A teacher's first language use in form-focused episodes in Spanish as a foreign language classroom

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Abstract

This study investigates a teacher's L1 use during focus-on-form episodes (FFEs). FFEs assist L2 learning by bringing learners' attention to language. We studied the language used in FFEs in a Spanish as a foreign language (SFL) classroom to better understand the pedagogical purposes of L1 use in the classroom. We video-recorded 12 hours of an intermediate-high SFL classroom with an L1 English teacher at a US university. The audio data was segmented into FFEs and then coded (English L1, Spanish L2, mix) to reflect the language used in each of the teacher's utterances. We also identified the linguistic areas (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) targeted in the FFEs. Chi-square and descriptive statistics were used to understand the relationship between the teacher's language and the linguistic areas. Lastly, using the same data set, we conducted a qualitative analysis in order to depict the situations in which the teacher employed the L1 and L2. There was a significant relationship between the teacher's language and the FFEs' linguistic areas. Specifically, the L1 and L2 were used equally when FFEs concerned vocabulary and grammar. However, when FFEs concerned semantics, frequent code-switching occurred. The qualitative data illustrate that the language choice may depend on the interactional patterns and the complexity of the linguistic structure.

Keywords

Spanish as a foreign language, focus-on-form episodes, L1 use, classroom, teacher speech

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I Introduction and review of literature

Focus on form can play a facilitative role in second language (L2) learning, in large part because it helps draw learners' attention to linguistic items as they occur within primarily meaning-based interaction (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Loewen, 2011; Long, 1991, 1996). Researchers have investigated the occurrence and effectiveness of various types of focus-on-form episodes (FFEs), which includes all of the discourse related to particular linguistic items, both teacher-initiated and student-initiated (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001a). Teacher-initiated focus on form is often realized as corrective feedback (e.g., Lyster & Saito, 2012), while student-initiated focus on form generally consists of students asking questions about linguistic items occurring during interaction (Williams, 1999). In addition to investigating various types of focus on form, researchers have explored what aspects of focus on form may make it more or less effective. For example, studies of corrective feedback have compared (a) the provision and elicitation of the correct form through recasts and prompts, respectively (e.g., Lyster, 2004) and (b) implicit and explicit types of correction (e.g., Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006). Studies of student-initiated focus on form have examined, in particular, the types of linguistic items raised (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001b) and the effects of learner proficiency (Williams, 1999). One factor that has been largely absent in focus on form research pertains to the occurrence and effectiveness of using the learner's first language (L1) during interaction. In part this absence may be explained by the fact that many studies have been conducted in L2 contexts with students from a variety of L1 backgrounds (e.g., Ellis et al., 2001a, 2001b). Nevertheless, much L2 instruction occurs in contexts where teachers and students share a common L1.

1 L1 use in language classrooms

Many language teachers have the choice of using the students' L1 or L2 during classroom instruction. Researchers hold contrasting opinions about the role of L1 use in the L2 classroom. Some argue that L1 use does not facilitate L2 learning, in large part because it deprives students of the opportunity to receive L2 input, particularly in foreign language (FL) contexts in which the primary opportunity for L2 exposure is in the classroom (e.g., Kang, 2008; Krashen, 1981; Mitchell, 1988). Therefore, teachers are exhorted to maximize the use of the target language (TL) (e.g., Mitchell, 1988). In some cases, institutional policies also proscribe L1 use. For example, Korean government policy is that English teachers should only use English in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms in primary education (Kang, 2008).

In contrast, others argue that L1 use may be beneficial in the L2 classroom (e.g., Cook, 2001; Levine, 2011; Turnbull, 2001). Levine (2011) argued that L2 exposure is often limited to the classroom, and thus it may appear ideal to conduct classes entirely in the L2; however, L2 learning may not be maximized by exclusive L2 use. He found that by incorporating the learners' L1s, they were more actively engaged in the classroom, which led to more L2 acquisition. Other researchers have suggested that the L1 can be used as a pedagogical tool to aid L2 comprehension (e.g., Cook, 2001; van Lier, 1995), assist in classroom management (e.g., de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009), strengthen

student–teacher relationships (e.g., Brooks-Lewis, 2009), and facilitate in-class task completion (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Despite these purported benefits, studies of L1 use have primarily described its occurrence, rather than investigating its possible role in classroom interaction that is argued to facilitate L2 acquisition.

Descriptive studies of L1 use have found that it occurs in varying degrees in the L2 classroom (e.g., Duff & Polio, 1990; Macaro, 2001; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002; Schweers, 1999). For example, Duff and Polio (1990) found that L1 use in FL classrooms at the University of California, Los Angeles, ranged from 0% to 90% of the discourse. Similarly, Macaro (2001) found that teachers used the L1 for 0–15.2% of the time in a French-as-a-foreign-language classroom in England. Finally, Kaneko (1992) found that teachers used the L1 from 51% to 74% in an ESL classroom in Japan.

To further understand when teachers used the L1, Polio and Duff (1994) identified the following eight types of teacher L1 use: classroom administration-related vocabulary items; grammar instruction; classroom management; indexing a stance of empathy; practicing English by the teacher; provision of target-language-equivalent translation; assisting students' comprehension; and as an interactive effect involving the students' use of English. Tang (2002) also conducted an observational study in an EFL classroom and identified similar functions of L1 use, such as the provision of activity instructions and vocabulary explanations.

In addition to describing the occurrence of L1 use in classrooms, some studies have included retrospective interviews with teachers in order to identify their reasons for using the L1. Assisting learner comprehension and time management were the primary reasons teachers provided as reasons for their L1 use (de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Kang, 2008; Wilkerson, 2008).

In sum, a number of research studies have illustrated how much, when, and why teachers use the L1 in language classrooms. Researchers now need to explore in more depth the ways in which teacher L1 use might facilitate L2 learning, particularly when the L1 is used during communicative classroom interaction.

2 Interaction and L2 learning

Communicative tasks (Ellis, 2003) are often used in L2 classrooms. During tasks, learners participate in meaning-based interaction in which they may exchange information, discuss opinions, and solve problems. Within such interaction, learners may need to direct their attention to linguistic items in order to negotiate meaning or to focus on accurate use of the L2. Such brief attention to linguistic items during a larger communicative context has been called focus on form (Long, 1991, 1996). Focus on form is considered to be particularly beneficial for L2 acquisition because it (a) focuses learner attention on linguistic elements that are needed to complete the task and (b) helps learners notice gaps between their L2 knowledge and more target-like language forms (Robinson, 1995; Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001; Tomlin & Villa, 1994).

Focus on form can occur in different ways in the classroom (Ellis, 2001). Teachers may design tasks that they believe will necessitate the use of certain forms in hope of forcing students' attention to those forms in a meaningful context (Ellis, 2001). Teachers may also provide corrective feedback on linguistic items that are used incorrectly during

communication. In addition, students may initiate a focus on form by asking questions about linguistic items in the interaction (Ellis et al., 2001a). In all of these cases, form is not just limited to morphosyntactic items; it may also include lexis, phonology or pragmatics.

In fact, multiple descriptive studies of incidental focus on form have examined the various aspects of language targeted (e.g., Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001b; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Nassaji, 2010). Lyster and Ranta's (1997) descriptive study of corrective feedback in French immersion classes in Canada was one of the first to analyze which linguistic areas were targeted during corrective feedback. They found that grammar, vocabulary, and phonology were all targeted. Another study, Ellis et al. (2001b), found that grammar and vocabulary were addressed roughly equally (around 30% each) during incidental focus on form in two ESL classes in New Zealand. Phonology received much less attention. Finally, Loewen (2003) found that in the data from 12 ESL classrooms in New Zealand, 43% of FFEs concerned vocabulary, 33% grammar, and 22% pronunciation.

Why is it important to examine the linguistic areas targeted during focus on form? Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000) conducted a study of learner perceptions of corrective feedback targeting different linguistic areas. They found that learners were more likely to correctly perceive corrective feedback targeting vocabulary and pronunciation as opposed to feedback targeting morphosyntax. The implication is that more effort may be needed to draw learners' attention to grammatical items during meaning-focused interaction.

Although studies of focus on form have investigated a number of its potentially important characteristics, very few studies have investigated L1 use, although it has been found to occur. In a small-scale study, Loewen (2009) found that 44% of FFEs in a university Chinese class and 55% of FFEs in a university Spanish class included the use of the English L1. In addition, one quasi-experimental study, Tian and Macaro (2012), investigated L1 use in lexical focus on form. They found that learners who received lexical focus on form with the provision of L1 translation equivalents outperformed learners who were not provided with L1 equivalents; however, the superior performance was observed only on the immediate posttest. At the delayed posttest both lexical focus-on-form groups outperformed a control group, but there was no extra advantage for the provision of L1 lexical equivalents.

3 Motivation for the study

In light of the limited research investigating L1 use during focus on form despite its potential benefits, the present study investigates how one Spanish FL teacher at an American university used a common L1, English, during FFEs.

II Research questions

1. How frequently does a Spanish as a foreign language (SFL) teacher use the learners' first language, English, during FFEs?
2. What linguistic areas are targeted in FFEs that involve use of the L1?
3. What is the relationship between the teacher's L1 use and the linguistic areas targeted in the FFEs?

III Method

1 Classroom information

The data for this study comprise 12 hours of videotaped classroom interaction from a fourth-semester university-level Spanish class, Spanish 202. The class met four days a week for two hours each day over six weeks during the summer of 2008. The data are taken from the second to the fourth week of the semester. The course covered Chapters 7–12 of *¡Avance!* (Bretz, Dvorak, Kirschner, Brandorfer, & Kihyet, 2008). According to the departmental syllabus, the course was designed to

> …sharpen students' skills for communicating in Spanish by providing extensive opportunities to use the language as a vehicle for information interchange and for learning about aspects of the Spanish-speaking world. In the second-year sequence we will continue with a systematic review of Spanish grammar along with an increased emphasis on reading and writing skills.

Each chapter or unit contained a specific set of grammar and vocabulary items that students were expected to learn and that they would later be tested on. For this reason, approximately half of class time was spent explaining, practicing, and putting to use novel grammar and vocabulary forms in both communicative and form-focused exercises. The other half of the class was purely communicative – for example, the class talked about their weekend activities, opinions about movies, etc. In addition, even though at times there were specifically focused grammatical structures, the teacher taught the class communicatively, which allowed the students to discuss various topics. Although such a classroom lacks the exclusively meaning-focused nature of immersion or naturalistic learning environments, the course objectives, assignments, assessments, textbook, and activities are very typical for beginner/intermediate Spanish courses. In this sense, the present study maintains ecological validity and relevance to similar FL classroom contexts.

2 Participants

The participants were 23 students enrolled in the Spanish 202 course. Ten were male and 13 female. The average age was 22 with a range from 19 to 35. The students had studied Spanish for an average of four and a half years. All students were English L1 speakers. None were Spanish majors; 20 were taking the course to fulfill a FL requirement. The teacher was a L2 speaker of Spanish who had been teaching Spanish for 5 years. He was a native speaker of English.

3 Procedure

The entire classroom was videotaped using a digital camera placed at the back of the classroom. In addition, the teacher wore a lapel microphone to capture teacher–student interaction that might not be captured by the video camera. Two near-native L2 speakers of Spanish transcribed the classroom data.

4 Analysis

For the analysis, we viewed the video recordings and read the transcripts. Subsequently, we (1) divided the teacher speech into individual utterances, (2) coded individual utterances in relation to L1 or L2 use, (3) identified the FFEs, and (4) coded the linguistic target of each FFE.

Firstly, we segmented the teacher's speech into individual utterances based on the completion of a sentence. In this study, frequency of utterance was used as a unit of measurement for research questions one and three because the length of the FFEs can vary substantially and using FFEs as a unit of analysis does not present the entire frequency of L1 use. When coding utterances, there were some cases when a complete utterance was not present. Sometimes the teacher's utterance was one word or in the form of an incomplete sentence and the conversation continued with a student's turn taking. In such cases, a single turn was counted as one unit.

Then, we coded the teacher's utterances with regards to language use (L1 or L2), following the coding scheme in Table 1. Table 1 includes the description of each coding category and an example (in bold) of the teacher's speech for each category. When the utterance is in Spanish or includes Spanish words, the equivalent English translation is presented in brackets immediately following the utterance. All examples are from the current data set. The coding scheme is modified from Duff and Polio (1990) who employed a detailed categorization system by separating an utterance into (a) completely in L1, (b) mostly in L1, (c) mostly in L2, and (d) completely in L2. In this study, however, we have not made such fine-grained distinctions in order to present a more general perspective of the teacher's language use.

Once we coded the language used for each utterance, we read the transcripts again in order to identify the FFEs. A FFE began when a linguistic item was topicalized in the discourse, and it ended when the discourse returned to a communicative topic or targeted

Table 1. Coding scheme of language for utterances in focus-on-form episodes (FFEs).

language code	Description of the code
Primarily L1	The teacher's utterances were completely in English, or mostly in English except for a few Spanish words. Example (FFE 23) T: **Yeah *hay* could, remember *hay* goes singular or plural.**
Primarily L2	The entire utterance is completely in Spanish, or mostly in Spanish except for a few English words. Example (FFE 25) S: *Uh no hay el ejercito.* [Uh there is no army*.] **T: No hay ejército.** [There is no army.] ← **L2** Note: The student used the wrong word for "army".
Equal L1 and L2	The entire utterance included a similar amount of English and Spanish. Example (FFE 239) **T: We are going to use *dos verbos dos palabras ¿no?* ←Mix**
Unknown	The utterance is intelligible.

Table 2. Coding scheme of linguistic targets.

Linguistic target	Description and example
Grammar	Grammar is focused on throughout the FFE. The teacher or students explain the grammatical rules, or the teacher corrects the students' grammatical mistakes.
	Example (FFE 18)
	S: *Canta, canta a Dios.* [They sing*, sing* to God.]
	T: *Ok ah sí cantan a Dios. No?* [Ok ah yes, they sing to God, right?]
	Note: The student made a mistake in the subject and verb agreement. Instead of saying *cantan* to match the third person plural subject, the student used *canta* which is used for the third person singular.
Semantic	The meaning of a phrase or a sentence is focused on in the FFE. The teacher or students explain the meaning of a sentence, or a phrase or translate a sentence from one language to another. This category is distinct from the category "vocabulary" in that it is an open-class category that involves more than a single word.
	Example (FFE 81)
	T: *El mensaje, el mensaje se transmite.* [The message, the message gets transmitted.] Ok, the message gets across just the same, ok?
Vocabulary	A single lexical item is the focus of the FFE. The teacher or students may explain the meaning of the single Spanish word, or ask for the Spanish translation of an English word.
	Example (FFE 19)
	S: How do you say governor?
	T: Governor is *gobernador.*
Other	The FFE focuses on other linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, pragmatics, and inappropriate use of English in the classroom.

FFE: focus-on-form episode.

a different linguistic item (Ellis et al., 2001a). After identifying the FFEs, the linguistic focus of each FFE was coded. The coding scheme and examples for the linguistic areas are shown in Table 2. Again, all examples are taken from the current data set. We created the present coding scheme of linguistic areas based on the linguistic areas that had been reported in previous studies (e.g., Ellis et al., 2001a; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). In addition to the categories in the current coding scheme, there were initially categories of pragmatics, inappropriate L1 use, and pronunciation. However, these categories were merged and labeled 'Other' due to their extremely low frequency in the data set.

Once the coding was complete, the frequency of FFEs (not utterances) was calculated, and the linguistic area targeted in each FFE was identified. We used FFEs as a unit of measurement for this analysis because the linguistic areas are determined at the level of the FFEs and not at the level of individual utterance.

Lastly, we calculated the frequency of L1 or L2 use in the teacher's utterances and compared it to the linguistic targets of the FFEs. Since the coding of the data was categorical, we used chi-square in order to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the teacher's language usage and the linguistic targets (alpha < .05).

Table 3. Distribution of teacher's language use during focus-on-form episodes (FFEs).

Language type	Frequency	Percent
Primarily L1 (English)	677	39.7%
Primarily L2 (Spanish)	812	47.6%
Equal L1 and L2	187	11.0%
Unknown	31	1.8%
Total	1707	100%

Table 4. Frequency and percent of linguistic targets.

Linguistic focus	Frequency	Percent
Vocabulary	165	36.1%
Grammar	218	47.7%
Semantic	48	11.5%
Other	26	5.7%
Total	457	100%

Interrater reliability was conducted with a near-native speaker of Spanish coding 20% of the data. The coding for the language used in each utterance reached 97% agreement, the identification of the FFEs reached 94%, and the coding of the linguistic target of the FFEs reached 93%. Disagreements in coding were discussed and mutual agreement was reached.

In order to illustrate the ways in which L1 use occurred in the FFEs, examples are presented for each of the linguistic areas.

IV Results

The first research question asked to what extent the teacher used the L1 in the FFEs in the SFL classroom. Overall, the teacher produced 1707 utterances within 447 FFEs. The distribution of the teacher's language use is shown in Table 3. Of the teacher's utterances, 812 (47.6%) were in Spanish, while 677 (39.7%) were in English. The teacher also mixed both languages within one utterance 187 times (11%).

The second research question explored the linguistic areas of the FFEs. As Table 4 shows, of the 447 FFEs, 218 targeted grammar (47.7%), 165 targeted vocabulary (36.1%), and 48 targeted semantics (11.5%).

The third research question concerned the relationship between the teacher's use of language and the linguistic target of the FFEs. A chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant association between the choice of language and the linguistic target, χ^2 (9, $N = 1707$) = 76.87, $p < .001$, 95% CI [43.776, 88.0041]. The Cramer's V effect size was 0.1225, indicating a moderate relationship. As shown in Table 5, when the topic of the FFEs concerned grammar, there were 527 utterances (45%) in which the teacher used English, the students' and the teacher's L1. This is closely followed by the 513 instances (44%) in which the teacher used primarily Spanish. When the topic concerned semantics, there were

Table 5. Frequency and ratio of utterances in language types and linguistic targets.

	Grammar	Semantic	Vocabulary	Others	Total
Primarily L1	527	34	98	18	677
	(45%)	(37%)	(26%)	(30%)	
Primarily L2	513	34	227	38	812
	(44%)	(37%)	(60%)	(63%)	
Equal L1 and L2	114	25	44	4	187
	(10%)	(27%)	(12%)	(7%)	
Unknown	24	0	7	0	31
	(2%)	(0%)	(2%)	(0%)	
Total	1178	93	376	60	1707
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	

34 primarily English and 34 primarily Spanish utterances (37% each). However, when the topic concerned vocabulary, 98 utterances (26%) were primarily in Spanish and 227 utterances (60%) were primarily in English. Finally, although there were only 187 utterances that involved both English and Spanish, which is the lowest frequency of all the language types, there were 25 utterances (27%) in both English and Spanish when the topic concerned semantics – which is the highest ratio among all the linguistic categories.

1 Qualitative analysis of L1 use during FFEs

This section presents six typical FFE patterns in order to illustrate the teacher's L1 use in each linguistic area. Because of the naturalistic classroom data, we acknowledge that various types of interactions occurred in the data set. However, the interactional patterns in the example FFEs occurred repeatedly and provide information about how the teacher used the L1 and L2. The FFEs may be initiated by the students (e.g., asking questions) or by the teacher (e.g., providing the translation). The first three FFEs target grammar items, the fourth one addresses vocabulary, and the last two target semantics.

a Grammatical FFEs. In Example 1, the student asked the teacher about the gender of the noun *civilizaciones* (civilizations), a grammatical structure that was not part of the current instructional syllabus. Although the teacher provided a hint by saying the feminine plural article *las* (line 2), the student was not able to understand whether the word is masculine or feminine (line 3). Then, the teacher offered the correct gender (line 4), explained that the word was in the plural form, and repeated the feminine plural article *las* (line 6). Following the student's acknowledgment (line 7), the teacher explained that the student could focus on the word ending to determine the gender of nouns in Spanish (line 8).

Example 1 illustrates the teacher using English consistently throughout the FFE, except when topicalizing the noun under consideration, *las civilizaciones.* The student had a problem understanding. In response to the student's incorrect gender choice, the teacher provided additional information, in English, about Spanish gender and pluralization. This example shows a common pattern of the student initiating a grammatical FFE, and the teacher providing an explanation in English.

Example 1.

1   S: Should this be masculine or feminine? That's my only question.
2   T: Um, I would say, we are talking about *las civilizaciones.*
3   S: Masculine.
4   T: That's, this is, this is feminine, *civilizaciones.*
5   S: Oh yeah, duh.
6   T: And it's plural. Yeah *las*.
7   S: Yeah.
8   T: And anything that has to do with c-i-o-n.

(FFE 398).

The next pattern occurred when a grammar-related FFE was triggered by a student's mistake on the structure targeted in the course curriculum. Before the exchange in Example 2 took place, the class had reviewed various obligatory contexts for the use of the subjunctive. In line 1, the student omitted the verb entirely after an obligatory context for the subjunctive. The teacher signaled that the answer was not correct (line 2), prompting the student to indicate that he was not certain about his answer (line 3). Next, the teacher explained that it is necessary to have a verb after *en caso de que*, and suggested a verb that the student could use. However, instead of saying the subjunctive form, *haya*, which was needed to complete the utterance, the teacher provided the indicative form *hay*, and asked if the student could conjugate the verb appropriately (line 4). The student did not know how to conjugate the verb (line 5), so the teacher provided the conjugated form (line 6), which the student repeated (line 7).

As is illustrated in Example 2, the teacher used primarily English throughout the FFE except for a few words, which were used from the correct answer in Spanish. Similar to Example 1, instead of giving the students correct answers immediately, the teacher tried to elicit the answer from the students by assisting them with metalinguistic explanations in English. This pattern was particularly noticeable when the students' grammatical problems related to the linguistic structure that had been addressed in class.

Example 2.

1   S: *Devuelvo las llamadas en caso de que emergencias.* [I return calls in case of that emergencies*.]
2   T: Um.
3   S: I just made that up.
4   T: Yeah *emergencia*. Yeah. Ok. Yeah, the only thing you are missing there is the verb, right? So, *en caso de que* always comes right after that comes the verb, right? *En caso de que* there is an emergency. So, the verb would be *hay* – how would you put *hay* in the subjunctive?
5   S: *No sé*. [I don't know.]
6   T: Okay, *haya* – yeah have you ever heard that one? Yeah, it's an irregular, yeah, it comes up. It comes up.
7   S: *Haya.*

(FFE 194).

The last typical case from the grammar FFEs involves students' errors using grammatical structures, which were not what the class had been focusing on at that time. Unlike the previous two examples, the FFE in Example 3 is shorter. The teacher provided the correct answer in Spanish immediately using a recast. Prior to this exchange, the class was talking about bad experiences during trips. One student wanted to say *Se me olvidaron las billetes en casa* (I forgot the tickets at home). However, instead of saying *en casa* (at home), she said *en la casa* (at the home) (line 1). The teacher provided the correct answer using a recast (line 2), and moved on to the next topic.

Comparing Example 3 with the previous two, this FFE is much shorter because the teacher did not provide a metalinguistic explanation about the student's mistake. In addition, because the teacher provided a recast, the response was in the L2. This type of brief FFE emerged from the data multiple times, when the students' errors were not related to structures currently covered in the course textbook.

Example 3.

1 S: *Se me olvidaron uh las billetes en la casa.* [I forgot the tickets *at the home.]
2 T: *Se me olvidaron las billetes en casa.* [I forgot the tickets at home.]

(FFE 424).

Overall, three overarching patterns were observed within the grammatical FFEs. The combination of these three patterns may potentially explain why English and Spanish were used almost equally in the FFEs concerning grammar. From the current data set, we interpreted that the teacher often used English when providing metalinguistic explanations after the student asked specific grammar-related questions, and after the student made a mistake using a structure that had been focused on in class. However, when the student made a mistake using a grammatical structure that was not directly related to the structure at hand, the teacher was likely to provide a recast in Spanish and move on.

b Vocabulary FFEs. In this section, we present a typical example for FFEs concerning vocabulary. The vocabulary FFEs were often initiated by the students asking for a Spanish word or the translation of a Spanish word. Generally, the teacher simply provided the Spanish translation equivalent and moved on to the next topic, as in Example 4. Prior to this example, the class was discussing the issue of people being separated according to race. One student asked the teacher how to say *segregated* in Spanish (line 1). The teacher provided the Spanish equivalent *segregado* (line 2), and the student repeated the word (line 3).

As shown in Example 4, the teacher's responses during vocabulary FFEs generally consisted of the provision of the equivalent Spanish translations that the students had asked for. As we showed in Section 4 earlier, the majority of the teacher's speech within vocabulary FFEs was either primarily in Spanish or primarily in English, with little mixing of the two languages. The nature of interaction in vocabulary FFEs, in which the students asked for the meaning of the Spanish words, or the students asked for the equivalent Spanish word of an English word, may explain the reason why teachers' utterances were either primarily in English or in Spanish.

Example 4.

1 S: *En otros estados…. La como se dice* segregated? [In other states – how do you say segregated?]
2 T: *Segregado.*
3 S: *Segregado.*

(FFE 257).

c Semantic FFEs. In this section, we show two examples that illustrate typical semantic FFEs. The first case is when the teacher translated his Spanish utterance into English (Example 5). When this exchange happened, the teacher and students were discussing a short story they had read. The teacher was describing how he both liked and disliked one of the central characters, and he explained the reasons behind this contradiction. The teacher initially said *Es el conflict del lector* (It is the conflict of the reader) (line 1), and then paraphrased the utterance in English (line 2).

As shown in Example 5, it is presumable that the teacher tended to use translation when he was trying to elicit the students' responses or ensure student comprehension when he was addressing the main point of a discussion. In these cases, he mixed both languages in a possible attempt to emphasize his point.

Example 5.

1 T: *Es, es el conflicto del lector no?* [It is the conflict of the reader, right?]
2   It's the conflict that the writer's sort of created in us, right?

(FFE 167).

The second pattern of FFEs concerning semantics involved students asking the teacher the meaning of a Spanish sentence or how to say an English phrase or sentence in Spanish. In Example 6, the student asked the teacher how to say *That won't work* in Spanish (line 6). The teacher provided the answer *No funciona* (line 2), and the student acknowledged it (line 3).

In Example 6, when the student asked how to say a certain English phrase or sentence in Spanish, the teacher's response was entirely in Spanish. On the other hand, when the student asked for the meaning of a Spanish sentence, the teacher's response was often entirely in English. Having these patterns may have also resulted in having an equal number of utterances in the L1 and in the L2 in the teacher's speech within semantic FFEs.

Example 6.

1 S: *Cómo se dice* like that won't work? [How do you say 'that won't work'?]
2 T: *No, no funciona, no funciona.*
3 S: Ok.

(FFE 324).

In sum, there were interactional patterns in the use of the L1 or L2 that seemed to be contingent upon, among other things, the linguistic areas that were being targeted in the FFEs. Translation equivalents were often used in the case of vocabulary and semantic

FFEs, while grammar FFEs often contained English when the grammar focus pertained to structures that were part of the class syllabus. In addition, when students initiated grammatical FFEs, there was often an explanation in English.

V Discussion

In this paper we investigated how the teacher of a SFL classroom used English, which was the teacher's and students' L1, during focus on form. This study is motivated by the current debate on monolingual classroom instruction, as well as by research that has investigated various characteristics of classroom interaction, namely corrective feedback and FFEs. The current study indicates that both the L1 and L2 can be used in focus on form inside the L2 classroom; it also illustrates the relationships between the teacher's language usage and the linguistic foci of the FFEs.

The first research question asked how frequently the teacher used the L1 in the FFEs. Almost half (47.6%) of the teacher's utterances during the FFEs were in the L2, which was slightly more frequent than speech in the L1 (39.7%). The teacher mixed both languages in 11.0% of his utterances. A comparison of the current results with those of Loewen (2009) is informative because his is one of the few descriptive studies to address L1 use during FFEs in university FL classes. He found that roughly 50% of FFEs in Spanish and Chinese L2 classes occurred exclusively in the TL, with the other half containing use of the L1. Similarly, findings from the current study also showed that close to half of the teacher's speech during FFEs was only in the TL (Spanish). This study's findings, along with Loewen's, suggest that teachers indeed use both the L1 and L2, even during FFEs. However, given the small-scale nature of these two studies, it is important to consider additional studies that have looked at general L1 use in the L2 classroom, and have found that L1 use may vary greatly depending on the institution and/or classroom (e.g., Duff & Polio, 1990; Kaneko, 1992; Macaro, 2001). It may be that learning context and research methodology play a role in the similarity of Loewen's (2009) results and the current study because even though they investigated different teachers, the studies were conducted at the same institution.

The second research question asked about the linguistic foci of the FFEs and their ratio. The majority of the FFEs concerned grammar (47.7%) and vocabulary (36.1%). These findings are comparable to other studies, which have investigated the linguistic foci of FFEs and corrective feedback. Mackey et al. (2000) reported that in an Italian foreign language (IFL) classroom, vocabulary and grammar were the two most common linguistic foci of corrective feedback. Similarly, Loewen (2003) reported that these two linguistic features were the most salient foci in an ESL classroom. The reason why these two linguistic features were focused on during the FFEs could be explained by the classroom context. Each day the teacher had some specific target structures that were to be practiced based on the textbook. Given this strong focus on Spanish grammar and vocabulary, it may be expected that these two linguistic aspects comprised most of the FFEs. It is also interesting that these linguistic aspects were reported as the ones that would benefit most from interaction in the L2 classroom (Mackey & Goo, 2007).

The third research question investigated the relationship between the language the teacher used and the linguistic aspects of the FFEs. The statistical analysis confirmed the linguistic foci's association with the teacher's language choice. In addition,

the descriptive analysis showed that the teacher was more likely to use the L1 and L2 relatively equally when the FFEs concerned grammar and vocabulary. Lastly, when the FFEs were about semantics, the teacher produced utterances that were either primarily in the L1 or the L2, but there were also a considerable number of utterances that involved both languages within one utterance. This finding adds a layer to Loewen's (2009) study in which he found that the teacher's responses were likely to be in the L2, and that the teacher's first utterance that initiated the FFEs were mostly in a mixture of L1 and L2 in the SFL classroom but mostly in the L2 in the CFL classroom.

As part of the results of the third research question, we illustrated patterns of L1 use depending on the linguistic foci of the FFEs. When FFEs concerned vocabulary, the teacher mainly used either entirely Spanish or entirely English because the majority of the FFEs came about as a direct result of students asking how to say a certain word in Spanish or asking the meaning of the Spanish word. The provision of translation equivalents may be a more efficient use of limited class time, as well as a benefit for L2 learning; however, this latter point has not been explored thoroughly in focus-on-form research. In addition, one of the few studies (Tian & Macaro, 2012) investigating the provision of L1 translation equivalents in lexical focus on form found an immediate effect, but this effect was not maintained over time. The teacher also used both English and Spanish when the FFEs concerned grammar, as illustrated by the two typical patterns of the FFEs. When the students asked the teacher about a specific grammatical structure or when a student made an error with the target structure that the class had focused on, the FFEs became extensive and included additional grammar explanations in English. This function matches the one reported in Polio and Duff's (1994) study in which they noted that the L1 was constantly used across various FL classrooms in order to explain grammar. In the FFE patterns that we summarized, the teacher extended the FFEs by adding grammar explanations in the L1, which is a common function of the L1 regardless of the TL of the language classroom, as reported by de la Campa and Nassaji (2009). From the cognitive perspective, we speculate that such additional explanation may help students notice problematic structures, thereby positively impacting L2 development. In addition, grammar explanations may also allow learners to build metalinguistic knowledge. Finally, when students made a mistake with a grammar structure that was less salient or was not focused on in the class, the FFEs often consisted of a brief L2 recast.

Lastly, when the FFEs concerned semantics, the teacher produced numerous utterances that were either primarily in the L1 or the L2 at the level of utterance. In addition, the frequency of the mixing of both languages within one utterance was higher than the other linguistic categories. When a student asked how to say a certain sentence or phrase in Spanish and when the student asked for the meaning of a Spanish sentence or phrase, the teacher answered in either primarily the L1 or L2. In addition, the teacher often repeated one utterance in English and then in Spanish, or vice versa. Because these instances appeared to be common when the teacher tried to elicit responses from students, it may be the case that the teacher was trying to ensure students' comprehension and attention before eliciting their answers during the process. As has been illustrated in many studies on L1 use in the language classroom (e.g., de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Polio & Duff, 1994; Wilkerson, 2008), teachers reported that they use the L1 in order to facilitate the students' comprehension.

VI Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between the teacher's language choice and the linguistic target of the FFEs. We found that the teacher produced utterances that were primarily in either the L1 or the L2, as well as utterances that combined the two languages within an utterance. In addition, we also found that the majority of the FFEs concerned vocabulary and grammar, and that there was a relationship between the linguistic foci of the FFEs and teacher's L1/L2 use. In addition, a qualitative analysis of the data illustrated how the teacher used the L1 and L2 during the FFEs. As illustrated in the examples, the teacher's language choice appeared to be influenced by whether or not the targeted structure was one that had been dealt with recently in class, as well as by the framing of students' questions, asking for either an L1 or L2 translation equivalent.

VII Limitations of this study

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution because the data were obtained from only one Spanish classroom. Indeed it would be interesting to investigate various classrooms, TLs, and teaching contexts, such as FL and L2 classrooms, to obtain a larger picture of teachers' language choices during FFEs.

Secondly, it is unfortunate that, because the analysis was conducted much later than the data collection, we were not able to interview the teacher in order to gain his perspectives on his use of the L1 and the L2 in the class. Such introspective data, as found in de la Campa and Nassaji (2009), would have strengthened the interpretation of the data.

Thirdly, although this study illustrated how the teacher used the L1 during FFEs and how it was used for L2 teaching, it was not within the scope of this study to investigate the influence that L1 use had on the learning of the items that were targeted in the FFEs.

VIII Directions for future studies

In spite of the aforementioned limitations, this study is insightful because it examines another aspect of focus on form that has the potential to affect L2 learning. Documenting the occurrence of L1 use and the ways in which it is used is one of the first steps in being able to investigate more systematically its effects on L2 development. Indeed, intervention studies are needed to determine to what extent L1 use assists L2 learning (if it indeed does) and to investigate why the L1 may or may not help L2 acquisition from a cognitive perspective specifically with regards to the noticing of linguistic targets. Although Tian and Macaro (2012) have conducted an intervention study to examine the effectiveness of L1 use in lexical focus on form, it would be informative to examine whether similar results would occur with regards to different linguistic areas, such as grammar. Furthermore, we suggest the inclusion of interviews or stimulated recalls with the teacher and students immediately after class to obtain retrospective reports related to L1 and L2 use in FFEs. Such information would not only provide triangulation with other data sources, but also shed light on the perceptions of and motivations for L1 use in the L2 classroom.

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