday communication. This means that explicit knowledge about language as a system is likely to be more easily extracted from the foreign language learning experience than from learning which takes place in the L1.
(278)

It was in light of the above considerations that the following research question was identified:

To what extent is the foreign language classroom conducive to the development of metacognitive writing strategies which can be transferred between both first language and foreign language contexts?

The Current Study

The study described in this chapter is drawn from data collected as part of a larger quasi-experimental study, which more broadly examined how an explicit focus on metacognitive strategy use within secondary school FL lessons impacts students' strategy development, proficiency in, and conceptualisations of writing in a foreign language, and whether any such effects transfer to another FL context and/or to the L1. The study was conducted with a mixed ability Year 9 class (students aged 13–14) in a secondary school in England. The majority of the students were native English speakers and were in their third year of learning German and fourth or fifth year of learning French at school. Over the course of an academic year, an intervention of strategy-based instruction focused on metacognition was implemented firstly in the German FL classroom, and later also in the English classroom, as explained further below. The German classroom was selected as the FL context for the SBI due to practical considerations (such as the willingness of the teacher to participate in the project and the possibility of integrating appropriate activities into the scheme of work); however, as stated above,

the students were also studying French. Data were also collected from this context as part of the larger study in order to explore the transfer of strategies between the two foreign languages. Due to limitations of space, this chapter concentrates primarily on the data relating to the FL-L1 transfer of writing strategies, however, a full exploration of transfer between the two FL contexts can be found in Forbes (2016).

While the wider study considered trends at a whole-class level and compared the outcomes of the experimental group with a control group using a mixed methods approach, the focus of this chapter is on the qualitative findings from a smaller group of students (see also Forbes 2018). Initially, six students were selected from the experimental group as embedded cases, and were chosen to represent a range of gender, academic performance level, attitude towards the subjects and first language background. As stated by Denscombe (2014):

Case studies focus on one (or just a few) instances of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance. The aim is to illuminate the general by looking at the particular.

(54)

While some reference will be made to data collected from this group as a whole in relation to their general conceptualisations of writing, this chapter will focus predominantly on the experience of one boy. Chris, a native English-speaking student in the experimental group, was selected as a critical case as he was an average performing student in both English and German, yet displayed a willingness to experiment with and try out new strategies in order to improve his performance. The year the study was conducted was his third year of learning German at school. Further details about Chris in relation to his experiences of learning English and German are presented below.

Research Design

The focus of this chapter is on the qualitative data drawn from the writing tasks and the stimulated recall interviews. At the beginning of the school year (Point 1), the students completed a narrative style writing task in both German and English in order to explore their existing writing strategies in each language. The first task in English was a piece of travel writing, while the first German task was an introductory email to an exchange partner. Each of the task topics were chosen to fit with the existing scheme of work in each subject so that the instruction could be fully integrated into the course and so as not to disrupt students' learning. These were completed on a specially designed writing task sheet and were followed by stimulated recall interviews conducted with each of the case study students (see below). This information was then used to develop an intervention of

explicit strategy-based instruction, which was integrated into lessons by the German teacher over the course of four months (Phase A). This included tasks and activities to encourage students to engage more metacognitively with their work and to help them to develop their planning, monitoring and evaluation strategies. For example, a structured planning sheet was created to encourage students to set goals for the task, to consider the main content ideas and language features they would include and to think about the overall structure. To help students to evaluate and improve their work, a series of self-assessment and peer-assessment activities were introduced.

Then, the students completed another set of writing tasks (Point 2) in order to investigate whether this explicit focus on metacognitive strategy use in the German lessons affected their strategy use and proficiency in German writing, but also to explore whether they transferred these strategies to their L1 writing tasks without being explicitly told to do so. The second German task was a piece of writing about hobbies, while the second English task was an imaginary diary entry based on a literary character. Following this, for the next four months the strategy-based instruction continued in the German classroom, but this time was also reinforced by the English teacher, who used similar tasks and resources to encourage the students to transfer their strategies between the two language contexts (Phase B). A third and final set of writing tasks were then set towards the end of the academic year (Point 3). The final German task was an article on using computers, while for English it was a piece of creative writing.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

The writing strategy task sheets were based on a method used by Macaro (2001) in the Oxford writing strategies study. Space was provided for students to engage in pre-task planning, a margin was included for students to make notes about their strategy use as they went along (such as the use of resources, asking for help, problems they encountered and how these were resolved), and the final section of the task sheet included a series of questions about the evaluation process, such as whether they checked over their work, what they checked for and how they felt about the task. These were then used as a stimulus for follow-up interviews with the case study students, which allowed them to further explain how and why they used particular writing strategies in both English and German. In addition to focusing on the particular task itself, the interviews also allowed for a more general exploration of how the students felt about writing in the L1 and FL contexts, what they felt was important, and if or how they felt their approach had changed over time. Given the students' limited proficiency in German, the interviews were conducted in English and lasted approximately 20 minutes. It must be acknowledged that the data obtained can be considered only as the students' *perceptions* of their strategy use, as they may also be using strategies that have become proceduralised and that they are not consciously aware of.

Following the data collection process, the strategies used in each writing task were coded using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to facilitate the coding and comparison of a range of strategy use and themes between different languages and tasks. An individual summary of the strategies coded in each of the tasks was then produced for each student in order to gain an overview of their patterns of strategy use in each language over time. Instances of errors and error correction were also identified and coded. Corresponding thematic codes were then applied to the interview transcripts in order to further explore the students' level of metacognitive engagement with the task, and to provide a more in-depth rationale for how they used particular strategies and the extent to which they were able to transfer them between the FL and L1 contexts. The interviews were also analysed in terms of how the students conceptualised FL and L1 writing more generally.

Results

Conceptualisations of Writing: The FL Classroom as a 'Thinking' Environment

Before focusing in more depth on the case of Chris, it is worth making some reference to the students' conceptualisations of writing in their L1 and a FL more generally, by drawing on some of the comments made by the wider group of case study students during the initial interviews. An interesting distinction made by the students between writing in L1 and a FL at the beginning of the study was the requirement to *think* more when writing in a foreign language. Table 8.1 provides an overview of some of the students' comments in relation to both language contexts.

To some extent, these comments can be explained by what could be referred to as the 'native-speaker' factor; the general impression given by the students interviewed was that, regardless of the language, the nature of writing in your native language, or most proficient language, is different from writing in a FL. Such differing views seem to be inherently linked to how they defined themselves as either an L1 or a FL writer. Interestingly, one native English speaking student stated in the first interview that he felt that writing in different languages would be the same: "if you can speak the language, if I could speak say, Chinese and English, they would be both the same, the writing tasks and the speaking tasks would both be the same . . . [but now] it's not the same, it's because we're not as advanced as I am in English". The use of the "if" clause here suggests that he did not yet identify himself as being a 'speaker' (or indeed 'writer') of the FL and therefore for him, such tasks consequently remained distinct from English.

However, it is important to recognise that even though these students *perceived* themselves as thinking less when writing in English, this was not necessarily the case. It is likely that, due to their experience and level of proficiency in English, their thought processes had become proceduralised to the extent to which they were no longer consciously aware that they

were taking place. Such lack of awareness of their L1 strategies may therefore make it difficult for the learners to consciously transfer them to a FL context. The above comments therefore provide some evidence to support the hypothesis that the FL classroom, where students undoubtedly are more aware of being consciously and actively engaged in thinking, is perhaps more conducive to the development of language-related metacognitive strategies than the L1 classroom. This will be explored in more depth by examining the trajectory of strategy development and transfer of one of the students, Chris, as he negotiated the strategy intervention (see Knospe 2018, this volume, for another case study on writing).

Case Study: Chris

As introduced above, Chris was one of the case study students in a mixed ability Year 9 class. Throughout his first two years at secondary school he consistently scored around the average or just below average in class tests and exams in German and English. His English teacher said that he “will ask for help where he needs it, but often that will be more to do with things like spellings and so on rather than help with structuring and style”. His German teacher commented that he was quite confident and had potential, but was often distracted, tended to rush his work and to “get in a muddle very quickly”.

Chris himself said that he quite enjoyed writing in English and felt reasonably confident with this because “you already know [the language], so English is fine to write in”. However, he preferred tasks which involved writing “from your own point of view” and did not enjoy writing essays based on a text “cause you have to go back and look for quotations and stuff like that”. On the other hand, he perceived German as “quite hard to write in” and said he often struggled to write longer texts. He expressed frustration that “you’re always doing, like, write ups of yourself and you’re not, you haven’t got the ability to do, to write up your own experiences cause you don’t know how to say everything”. The different task types and his limited proficiency in German led him to conceptualise L1 and FL writing very differently at the beginning of the study and as a result, he approached them in different ways. In terms of his performance in the three sets of writing tasks, Chris showed the most improvement in scores in German between Point 1 and Point 2, and he also improved consistently over time in English. The reasons behind such improvements will be explored further below.

Planning Strategies

Over the course of the year, Chris experimented with and developed his use of planning strategies in both language contexts. The first task in English was a piece of travel writing, while the first German task was an introductory email to an exchange partner, and these were completed before any

form of strategy instruction took place. For the first English task he engaged in some planning, which consisted of "just a few bullet points" related to the content of his writing. Yet he did not consider this to be particularly important or useful, and explained that: "I didn't think there was much planning to do". This was also evidenced by the fact that only half of his planned points were actually integrated into the final text. However, even though his planning in English was limited, it is important to note that he did not transfer his pre-existing L1 strategies at all to the first German task, where he did not engage in any written planning whatsoever. His belief was that "planning's not really that useful for German". It is also worth noting that his goals for both tasks were concerned purely with content rather than language, as he aimed to include details about his "pets" in the German class and "the journey" in English.

However, by the second set of tasks following the first phase of the intervention in the FL classroom, Chris had started to experiment with a range of different planning strategies introduced during the SBI; this was particularly evident in German, where the task involved writing about hobbies. This time, Chris engaged in planning which included a range of content items, language features and drafting of sentences in the target language. His goals shifted beyond the content itself as he commented that he also aimed to include some particular grammatical structures they had recently covered in class. Interestingly, he described the overall structure for his text as "kind of what I do in English . . . if I mention the points in the introduction I usually do a paragraph on each one", which suggests he was starting to more actively make comparisons between writing in the different subjects and to transfer certain elements from one to another. Such evidence of an increasing level of metacognitive engagement with his approach to writing may have been partly a result of the intervention in the German classroom. It is also worth noting that Chris's planning for this task was mostly written in German, which he deliberately chose to do "cause then it's already there in German and I didn't have to think what it was".

In the second English task, an imaginary diary entry based on a literary character, Chris commented that he did "much more planning" this time, and his plan was certainly more developed than in the first task. He included consideration of a wider range of features and this time all of the aspects he planned were integrated into the final text. Interestingly, he also specified that his English text should be written in the "past tense". This is an aspect that students would perhaps be less likely to consciously plan in their native language. Given that the strategy instruction at this point was only taking place in the German class, this may therefore represent some transfer from the FL context. In addition to engaging in more planning, Chris was also beginning to view this process as more important in both language contexts. He felt that planning this time made it "easier to write the actual piece, cause with no plan you haven't really got anything to go back and look at what your initial ideas were", and commented that "planning helps to get

a better mark at the end". However, this comment also suggests that at this stage Chris seemed to evaluate the success of his strategy use according to the marks he received and, by extension, seemed to rely on the teacher to evaluate this for him, rather than engaging in self-evaluation.

For the third set of tasks, an article on using computers in German and a piece of creative writing in English, Chris showed evidence of using more similar planning strategies in both languages, such as making a checklist of content items and also language features. In German he chose this time to draft his ideas using English. After having tried various approaches it seems as though he decided that this was what worked best for him: "I think I found it easier cause I'd written it all in English before, it was easier to translate rather than thinking of it all in German without planning". This provides evidence that he was starting to engage in more independent reflection of his strategy use and was adapting this accordingly. Chris also made a more concerted effort to include particular language features "like 'because' sentences" and wanted to include a range of past tense sentences "because Miss said that I needed to improve". This shows that he was starting to use feedback from previous tasks in order to set himself goals for improving in future tasks. Similarly, for the final English task, Chris opted to make "a checklist of bullet points" which he said "helped a lot" and once again all of his planning was integrated into the final text. He was also more concerned with the overall structure and style of the text. At this point, he had received the SBI in both the German and English classrooms which seemed to help to further facilitate the development and transfer of planning strategies between the two languages.

Monitoring Strategies

In relation to monitoring strategies, Chris demonstrated increasing levels of engagement with his writing over time. In the first set of tasks when Chris encountered a problem, his first reaction was to ask the teacher for help. This happened particularly with translations of vocabulary in German and the spelling of words in English. However, if the teacher was not available, he would refer to a dictionary or his notes for help. In the first German task he also commented that he aimed to make his work "as simple as I can" in order to avoid possible problems. Yet by the final tasks Chris was much more likely to try a range of strategies to solve a problem himself, and would only ask the teacher as a last resort. In German, for example, he explained that he had to look up the word 'expensive' in the dictionary, because he did not know it "and couldn't think of anything else to substitute it for". It seems, therefore, that he was utilising a range of strategies to try to solve the problem independently, rather than just asking the teacher immediately.

He also increasingly engaged in monitoring the content of his writing throughout by looking back at his planning while writing, something which he admitted on several occasions to finding "really helpful". In addition,

in the final tasks he was making much more of a conscious effort to vary his language and vocabulary use. For example, he was going to include the phrase '*Netflix ist interessant*' (Netflix is interesting) in his German task, but decided to change this to '*Netflix ist sehr nützliche*' (sic) (Netflix is very useful) as he realised that he had already used the word '*interessant*'. Chris also became increasingly effective at monitoring the accuracy of his work and in noticing and self-correcting errors. This is evidenced by the decreasing number of errors made in each task, as shown in Table 8.2.

In German, the biggest improvement took place between Tasks 1 and 2, which corresponds to the explicit SBI in the FL classroom, and of particular note was his improvement in spelling. However, there was also a small improvement in the accuracy of his English writing following the first phase of the intervention, which may suggest some transfer of monitoring strategies from the FL. Yet the biggest change for Chris took place in English following Phase B, which highlights the importance of explicit instruction and scaffolding for Chris in the development of his strategy use.

Table 8.1 Comments about "thinking" in the FL and L1 classroom.

<i>Student</i>	<i>Foreign Languages</i>	<i>English</i>
A	"You normally have to keep thinking what you need to write and how to spell it and things"	"I can just write more naturally"
B	"I think like, when you're doing [. . .] German you're thinking more about the, like, the words"	"you don't have to think about it as much, cause like, you already know it"
C	"in German I concentrate and I make sure that it makes sense"	"in English I don't really have to think about it cause I've been doing it for like, 10 years"
D	"in German like, I don't know the whole language so I have to like . . . think about it more than I do in English"	–
E	–	"I don't need to think about it as long as I do with German"
F	"I use more adjectives [. . .] than I do in English . . . because I'm thinking more about it"	"that's your born language so you know all the words"

Table 8.2 Average number of uncorrected errors (per 100 words).

	<i>Point 1</i>	<i>Point 2</i>	<i>Point 3</i>
German	17	10	7
English	7.5	5	3

Evaluation Strategies

Checking over his work was something that Chris said that he engaged in from the beginning in all subjects, yet he placed much more importance on this in English. This was in line with general class trends:

In English I check much more . . . I think it's cause it's our main language so, and English they say is quite an important subject for you to have, so I see that as more important than checking over in German, although I do, I would check it over, I just wouldn't check it over as much as I would in English.

(Interview 1)

However, his approach to checking over his work evolved over the course of the year. In the first set of tasks in all subjects he waited until the end to check, but for the second and third German tasks he checked as he went along. It was not until the final task, however, that he changed his approach in English, and instead of waiting until the end as he did for the first two, he checked both as he went along and again at the end.

The focus of his checking also evolved over the year. In the first tasks his prevailing concern in both languages was with surface level accuracy and correcting "silly mistakes" and in English also with the factual correctness of his writing. Yet over time this became much more focused and he began to increasingly check back to his plan to ensure he had included all the main points and taken on board feedback from previous tasks. In German, for example, he specifically checked his 'because' sentences, as he said that in his previous task he had "lost marks from not doing a sentence structure right", while in English he looked for "the sort of words that I'd spelt wrong before".

For German from Task 2 onwards and in English at Task 3 these changes in approach corresponded to a reduction in the errors being made, suggesting that his approach to checking his work was indeed becoming more effective over time. However, this highlights once again that, for Chris, the explicit phases of the SBI were instrumental in encouraging him to experiment with his strategy use. Similarly, he also attached increasing importance to the checking process and following the second German task he commented that "once I've checked it over then usually I get a better mark than when I haven't checked it over". For Chris, therefore, the correlation between strategy use and achievement was very explicit.

Cross-Linguistic Transfer of Strategies

Given the difference in Chris' approaches to writing in English and the FL at the beginning of the study, it seems as though he was not necessarily transferring his pre-existing L1 writing strategies automatically to German.

Yet it seems fair to say that the intervention of SBI not only helped him to develop his metacognitive writing strategies over time, but also to transfer them between the FL and L1. For Chris, the most notable changes in his strategy development took place in German after Phase A of the intervention and in English following Phase B. In comparison to some of the more 'strategic' writers in the class, he seemed therefore to rely more heavily on the explicit instruction and scaffolding provided by the teacher, especially towards the beginning of the year.

However, even though the majority of changes in each subject took place following the explicit SBI, there was also some evidence that he was beginning to transfer some strategies from German to English following the first phase of the intervention, without being deliberately encouraged to do so, particularly in relation to the quality of his planning and evaluation strategies. In the interview following the second set of tasks, Chris hinted at this implicit transfer by stating:

Well, I didn't use to do much planning but I do some now, and I didn't use to check it over in French and German but now I've started checking it over and it's started to work a lot more cause I'm getting better marks, so if I've done something and my marks have improved then I'd start to do that more. [. . .] Then I was trying some of the things out in English as well, sort of reading through afterwards to check, make sure my spellings are OK and stuff like that.

(Interview 2)

This comment is particularly striking given his much higher level of linguistic proficiency in English; it seems that his experience of engaging in metacognitive strategy use in a beginner level foreign language class did, in fact, have some sort of positive effect on his English writing strategies.

While at the beginning of the year Chris seemed to conceptualise the nature of L1 and FL writing, and likewise his approaches to L1 and FL writing, as being very distinct, by the end of the year he perceived them as being much more similar and was beginning to view some aspects of writing as cross-linguistic, rather than as specific to L1 or FL contexts:

I think they've got much closer now, doing these types of things, because you're planning more, you're using the same sort of sheets so it kind of shows you that they do relate to each other, so you can use the same things, so like reading through afterwards, checking for spelling and structures, they're all the same, they're all in French, German and in English.

(Interview 3)

It is also important to consider that such converging conceptualisations of writing in the FL and L1, particularly in terms of an increasing level of

importance being attributed to metacognitive strategies related to planning and revising, may in turn have facilitated transfer between the different contexts.

Discussion

As a result of the pedagogic intervention of SBI, there is evidence that Chris developed both the quantity and quality, or effectiveness, of his strategy use. His overall development of writing strategies as a result of explicit SBI is in line with findings from other studies (see De La Paz and Graham 2002; De Silva and Graham 2015; Knospe 2018, this volume; Macaro 2001). For Chris, this was particularly evident in terms of an increased engagement in planning (in line with Knospe 2018, this volume; Nguyen and Gu 2013), an improvement in accuracy (Macaro 2001) and improved achievement (De Silva 2015; Macaro 2001). For him, the link between strategy use and achievement was very explicit; he viewed strategy use as a means to an end, with the ‘end’ being a higher mark. As such, he initially had a tendency to evaluate the success of the strategies he used according to the marks he received from the teacher; yet towards the end of the year Chris was beginning to show signs of developing his skills of self-evaluation more independently. In light of this, I would agree with Myhill (2006) that “we may well develop better writers not by doing more writing but by generating more thinking about writing” (6).

Following from this, it is important to remember that strategies in themselves are not inherently good or bad, but can be applied successfully or unsuccessfully (Cohen 2011; Grenfell and Harris 1999) and I would argue that the findings from the current study highlight the importance of the learners’ ability to engage metacognitively with the writing task in determining the success of their development of strategies. Such a relationship between metacognition and effective strategy development has been underlined in a number of other studies (e.g. Anderson 2005; Grenfell and Macaro 2007; O’Malley and Chamot 1990) and was also evident here as Chris began to reflect on and adapt his strategy use more independently as the year progressed. Similarly, Zhang and Zhang (2013) have stated that “metacognition should be treated as dynamic systems, and it should be construed as something embedded in language learners, which is intertwined with many modifiable variables, both cognitive and sociocultural” (114). Such dynamism is effectively captured in the case of Chris; although not a particularly high achieving or strategic writer at the beginning, Chris actively developed an increasing awareness of his strategy use over time. Engaging in such metacognitive reflection was key to enabling him to develop his strategy use and become a more strategic and proficient writer over time.

Just as enabling learners to engage metacognitively with their writing is a key factor in the development of successful strategy use, it is similarly fundamental to facilitating the *transfer* of such strategies from one language

context to another. As shown above, Chris did not automatically transfer his pre-existing English strategies to his German writing at the beginning. From a transfer of learning perspective (Perkins and Salomon 1988), it may be that his initial perception of the two language contexts as being superficially distinct may have hindered him from engaging in the explicit connection making required to facilitate such transfer.

Yet while there was little evidence of L1-FL transfer at the beginning, there was some evidence of reverse FL-L1 transfer by the end, particularly in relation to the quality of planning and increase in accuracy. Such examples of FL-L1 transfer have also been detected by Berman (1994) and Kecskes and Papp (2000) in relation to essay organisation skills and use of syntactic structures respectively. As such transfer did not necessarily take place automatically, it seems that the metacognitive strategies introduced as part of the intervention played a key role in encouraging it; there was evidence in the current study that the strategy instruction in the German classroom during Phase A helped to develop both Chris' metacognitive awareness and use of writing strategies in both the FL and L1 contexts. This was facilitated further during Phase B of the study when the links between strategy use in the two language contexts were made explicit.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the foreign language classroom as a key context for developing metacognitive writing strategies, and the extent to which these strategies are transferred between FL and L1 classroom contexts. Through examining the strategy development and experience of one student, Chris, as he negotiated the classroom intervention, it emerged that the explicit development of metacognitive writing strategies within the FL classroom did not only benefit his FL writing tasks, but also positively affected his writing in the L1. The FL context, where the students were more explicitly aware of and engaged in their thinking when compared to the L1 classroom, provided an environment which was highly conducive to the development of such metacognitive skills. This transfer was facilitated further when the links between strategy use in the FL and L1 classrooms were made explicit. It is also important, however, to acknowledge the limitations of focusing primarily on data from just one student. Due to the case study approach adopted here, the findings presented can only be seen as reflective of this particular student in this particular context and therefore cannot be generalised. It is also important to recognise that due to the mentalistic nature of metacognition and strategic thought processes it was necessary to rely heavily on self-report data; as such, data collected can only be considered as students' own *perceptions* of their strategy use. However, it is hoped that the in-depth analysis conducted here will shed some light on the potential of the FL classroom for developing important transferable skills related to language more generally.

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