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Beyond the Dictogloss: Learner-Generated Attention to Form in a Collaborative, Communicative Classroom Activity

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Recent research has shown there is a need for activities that consistently create an environment which pushes students to focus their attention on form in the process of communicating meaning. This paper begins to address this need by introducing a task developed by one of the authors: the "Dictowatch." We report that a pilot study in an undisturbed classroom showed the activity to draw frequent attention to a wide range of linguistic forms at an encouraging level of success.

Introduction[1]

As teacher/researchers, we are often concerned that "research on L2 learning has little to say to [our] everyday classroom needs and decisions" (Pica 1994a: 49). Given our interest in the Focus on Form (FonF) theoretical approach to ESL, we face certain practical questions: How do I make it work in my classroom tomorrow? What activities create an environment which pushes students? And finally, do I choose what forms they are going to focus on in advance or not? In this paper, we introduce an activity, dubbed the "dictowatch," which addresses these questions. The purpose of our research was to discover the quan-

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tity, quality and focus of learners' attention to form during the dictowatch.

Background

Noticing and Focus on Form

Many of the recent developments in SLA can be traced to Canada's highly-regarded French immersion programs. This type of second language teaching assumes that large amounts of "comprehensible input" (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 32) are sufficient for young learners. However, some researchers (see Doughty & Williams 1998: 3) found that certain linguistic features failed to emerge, despite years of meaningful input. This eventually inspired Focus on Form (FonF), a term coined by Long (1991, cited in Doughty & Williams 1998: 3).

In Doughty and Williams' (1998) collection of papers on implementing FonF in the classroom, Long and Robinson define FonF thus:

> During an otherwise meaning-focused classroom lesson, focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features – by the teacher and/or one or more of the students – triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production. (23)

It is in these episodes of communicative breakdown that students become aware of certain differences between their interlanguage (IL) and the target language (TL), which Schmidt and Frota call "noticing the gap" (1986, cited in Swain & Lapkin 1995: 373). It is believed that these instances may be beneficial to students' learning by making information about what can and cannot be said in the target language more salient (Long 1996: 453). Harley (1993) claims that the non-salient linguistic features that would most benefit from this sort of conscious attention are:

> 1. Features that differ in nonobvious, or for the learner, unexpected ways from the L1.

> 2. Features that are irregular, infrequent, or otherwise lacking in perceptual salience in the L2 input.

> 3. Features that do not carry a heavy communicative load. (Harley 1993: 251)

Two hypotheses that have made use of this noticing principal are "negotiation" and "comprehensible output."

Negotiation

The value of encouraging or requiring students to work through, or negotiate, "real or perceived gaps in communication" (Pica 1994b: 499), is three-fold: it promotes "learners' comprehension of L2 input, their pro-

duction of modified output, and their attention to L2 form" (Pica 1994b: 500). It is the third function which has proved the most contentious. As many researchers have discovered, learners tend to negotiate primarily lexical items, with relatively little attention paid to morphosyntax (e.g. Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen 2001: 425; Foster 1998: 17; Pica 1994b: 518; Williams 1999: 583). Foster (1998: 20) concludes that classroom activities "that are designed to draw students into negotiating *meaning* are on the wrong track" (original emphasis), however we find Pica's prognosis more attractive:

> These findings do not mean that learners and interlocutors *cannot* negotiate over verb tense and aspect, but that many of the communication activities in which they participate – both in research and in everyday life – do not demand their attention to these areas on grammar. (Pica 1994b: 518; original emphasis)

In this review of the negotiation literature, Pica calls for the design of new tasks which will require students to negotiate a wider range of linguistic form. Thus "negotiation for meaning" and "negotiation for form" (Lyster 1998: 53) can both be considered two sides of the FonF coin when learners' attention is drawn to form *"in the context of 'making meaning'"* (Swain 1998: 69; original emphasis). Indeed it may not always be evident which species of negotiation is occurring, because "learners' comprehension of meaning can be the *result* of their access to L2 form rather than its precursor" (Pica 1994b: 508, original emphasis; see also Williams 1999: 584).

Comprehensible Output

Swain's work on "comprehensible output" (CO) and "pushed output" (1985, 1995) are seminal to FonF:

> It is *while attempting to produce* the target language (vocally or subvocally) that learners may notice that they do not know how to say (or write) precisely the meaning they wish to convey. In other words, under some circumstances, the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to recognize consciously some of their linguistic problems. (Swain 1998: 67; original emphasis)

She also claims that in producing pushed output, the student is sometimes forced to process syntactical issues that would not ordinarily cause a breakdown in interaction (Swain & Lapkin 1995: 372). At this stage, learners are no longer concerned only with understanding meaning, but are faced with the task of rendering it in a form that would be comprehensible to someone else. Although "the question of whether and how learners' output, or output modification, helps with L2 learning is still largely unanswered" (Shehedah 2002: 601), Swain (1998: 67) believes that CO "may trigger cognitive processes that might generate linguistic

knowledge that is new for the learner or consolidate the learner's existing knowledge."

One activity which has been frequently used in CO research is grammar dictation, commonly know as the "dictogloss" (Wajnryb 1990; and for a review of the research see Swain 1998). In the dictogloss, a short passage, designed to practice a particular grammatical feature, is read twice at normal speed by the teacher. Students individually try to write down as much as they can, and subsequently work in small groups to "reconstruct" the text; that is, the goal is not to reproduce the original, but to "gloss" it using their combined linguistic resources (Wajnryb 1990: 12). The pilot study described in Swain (1998) resulted in students negotiating "vocabulary, morphology, and complex syntactic structures" (Swain 1998: 79) (although she does not give the proportions in this chapter).

However, we have some reservations about the dictogloss. The first is the low number of instances of conscious attention to linguistic problems in the output. Krashen points out that in the Swain & Lapkin study (1996, cited in Swain 1998), the average number of instances where a student "noticed the gap" when trying to produce the TL was 10.6 per student (Krashen 1998: 178); in Swain's pilot follow-up (1998), the average number of negotiations per pair was 10.7 in a 25-minute dictogloss (adapted from data in Swain 1998: 77). One of Krashen's primary concerns is similar to Foster's criticism of negotiation: CO does not occur enough to have an effect on linguistic competence (Krashen 1998: 180).

Second, the dictogloss is barely communicative in nature, and does not have the construction of meaning as its primary goal; furthermore it is not, as Wajnyrb (1990: 12) claims, an information gap, as the collective memory of the group may still be missing information. Third, the focus on form is intended to be proactive and intensive (the original text is "dense," Wajnryb 1990: 12), which Ellis et al. (2001: 411) suggest would put it out of the scope of FonF. Ironically, as Swain notes, the students did not in fact focus on the forms the passage was designed to highlight (two aspects of the past tense in French); instead they negotiated the gender and number of nouns. Swain (1998: 77) explains: "Students talked about what they needed to talk about according to the state of their own internalised knowledge."[2] Is the dictogloss text (but not the procedure) therefore effectively redundant? And can it be replaced with the learners' own language, so that it is truly reactive and extensive (Ellis et al. 2001: 412)?

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[2] Swain (1998: 75) modified Wajnryb's technique by instructing the students "that they should try to write their text so that it would be as close to the original as possible in grammar and content". That the students nonetheless chose to focus on different forms than those the classroom teacher had anticipated is therefore even more striking.

Learner-Generated Attention to Form

Much of the FonF literature deals with studies or techniques that are teacher-centered (e.g. Ellis et al. 2001: 417; Lyster 1998). However Williams' (1999) study of "learner-generated focus on form" posits three roles for learners in the FonF classroom: choosing the forms on which to focus, using their existing knowledge to spot holes or gaps, and modifying their output (Williams 1999: 589). Although the dictogloss does allow for all three roles, it limits the first, potentially at the risk of frustrating the teacher who has carefully prepared a lesson on the present perfect. If modified output "can be considered to represent the leading edge of a learner's interlanguage" (Swain 1998: 68), then greater autonomy must be given to learners to work at their own threshold and negotiate the language that best fits their needs. This is further supported by Leow (1998: 51) who found that when learners direct the task and their exposure to grammatical form, their accuracy is improved.

The problem is that too much freedom can be detrimental to the amount of FonF in learner-learner interaction – Williams (1999: 617) found much less attention to form in unstructured activities (compared to structured, forms-focused activities [Long & Robinson 1998: 3]) in the classes she studied, and the pair/group work environment has been shown to yield less FonF than teacher-fronted classes (Ellis et al. 2001: 426). Furthermore the language focus Williams did find was primarily (over 80%) lexical: "What learners notice is that they need words" (Williams 1999: 618). This last point, as we have noted, is a consistent finding in the FonF literature (nearly two-thirds of Ellis et al.'s teacher-fronted form-focused events negotiated vocabulary), and one which must be addressed in defense of the efficacy of this approach (see Foster 1998 for a comprehensive attack).

Taking all of this into account, the challenge which one of the present authors set himself was to design a communicative, meaning-focused classroom activity which would use the students' own language to direct their attention to a range of forms not normally salient in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) activities, and which would not be dominated by lexicon. The activity would also fit a strict definition of FonF (Ellis et al. 2001: 411; Long & Robinson 1998: 23).

Methods

The Task

For the dictowatch students work in pairs, sitting opposite each other at computer consoles in the language laboratory. In the first stage of the activity, one partner narrates the action in half of a scene from a video (in this study, a 4-minute clip from an episode of the British television comedy, Mr. Bean), while the other, who cannot see the video screen takes notes. Halfway through the scene they change roles. Without showing

each other their notes, the students then discuss with the aim of constructing an individual, complete narrative of the whole scene. As the students never see their partner's text (composed using a word processor), they must rely exclusively on oral input, the notes they took while their partner described the scene, and their own memory of half of the clip (stage 2). The goal of the activity is for both students' written accounts to be exactly identical, so in stage 3, the students compare their texts orally line by line in order to spot and correct any remaining differences.[3]

The dictowatch meets the theoretical principles outlined above. First, it is a communicative, meaning-focused activity; the product is meaningful and useful (narrating a scene). Furthermore, the prompt is motivating and popular, and we note the recent interest in Mr. Bean in SLA research (e.g. Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres & Fernández-García 1999; Skehan & Foster 1999). As Skehan and Foster (1999: 103) explain, Mr. Bean sketches are ideal because they are short, silent and widely appealing. In addition, the dictowatch fits a strict definition of FonF (Long & Robinson 1998: 23), as restated by Ellis et al. (2001: 411-12): the attention to form is meaning-centered, observable, incidental (unplanned), transitory, and extensive (covers many different forms).

As well as being communicative, the dictowatch efficiently promotes L2 comprehension, feedback, and modified output, as defined by Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993: 17):

1. Each interactant holds a different portion of information which must be exchanged and manipulated in order to reach the task outcome.

2. Both interactants are required to request and supply this information to each other.

3. Interactants have the same or convergent goals.

4. Only one acceptable outcome is possible from their attempts to meet this goal.

The dictowatch fulfills the first three criteria. Each student has viewed half of the scene, but only has notes from the part of the scene that their partner narrated to them, and of which may have an incomplete understanding. Crucially, though, in order for the pair to produce matching papers, they are forced to communicate not only meaning (what happened), but also make form (how to narrate it).

Although we do not meet Pica et al.'s (1993) fourth criterion (there is no fixed text that serves as the correct answer), this may in fact be a strength of our activity, as it allows the language used and the forms in focus to be student-generated. In the dictogloss, the original text is high-

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[3] The "Spot the Difference" task has been developed independently by Pica and her colleagues (Pica 2002).

ly controlled for lexicon and grammar; Wajnryb (1990: 7) recommends pre-teaching key vocabulary, and Swain (1998: 73) also previews "a set of rules relevant to the grammatical point in focus." In the dictowatch, however, the students struggle with the words and forms they need to communicate and narrate the events they have seen. What is more, by insisting that "every word and every letter should match exactly" (see appendix A), the dictowatch encourages students to focus on non-salient forms, without proactively prescribing a grammatical goal, thus allowing students to work within the scope of their own IL. The focus of attention to both meaning and form is therefore centered on the students' needs, and suits realistic classroom situations where the proficiency level is rarely homogeneous.

Finally, in a modification to the dictogloss, both students write a text, rather than one student being elected as "scribe" (Wajnwyb 1990: 8). The whole class is therefore being pushed to produce comprehensible output.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of our research was to look at the dictowatch in an undisturbed classroom to analyze learners' spoken attention to form while doing the activity.

We formulated the following research questions:

RQ 1 : Is there substantial attention to form in the dictowatch transcripts?

RQ 2 : Do learners attend only to lexis, or to a variety of forms?

RQ 3 : Are there any trends or patterns in the types of Language Related Episodes (LRE)?

Procedure

The six participants of the study were upper-intermediate[4], full-time students at an intensive English language program in the United States. The data were collected in a normal lesson in an undisturbed class as Foster (1998: 4) advocates. The course, entitled Language Through Film, is an integrated skills class that meets five days a week for seven weeks. The students engage in video-based activities nearly every day, and the lessons takes place in a language laboratory once a week. As they speak to each other using headphones, it was possible to tape record them unobtrusively (but with their knowledge) on their individual consoles. The participants were selected from a class of 14 purely on the basis that they were the only students to attend on the snowy morning when the data were collected. They came from a variety of countries (Italy, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan). Three were male and three were female. Although

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[4] One student (S6) tested into the advanced level, but chose to join the upper intermediate class.

the pairs were self-selected and not intentionally controlled by the teacher/researcher, they cover all combinations of gender. While gender effects are not studied in this paper, we note research claims that gender influences the way students interact (e.g. Shehadeh 2002: 602). This was the students' third exposure to the dictowatch as a regular part of the course; therefore students were performing the activity and not learning it.

Coding

We first coded the data by identifying the students' attention to linguistic form, operationalized as LREs: "any part of a dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct" (Swain 1998: 70). This broad definition therefore serves as an umbrella term for a variety of other criteria used in the literature, including form-focused episodes (Ellis et al. 2001: 416), negotiation and negotiation for meaning (Foster 1998: 8; Pica 1994b: 494), non-understanding routines (Varonis & Gass 1985: 73), corrective feedback (Lyster & Ranta 1997: 44), recasts and repetition (Lyster 1998: 51), and self-correction (see Ellis 1994: 262). No attempt was made for the purposes of this study to categorize the data according to the nature of the LREs, although we believe this would be a fruitful next step in our research. Here we are not concerned with how students focus on form, but rather how much attention is given to what types of form, and if the result is successful. Nonetheless, we do distinguish between self-correction (where only the speaker is attending to form) and dialogue (in which both partners' attention is drawn to a particular focus).

We allowed our categories of LRE to be data-driven, although we were expecting certain forms to appear, such as morphosyntax and lexicon, as per previous research. We found a wide variety of forms in focus, which we grouped into three levels of linguistic analysis: (1) word level; (2) sentence level; (3) suprasentential (discourse) level. Our coding categories were as follows:

1. Word Level.

At this level we grouped the aspects of "what it means to know a word" that do not involve inflection or pragmatics (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1999: 30), namely:

1 (a) Semantic Any discussion or self-correction focusing on the *meaning*

of a content word fell into this category. For example:

Excerpt 1

S1	It's not stone. I think it's - what can I say, rock
S2	Lock?
S1	Block.
S2	Block
S1	Block. Yeah, the block, to make, to make house.
S2	House.
S1	Red, red block.
S2	Ah, brick? I think brick.
S1	Ah yeah, brick. (T1: 8)[5]

1 (b) Orthography When the spelling of a word was requested, questioned or corrected, it was included here. For example:

Excerpt 2

S3	His nightgown. (.) Night<u>gown</u>.
S4	How to spell gown?
S3	G-O-W-N.
S4	Thank you. G-O-W-N. (T2 : 11)

However, when spelling out a word was a strategy to negotiate a different form (for example, a plural or verb form), the LRE was coded according to the underlying communicative breakdown. For example, excerpt 3 is coded type 1a (semantic):

Excerpt 3

S4	He starts driving and bump – bump into.
S3	Bump?
S4	B-U-M-P.
S3	B-U-M?
S4	M-P.
S3	M-P. (T2 : 12)

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[5] Excerpts from our data are cited by transcript (see table 1) and page number. All students' names have been changed. Our transcription conventions are adapted from Jefferson's notation (Atkinson & Heritage 1999: 158-166) as follows:

    . stopping fall in tone
    ? rising inflection
    , continuing intonation
    ! animated tone
    - halting, abrupt cut-off or interruption
    (.) short, untimed pause
    ( ) unclear on the tape
    [overlapping or simultaneous utterances
    Emphasis is marked by <u>underlining</u>.

1 (c) Pronunciation It was often difficult to distinguish a focus on pronunciation from other LREs at the word level. However, occasionally it was clear that the transmission of ideas was interrupted because one partner's pronunciation was unintelligible to the other. In this example, S2 is trying to ask S1 whether they should use the tab key on the computer keyboard to indent the first paragraph:

Excerpt 4

S2	OK. First we need – space.
S1	Space?
S2	Space.
S1	Just one space?
S2	Or top – top – top key? OK. And.
S1	Sorry?
S2	Yeah, no?
S1	What is top key?
S2	Top key.
S1	What's that? Space key, you mean?
S2	Ah – do you know, on the – how to say – keyboard?
S1	Yeah.
S2	And the left side.
S1	Yeah. Tab, T-A-B?
S2	Yeah. T-A-B, tab. (T1: 5)

In the above interaction, we note that S2's pronunciation of "tab" is correct in the last line, showing evidence of uptake on her part.

2. Sentence Level

At the sentence level, we include Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman's "subsentential" and "sentential" levels (1999: 13-22). In practice, we were looking at morphosyntax and clause boundaries (where to put commas and periods). Our categories were:

2 (a) Morphosyntax

2 (a) i. Verb inflections The vast majority of these LREs were subject/verb agreements (excerpt 5), although there were a few instances of other verb forms (progressive aspect, past simple tense).

Excerpt 5

S5	And put his clothes and –
S6	And puts.

S5	Puts.
S6	Don't forget the 's'!
S5	Yeah, thank you. (T3: 8)

2 (a) ii. Determiners Most of the determiners to which the students attended were articles (excerpt 6), but there were a few instances of pronouns (excerpt 7).

Excerpt 6

S4	The last sentence, did you put 'the'? He puts the tooth paste –
S3	No no no. He puts thee?
S4	No 'the'? OK. I delete.
S3	Ah, 'the', yeah! I think we need 'the'.
S4	'The' is better.
S3	Yeah, he puts the toothpaste on a different place ... (T2: 26)[6]

Excerpt 7

S6	He puts on a brown, I would say –
S5	His brown jacket.
S6	His? Or a?
S5	I think both of them you can – we can use.
S6	OK. His.
S5	His brown jacket. (T3: 16)

2 (a) iii. Plural inflection This category includes adding or deleting plural "-s" and also irregular plurals (notably feet and teeth). Excerpt 8 is an example of an LRE resulting in a grammatically incorrect solution.

Excerpt 8

S2	With his right foot. Right.
S1	And –
S2	Right foot. Feet? Right feet?
S1	Yeah, right feet.
S1	Feet. (T1: 15)

2 (a) iv. Preposition Less frequently, students drew attention to their choice

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[6] Scare-quotes have been added around the articles in this example for clarity.

of preposition:

Excerpt 9

S2	On the driver seat. In? I think on is.
S1	On?
S2	On. Ah, in? In.
S1	In.
S2	In.
S1	Yeah.
S2	In the driver seat. (T1: 20).

Any syntactical LREs which did not fit these categories were coded 2 (a) – Other.

2 (b) Punctuation Reading the transcripts, we were struck by the frequency of references to punctuation (periods and commas). This speaks to the recognition of complete sentences, the grammatical or stylistic use of commas, and also the decision to write simple, compound or complex sentences (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1999: 20). Although arguably the last function would better fit the discourse level, the distinction would be hard to make, so we have included all attention to punctuation in the sentential level as a feature of written syntax. Excerpt 10 is a long LRE which negotiates two punctuation marks.

Excerpt 10

S5	Suddenly,
S6	Period at the end?
S5	Yeah, period. S is capital. Comma.
S6	Comma? Or period?
S5	He takes,
S6	No, [S5]. Comma or period?
S5	Ah, suddenly period. No no no ((laughs)).
S6	((laughs)) Suddenly period!
S5	Clothes into the car, period.
S6	OK.
S5	Suddenly, comma. (T3: 8)

As punctuation is not usually salient in speech, we included any verbalization ("period", "comma" etc.) as an LRE in this category.

3. Suprasentential Level

The suprasentential, or discourse, level of form focuses on the structure and organization of the paragraph, as well as higher level stylistic issues (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1999: 23-25). Its categories are:

3 (a) Paragraph Division

Excerpt 11

S4	So, next paragraph?
S3	Yeah. He runs – ah, paragraph. Ah, not next paragraph. Yeah, we can continue.
S4	OK. (T2: 18)

3 (b) Logical Organization   This category includes the use of transition devices (excerpt 12), and reflections on ordering sentences within a paragraph (excerpt 13).

Excerpt 12

S5	Then you say the man – a man is wa-walking.
S6	Ah OK. Then –
S5	No then. I already used then.
S6	OK – aha – after. (T3: 24)

Excerpt 13

S4	Ah! Ah! So maybe before this sentence we need to add one sentence.
S3	Yeah. (T2: 12)

3 (c) Redundancy   Occasionally, students considered whether words were redundant and could be elided, as in excerpt 14.

Excerpt 14

S5	Mr Bean is running. He's wearing –
S6	He's running (.) wearing,
S5	He is wearing pajama.
S6	No, without repeating "he is". Right?
S5	Mhm.
S6	I would say Mr Bean is running, wearing,
S5	Yeah.
S6	It's OK?
S5	It's OK. (T3: 6)

3 (d) Register   We only found one case where students explicitly referred to register in order to change a word. In the scene, Mr. Bean is driving his car and attempting to brush his teeth; he rinses his mouth and spits the water out of the window, accidentally hitting a passer-by on the posteri-

or. Thus:

Excerpt 15

S6	So I don't, on his ass or on his back, how you prefer.
S5	It's back, I think it's OK.
S6	OK. Back. Ass is a bad word. (T3: 27)

Outcomes

Following Swain (1998: 77) we also coded for LREs that failed or resulted in incorrect solutions. In an "incorrect" LRE, the students agreed on a non-targetlike form, as in excerpt 8, above. A "failed" LRE was defined as one in which the "problem [was] not solved or [there was] disagreement about problem solution" (Swain 1998: 77). Thus, LREs in which the students failed to come to a consensus, gave up their negotiation and moved on, or did not realize that they had come to different solutions were marked in this way, as in excerpt 16:

Excerpt 16

S1	He – picks –
S2	Kicks a stone.
S1	Picks, P-I-C-K-S?
S2	K-I-C-K-S.
S1	P-I-C-K-S. Yeah. (T1: 8)

In this dialogue, there are two failed LREs : the first for the article (S2 is trying to insist on the indefinite article in her first turn) and the second for pronunciation ('kicks' or 'picks'). Spelling, as has been noted, was a strategy for resolving the breakdown, which here fails because they both believe they have the same word. The confusion here, incidentally, is resolved in the third stage of the activity. Excerpt 17 is an example of students admitting defeat during a dialogue about semantics (1a).

Excerpt 17

S6	You can say – he leans on the window?
S5	You say he puts his head out of the window.
S6	Yeah. Or you can say he leans on.
S5	Leans on?
S6	I'm not sure.
S5	I don't know that word. What's the meaning leans?
S6	Lean? When you put your hand outside. What if is incorrect? I don't know.
S5	I'm not sure, I'm sorry. (T3: 21-22)

Nesting

Finally, we found that LREs could be nested within one another. This is similar to the "multiple layers of trigger-resolution sequences" in Varonis & Gass' study (1985: 78) which have "multiple embeddings" (81). We coded each LRE separately, for example:

Excerpt 18

1. S2	He put off his pajama?
2. S1	Yeah, pajama. Upper, upper pajama.
3. S2	Ah, upper pajama.
4. S1	Yeah, he's changing?
5. S2	He – he – how about he is, he take off his upper pajama?
6. S1	Yeah.
7. S2	And he's changing his clothes.
8. S1	He takes off –
9. S2	He takes off –
10. S1	Off – his upper, U-P-P-E-R.
11. S2	U-P-P-E-R? Upper –
12. S1	Pajama. (T1: 11-12)

In turn 1, S2 asks whether "put off" is the correct verb (1a, semantic); this LRE is continued in turns 4 and 5. In the meantime, S1 suggests another phrase ("changing his clothes" – 1a, semantic) in turn 4 which S2 agrees to add to the sentence in turn 7. In between, there is another semantic negotiation which returns an incorrect solution ("upper pajama" is non-targetlike; turns 2-3). In addition, S1 corrects the subject-verb agreement on "takes" in turn 8 (2a i), and the spelling of "upper" is discussed in turns 10 and 11 (1b, orthography).

Results

The three recordings (totaling around three hours of data) yielded a total of 385 LREs, or an average of 128.3 per dyad (around two LREs on average every minute). The forms in focus during the LREs are summarized in Table 1. Around a third of the total LREs focused on the word level, with 19.5% of the total being semantic in nature; over half showed attention to the sentence level, with a striking 40.5% syntactic; and 31 LREs, or 8.1%, had suprasentential foci.

Within the syntactical category, verb forms and determiners predominated. The verb forms were mostly subject-verb agreement (only 17 out of 69 focused on other inflections), and the determiners were almost all articles, with a few cases of possessive pronouns (the car or his car). The three tokens in the "other" category comprised of a pronoun, a possessive and an instance of faulty word order.

When we counted the LREs produced in each stage of the activity (table 2), we found the vast majority (290 out of 385, or 75.3%) occurred

in stage 2, the collaborative writing task, and covered the full spread of categories. The LREs in the first (on-line narrative) stage were mostly at the word level (75%), as students self-corrected or negotiated lexical items or pronunciation. Despite the focus on meaning in this stage, there were still occasional shifts of attention to morphosyntax (verb form, articles and plurals).

The results for the final stage (comparing) are problematic. One pair (S6 and S5) did not complete the activity in order: after constructing a narrative for the first half of the scene (stage 2), they compared their written versions (stage 3) and then wrote the narrative for the second half (stage 2), which they never compared due to lack of time. Another pair (S1 and S2) started stage 3 when the teacher instructed them, but when they finished, they continued their unfinished narrative (stage 2). Overall, a holistic reading of the transcripts reveals that little time was spent on this third stage; however there were still 45 LREs, with almost half of them evidencing attention to clause structure (punctuation).

We also coded the data according to the outcome of the LREs (Table 3). Overall, we found very few failed or incorrect LREs (24 of each), meaning that over 80% of the LREs were successful (i.e. found consensus) and reached a targetlike solution (self-corrections, see below, could not by definition fail, but they could have a non-targetlike resolution). Of the failed LREs, the majority were at the word level, as pairs failed to find or explain the meaning of a word, or did not resolve misunderstandings due to their pronunciation. Of the incorrect solutions, the majority (15) were syntactical (1 verb inflection, 7 determiners, 3 plurals, 3 prepositions and 1 other); however, 11 of these were produced by one dyad (S1 and S2).

Finally, we looked at the phenomenon of self-correction (Table 4). Overall, there were only 71 such LREs, but surprisingly the majority were syntactic (43) with an unexpected attention to subject-verb agreement and articles. There was a relatively lower number of self-correcting moves in dyad 3 (S5 and S6), possibly because S6 was a much more advanced student than the others in the class, and made fewer grammatical mistakes in his speech. This may also help to explain the lower overall total of LREs for this pair.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to propose a focus on form activity that fits all the criteria outlined at the end of the background section, and analyze its value by answering three research questions:

RQ 1 : Is there substantial attention to form in the dictowatch?

With an average of 128.3 LREs per dyad in approximately one hour, we are confident in answering yes to this question. The attention to form was intense, and the students found the activity engaging and motivating. Part of the reason may be the choice of video, and we are not the first

Table 1
Categories of LREs

Category	S1/S2 (T1)	S3/S4 (T2)	S5/S6 (T3)	Total (n)	(%)	Average per dyad
1. Word Level	**51**	**39**	**38**	**128**	**33.2%**	**42.7**
1(a) *Semantic*	26	26	23	75	19.5	25.0
1(b) *Orthography*	12	7	11	30	7.8%	10.0
1(c) *Pronunciation*	13	6	4	23	6.0%	7.7
2. Sentence Level	**86**	**90**	**50**	**226**	**58.7%**	**75.3**
2(a) *Syntax*	68	61	27	156	40.5%	52.0
i. Verb Form	30	29	10	69		
ii. Determiner	19	18	13	50		
iii. Plural	10	7	0	17		
iv. Preposition	1	2	0	3		
2(b) *Punctuation*	18	29	23	70	18.2%	23.3
3. Supersentential Level	**6**	**9**	**16**	**31**	**8.1%**	**10.3**
3(a) *Paragraph division*	2	1	2	5		
3(b) *Logical Organization*	2	7	10	19		
3(c) *Redundancy*	2	1	3	6		
3(d) *Register*	0	0	1	1		
TOTAL	143	138	104	375		128.3

to find success with Mr. Bean (see above). There was a lot of laughter on the tapes, and not only when describing the protagonist's antics (see

Table 2
LREs by Stage

Category	Stage 1 Narrative	Stage 2 Writing	Stage 3 Comparing	Total
1.Word Level	30	91	7	128
1(a) Semantic	21	52	2	75
1(b) Orthography	0	26	4	30
1(c) Pronunciation	9	13	1	23
2. Sentence Level	10	178	38	226
2(a) Syntax	10	130	16	156
2(b) Punctuation	0	48	22	70
3. Supersentential Level	0	27	4	31
TOTAL	40	290	45	385

Table 3
Outcomes of LREs

Category	Failed	Incorrect	Successful & Correct
1. Word Level	19	9	100
1(a) Semantic	11	9	55
1(b) Orthography	2	0	28
1(c) Pronunciation	6	0	17
2. Sentence Level	5	15	206
2(a) Syntax	5	15	136
2(b) Punctuation	0	0	70
3. Supersentential Level	0	0	31
TOTAL	24	24	337

Table 4
Self-Corrections

Category	S1/S2 (T1)	S3/S4 (T2)	S5/S6 (T3)	Total
1. Word Level	**16**	**10**	**2**	**28**
1(a) Semantic	*10*	*7*	*2*	*19*
1(b) Orthography	*1*	*1*	*0*	*2*
1(c) Pronunciation	*5*	*2*	*0*	*7*
2. Sentence Level	**19**	**17**	**7**	**43**
2(a) Syntax	*19*	*17*	*7*	*43*
i. Verb Form	13	9	5	27
ii. Determiner	1	5	2	8
iii. Plural	3	3	0	6
iv. Preposition	2	0	0	2
v. Other	0	0	0	0
2(b) Punctuation	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
3. Supersentential Level	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
TOTAL	*35*	*27*	*9*	*71*

excerpt 10, above). The students seemed to relish the twin challenges of narrating the scene in detail, and producing identical texts. This concurs with our impression in numerous other classes using the dictowatch, andseems to be an advantage over the dictogloss, which our students have found more frustrating.

In fact, the success rate in the LREs was very high: around 80% of them were successful and were resolved accurately. Although we did not specifically look for "uptake" (Lyster & Ranta 1997: 44) in this study, we feel that the students' performance (both lexically and syntactically) improved during the lesson, implying that the attention to form demanded by the dictowatch was having a positive effect. The amount of self-correction, particularly of subject-verb agreement and articles (which in our experience is somewhat rare at this level) is further support for this claim.

RQ 2: Do learners attend only to lexis, or to a variety of forms?

The results clearly show a wide range of forms in focus, from semantics and other word-level issues, through the sentence level, and even to the suprasentential level. Semantics accounted for less than one fifth of the total LREs, and the largest single category was syntax (40.5%). It is particularly striking how much attention was drawn to less salient fea-

tures, such as third person and plural "-s", and articles. We observed broad consistency between the three pairs in terms of the types of form and the proportion of LREs in each category; however this has not been statistically tested. Overall, we can see all the students focusing to a greater or lesser extent on errors common to their proficiency level.

Punctuation accounted for almost 20% of the LREs, and although this is clearly not part of the oral language, we are encouraged by this figure because it demonstrates students' attention to clause structure, and suggests that the dictowatch might help develop academic writing skills, where sentence fragments and punctuation are common trouble spots.

Higher order episodes were infrequent but interesting. One pair in particular (S5 and S6) put considerable effort into writing a flowing paragraph with good transitions, and their final product is clearly more complex than the other pairs'. It is no coincidence that they were, according to the classroom teacher, the highest proficiency students in the study. As the directions for the task (Appendix A) do recommend students to look at the paragraph as a whole, we might speculate that lower level students will pay attention to higher order concerns if given more time for the third stage (see below).

RQ 3: Are there any trends or patterns in the types of LRE?

We were expecting that each stage of the dictowatch would promote different types of LRE, as the focus shifted from communicating meaning, to negotiating form, to structuring a coherent narrative. The results from these data are inconclusive (as discussed above) probably because time did not allow any group to write about the entire scene (S4 declared she was "so tired" at the end of stage 3). In the future, the comparing stage could probably take rather longer than was allowed in this lesson.

The distribution of LREs across categories for each pair, although broadly consistent, revealed some interesting patterns. S5 and S6 used the fewest LREs overall and produced the most complex and accurate written narrative. In absolute terms, they have the fewest sentence level LREs (possibly because subject/verb agreement, plurals and articles appeared to be very stable in S6's interlanguage) and the most suprasentential attention. At the other end, S1 and S2, whose level was about average for this class, produced the largest number of LREs (almost 40 more than S6 and S5), and the least attention to the discourse level. They also had the most difficulty with spelling and pronunciation, and settled on 11 incorrect syntactic forms (mostly missing articles).

The analysis of outcomes reveals a trend: most of the failed LREs were lexical, and most of the incorrect ones were syntactical. S1 and S2's data show awareness of the choice to be made between articles in English, but their relatively frequent errors suggest that this feature is indeed the threshold of their interlanguage. We propose therefore that the students

are attending to forms as they become aware of their existence, and given the autonomy of the dictowatch, choose to work on these features.

The failed semantic LREs might be explained by the difficulty of the vocabulary in question. Unlike the dictogloss (particularly in Swain's implementation), students can avoid words they cannot find, as in excerpt 19 where S1 and S2 are trying to explain that Mr. Bean drops toothpaste on the dashboard. They both clearly know the part of the car in question, but the word escapes them.

Excerpt 19

S2	On the – how to say – bonnet – not bonnet.
S1	Hood.
S2	Not hood. In the – in front of driver there is some – something like kind of table, not table.
S1	Yeah, there is space
S2	Space, yeah.
S1	between mirror – and between –
S2	Glass?
S1	Glass.
S2	And driver.
S1	What can I say?
S2	Drops the toothpaste on the – on the –
S1	On the –
S2	Just drops the toothpaste.
S1	Yeah. (T1: 22)

Implications for further research

Our results suggest that the dictowatch is not only a successful classroom activity (which we both use enthusiastically) but also a fruitful site for further research. Some possible lines of study might be:

1. An analysis of the notes produced during stage 1 and the texts submitted at the end of the dictowatch. In fact, pairs rarely turn in absolutely identical paragraphs and it would be interesting to know what they write down during the online narrative, and how they use it in the composition stage.

2. A cross-sectional study of ESL students at different levels attempting the dictowatch, following Williams (1999). S5 and S6's transcript, although something of an anomaly for this paper, suggests that level would have an important effect.

3. An analysis of the structure of the LREs produced in the dictowatch. As we noted in the coding section, this is a blanket term to cover a wide range of concepts found in the interaction literature. We are particularly interested in negotiation for meaning (Pica 1994b: 497), types of corrective

feedback (Lyster & Ranta 1997: 44), modified output (Swain 1998: 68), uptake (Lyster & Ranta 1997: 44) and embedding (Varonis & Gass 1985: 81).

4. A comparative study of the dictowatch and dictogloss. Although this has major methodological obstacles (choosing a text for the dictogloss, primarily), we would like to find statistical support for our claim that the dictowatch is a constructive modification of Wajnryb's classic technique. We would also want to know the rate of LREs in a defined unit of speech.

5. Further research into the stages of the dictowatch. As discussed above, we hypothesize that the types of LRE which predominate in each stage will be different, but we need to control the time and level of the students more carefully in order to yield useful results.

6. Does the choice of video clip and the nature of the assignment affect the types and amount of LREs? We have used the dictowatch technique with clips from other movies and different episodes of Mr. Bean. We have also asked students to produce texts other than narratives (compare and contrast essays, for example). We speculate that task type will be a significant factor in students' attention to form.

7. Research into the consistency of students' attention to form during the dictowatch. Our experience, supported by the literature, is that the dictogloss is only successful with some students, and is somewhat unpredictable. We believe that the dictowatch is compatible with many different "learning styles" (Oxford 1990) and "intelligences" (Gardner 1985), but we will need to conduct a larger project in order to provide empirical evidence for this claim.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while we are aware of a number of issues that need to be addressed in further research, we are confident the dictowatch is a useful addition to both teachers' and researchers' repertoires for focusing students' attention to a rich variety of form during meaningful interaction.

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Appendix A : Directions[7]

You and your partner will work together to create a detailed description of a scene from the British TV show Mr. Bean. There will be three steps:

STEP 1. a) Partner A will watch the first half of the scene and will describe it as it is happening to Partner B. Partner B will not be able to see the scene. (If this activity is done in the lab, then Partner B will have turned the computer monitor off. If this activity is done in the classroom, Partner B will have turned away from the TV.) On a piece of scratch paper, Partner B will write down as much information as possible from Partner A's description. The scene will only be shown once.

b) Your teacher will stop the tape in the middle of the scene and will ask you to switch roles. Partner A 's monitor should be turned off and Partner B's turned on. Partner B will then describe the rest of the scene to Partner A, who will write down on a piece of scratch paper as much information as they can from B's description. Again, the scene will only be shown once.

STEP 2. Your teacher will stop the tape at the end of the scene. Then, by working together and drawing from both memory and notes, you will write a complete narrative of the entire scene on a separate sheet of paper from your notes. You should have two separate copies (one for A and one for B) of exactly the same thing.

STEP 3. After you have finished the narrative, go over your descriptions sentence by sentence to ensure you have exactly the same thing. Every word and every letter should match exactly. Once you are through with the first writing, read through it together again, and make any changes necessary to make sure your papers are accurate and match each other.

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