THE RELEVANCE OF ATTENTION TO L2 FORM IN COMMUNICATIVE CLASSROOM CONTEXTS

María del Pilar García Mayo
Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea, Spain
mariapilar.garciamayo@ehu.es

This paper presents an overview of the rationale for the return to the relevance of L2 form in the communicative language classroom, and provides ideas about how to draw learners' attention to formal aspects of language within the backdrop of a task-based approach to language teaching. The paper offers an updated review of the approach to grammar instruction known as Focus-on-Form (FonF), an instructional option that calls for an integration of grammar and communication in non-native language teaching, and provides research-informed insights that might be of use for the classroom practitioner. Several avenues for research on FonF are also presented, considering new instructional settings and the access to computer-mediated communication. A call for the strengthening of the link between second language acquisition (SLA) research findings and language pedagogy is made as a way to contribute to more ecologically valid classroom research and pedagogy.

Key words: Grammar teaching, focus on form, focus on forms, tasks, interaction

Este trabajo se centra en los motivos que han llevado a volver a poner de relieve la pertinencia de la forma lingüística en la enseñanza

de lenguas dentro de un enfoque comunicativo y proporciona ideas de cómo hacer que los alumnos dirijan su atención hacia esos aspectos formales dentro del marco de la enseñanza/aprendizaje por tareas. El trabajo proporciona una revisión actualizada de la aproximación didáctica conocida como 'atención a la forma', una opción pedagógica que busca integrar la gramática y la comunicación en la enseñanza de lenguas no maternas, y proporciona ideas que provienen de las investigaciones realizadas y que pueden ser útiles para el profesorado. También se identifican varias líneas de investigación sobre la atención a la forma teniendo en cuenta nuevos escenarios de enseñanza y el acceso a la comunicación a través del ordenador. Se aboga por reforzar la interrelación entre los resultados de las investigaciones sobre la adquisición de segundas lenguas y la práctica docente para beneficio de ambos campos.

       Palabras clave: *enseñanza de gramática, atención a la forma, atención a las formas, tareas, interacción*

1. Introduction

How grammar should be taught in order to achieve proficiency in a foreign or second language (L2) is a question that has concerned educators and researchers alike for many centuries (Larsen-Freeman, 2009; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004, 2011; see Howatt, 1984, and Kelly, 1969, for historical reviews). Krashen (1981) brought up the debate about the role of grammar teaching when he distinguished between the terms acquisition and learning, and claimed that language should be acquired through natural exposure, not learned in formal contexts. According to Krashen, formal grammar teaching had no role to play in the process because grammar lessons could improve explicit knowledge (also referred to as declarative or learned), but not implicit knowledge (procedural, acquired) necessary to use the language appropriately in spontaneous situations. Besides,

Krashen claimed that there was no interface between the two types of knowledge because they belonged to different brain systems (DeKeyser, 2001). Formal grammar teaching was also seen as unnecessary from the perspective of Universal Grammar (UG) approaches; Schwartz (1993), for example, claimed that L2 learning occurs from the interaction of UG principles with the input provided.

The advent of communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches in the 1970s and 1980s saw the decline of formal language pedagogy as such because, as Mitchell (2000, p. 285) rightly pointed out:

> […] explicit grammar study was seen as pedantic, lacking in intrinsic value and inefficient as a means of developing practical communication skills, specially oral skills.

CLT approaches encourage the use and exchange of realistic messages in order to present language features (Grim, 2009). Their emphasis is on the learner's active participation in the different communicative tasks s/he has to engage with. A task is a real-life activity in which meaning is primary and there is a goal to be reached (Skehan, 1998). The development of CLT approaches was based on the necessity for exposure to comprehensible input as part of the acquisition process (Sheen & O'Neill, 2005). Overall, CLT is successful if the types of activities designed for classroom use have a positive effect on learner motivation (Nunan, 1989). However, extensive research has shown that a mere focus on meaning and mere exposure to the L2 is not enough for learners to reach proficiency in the language and to develop their productive skills (Spada, 2011). In other words, as Pica (2002) points out, meaning-centered instruction led to low levels of linguistic accuracy (i.e., non-target morphology and syntax) and the issue of form was overlooked.

The role of grammar teaching in the L2 classroom has been reconsidered in current second language acquisition (SLA) research.

Researchers have advanced the possibility that there can be an interface between explicit and implicit knowledge, that is, in the realm of grammar teaching the practice of grammar rules could be of value when that explicit teaching affects the acquisition of implicit knowledge (DeKeyser, 2007).

Within the backdrop of the issues raised above, the purpose of this paper is to offer an updated review of the approach to grammar instruction known as Focus-on-Form, henceforth, FonF (Long, 1991), "an instructional option that calls for an integration of grammar and communication in L2 teaching" (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 1). Section 2 reviews the arguments supporting the reconsideration of the role of grammar instruction in the L2 classroom. Section 3 provides some definitions of the FonF construct which show its evolution since it was first proposed and the principal FonF options. Section 4 outlines some ideas for a task-based FonF approach to grammar instruction on the basis of empirical studies. Finally, section 5 concludes the paper offering lines for further research.

2. Why a Return to the Relevance of Grammar Instruction in the L2 Communicative Language Classroom?

As mentioned above, the FonF approach is based on the assumption that comprehensible input, though necessary for acquisition, is insufficient for acquiring the L2 grammar (but see Laufer, 2005; Sheen & O'Neill, 2005). One of the arguments that led to an increasing relevance in the focus on formal aspects of language is the large body of research carried in Canadian French immersion programs by Merrill Swain and colleagues (Allen, Swain, Harley, & Cummins, 1990; Harley & Swain, 1984; Swain, 1985 et passim). After a large number of hours of exposure to meaningful input — approximately 6000 hours at the end of primary education (Turnbull, Lapkin, Hart & Swain, 1998)[1] —, the learners did not achieve

grammatical accuracy in certain forms such as gender agreement, tense marking, and politeness markers (Swain & Lapkin, 1982).

Research indicating that some kind of attention to form is necessary for language learning provides a second argument for a return to the relevance of form in the L2 classroom. Schmidt (1990, 2001) operationalizes that type of attention as noticing, for him a necessary condition for language learning (but see Truscott, 1998, for a different view). From an information-processing model perspective (García Mayo & Perales Haya, 2002; VanPatten, 2007), which posits that learners have difficulty attending to form and meaning at the same time (especially at beginner levels), there would be a need to implement activities that draw their attention to form. Various SLA researchers agree that some degree of attention is necessary for the learning process to occur more effectively (DeKeyser, 2007; Doughty, 2001).

As mentioned by Nassaji and Fotos (2004), another reason for the coming back of grammar instruction is based on evidence that L2 learners go through what is referred to as developmental sequences. Pienemann (1989 *et passim*) developed his influential Teachability Hypothesis, which suggests that certain structures can benefit from explicit grammar teaching if the learner is developmentally ready to progress to the next stage in his development. More recent research on the positive role of grammar instruction comes from both laboratory and classroom studies focusing on specific target language forms but, especially, from meta-analyses (i.e., a type of study that considers a large body of separate papers and aims to integrate their main conclusions). Thus, Norris and Ortega (2000), after analyzing 49 studies on the effectiveness of L2 instruction concluded that explicit instruction resulted in significant gains that were maintained over time as compared to implicit instruction. A more recent meta-analysis by Spada and Tomita (2010) supports that finding as well.

In general, most SLA researchers nowadays agree that learners need some kind of grammar instruction within a communicative approach and some opportunity to produce language which contains the grammatical points introduced (Swain 2005 *et passim*). As Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 11-12) rightly point out, even Savignon, a well-known advocate of CLT, highlights the value of attention to form in language pedagogy and suggests that "[…] communicative language teaching does not exclude a focus on metalinguistic awareness or knowledge of the rules of syntax." (2005, p. 645). It is when learners are exposed to formal issues that their awareness of those forms might be lasting because opaque or advanced features are made salient and their accuracy might also improve (Spada, 1997). Over the past three decades several researchers have identified strategies that may increase learners' metalinguistic sensitivity to input (for processing instruction and structured input, see Benati (forthcoming); Benati & Lee, 2008; VanPatten, 1996, 2004, 2007). In what follows we concentrate on the FonF notion and its principal options.

3. What Is Focus on Form (FonF)?

In his early work on this notion, Long (1983) suggested that learners who received formal explicit instruction had an advantage over naturalistic learners. Long himself (1991) established a distinction between focus on forms (FonFs) and focus on form (FonF), the former being the traditional approach to grammar instruction in which the teacher draws the learners' attention to isolated language forms without a meaningful context (i.e., through traditional exercises or drills). On the contrary, Long (1991, pp. 45-46) defined FonF as "[…] drawing students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning and communication." It should be noticed that in his original definition, Long conceptualizes attention to form as arising *incidentally* within a communicative context. In fact, Basturkmen, Loewen, and Ellis (2004, p. 243) state that "Focus on form is a feature of communicative language teaching (CLT)."

Research throughout the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century has expanded Long's definition. Thus, Ellis (2001, pp. 1-2) wrote about form-focused instruction (FFI) and defined it as "[…] any planned or incidental activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form." The concept includes now both preplanned and reactive approaches to grammar instruction and is generally understood as any activity that draws the learners' attention to form within a meaningful context (Dougthy, 2001; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Spada, 1997). The term form, as Ellis (2001) points out, is intended to include phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmalinguistic aspects of language.

Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2002) classified FonF as both *planned* and *incidental*. The former type implies a pre-selection by the teacher of those forms that are known to be problematic for a certain group of learners (e.g. the *–ed* in English regular past tense for Spanish-speaking learners of L2 English). Some researchers consider planned FonF an effective, though time-consuming, technique (Doughty & Varela, 1998). Incidental FonF uses communicative tasks designed to elicit general samples of language. Some researchers (Loewen, 2003, 2004; 2005; Lyster, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997) have documented that incidental FonF occurs frequently in meaning-focused classrooms and have argued for its beneficial effects on L2 acquisition.

Within incidental FonF, Ellis et al. (2002) distinguish three possible types:

(I) Reactive FonF: the teacher (T) or another student (S) respond to an error

(1)   Student   she don't have children so they don't have

        Teacher   she doesn't

        Student   she doesn't

        (Loewen, 2007)

(II) Pre-emptive FonF: Student-initiated

(2)   Student 1:   […] that is, that is partly, partly inherited, no?

         Student 2   How do you spell that?

         Student 1:   i-n-h-e-r-i-t-e-d? I think... I'm not sure

         (Azkarai Garai & García Mayo, in press)

(III) Pre-emptive FonF: Teacher-initiated

(3)   Teacher: Today we are going to talk about customs officers.

                         Do you know what a customs officer means?

         Student: *Frontera*?

         (Alcón Soler & García Mayo, 2008)

FFI, according to Ellis (2001, p. 12) entails "[…] a set of psycholinguistically motivated pedagogical options", which are considered to be motivating when carried out in communicative language contexts. Ellis (2006) argues for a clear dichotomy between focus on forms and FonF approaches on the basis of the context in which attention to form is paid. Thus, in the case of the former, "[…] the context is shaped by instructional events and/or rubrics that make it clear to the learners that the essential purpose of the activities […] is to focus on the processing/ use of some specific linguistic feature." In the case of FonF "[…] the context is shaped by the teacher presenting the activity as an opportunity for practicing communication […] attention to form is intended to be secondary to this overriding purpose, no the main purpose" (p. 23)

A crucial question is whether particular language features are more affected by FonF than others (Ellis, 2006; Spada & Lightbown, 2008). As Spada (2011) points out, little research had been carried out on this topic up to the recent meta-analysis by Spada and Tomita (2010), possibly

because of the difficulty of defining the terms simple and complex when referring to a linguistic structure. Spada and Tomita (2010) defined both terms on the basis of the number of transformations applied to arrive at the correct form. Thus, for example, forming a wh-question as object of a preposition (Who did you talk to?) would be more complex than the rule of the regular past tense in English. Explicit FFI was found to be more effective than implicit FFI on both simple and complex structures. Interestingly, explicit FFI was reported to contribute not only to learners' conscious knowledge of the target forms, but to their ability to use those forms in a spontaneous way.

4. A Task-Based FonF Approach

Ortega (2007) proposes three principles for the design of meaningful L2 practice in foreign language classrooms, all of them from a cognitive-interactionist perspective (Gass & Mackey, 2007). The first principle states that L2 practice should be *interactive* because L2 research has shown that such practice has linguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociocognitive benefits argued to be facilitative of L2 development. The second principle states that L2 practice should be *meaningful*. Ortega (2007, p. 183) points out that from a cognitive-interactionist SLA sense, "[…] meaningful refers to the prerequisite of *focus on form*, or concurrent attention to meaning and form during processing (following Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long, 1997, and Long & Robinson, 1998)" (emphasis in original). The third principle states that there should be a *focus on task-essential forms*, that is, the task that has been designed should be able to elicit the forms learners have most problems with. Tasks need to focus on formal aspects of language that are crucial for its development. In summary, for Ortega (2007, p. 186) "[…] a sound pedagogical principle is the matching of classroom tasks with essential form-function mappings"

Tasks have become central to both L2 research and pedagogy. Various tasks characteristics (task modality, task complexity, etc.) are the focus of current research that intends to show how task-based interaction plays a facilitative role in language development (García Mayo, 2007). Tasks that draw learners' attention to form have also been designed specifically for L2 classrooms. As Ellis, Loewen, and Basturkmen (2006, p. 137) state: "Task-based instruction involving FonF serves as one way in which linguistic form can be addressed extensively (rather than intensively) and also helps learners develop confidence and fluency in communicating." The question that arises is which task design features may have an impact on the nature of learner language and on the processing and learning of the L2. In particular, how can L2 teachers design features that foster learners' attention to form?

According to Ellis (2005a) tasks can be manipulated to draw learners' attention to form within a communicative context in four ways, namely, manipulating task design, task planning, learner interaction, and providing corrective feedback.

Let us consider each of these scenarios in turn making reference to different studies illustrating various possibilities. First, research has shown that two-way tasks with segmented input and with a closed goal lead to more negotiation of meaning[2] than one-way tasks, as members of a dyad need to join efforts in order to reach their goal. Most studies on this aspect have been carried out with English as the target language (see Mackey & Philp, 1998, for questions; Muranoi, 2000, for articles; Pica, Kang, & Sauro, 2006, for articles and prepositions, among others). Gilabert, Barón, and Llanes (2009) manipulated the impact of the cognitive complexity of three different types of oral tasks (a narrative reconstruction task, an instruction-giving map task, and a decision-making task) on the interaction of adult Spanish EFL learners organized in 27 dyads. Their study was carried out within the framework of the Cognition Hypothesis (Robinson 2001a, 2001b, 2007) which claims that

increasing task cognitive demands along certain dimensions will push learners to greater accuracy and complexity in L2 production and will also promote greater interaction as more communicative breakdowns will occur. Communicative breakdowns, in turn, are claimed to provide more opportunities for learning because they generate conversational episodes (but see Aston, 1986). Gilabert et al. (2009) claim that their study has found confirmatory evidence for the Cognition Hypothesis: the more complex a task is, the more it will contribute to interaction, which in turn helps L2 learners in their linguistic development (Mackey, 2007). More recently, Nuevo, Adams, and Ross-Feldman (2011) also manipulated task complexity (operationalized as [± reasoning demands]) and investigated whether it affected learners' modified output and the relationship between output modification and L2 development. The tasks, carried out by a group of 79 ESL learners, targeted English past tense and locative prepositions. The findings pointed to complex patterns among level of task complexity, type of target structure, type of modified output and learning outcomes. Kim and Tracy-Ventura (2011) focused on the relationship between task complexity and learner anxiety in the learner-learner interaction of 88 Korean EFL learners' development of past tens morphology. The findings of their study showed that more complex tasks were more facilitative of past tense development than simple tasks and that low-anxiety learners showed more tense development than high-anxiety learners.[3]

Secondly, tasks can be manipulated with the goal of drawing learners' attention to form by means of task planning (Ellis 2005a, 2005b). Thus, Foster and Skehan (1996) studied the influence of different implementation conditions (unplanned, planned but without detail, and detailed planning) on the variables of fluency, complexity and accuracy while learners performed personal information exchange, narrative, and decision-making tasks. These researchers reported strong effects of planning on fluency and clear effects on complexity, but a more complex relationship between planning and accuracy, curiously with the most

accurate performance by the learners who had less detailed planning. In a further study, Foster and Skehan (1999) considered different sources of planning (teacher-led, solitary and group-based) and different foci for planning (content vs. language). Their findings pointed to the teacher-fronted condition as the one generating significant accuracy effects while the solitary planning condition had greater influence on complexity, fluency, and turn length. All these research findings may have pedagogical implications regarding informed decisions teachers can make on the basis of their specific goals.

Ortega (1999) explicitly draws on FonF research to investigate whether planning opportunities result in an increased FonF both at the level of strategic attention to form during planning time and also regarding production outcomes at the level of task performance. Her data come from the oral interaction of 64 adult native speakers of American English who were learners of Spanish and completed a story-telling task. Her findings provide support for the claim that "[…] planning before doing an L2 task can promote an increased focus on form by providing space for the learner to devote conscious attention during pretask planning to form and systematic aspects of the language needed to accomplish a particular task." (Ortega, 1999, p. 109). Yuan and Ellis (2003) argue that pre-task planning enhances grammatical complexity while on-line planning, that is, planning while performing the task, positively influences accuracy and grammatical complexity. More recently, Park (2010) designed an experimental study in which he isolated pretask instructions from planning, two variables that seem to have been interwoven in previous research and, thus, could have misled the findings reported regarding what caused the improvement in planned performance. In his study, 110 Korean EFL learners completed two oral picture narrative tasks in dyads during a two-week period under four conditions (specific instructions with pretask planning, specific instructions without planning, general instructions with planning, and general instructions without planning). His study concludes that while

pretask instructions revealed some role for manipulating attention to form, planning did not have any effect. An issue that is recently being considered is that of pretask modelling. Thus, Kim and McDonough (2011) studied the impact of this variable on the collaborative learning opportunities of 44 Korean EFL learners when carrying out three collaborative tasks. The findings of their study indicated that those learners who received pretask modelling produced more language-related episodes (LREs) -Swain, 1998- and correctly resolved an important proportion of those than learners who did not receive any models. Their collaboration opportunities and pair dynamics were also better.

A third way to foster learners' attention to form is by means of their interaction in collaborative tasks. According to sociocultural theory, human cognitive development is a socially situated activity mediated by language (Vygotsky, 1978), that is, knowledge is socially constructed by interaction and is then internalised. Individuals learn how to carry out a new function with the help of an expert (in an expert/novice pair) and then they can perform individually. Speaking is a cognitive tool that can be used by learners to regulate themselves, others, and objects (e.g., language and tasks) (Brooks, Donato, & McGlone, 1997; see Gánem-Gutiérrez, forthcoming in press, for a detailed update of sociocultural theory). By speaking about a problem or the procedures for completing a task, the learners gain control of the situation and can organize, plan, and coordinate their actions and the actions of their peers.

Several studies (Storch, 2002; Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002) have demonstrated the impact of peer-peer dialogue on second language learning. Through interaction learners regulate or restructure their knowledge and they are provided with the possibility to develop not only their linguistic skills but also their problem-solving capacities. From this perspective, collaborative dialogue is language learning mediated by language. Several collaborative tasks such as dictogloss (Wajnryb, 1990), text-reconstruction, or jigsaw foster dialogue among the members of

the dyad and offer opportunities to improve the knowledge of the target language (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007, 2009; Basterrechea & García Mayo, 2010, forthcoming; García Mayo, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Kowal & Swain, 1997; Leeser, 2004; Storch, 2007). It is precisely when performing these types of collaborative tasks that learners pay attention to formal aspect of the language. Swain (1998, p. 70) defined the construct of *language-related episode* (LRE) as a segment of the learners' dialogue in which they talk about language, question, and/or correct (explicitly or implicitly) their interlocutor's language use while trying to complete the task. LREs have been widely used as a unit of analysis in FonF research because they are signs that learners are paying attention to form. They also provide insights into their mental processes while they are working and may represent learning in progress (Donato, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Consider the following examples:

(4)   Student 1: We will talk about the main advantages of containerization

         Student 2: Aha

         Student 1: In general terms, containerization I think we should omit 'the'

         Student 2: Yes, I was going to say that too

         (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007, p. 99)

(5)   Student 1:… muchos personas o muchas personas?

         Student 2: muchas personas

         Student 1: Sí, muchas personas

         (Leeser, 2004, p. 65)

These two examples are excerpts from longer interactions the learners were engaged in when completing collaborative tasks. In (4), student 1 reflects on the use of the definite article in English and in (5) student 1 is unsure about the gender of the Spanish noun *persona*

('person'). Both examples illustrate how learners focus on formal aspects of the languages they are learning (English and Spanish, respectively) without the teacher intervening in the conversation.

Finally, learners' attention to form can be fostered by means of feedback for correction, provided by the teacher or by other learners. Leeman (2007, p. 112) defines feedback as "[…] a mechanism which provides the learner with information regarding the success or failure of a given process. By definition, feedback is responsive and thus can occur only *after* a given process." Feedback can vary greatly in the form it takes when provided to learners (verbal and non-verbal, for example) and corrective feedback is often viewed as a continuum from explicit to implicit. *Explicit corrective feedback* refers to situations in which the interlocutor (a native speaker, a teacher, or another learner) provides linguistic information about the non-target-like nature of the utterance that has been produced. *Implicit corrective feedback* is an indirect and less obtrusive way to show that learners' utterances are problematic and is of more interest within the interactional model.

As pointed out by Nassaji and Simard (2010), a considerable body of research has examined whether communicative tasks that contain some kind of interactional feedback promote language acquisition (Ellis et al., 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey, 2006; Panova & Lyster, 2002, among many others). The findings in those studies suggest that if the feedback provided is salient enough and perceived as such by the learners, it contributes to L2 acquisition. A recent study by Erlam and Loewen (2010) investigates the effectiveness of implicit and explicit corrective feedback on noun-adjective agreement errors among native speakers of English learning French. Their study did not show a significant effect of type of feedback but, interestingly, it did show an overall effect for interaction. Nassaji (2010) explores the impact of preemptive and reactive FonF on certain language features in data from 54 hours of classroom interaction within seven intact ESL classes at three levels of proficiency.

His study revealed that (i) both reactive and preemptive FonF occurred but the latter led to higher individualized post-test scores; (ii) different types of FonF have different impact on learning the targeted forms, and (iii) the amount, type and effectiveness of FonF were strongly related to the learners' level of proficiency in the L2.

Although most research carried out on the potential impact feedback might have on drawing learners' attention to form has focused on adult learners, some recent studies have shown that feedback techniques are also crucial to foster metalinguistic awareness among young children. Thus, Bouffard and Sarkar (2008) devised pedagogical techniques that enable young learners (8 year olds) to develop their metalinguistic awareness. They designed tasks that encouraged the learners to correct their non-target utterances. The classroom teacher (one of the researchers) provided corrective feedback on different types of errors and both teacher and learners' interactions were recorded to be watched later on by the learners. The findings of their study showed that the young learners were able to negotiate form and do a grammatical analysis of their errors. Fujii and Mackey (2009) used learning diaries to draw learners' attention to form, although theirs were adult Japanese EFL learners.

In summary, several research studies over the past years have manipulated tasks to draw learners' attention to form within a communicative context in at least four ways: manipulating task design, task planning, learner interaction, and providing feedback for correction (see Table 1 below). Much more research is needed along these lines though, as well as on other issues that have not been mentioned here due to space constraints. Thus, how student-generated FonF varies depending on factors such as (i) the learners' proficiency level (Leeser, 2004; Williams, 1999), (ii) the different tasks used to foster interaction (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007; García Mayo 2002a, 2002b; Storch, 1998; Yilmaz, 2011), and (iii) pair and group dynamics (Morris & Tarone, 2003; Storch, 2002), among others. Also, from the teacher's perspective,

the role of individual differences (novice vs. experienced teachers) has been claimed to have an impact on the use of FonF techniques (Mackey, Polio, & McDonough, 2004).

Task design	• Mackey & Philp (1998)	L2 English question formation. If the learner developmental level was appropriate, then there was a greater stage increase when provided with intensive recasts in interaction.
	• Muranoi (2000)	L2 English article use. Task design had positive effects on the restructuring of the learners' interlanguage regarding article use.
	• Pica et al. (2006)	L2 English. Both articles and prepositions. Learners identified, solved, and resolved problems related to target items with jigsaw and grammar communication tasks.
	• Gilabert et al. (2009	L2 English. The more complex the task, the more it contributed to interaction and learner language development.
	• Nuevo et al. (2011)	L2 English. Past tense and locative prepositions. Complex patterns among level of task complexity, type of target structure, type of modified output, and learning.
	• Kim & Tracy-Ventura (2011)	L2 English. Past tense morphology and learner anxiety. Complex tasks more facilitative of past-tense development; low anxiety learners showed more past-tense gains.
Task planning	• Foster & Skehan (1996)	Strong effects of planning on fluency; clear effects on complexity; complex relationship between planning and accuracy.

	• Foster & Skehan (1999)	Various L1s. L2 English. Teacher-led planning generated significant accuracy effects, fluency, and turn length.
	• Ortega (1999)	L1 English. L2 Spanish (advanced level). Pre-task planning did promote increased FonF.
	• Yuan & Ellis (2003)	L1 Chinese. L2 English. Pre-task planning enhanced grammatical complexity while on-line planning positively influenced accuracy and grammatical complexity.
	• Park (2010)	L2 English. L1 Korean. Pre-task instructions played some role in manipulating attention to form; planning did not.
	• Kim & McDonough (2011)	L2 English. L1 Korean. Pre-task modeling led to more —and correctly solved—LREs.
Learner interaction. Collaborative tasks	• García Mayo (2002a)	L2 English (advanced). L1 Spanish. Text reconstruction and
	• García Mayo (2002b)	L2 English (advanced). L1 Spanish. Text reconstruction, dictogloss, cloze, multiple choice, text editing. FonF was task-dependent; grammar features targeted not always interpreted as such by the learners.
	• Leeser (2004)	L2 Spanish. L1 English. Dictogloss. How proficiency affected the amount and nature (lexical vs. grammatical) and outcome (correct, unresolved, incorrect) of LREs.
	• Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo (2007)	L2 English (low proficiency). L1 Spanish. Jigsaw, dictogloss, and text editing. All effective at drawing FonF and engaging learners in metatalk.
	• Storch (2007)	L2 English. Learners asked to correct a short text based on one produced by an ESL student. Learners working collaboratively were engaged in interaction and reflection about language forms.

	• Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo (2009)	L2 English (low proficiency). L1 Spanish. Use of L1 in collaborative tasks (jigsaw, dictogloss, and text editing) to provide essential cognitive support to focus attention on formal and semantic aspects.
	• Basterrechea & García Mayo (2010, forthcoming)	L2 English. L1s Spanish and Basque. CLIL and EFL classes. Target item: 3rd person morpheme –s. Dictogloss had more positive results in CLIL classes; more correlation between use of target item in LRE and written output.
Provision of corrective feedback	• Bouffard & Sarkar (2008)	L2 French. L1 English. 8-year-old learners. When provided with corrective feedback, learners were able to negotiate form and become aware of their errors.
	• Earlam & Loewen (2010)	L2 French. L1English (adults). Effectiveness of implicit and explicit corrective feedback on N+Adj agreement errors. No significant effect of feedback type, but overall effect for interaction.
	• Nassaji (2010)	L2 English. 54 hours of interaction in 7 intact classes. Three levels of proficiency. Pre-emptive FonF led to higher individualized test-scores than reactive FonF. Amount, type, and effectiveness of FonF related to learners' proficiency level.

Table 1. Summary of ways to draw learners' attention to form

5. Conclusion and Lines for Further Research

The main goal of this paper has been twofold: to present an overview of the rationale for the relevance of L2 form in the communicative language classroom, and to provide ideas about how

to draw learners' attention to form within the backdrop of a task-based approach to language teaching.

Several issues in need of further research were pointed out at the end of the previous section but there are many more research avenues waiting to be explored. Thus, among others, we should mention the need to do research on whether or not attention to form is an issue of concern in classrooms where the recent educational approach known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is implemented (Mehisto, Frigols, & Marsh, 2008). Preliminary studies in other contexts have shown that teacher-dominated discussion is the prevalent mode of classroom discourse in content-based classrooms. Teachers rarely provide incidental attention to form in response to students' non-target-like utterances but, rather, they react to the value of the content of those utterances (Pica, 2002). Grim (2009) found that a planned FonF technique was effective in a content-enriched instruction lesson in learning L2 grammar, vocabulary, and cultural content in intermediate French L2 learners; Lyster (2004) suggests that effective FFI in immersion contexts should include a balanced distribution of opportunities for noticing, language awareness, and controlled practice with feedback.

Other issues in need of further research are (i) task modality: the speaking-writing connection, that is, the comparison between learners' attention to form in tasks that require only spoken output with those that require both written and spoken language production (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Azkarai Garai & García Mayo, in press), (ii) a focus on specific grammar constructions (Yang & Lyster, 2010) and on pronunciation (Saito & Lyster, in press), (iii) the study of the impact that FFI might have depending on learners' individual differences such as age, anxiety, aptitude, learning styles and motivation, (iv) the extent to which different tasks used in synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) draw learners' attention to form (Yilmaz, 2011) and (v) the study of social considerations (avoidance of peer correction, task orientation, empathy with partners)

in classroom interaction (Philp, Walter, & Basturkmen, 2010), to name a few. Besides, as seen above, task features can be manipulated to encourage greater attention to form but much more systematic research is needed in intact classrooms where, as rightly pointed out by Philp et al. (2010, p. 275) "[…] tasks features alone may not predict incidence or quality of focus on form: what the students bring to the task is important, both individually and collectively." Reflection on FonF activities and their relevance in second/ foreign language classrooms should be a must in teacher training courses (García Mayo, in press). In fact, the link between SLA research findings and L2 pedagogy needs to be strengthened in such a way that professional development is "research-based and practitioner-informed", if we borrow part of the title of the book by Fortune and Menke (2010)—reviewed by Lightbown (2011). Both researchers and practitioners would benefit from collaboration that would lead to more ecologically valid classroom research.

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Notes

1. See Lapkin and Mady (2009) and Marshall (2011) for more information on French as a second language instruction in Canada.

2. Negotiation of meaning is a type of conversational interaction that takes place between learners and their interlocutors when one of them indicates that the other's message has not been successfully conveyed.

3. The interested reader should read Robinson (2011) for updated research on task complexity.

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