Analysing EFL classroom transcripts: The codification of Incidental Focus on Form Episodes

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ABSTRACT: There are different types of Focus on Form instruction (Ellis, 2001; Ellis *et al.* 2002). This paper will provide a wide range of examples for the different types of Focus on Form Episodes that can be identified. In the first place, the paper will present the difference between Focus on Form and Focus on Forms instruction, it will then concentrate on the first one providing an outline of its different subtypes and finally it will present the examples obtained from an analysis of secondary EFL students' transcripts.
Key words: Focus on Form, Focus on Form Episodes, EFL students.

RESUMEN: Hay diferentes tipos de instrucción con Atención a la Forma (Ellis, 2001; Ellis *et al.* 2002). Este artículo presenta una amplia gama de ejemplos de los diferentes tipos de Episodios de Atención a la Forma. En primer lugar, se presentará la diferencia entre la instrucción mediante Atención a la Forma y Atención a las Formas. A continuación, se desarrollará el primer tipo analizando sus subclases y finalmente, se presentarán los ejemplos obtenidos del análisis de un corpus de transcripciones de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.
Palabras clave: Atención a la Forma, Episodios de Atención a la Forma, estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

1. Introduction

In the last decades, there has been a shift from strictly communicative methods to methods including focus on form in the communicative language teaching (henceforth CLT) classroom. Long (1991) refers to the topic of Focus on Form after a long period of denial of teaching grammatical forms. However, the purpose of this change was not to go back to the teaching of isolated and uncontextualised grammatical forms (Focus on Forms) but its main purpose was to include the use of forms in the communicative classroom. Many language teachers and researchers have shared their concern that the teaching of linguistic forms had to be included in the communicative language classroom (Doughty and Williams, 1998; Lightbown, 2000; Norris and Ortega, 2000). Findings of immersion and naturalistic acquisition studies suggested that in experiential and meaning-focused language classrooms, some linguistic

features do not develop to target like levels (see for example, Harley, 1998; Swain, 1991, 1998; Lyster, 1998; Lyster and Ranta, 1997). This is so despite years of meaningful input and opportunities for interaction. There is evidence to state that environmental support in the form of comprehensible input is necessary for language learning, but not enough for learning certain aspects of an L2 (Long, 1996). As an instance of this, foreign students in immersion programmes were generally good in acquiring reading and writing skills in the target language, however failed in acquiring native-like proficiency in listening and speaking. Also, there are cases of learners who after living in an L2 environment for many years still retain many deviant forms in their speech (see for example Schmidt, 1993). Environmental support in the form of comprehensible input is necessary for language learning, however it is insufficient for learning certain aspects of an L2 (Long, 1996). For this reason, those approaches making isolated linguistic structures the content of language courses were considered less effective. The method that was considered most favourable for teaching foreign languages was one that could focus on aspects of language and communication at the same time. This was only possible using a Focus on Form approach that we will now describe in the following section.

2. FOCUS ON FORMS (FONFS) AND FOCUS ON FORM (FONF)

The use of communicative methods experienced a major development around the 80s. For more than two decades now, these methods have been adopted by a considerably amount of current teaching materials. Yet, the teaching of linguistic forms, especially grammar, still plays a fundamental role in language pedagogy (Ellis *et al.,* 2002). Forms include any aspect of linguistic form, that is phonological, graphological, lexical or grammatical (Long, 1991). Therefore, FonF instruction can be directed at phonology, vocabulary, grammar or discourse (Ellis *et al.,* 2001). Attention to form also involves consideration of the meaning (function) that a particular form conveys. Miscommunication can lead learners to recognize that a linguistic problem exists, switch from focus on message to focus on form, identify the problem and notice the needed item in the input. This was the starting point for many teachers and researchers to claim the need to include grammar in communicative language classrooms and to start working together on the successful accomplishment of their purpose.

Most researchers currently investigating the role of attention to form in communicative language classrooms attribute the reawakening of interest for this issue to Long (1991). According to this author, two kinds of form-focused instruction can be distinguished, namely those of Focus on Forms and Focus on Form.

According to Sheen (2002) the fundamental difference between these two options is the following:

> 'Focus on Form' derives from an assumed degree of similarity between first and second language acquisition positing that the two processes are both based on an exposure to comprehensible input arising from natural interaction. However, it is also assumed that there are significant differences in the two processes: that exposure is insufficient to enable learners to acquire much of the second-language grammar, and that this lack needs to be compensated for by focusing learners' attention on

grammatical features. 'Focus on FormS', on the other hand, is based on the assumption that classroom foreign or second language learning derives from general cognitive processes, and thus entails the learning of a skill-hence its being characterized as a 'skills-learning approach'. (Sheen, 2002: 303)

On the one hand, Focus on Forms (henceforth FonFs) entails the pre-selection of specific features based on a linguistic syllabus and the intensive and systematic treatment of those features. Thus, in FonFs instruction the primary focus of attention is on the form or forms that are being targeted. It characterizes earlier synthetic approaches to language teaching that had stated the presentation of individual language elements as their primary organizing principle for course design. Some examples of these elements are: forms such as verb endings or agreement features, or even functions such as greetings or apologies. As Ellis *et al.* (2002) state, an example of a lesson of the focus-on-forms type would be one conducted by means of what they call 'PPP' that is, a three stage lesson involving the presentation of a grammatical structure, its practice in controlled exercises and the provision of opportunities to produce it freely.

On the other hand, the primary focus of attention in focus-on-form instruction is on meaning. Here, the attention to form arises out of a meaning-centred activity derived from the performance of a communicative task. In this sense, FonF overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose principal focus is on meaning or communication (Long, 1991). Again, following Ellis *et al.* (2002) an example of the former would be a situation in which the students are given an information-gap task and in the course of being successful on it, their attention is drawn to one or more linguistic forms. Therefore, the shift of attention to linguistic code features could be triggered by the teacher and /or one or more students over one or several perceived problems over comprehension or production (Long and Robinson, 1998).

In short, FonF differs from FonFs in that FonF entails a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can be expected to be effective (Doughty and Williams, 1998).

Although there is substantial evidence that supports FonFs instruction as a learning token, there is less evidence to support that it leads to the kind of learning that would allow learners to engage in successful oral production. In this sense, Norris and Ortega (2000) for instance, analysed 49 studies which dealt with FonFs. They found that the effectiveness of the instruction was markedly reduced when this was measured in terms of learners' ability to use the targeted structure spontaneously in communication. In this line, researchers (such as Long, 1991 or Doughty, 2001) suggest that an approach based on FonF would work better for the attainment of both, communicative and linguistic skills. The reason for this is the desire of many applied linguists to combine communicative use of the FL in the classroom and the need for a linguistic focus on the different aspects of language. According to Ellis *et al.* (2002) their argument rests on the following four premises:

1) In order to acquire the ability to use new linguistic forms communicatively, learners need opportunities to engage in meaning-focused language use (see Prabhu, 1987);
2) such opportunities will only guarantee full acquisition of the new linguistic forms if learners also have the opportunity to attend to form while engaged in meaning-

focused language use. Long (1991) argues that only in this way can attention to form be made compatible with the processes of L2 acquisition and thereby overcome persistent developmental errors;

3) given that learners have a limited capacity to process the second language (L2) and have difficulty in attending to meaning and form simultaneously they will give priority to meaning over form when performing a communicative activity (VanPatten, 1990);

4) therefore, it is necessary to find ways of drawing learners' attention to form during a communicative activity. As Doughty (2001) states, «the factor that distinguishes focus on form from other pedagogical approaches is the requirement that focus on form involves learners' briefly and perhaps simultaneously attending to form, meaning and use during one cognitive event.»

(Doughty, 2001: 211).

After providing the definitions of FonF and FonFs that illustrate the differences between them, we will introduce the different types of FonF. It is the aim of this article to analyse and exemplify the types of FonF instruction that take place in an EFL communicative-based classroom. Therefore, we need a thorough explanation of each type and subtypes in order to code our data. To this end, we provide the following section which deals with the different types of FonF according to the distinction provided by Ellis (2001) and Ellis *et al.* (2002).

3. TYPES OF FOCUS ON FORM

There are different types of FonF instruction which will be explained below. All of them will be tackled according to the distinctions provided by Ellis (2001) and Ellis *et al.* (2002).

Our main concern is related to the procedures for teaching form in the context of a communicative activity. The main reason for this is that our study deals with data obtained from a communicate language classroom and hence, we will look into the various ways of addressing form in this setting. Within FonF instruction, Ellis (2001) and Ellis *et al.* (2002), distinguish between planned versus incidental FonF. This will be the first distinction provided in this section. Then, we will briefly outline the different types of planned FonF and we will provide a detailed explanation about the different types of incidental FonF. These are pre-emptive and reactive FonF and both types will be exemplified in the present paper.

On the one hand, planned focus on a linguistic form can be pre-determined by means of using focus tasks. So to say, communicative tasks that have been designed to elicit the use of a specific linguistic form in the context of meaning-centred language use. In this sense for example, the students would be given a task in which the correct command of prepositions was needed (i.e. finding differences between two similar pictures: in picture C, on the top of, and the like). In so doing, this type of instruction could be compared to FonFs in the sense that instruction on a specific form is pre-selected for treatment. However, it differs from it in two ways. Firstly, this attention to form is achieved by means of interaction where the primary focus is on meaning. Secondly, learners do not know that a specific form is being targeted and thus are expected to function as language users rather than as learners when they perform the task.

On the other hand, incidental FonF consists on the use of unfocused tasks. These are designed to elicit general samples of language rather than specific forms. It could happen that no attention to form was paid whatsoever, although in some cases either the teacher or the students could choose to incidentally attend to various forms while performing the task. If this was the case, attention to form would be extensive in the sense that many different forms would likely be treated briefly rather than a single form addressed many times. Among others, one possible task for this to take place would be an opinion-gap task where either the teacher corrects students' mistakes or students enquire about a particular form.

For both incidental and planned FonF, a communicative task is necessary. Yet, it is the teacher's responsibility to orientate it in one way or another. However, it should also be hinted here that sometimes although a task might be planned, incidental attention to other forms than the targeted ones might occur.

Within planned FonF and incidental FonF more subdivisions can be made. Again, we will follow the distinction provided by Ellis (2001) and Ellis *et al.* (2002). The reason for us to follow this typology is that these authors meet the need to further develop incidental FonF of the pre-emptive type, which is the main type we will analyse in our study.

On the one hand, planned FonF can be of enriched input (input flood or input enhancement) and focused communicative tasks. For example, Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) have identified three degrees of involvement of a linguistic form in a task: task naturalness, task utility and task essentialness and they defined them as follows:

> In task-naturalness, a grammatical construction may arise naturally during the performance of a particular task, but the task can often be performed perfectly well, even quite easily, without it. In the case of task-utility, it is possible to complete a task without the structure, but with the structure, the task becomes easier. The most extreme demand a task can place on a structure is essentialness: the task cannot be successfully performed unless the structure is used.
>
> (Loschky and Bley-Vroman, 1993: 132)

On the other hand, incidental FonF can be pre-emptive or reactive. Pre-emptive FonF consists of attempts by the teacher or the students to make a particular form the topic of conversation even though no error (or perceived error) in the use of that form has occurred. It can be either student or teacher initiated.

Student pre-emptive FonF is typically initiated by means of a query that the student addresses to the teacher. Then the teacher will either, answer the student's query, re-direct it to another student or in rare cases, leave it to come to it later (Ellis *et al.* 2002). In the example below, the student wants to know how to say a word in order to continue an explanation he is giving. To this end, he decides to focus on lexis.

Example 1: Student-initiated pre-emptive FonF.

S: how do you say…?
T: what?
S: it's like a book, you buy it every day.
T: newspaper?
S: yes newspaper, thank you

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It has been argued that student-initiated pre-emptive FonF usually addresses gaps found in the students' linguistic knowledge which can be presumed to be significant to them and they are, therefore, highly motivated to understand them. Slimani's (1989) study shows that learners were more likely to recall new items after they had initiated the queries. A counterpart in student-initiated attention to form is that it may detract from the communicative activity or even bore the other students who already knew the answer. Furthermore, episodes that involve learner-generated attention to form revolve largely around lexis and not grammar forms, for example. Williams (2001) argues that more than anything else, learners want to know about words.

The flow of communication could also be interrupted by the teacher. This is usually done because the teacher thinks that a form could be in some way problematic to the students. This can be done either by a query directed at the students or by an advisory statement. However, sometimes the query that the teacher thought to be problematic may not be so. It has been argued that teachers are probably better of limiting themselves to provide corrective feedback (i.e. reactive FonF), where the need for their assistance is clear. In the first example below, the teacher decides to focus on vocabulary while he is providing the description of a door. The teacher explains the word without any intervention from the students.

Example 2: Teacher initiated FonF (using a query)

T: what's a bolt?
T: Do you know what a bolt is?
T: type of animal?
(laughter)
T: a bolt is what one uses to lock a door. Okay. To lock a door.

The next example is also teacher initiated but differs from the above example in that the conversation is now interrupted to introduce a new structure that students will need in order to build grammatically correct sentences.

Example 3: Teacher-initiated FonF (using an advisory statement)

T: Okay, today, we are going to look at the differences between there is and there are, ok? There is and there are.

Apart from these three examples there are more models to illustrate how forms are pre-empted by either the teacher or the students. The aspects addressed can be of different types, that is pragmatic aspects, linguistic aspects and the like. In our study we have focused on the linguistic aspects that were pre-empted in an EFL communicative classroom, namely those of vocabulary, grammar, spelling and pronunciation, more examples from our data will be provided in the next section.

In addition to different types of pre-emptive FonF there are also different types of reactive FonF within the incidental type. We will present the types of the latter one below.

Reactive FonF involves the treatment of learners' errors. It arises when learners produce an utterance containing an actual or perceived error which is then addressed usually by the teacher but sometimes by another learner. Thus, it supplies learners with negative evidence (Ellis *et al.* 2001). In communicative activities, the linguistic errors that students make may or may not result in a communicative problem. If there is no misunderstanding, the flow of conversation can follow on most occasions. However, if there are communication problems, the teacher or maybe other students negotiate the meaning using either requests for clarification or requests for confirmation. The first one typically involves the teacher repeating the problematic utterance with or without reformulating it. A request for clarification is typically used when the teacher does not have a clear idea of what the student has said. It is usually performed by means of expressions such as sorry? or could you repeat that? This last one is usually more demanding from the students because they have to reformulate the utterance. In the first example below, the teacher does not understand a word that a student has said and checks with the student whether he has understood the word.

Example 4: Conversational FonF (request for confirmation)

S: my team has a name
T: what name?
S1: foxes
T: boxes group?
S1: fox, foxes
T: oh, foxes, okay
S2: yes foxes

In the following example, the teacher seems not to have understood one of the student's sentences. For that reason, she asks him what he had said and he re-formulates the utterance.

Example 5: Conversational FonF (request for clarification)

S1: I have got one brother
T: what?
S2: I've got one brother

Apart from conversational FonF, reactive FonF can also be didactic FonF, which involves a negotiation of form rather than a negotiation of meaning. Commonly, there is no communication problem due to this error. However, the teacher still elects to correct it. It is possible thought that the students do not notice the target of such negotiation. In the following example, one student repeats an incorrect utterance twice. In this case, the teacher repeats the part of the sentence that was incorrect and makes it grammatically correct. The student notices his mistakes and re-formulates the sentence.

Example 6: Didactic FonF

S: Let's go to beach
S: Let's go to beach
T: to the beach
S: yeah to the beach with my friends

Further types of reactive FonF are implicit or explicit. On the one hand, the aim of implicit FonF is to attract learners' attention and to avoid metalinguistic discussion, always minimizing any interruption to the communication of meaning (Doughty and Williams, 1998). The most common way of performing implicit feedback is by means of a recast. This consists of a reformulation of either the whole or part of the student's utterance containing an error in such a way as to maintain the student's intended meaning. The corrective feedback of the recast is not always apparent and therefore the student may fail to notice the difference between his or her utterance. For this reason, in order to ensure attention to form feedback should be less implicit. In the following example, the teacher repeats an incorrect utterance with the purpose of making the student aware of his/her error. Not receiving any response from the student, the teacher finally says it correctly.

Example 7: Implicit FonF by means of a recast

S: I know that they will lose the match.
T: I know they will lose the match?
S: (no response)
T: I knew that they would lose the match.

On the other hand, the aim of explicit teaching is to direct learners' attention and to exploit pedagogical grammar in this regard (Doughty and Williams, 1998). Explicit feedback can be presented in different ways. One possibility is to simply signal that the student has made an error by saying No. Not … , however it is also true that this could make the student and the teacher uncomfortable in some situations. Another option is for the teacher to use metalanguage to indicate that something was wrong with the student's utterance, for example 'Preposition' if a preposition used by the student was wrong. One further option is to provide a correction and then provide opportunities for the student to practise the use of the correct form. Also, the possibility to intervene with a metalinguistic explanation of the correct form is another option. Explicit correction has the advantage of making it more or less impossible for the student to avoid noticing the correct form.

Although some distinctions have been pointed out about implicit and explicit teaching, reactive FonF can be more or less implicit or explicit; this means that both are rather a continuum than complete opposites. The example below is a case of explicit FonF, the teacher corrects a badly pronounced word and the student repeats it until he says it properly.

Example 8: Explicit FonF

S1: I found a fossil
S2: pardon
S1: was anything found, fou, fou
T: listen found
S1: found
T: found
S1: found

Like pre-emptive FonF, the reactive types can also be addressed to different aspects of language communication. However, like with the pre-emptive cases, in our study we have

only analysed those reactive FonF that concerned linguistic forms such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation.

Several factors should be born in mind, in order to put into practice the several types of FonF mentioned above. There may be for example, institutional and cultural limitations on pedagogical practices, such as large classes or a tradition of teacher- or exam-centred language instruction. Any of these or other learning context variables can influence whether and what kinds of FonF are applicable. FonF instruction is very demanding of the teacher in the sense that, they have to include the issues to be learnt in the communicative lesson, in the first place. Also, they need to find the best way to drive the students towards attending these particular aspects of language. In that sense, teachers and researchers have to be aware of the psycholinguistic processing that occurs during SLA so they know more about how the acquisition process takes place.

This section has listed the different types of FonF instruction following Ellis (2001) and Ellis *et al.* (2002). Among all the different types, we have introduced the most relevant for our study, incidental FonF and within which both reactive and pre-emptive FonF play a very important role in our research. We will analyse all the incidental Focus on Form Episodes (henceforth FFEs) in the data, classifying them in student and teacher initiated reactive or pre-emptive FFEs. Within this categorization all the incidental FonF types described above will be considered. FFEs have been defined as the discourse from the point where the attention to linguistic form starts to the point where it ends (Ellis *et al.* 2001). These episodes will be exemplified in the following section in order to understand how the coding of the data was carried out.

Table 1. Below provides a summary of the different types of FonF *following the former descriptions.*

Table 1. Types of FonF. Table adapted from Ellis (2001) and Ellis et al. (2002: 429).

A) Planned FonF	Use of focused communicative tasks with predetermined targets.
1. Enriched input	Input flood or input enhancement.
2. Focused comunicative tasks	Communicative tasks that have been designed to elicit the use of a specific linguistic form in the context of meaning-centred language use.
B) Incidental FonF	Unfocused communicative tasks.
1. Pre-emptive FonF	The teacher or a student makes a linguistic form the topic of the discourse even though no error has been committed.
a.Student-initiated	A student asks a question about a linguistic form.
b.Teacher-initiated	The teacher gives advice about a linguistic form she/he thinks might be problematic or asks the students a question about the form.

2. Reactive FonF	The teacher or another student responds to an error that a student makes in the context of a communicative activity.
a. Negotiation	A process of exchanging thoughts with another (or others) aimed at reaching an agreement about a particular issue.
a.1. Conversational	The response to the error is triggered by a failure to understand what the student meant. It involves 'negotiation of meaning'.
a.2. Didactic	The response occurs even though no breakdown in communication has taken place; it constitutes a 'time-out' from communicating. It involves 'negotiation of form'.
b. Feedback	Means of informing the learners about their output.
b.1. Implicit feedback	The teacher or another student responds to a student's error without directly indicating an error has been made, e.g. by means of a recast.
b.2. Explicit feedback	The teacher or another student responds to a student's error by directly indicating that an error has been made, e.g. by formally correcting the error or by using metalanguage to draw attention to it.

4. THE STUDY

The present study aims to contribute to the growing body of descriptive research investigating focus on form, defined as the incidental attention that teachers and L2 learners pay to form in the context of meaning-focused instruction (Ellis et al. 2001). To this end, we have analysed transcripts from a communicative EFL classroom in which attention to form is achieved incidentally. From this point, we examined the types of incidental FonF and the aspects of language they addressed.

This study may shed some light to the identification of the various linguistic forms that students and teachers pre-empt in an EFL context like the one for our research.

4.1. Data

The transcripts analysed were taken from Alcón (1993), which show EFL learners' participation in a communicative language classroom. We examined transcripts that corresponded to seventeen sessions. From these transcripts we might identify that each session lasted approximately forty-five minutes. Of these 17 sessions, 13 were attended by all 12 students, 2 by 11 students and two more by 10 students. These transcripts showed the interventions of the teacher and the students in different classroom situations. The sessions show a systematic procedure. At the beginning, the teacher tried to get the students' attention

by dealing with relevant issues about the course, their other subjects, the homework they were to prepare for the lesson and the like. Having engaged them in a conversation the teacher shifted the students attention to the task of the day, namely that of reading a text out loud and commenting on it. In other occasions, some students rehearsed a dialogue that they had prepared for the lesson or they were given a topic to discuss. From that communicative process some linguistic matters arose, and it was then when the focus of the class shifted from strictly meaning-based to language-based. Both the teacher and the students, reacted and pre-emptied language matters. Before bringing the lesson to an end, the teacher asked the students whether there were any further issues to be considered and went over the assignment for the following session with them. The interaction that the turns show in the transcripts implies that the conversation was very active throughout the seventeen sessions. The language issues arose from time to time during the conversation flow, and they involved various turns.

The participants of this study were twelve EFL learners that were in their third year of secondary school in Castelló. The teacher and the learners shared their L1. As already mentioned, they were in an EFL setting. Teaching English as a foreign language (henceforth FL) is different than teaching it as a second language (henceforth SL). One of the main reasons for this, is the context, in an FL context the contact with the target language is highly reduced and the teacher might be the only language supplier. Another reason is that if miscommunication takes place in the FL classroom, teachers might shift to the learners' first language (henceforth L1). In so doing, learners might develop less learning strategic abilities for communication. However, the lesson might be easily followed by the learners. Also, the motivation of the EFL students may not be such as that of those learning English as a SL. For these and other reasons, in the teaching of EFL, levels, materials, number of students, activities, and the like, should be carefully controlled. In addition, teachers should be well-prepared in order to face these difficulties and to provide opportunities for interaction to take place in class.

4.2. Procedure

The unit of analysis used to code data for such instances was the focus on form episode (FFE). Ellis *et al.* (2001) define FFEs as the discourse from the point where the attention to linguistic form starts to the point where it ends, due to a change in topic back to message or sometimes another focus on form. Due to our interest in finding both, teacher and student initiated episodes, we have chosen FFEs as coding unit as opposed to LREs that only take into account learners' participations (see for example Garcia Mayo, 2002).

The analysis of the classroom data involved, identifying the FFEs in each session and coding the particular characteristics of each episode, in order to define the type of focus on form that was generated. The seventeen sessions were carefully revised in order to find all the FFEs, some were found in all of them except one. Session 9 did not contain any FFE. Once they were identified, we grouped them under two main categories pre-emptive, that is attempts by the teacher or the students to make a particular form the topic of conversation even though no error (or perceived error) in the use of that form has occurred (Ellis *et al.* 2001) and reactive, which arise when learners produce an utterance containing an actual or perceived error. This is then addressed usually by the teacher or sometimes by another learner. We analysed four linguistic aspects: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling.

Focus on grammar episodes concerned the explanation of grammatical rules (some examples are: reported speech, verbal tenses, word order, modal verbs, prepositions, articles) and also the correction of grammatical aspects such as use of infinitives and gerunds, third person forms, verb tenses or prepositions. Focus on vocabulary episodes included asking the meaning of single words (verbs, adjectives or nouns) and expressions and also, corrections from the teacher or another student of bad usage of single or compound words. The focus on pronunciation occurred in a reactive way and it was by means of the teacher or in some isolated cases the students providing a correct pronunciation of a word. Finally, spellings were the less found and in most cases were the students who asked how to write a new word they could not understand. In order to indicate all the FFEs, we selected the turns in which the focus was addressed either to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or spelling. The following table provides a summary of the FFEs we coded in our study.

Table 2. Definitions for the typology used to code the data.
(Adapted from Ellis (2001) and Ellis et al. (2002)).

FOCUS ON FORM EPISODES (FFEs)			
Pre-emptive focus on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or spelling.		**Reactive focus on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or spelling.**	
Student-initiated	**Teacher-initiated**	**Student-initiated**	**Teacher-initiated**
A student asks a question about a linguistic form.	The teacher gives advice about a linguistic form she/he thinks might be problematic or asks the students a question about the form.	A student responds to an error that a student makes in the context of a communicative activity.	The teacher responds to an error that a student makes in the context of a communicative activity.

If more than two FFEs occurred in consequent turns, the FFE was counted again, see the following example.

Example 1.

FFE PSV

S12	what does vase mean?
T	pardon?
S12	vase
T	(no entiende) where?
S12	aquí
T	ah yah vase vase (corrigiendo la pronunciación) a container for flowers...
S12	<ah sí>

In this example we consider the first one, a pre-emptive student-initiated FFEs, when the participant S12 asks for the meaning of the word vase. The second one is a reactive FFE because the teacher is correcting the pronunciation of the word.

The coding of all the FFEs consisted in a particular system which was based on a set of symbols by means of which a rudimentary description of each episode was presented. The following examples illustrate: a student-initiated pre-emptive FFE, a teacher-initiated and a reactive FFE.

Example 2.

FFE PTV

T   the opposite of hard is
S8   soft
T   the opposite of hard is soft, right

This example would be considered as pre-emptive teacher-initiated focus on vocabulary. The teacher takes time out from focussing on meaning to address a perceived gap in the student's lexical knowledge. Borg (1998) has shown that the experienced teacher he studied pre-empted grammar problems in this way. He stated that this teacher's approach to grammar was largely unplanned and that he decided which language points to focus on interactively. One of the problems of such teacher-initiated pre-emption is that the gap perceived by the teacher may not be an actual gap for the student. Just as in one example from Ellis et al. (2001), in the example above, the fact that one student is able to answer the question might imply that he already knew the word. Yet, in student initiated preemptions, the gap is presumably real (unless a student elects to focus on a known form) (Ellis et al. 2001). However, in our opinion this is not so in the cases provided in the present study. Students' questions address their worries.

Example 3.

FFE PSG

N1   the tallest
T   yah that's important. In the last sentence you have, John is the tallest brother. Tallest is the superlative of tall and it's used when we want to differentiate something from the rest (el más alto). Fat, fattest; short, shortest. Do you understand?
SS   (asienten)

In this example one student takes some time out of communication to focus on the use of the expression the tallest, obtaining a grammar explanation from the teacher.

Reactive FFEs were also transcribed and they indicated which aspect of language they addressed, grammar (RG), vocabulary (RV), pronunciation (RP), and spelling (RS).

Example 4.

FFE RV

S5   de high higher
T   higher? Yah but you know when somebody says higher, higher is a mountain,
      but you don't say a person is higher
S5   taller?
T   a person is #
S5   taller
T   yah taller very good. Yah

In the above episode a student is referring to himself as being higher than someone. Then the teacher corrects him saying that the adjective high is not used in that context and that for people another word is used. This explanation helps the student to find the appropriate word. In this case the comparative taller.

To sum up, we will provide a table with the different types of Focus on Form Episodes that we coded:

Table 3. Typology used to code the data.

FOCUS ON FORM EPISODES (FFEs)			
Pre-emptive		Reactive	
Student-initiated	Teacher-initiated	Student-initiated	Teacher-initiated
Vocabulary (FFE PSV)	Vocabulary (FFE PTV)	Vocabulary (FFE RSV)	Vocabulary (FFE RTV)
Grammar (FFE PSG)	Grammar (FFE PTG)	Grammar (FFE PSG)	Grammar (FFE PTG)
Spelling (FFE PSS)	Spelling (FFE PTS)	Spelling (FFE PSS)	Spelling (FFE PTS)
Pronunciation (FFE PSP)	Pronunciation (FFE PTP)	Pronunciation (FFE PSP)	Pronunciation (FFE PRP)

The examples provided above are just some examples from the 171 FFEs coded in the 17 sessions analysed for our study.

5. CONCLUSION

From the FFEs included in this paper we might infer that it is both teachers and students who pre-empt and react to linguistic matters during communication in an ELF classroom setting. Also, we might assume that they are concerned with various linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling. Probably, there are other aspects such as pragmatic issues that might be also tackled during these interactions, which we suggest as a topic for further research. Furthermore, we might state that it is also, both teacher and

students that help solve the uncertainties that might arise in the communication process. Hence, pedagogical implications from our findings imply the development of metacognitive learning strategies (Oxford, 1990) related to language planning and formulation.

6. References

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