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EFL task-based interaction: Does task modality impact on language-related episodes?

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Abstract

Research on L2 interaction has shown that task modality (written vs. oral) influences language learning opportunities. However, most research has been carried out in ESL settings and few studies have investigated task modality differences in EFL contexts, where both quantity and quality of exposure to the target language differ considerably. In addition, most research has only focused on how task modality impacts on the incidence, nature and outcome of language-related episodes (LREs), but has not considered the relationship between task modality and learners' level of engagement. This chapter examines the impact of task modality on the LREs and level of engagement in the oral interaction of 44 Spanish-Basque EFL learners while completing four communicative tasks. The findings point to a significant impact of task modality on the incidence, nature and outcome of LREs but a minor impact on learners' level of engagement.

Key words: interaction, task modality, language-related episodes, level of engagement

Introduction

Research on second language (L2) task-based interaction has shown that different tasks offer different language learning opportunities. Thus, collaborative writing tasks usually elicit more attention to form than speaking tasks, which do not require the production of written output and seem to focus learners' attention more on meaning (Adams 2006; Adams & Ross-Feldman 2008; Niu 2009). In order to identify language learning opportunities that occur during interaction and collaborative work, researchers have employed language-related episodes (LREs), defined as "[...] any part of the dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct" (Swain 1998: 70). LREs include conversational turns in which learners may question the meaning of a word and/or its form (spelling, pronunciation, grammatical status), and they have been claimed to represent L2 learning in progress (Gass & Mackey 2007). Throughout this chapter, such language learning opportunities will be operationalized as LREs.

Many studies have examined LREs, including those considering learners' proficiency (Leeser 2004; Storch & Aldosari 2013; Williams 2001), task type (Adams 2006; Adams & Ross-Feldman 2008; Niu 2009), context (Basterrechea & García Mayo 2013), and the relationship between LREs and L2 development (Kim 2008; McDonough & Sunitham 2009; Swain & Lapkin 1998). Storch (2008) examined the impact of learners' level of engagement in LREs during collaborative work. She used the term 'engagement' to describe the quality of the learners' metatalk (Storch 2008: 98) and found that the higher the learners' engagement, the more opportunities they have to develop their L2.

The studies mentioned above have shown the benefits of collaborative work and LREs during task-based interaction. However, most have been carried out in English as a second language (ESL) settings, where the quality and quantity of exposure to the target language differ considerably from English as a foreign language (EFL) settings or foreign language settings in general (García Mayo & García Lecumberri 2003; Muñoz 2006). In most foreign language settings, teachers have less class time contact with their students and L2 input opportunities are limited, both inside and outside the classroom in comparison to most ESL settings (García Mayo & Pica 2000; Philp & Tognini 2009). These opportunities are limited inside the classroom because some teachers do not have the expected English proficiency level and classroom management skills, and outside the classroom because English is a foreign language and is not on TV (in Spain films are dubbed), or even in the linguistic landscape. Therefore, it is important for EFL teachers to have information about the types of tasks that would be more beneficial for their students. The goal of this chapter is to explore the impact of task modality on the production, nature and outcome of LREs and on the engagement that EFL learners show when an LRE is generated in conversational interaction. Its ultimate aim is to consider the kinds of tasks that are more likely to foster language learning opportunities.

Interaction and language learning opportunities

This chapter is framed within the interactionist approach, which is based on the Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1996). The Interaction Hypothesis states that conversational interaction facilitates L2 learning because learners receive comprehensible input and feedback

from their interlocutors and they also have the opportunity to produce modified output (Gass 1997, 2003; Long 1996; Pica 1994; [Sato & Ballinger 2016](#); Swain 2005). Interaction provides learners with opportunities to negotiate meaning and form and to ‘notice the gap’ (Schmidt & Frota 1986) between their production and the target language. The benefits of interaction have been reported in numerous studies (see Keck, Iberri-Shea, Tracy-Ventura & Wa-Mbaleka 2006 and Mackey & Goo 2007 for meta-analyses; García Mayo & Alcón Soler 2013 for a recent review), which have shown a strong link between learners’ participation in conversational interaction and L2 learning. Many of these studies have used collaborative, form-focused tasks, as they have been claimed to trigger learners’ attention to their own interlanguage and to lead to the production of LREs. Drawing learners’ attention to formal aspects of language is of crucial importance in an otherwise communicative-based teaching approach as a large body of research has shown that explicit attention to form facilitates L2 acquisition (Norris & Ortega 2000; Spada & Tomita 2010). In addition, attention to form has also been claimed to enhance “[...] cognitive mapping among forms, meaning and use” (Doughty 2001: 211).

As mentioned above, the LRE is a unit of analysis used to identify whether learners consciously reflect on their own language use. LREs have been mainly classified on the basis of their focus (lexis or grammar) and outcome (resolved [target-like or non target-like] or not resolved) (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo 2007; Leeser 2004; Ross-Feldman 2007; Williams 2001) – see examples (1) to (5) below. During an LRE, when a learner raises an issue about the target language, the other learner has the option to either join in the discussion or move on with the task at hand. It is precisely this aspect that Storch (2008) considered in detail when she analyzed engagement in LREs. Thus, she distinguished between LREs showing elaborate engagement (E LREs), when both learners deliberated over language items seeking and

providing confirmation and explanations, and LREs showing limited engagement, when participants mentioned a linguistic item without deliberating about it. When analyzing the latter, Storch realized that there was a need to further distinguish between LREs showing limited engagement by only one participant (L LREs), and LREs showing limited engagement by both participants (L+L LREs) see examples below.

Storch (2008) tested 22 ESL learners who worked in pairs on a text reconstruction task. She examined the nature of their engagement with the items they discussed and whether engagement affected language development or not. Her findings showed that participants focused more on grammar than on lexis or mechanics and that the majority of LREs were correctly resolved and of the E LRE type. Those learners who showed an elaborate engagement in their grammar choices learned the target structures. Elaborate engagement triggered more deliberations, questions and explanations than limited engagement.

Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) analyzed the relationship between level of engagement and feedback in a group of ESL students with different first languages (L1s) while they carried out a text composition task. They found that a high level of engagement in feedback episodes led these students to high levels of uptake (immediate revision). In a subsequent study, Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) examined the written texts produced by ESL students with different L1s. When analyzing LREs, they distinguished between LREs consisting of one turn, which showed little engagement and LREs consisting of more turns, which led to more discussion and engagement. Their findings showed that, overall, the level of engagement was high, although the researchers could not establish whether a higher engagement led to greater accuracy.

As a whole, the studies by Storch and Wigglesworth found that during collaborative work learners' engagement tends to be elaborate or high and that this higher level of engagement is more likely to lead to L2 learning. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no study that has considered learners' level of engagement in EFL settings, nor the impact of task modality on that engagement. This chapter tries to address this gap in task modality research.

Task modality: Speaking vs. writing tasks

The impact of task-modality on L2 interaction has been the subject of recent research, although it is yet to be explored in depth (Rouhshad & Storch 2016; Kuiken & Vedder 2012: 364). Tasks that encourage speaking, such as information-gap tasks (Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun 1993) have been claimed to focus learners' attention more on meaning, whereas writing tasks, such as dictogloss or text editing, focus learners' attention more on form (García Mayo 2002a, 2002b). Although both speaking and writing are essential for language learning, the process of writing is:

[...] five to eight times slower than speaking, since more time is needed for the verbalization of content [...]. As a consequence, cognitive resources can be used for a longer period of time, from which information retrieval from long-term memory, as well as planning time, should benefit.

(Kuiken & Vedder 2012: 366)

Writing encourages learners to attend to both form and meaning (Cumming 1989) in the sense that, once meaning is understood, learners can pay more attention to the form of the message. Previous research has suggested that tasks that incorporate a writing component are more likely to provide learners with more language learning opportunities, operationalized as LREs, than speaking tasks (see Adams & Ross-Feldman 2008; Williams 2008). Learners are likely to use structures in writing that they do not use when speaking and they might also use a form first in their writing and then in their speech (Williams 2008). Further, writing requires higher levels of accuracy because people tend not to tolerate as many errors in written language as they do in spoken language (Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, & van Gelderen 2009).

Adams (2006) examined the impact of task modality when ESL learners with different L1s worked on two tasks that elicited two target forms: locative prepositions and past tense. Each task required an oral and a written component and for the data analysis Adams considered the amount of LREs, self-repairs, and use of target structures in both the writing and speaking parts of the tasks. Her findings showed that the writing part of the task led these students to initiate more LREs, self-repair and use the target structures more often. Ross-Feldman (2007) analyzed the incidence and outcome of LREs in Spanish ESL dyads who worked on a picture placement, a picture differences, and a picture story task. Her findings showed that these learners initiated and resolved more LREs in the picture story task, which incorporated a writing component, than the other two tasks with only a speaking component. More recently, Adams and Ross-Feldman (2008) examined the production of LREs by ESL learners with different L1s when they completed different collaborative writing and speaking tasks. The two target structures were locative prepositions and past tense morphology. They reported that the majority of LREs in both tasks focused on form and that their participants produced more LREs when they had to write

than when they only engaged in speaking, although the differences were not statistically significant.

In an EFL context, Niu (2009) also compared the production of LREs when EFL Chinese learners worked on a text reconstruction task. Four pairs completed the task as a collaborative oral output task and another four pairs did it as a collaborative written output task. Her findings showed that those pairs that completed the task as a collaborative written output task initiated more LREs that focused on lexis, form, and discourse than collaborative oral output pairs. Niu concluded that collaborative writing might promote more language learning than only oral communicative tasks.

Azkarai and García Mayo (2012) explored the production and outcome of LREs generated by 12 EFL Basque-Spanish learners when they worked in pairs on a picture placement, a picture differences, a picture story and a dictogloss task. They found that these learners generated more LREs in the picture story and dictogloss tasks, which required them to produce a final written text, than in the other two tasks, which only required them to reach a solution by interacting orally.

The studies reviewed above support the use of collaborative writing tasks, as they provide L2 learners with the opportunity to generate more LREs than speaking tasks. However, in EFL settings only a few studies have focused on the impact of task modality on LREs and there is clearly a need for further research on this topic. As mentioned above, EFL learners generally receive fewer hours of classroom exposure than ESL learners and outside L2 input is also limited (García Mayo & García Lecumberri 2003; Muñoz 2006). It is, therefore, important for teachers to know which tasks could provide their learners with more learning opportunities so that they can obtain the maximum benefit.

The study

The main goal of the present chapter is to investigate the extent to which task modality (writing vs. oral) has an impact on the occurrence of LREs during EFL task-based interaction and on learners' level of engagement while completing collaborative tasks. The following research questions guided this chapter:

- a. Is there a task modality (writing vs. oral) effect on the incidence, nature, and outcome of LREs?
- b. Is the level of engagement different depending on task modality?

In line with previous findings (Adams 2006; Adams & Ross-Feldman 2008; Azkarai & García Mayo 2012; Niu 2009; Ross-Feldman 2007), we expected a clear impact of task modality on LREs. Specifically, collaborative writing tasks should generate more LREs overall, which would mainly focus on form, than oral communicative tasks, where it is expected that more LREs would focus on meaning. The majority of LREs should also be resolved correctly, but the amount of correctly resolved LREs would be higher in the written tasks. No studies have considered the relationship between level of engagement and task modality. However, one could speculate that, as collaborative writing tasks have been claimed to provide L2 learners with more language learning opportunities, this task modality might also generate a higher level of engagement among learners.

Participants

Forty-four Spanish-Basque bilinguals (22 females and 22 males) took part in this study. Participants were all EFL learners and were enrolled in different degree courses at a major Spanish university. Their English level was assessed by means of a standardized test, the Quick Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Syndicate U.C.L.E. 2001). Table 1 provides a detailed description of the participants' profile:

Table 1
Participants' Profile

	Age	Years studying English	English proficiency		
			Elementary	Lower intermediate	Upper intermediate
Average	24	11	6	26	12
Mean	24.22	11.59			
Range	20 – 31	8 – 15			

Materials

The materials used in this study were four collaborative tasks (see Appendix). Two required the production of oral and written output (henceforth, writing tasks), a dictogloss and a text editing task, and the other two required just the production of oral output (henceforth, oral tasks), a picture placement and a picture differences task.

The writing tasks were taken from the New English File Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Upper Intermediate Text Books (Oxenden, Latham-Koenig, & Seligson 1997a, 1997b, 1997c). Dictogloss and text editing are tasks that have been extensively used in studies framed

within the Interaction Hypothesis and they have demonstrated the benefits of writing during interaction (García Mayo 2002a, 2002b).

Dictogloss (Wajnryb 1990) has been found to favor collaborative work and encourage learners to reflect on their own output (Kowal & Swain 1994; Swain 1998; Swain & Lapkin 2001). Both participants work together to reconstruct the original text and in doing so they refine their understanding of the language being used (Basterrechea & García Mayo 2013; García Mayo 2002a, 2002b). Studies have shown that during dictogloss, students notice gaps in their grammatical knowledge and work together to resolve those gaps when attempting to co-produce the text (Nassaji 2000). This task has been shown to promote participation for both partners, to activate the cognitive processes necessary for the acquisition of an L2, and to draw learners' attention to form.

During the text editing task, participants insert function words that have been deleted from the text and correct errors such as omitted subjects, verb tense and agreement, and missing prepositions. This task has also been claimed to be an effective form-focused task, since learners work together collaboratively and peer feedback is available (Alegria de la Colina & García Mayo 2007; García Mayo 2002a, 2002b; Storch 1998a, 1998b).

The oral tasks (picture placement and picture differences) chosen for this study are considered information-gap tasks (Pica et al. 1993). Both tasks engage learners in functional, meaning-focused use of the target language and allow them to gain access to input for learning (Pica, Kang & Sauro 2006). These tasks also provide L2 learners with opportunities for negotiation of meaning and output modification, since both participants have part of the information they need to exchange in order to complete the task (Sato & Lyster 2007).

All these tasks, very similar to those available in commercial ESL/EFL textbooks, were chosen for the present study because they represented the two task modalities and previous research has shown their effectiveness.

Table 2, describes the average time in minutes taken to complete each task and shows that the four tasks were comparable in terms of the amount of time devoted to each by this group of learners.

Table 2
Time Employed by Participants in Each Task

	Writing tasks		Oral tasks	
	Dictogloss	Text editing	Picture Placement	Picture Differences
Mean	06:30	06:30	06:31	05:45
Range	03:28 - 11:15	03:09 - 12:55	04:08 - 10:27	03:03 - 12:11

Procedure

This study took place in a laboratory setting and was part of a larger study investigating the role of gender in task-based interaction. As stated earlier, students completed the OPT to assess their proficiency in English and were paired on the basis of their score. Different versions of the four tasks were prepared to avoid task repetition effects, but the tasks were not counterbalanced, which we acknowledge as a weakness.

After task completion, the participants were asked to fill in a post-questionnaire regarding their feelings and thoughts about the tasks. Most participants (34 [77%]) liked the tasks, 24 participants (54%) indicated that they found them difficult and 42 participants (95%) indicated that they had the impression that these tasks helped them learn English. When they were asked about their favorite and least favorite task, most participants (32 [73%]) indicated that the picture

differences task was their favorite task and the dictogloss (12 [25%]) and text editing (20 [45%]) tasks were identified as the least favorite. Table 3 provides more details:

Table 3

Participants' Opinions on Tasks (44 participants)

	Dictogloss	Text Editing	Picture Placement	Picture Differences	No answer
Favorite task	4	2	5	32	1
Least favorite task	12	20	10	1	1

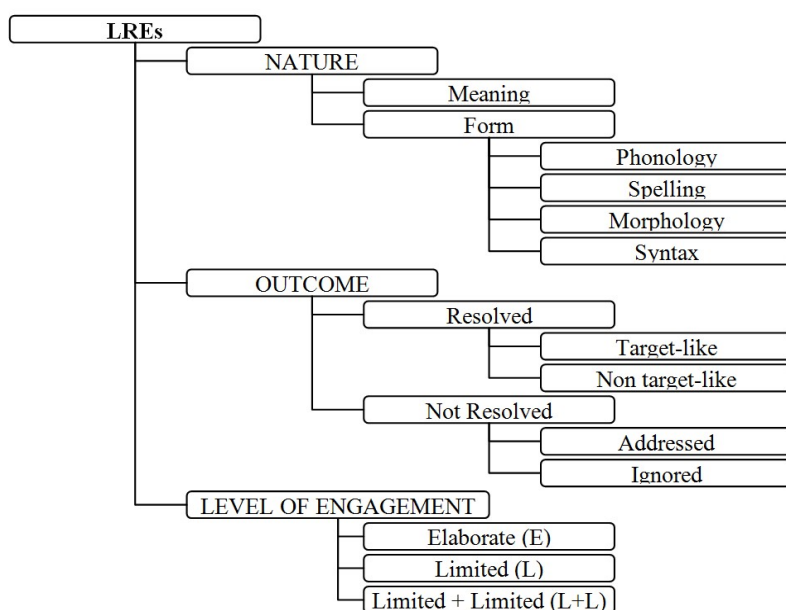
Data analysis and codification

All conversational interactions, consisting of a total of 17 hours and 16 minutes of talk, were transcribed verbatim, and the total number of turns and LREs in each task were tallied. A turn began when a learner started talking and finished when his/her partner began a new utterance. An LRE started when a participant raised a concern about language and finished when they had moved on to a new conversational topic or when the participants moved on with the task at hand, thus resolving the initial concern (see examples below for more details). The incidence of LREs was analyzed considering proportions of the total number of turns in each LRE to the total number of turns in each task.

As the types of LREs and the level of engagement recorded in this study were similar to those reported in Ross-Feldman (2007) and Storch (2008), respectively, we used the same categorizations that were used in those studies. The nature of LREs was coded on the basis of form and meaning-focused LREs and the outcome of LREs on the basis of resolved and not resolved LREs. We further distinguished two types of “not resolved” LREs, namely addressed and ignored LREs, as we thought a more detailed categorization might shed more light on the

data. In the categorization of the level of engagement in LREs, we distinguished between E LREs, when the two members of the dyad were engaged in addressing an issue; L LREs, when only that member of the dyad who initiated the LRE was engaged in the linguistic issue and his/her partner did not join in or deliberate about it; and L+L LREs, when the two members of the dyad did not deliberate/discuss the linguistic issue at hand. Figure 1 illustrates this information:

Figure 1

Categorization of LREs

The following examples, all of them from our database, illustrate different types of LREs and the level of engagement in each. In example 1, Miguel and Susana are completing the picture placement task. Miguel asks Susana where the ‘oven glove’ is (turn 1), but Susana does not know the correct answer. However, she lets him know that she has understood what he meant (turn 2). In turn 3 Miguel provides more details about the object he refers to and initiates another

LRE, as he does not know how to say the word ‘oven’. Susana provides him with the correct answer for ‘oven’ in turn 4 (meaning-focused, target-like resolved and elaborate LRE), and still seems to be thinking about the correct word for ‘oven glove’. The first LRE, referring to ‘oven glove’ was left unresolved, but addressed as both participants deliberated about it and tried to find a solution, for this reason it was also coded as an E LRE:

- (1) 1. Miguel: Where is the the thing that we use to put with hand inside?
2. Susana: Oh, yes! To take something?
3. Miguel: For the *horno* [oven]. Cook? In the *horno* [oven].
4. Susana: Yeah, oven.
5. Miguel: Oven. Yes.
6. Susana: Ok. Er...

Example 2 shows a form-focused phonology LRE. When completing the picture differences task, Iria mispronounces the word ‘hat’ (/hæt/) (turn 3) and Sergio immediately provides her with the correct pronunciation of the word in turn 4. As Sergio’s answer is correct, this LRE was coded as a target-like resolved LRE and as an E LRE as both members are actively engaged.

- (2) 1. Iria: He has a carrot in his nose.
2. Sergio: Yes.
3. Iria: Han /hæn/? A green han /hæn/? Han /hæn/?
4. Sergio: Hat /hæt/!

5. Iria: *O sea* [I mean], hat /hæt/!

Example 3 took place during the dictogloss. David misspells the word ‘T-H-R-U-S-D-A-Y’ (turn 3), but later in turn 5 he spells it correctly. This seems to confuse Raúl, who repeats the correct word in turn 6. In turn 7, David tells Raúl that he is wrong and that he should spell it as in turn 3 (Thrusday), with an ‘R’ (turn 9). Raúl is confused and repeats the word (turn 8) and, finally, in turn 10 he realizes that the correct spelling is ‘Thursday’ and not ‘T-H-R-U-S-D-A-Y’ as his partner was suggesting. In turn 11 David realizes that he was wrong and apologizes for his mistake. This spelling-focused LRE was coded as a target-like resolved LRE because the participants finally provided the right answer, and as an E LRE because both participants were engaged in trying to get the correct spelling of ‘Thursday’ and deliberated about it.

- (3) 1. David: My favorite day, my favorite day of the week.
 2. Raúl: Of the week.
 3. David: It’s T-H-R-U-S-D-A-Y.
 4. Raúl: Is?
 5. David: T-H-R-U-S-D-A-Y.
 6. Raúl: Thursday.
 7. David: Thru! Thru!
 8. Raúl: Thursday.
 9. David: With R.
 10. Raúl: Thursday!
 11. David: Ok, ok. Yes. Excuse me! Excuse me!

12. Raúl: Thursday.

Example 4 shows a morphology-focused LRE. In the text editing, Candela asks whether the correct form of the verb is ‘being’ instead of ‘be’ in the sentence ‘Despite be the most famous Englishman...’ (turn 2). Paz ignores her, and for this reason it was coded as an ignored LRE, and Candela goes on with the task and both learners focus on the following sentence. As they do not try to provide an answer, both seem not to be engaged with this LRE and for this reason it was coded as an L+L LRE.

(4) 1. Paz: He is the most...

2. Candela: Yes. Or being *igual*, ¿no? [maybe, don't you think? Despite be the most famous Englishman in the world, little is know for certain about Shakespeare's...

3. Paz: Shakespeare's private life.

Example 5 took place during the text editing. Rebeca is discussing whether to insert the pronoun ‘it’ in the sentence or not. At the beginning, she is convinced that they have to insert the pronoun in the sentence (turn 2), but later she changes her mind (in turns 4 and 6). Note that the original sentence was “Whatever food you are looking for, you can find it in San Francisco”. Rebeca refers to ‘restaurants’ instead of ‘food’ and that is the reason why she thinks that inserting the pronoun would only refer to one restaurant and not to food. She deliberates about it, seeking Marcos’ confirmation in turns 4 and 6, but he only answers ‘Yes’ and does not help her, thus showing little engagement. At the end, Rebeca decides to omit the pronoun. The LRE was

coded as a syntax-focused non target-like LRE. As she was engaged in trying to get the correct answer and Marcos was not, the LRE was also coded as an L LRE.

- (5) 1. Marcos: You find it.
2. Rebeca: You can find it.
3. Marcos: Oh! You can find it in San Francisco.
4. Rebeca: And why not "you can find in San Francisco"? You can find it?
5. Marcos: Yes.
6. Rebeca: It is more than one. You can find.
7. Marcos: Yes.
8. Rebeca: In San Francisco.

After all LREs were identified and categorized on the basis of their nature, outcome and the learners' level of engagement, the data were submitted to statistical analysis. A bilateral two sample binomial test for independent sample ($\alpha = 0.05$) was used to determine significance.

Results

This section presents the findings on the basis of the two research questions posited above. The significant findings have been summarized into three different graphs which are presented at the end of the section.

Our first research question asked whether there was a task modality effect on the incidence, nature, and outcome of LREs. Regarding the incidence of LREs, participants initiated significantly more LREs in the writing tasks (467) than in the oral tasks (357) ($z = 31.72, p < 0.0001$). There were also differences between same-modality tasks: participants initiated significantly more LREs in the text editing task than in the dictogloss ($z = 30.83, p < 0.0001$) and significantly more LREs in the picture placement than in the picture differences task ($z = 17.26, p < 0.0001$). These findings are detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Incidence of LREs in the Two Task Modalities and in Each Task

Tasks	Turns	Turns comprising LREs	Number of LREs	Mean	SD
Writing tasks	4991	2200 (44.08%)	467	10.61	4.211
Dictogloss	2227	444 (19.94%)	107	2.43	2.774
Text Editing	2764	1756 (63.53%)	360	8.18	3.082
Oral tasks	7579	1365 (18.01%)	357	8.11	3.610
P.Placement	3171	856 (27%)	221	5.02	2.565
P.Differences	4408	509 (11.55%)	136	3.09	1.736

Note. The percentages are calculated considering the total number of turns comprising LREs to the total amount of turns initiated in each task

The analysis of the nature of LREs showed that participants initiated significantly more form-focused LREs in the writing tasks (344 [73.66%]) and significantly more meaning-focused LREs in the oral tasks (326 [91.32%]) ($z = 18.56, p < 0.0001$). Specifically, form-focused LREs were significantly more common in the text editing task (274 [76.11%]) than in the dictogloss ($z = 2.20, p = 0.0276$), and meaning-focused LREs were significantly more common in the picture placement task (208 [94.12%]) than in the picture differences task ($z = 2.40, p = 0.0166$). These findings are detailed in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Nature of LREs in Both Task Modalities and in Each Task

Tasks	Form-focused			Meaning-focused		
	LREs	Mean	SD	LREs	Mean	SD
Writing tasks	344 (73.66%)	7.82	3.432	123 (26.34%)	2.80	1.850
Dictogloss	70 (65.42%)	1.59	2.171	37 (34.58%)	.84	1.077
Text Editing	274 (76.11%)	6.23	2.532	86 (23.89%)	1.95	1.493
Oral tasks	31 (8.68%)	.70	.904	326 (91.32%)	7.41	3.350
P.Placement	13 (5.88%)	.30	.509	208 (94.12%)	4.73	2.395
P.Differences	18 (13.23%)	.41	.583	118 (86.77%)	2.68	1.581

Note. The percentages are calculated considering the number of LREs initiated in each condition (form or meaning) to the total number of LREs initiated in each task

Regarding the outcome of LREs, in terms of percentages, resolved LREs occurred significantly more in the writing tasks (376 [80.51%]) than in the oral tasks ($z = 6.73, p < 0.0001$), and addressed LREs were significantly more frequent in the oral tasks (123 [84.25%]) than in the writing tasks ($z = 4.45, p < 0.0001$). LREs were also resolved in a target-like manner more often in the oral tasks than in the writing tasks, but this difference was not significant.

The comparison between same-modality tasks was only significant in the case of the amount of target-like/non target-like resolved LREs: participants correctly resolved significantly more LREs in the dictogloss (70 [76.92%]) ($z = 2.76, p = 0.0058$) and the picture differences (72 [82.76%]) ($z = 3.46, p = 0.0006$) tasks than in their modality counterparts. These findings are detailed in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Outcome of LREs in Both Task Modalities and in Each Task

Tasks	Resolved			Target-like (resolved)			Addressed (not resolved)		
	LREs	Mean	SD	LREs	Mean	SD	LREs	Mean	SD
Writing tasks	376 (80.51%)	8.55	3.688	244 (64.89%)	5.55	2.905	5 (58.24%)	1.20	1.304
Dictogloss	91 (85.05%)	2.07	2.245	70 (76.92%)	1.59	1.909	10 (62.5%)	.23	.642
Text Editing	285 (79.17%)	6.48	2.921	174 (61.05%)	3.95	2.188	43 (57.33%)	.98	.976
Oral tasks	211 (59.10%)	4.80	2.455	147 (69.67%)	3.34	1.976	123 (84.25%)	2.80	2.075
P.Placement	124 (56.11%)	2.82	1.896	75 (60.48%)	1.70	1.488	83 (85.57%)	1.89	1.528

P.Differences	87 (63.97%)	1.98	1.320	72 (82.76%)	1.64	1.222	40 (81.63%)	.91	1.007
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Note. The percentages are calculated considering the number of LREs initiated in each condition (resolved [target-like/non target-like] or not resolved [addressed/ignored]) to the total number of LREs initiated in each task

Our second research question asked whether task modality could impact the level of engagement in LREs. The results indicated that, overall, the level of engagement in LREs was elaborate in all the tasks and no major difference was found between task modalities or same-modality tasks. Overall, E LREs occurred more frequently in the oral tasks, but the task that proportionally generated more E LREs was the dictogloss (76 [71.03%]). In addition, when comparing the amount of E LREs initiated in the dictogloss and the text editing, the results showed a significant difference ($z = 2.02, p = 0.043$). Significant differences were also found in the amount of L LREs, as these LREs were more frequent in the writing tasks (86 [18.42%]) than in oral tasks ($z = 3.21, p = 0.001$). No differences were found for the rest of the comparisons. These findings are detailed in Table 7 below.

Table 7
Level of Engagement in LREs in Both Task Modalities and in Each Task

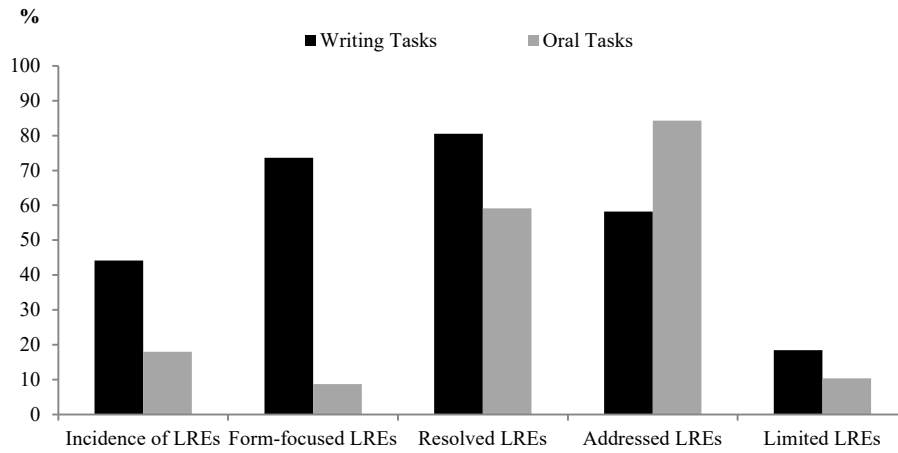
Tasks	Elaborate			Limited			Limited+limited		
	LREs	Mean	SD	LREs	Mean	SD	LREs	Mean	SD
Writing tasks	293 (62.74%)	6.66	3.154	86 (18.42%)	2.07	1.897	88 (18.84%)	1.89	1.646
Dictogloss	76 (71.03%)	1.73	1.757	17 (15.89%)	.39	.895	14 (13.08%)	.32	.639
Text Editing	217 (60.28%)	4.93	2.671	69 (19.16%)	1.68	1.667	74 (20.56%)	1.57	1.576
Oral tasks	245 (68.63%)	5.57	2.897	37 (10.36%)	.84	.939	75 (21.01%)	1.70	1.773
P.Placement	150 (67.87%)	3.41	2.171	24 (10.86%)	.55	.697	47 (21.27%)	1.07	1.404
P.Differences	95 (69.85%)	2.16	1.413	13 (9.56%)	.30	.553	28 (20.59%)	.64	.865

Note. The percentages are calculated considering the number of LREs initiated in each condition (elaborate, limited or limited+limited) to the total number of LREs initiated in each task

As indicated at the beginning of this section, the following graphs summarize the significant findings of the study:

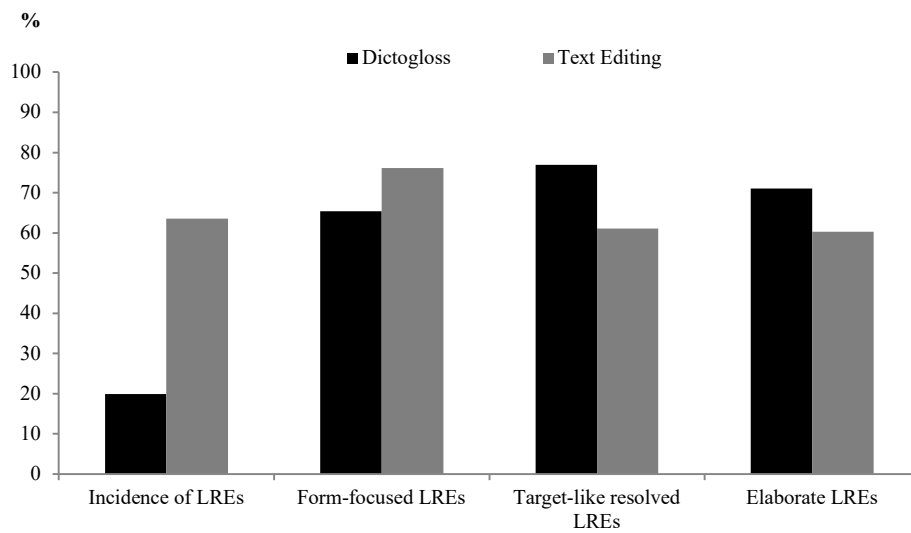
Graph 1

Significant Differences in the Incidence, Nature, Outcome and Level of Engagement in LREs between Writing and Oral Tasks



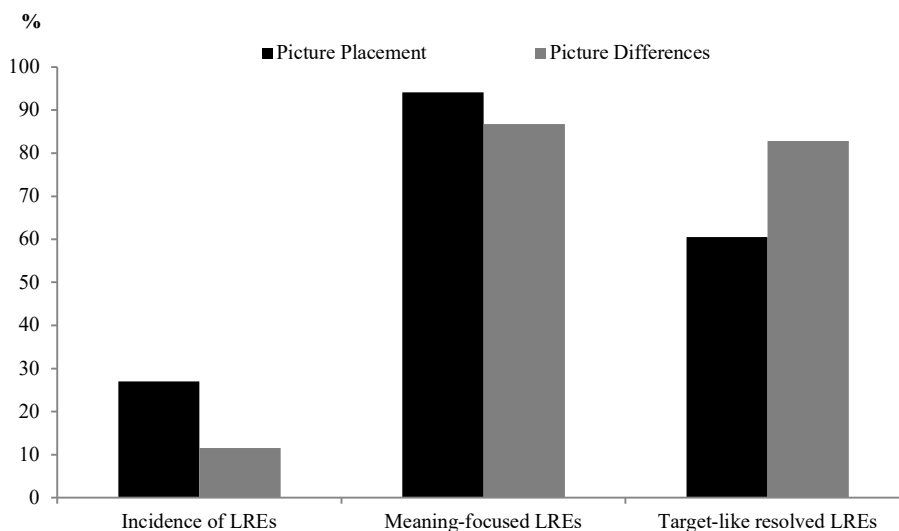
Graph 2

Significant Differences in the Incidence, Nature, Outcome and Level of Engagement in LREs between the Dictogloss and the Text Editing



Graph 3

Significant Differences in the Incidence, Nature and Outcome of LREs between the Picture Placement and the Picture Differences Tasks



Discussion

The main goal of this study was to investigate the impact of task modality (writing vs. oral tasks) on LREs during EFL task-based interaction and on the learners' level of engagement in those LREs. There is a clear gap in the research on this topic in EFL settings, where the learners receive fewer hours of exposure to the target language than in most ESL settings and do not have many opportunities to practice their target language outside the classroom. Our findings reflect previous research in ESL settings on the impact of task modality, as participants initiated more LREs in the writing tasks, mainly focusing on form, than in the oral tasks, where LREs mainly focused on meaning. The EFL participants also solved more LREs in the writing tasks than in the oral tasks. Although previous research had not considered the relationship between task modality and engagement, we expected to find a more elaborate level of engagement in the

LREs generated in the writing tasks than in oral tasks because learners seem to be more concerned with formal issues while completing the writing tasks. However, this prediction was not borne out.

In line with previous studies (Adams & Ross-Feldman 2008; Azkarai & García Mayo 2012; Niu 2009; Ross-Feldman 2007), these participants initiated significantly more LREs in the writing tasks than in the oral tasks, specifically in the text editing task. As participants had to submit a final written product, they may have felt more concerned about making errors. As mentioned above, writing demands higher levels of accuracy and errors are less likely to be overlooked (Schoonen et al. 2009). It is perhaps for this reason that raising an issue about language was more common in the writing tasks.

However, we also found differences in the incidence of LREs between same-modality tasks. In line with García Mayo (2001, 2002a, 2002b) and Storch (1998a), participants in this study generated significantly more LREs in the text editing task than in the dictogloss task, a finding that would be expected considering that discussing language issues is a requirement in a collaborative text editing task. García Mayo (2002b) attributed her findings to the nature of the stimulus of the dictogloss (aural) and also to the learners' lack of familiarity with the procedure. Some studies have also reported that dictogloss is not a "successful" activity. For example, Dunn (1993) and Lukin (1994) found that their students produced texts that were less grammatically accurate than those they usually produced in writing classes. However, Swain and Lapkin (2000, 2001) have used dictogloss tasks successfully in several of their studies.

Similarly to Ross-Feldman (2007), the present study also showed that participants produced significantly more LREs in the picture placement than in the picture differences task. In the picture placement task, the objects on which participants had to focus were related to a

specific semantic field. If they were not familiar with the vocabulary associated with that semantic field, they would encounter difficulties completing the activity. In the picture differences task, the items that appeared in their pictures were more numerous than in the picture placement task and not related to any specific semantic field. Therefore, when participants could not refer to one object, they would just refer to another one with which they were familiar.

To sum up, the findings from the present study indicate that including a writing component in interactive tasks leads learners to produce more LREs and that there is a clear task modality effect: more structured tasks (text editing or picture placement) seem to elicit more attention to language than their modality counterparts.

Nature of LREs

The nature of LREs was task-modality dependent and there were significantly more form-focused LREs in the writing tasks and significantly more meaning-focused LREs in the oral tasks. When working on the former, participants appeared to pay more attention not only to the content, but also to the form and structure of the output they generated. In this way, our study supports previous research in ESL settings and provides more evidence for the scarce database existing in EFL contexts from learners with different L1s.

There were also differences regarding the nature of LREs in same-modality tasks: form-focused LREs occurred significantly more often in the text editing task than in the dictogloss. In line with previous studies (García Mayo 2001, 2002a, 2002b), dictogloss was the least efficient in this sense. Although both tasks require oral and written output, text editing seems to be a more effective task for stimulating a focus on form (Storch 1998a). As argued by García Mayo (2002a,

2002b) it could be that those tasks that offer a written stimulus (text editing) prompt more attention to form because participants have been provided with a written version of the activity. However, the stimulus received from the dictogloss is aural and participants need to understand the text before starting to write it so they might be more focused on trying to understand the text than on producing error-free writing. In addition, during dictogloss learners not only have to understand the text that they have just heard, but they also have to remember it. The extra listening, comprehension and memory component involved may increase the cognitive demand of the task for learners.

Differences were also found between the two oral tasks: the picture placement task generated more meaning-focused LREs than the picture differences task, but no differences were found between these two tasks in the amount of form-focused LREs. As indicated above, the picture placement task contained more specific items than the picture differences task, and for this reason participants may have encountered more difficulties.

Overall, the analysis of the nature of LREs showed that the writing tasks led these learners to focus on formal aspects of language while oral tasks focused learners' attention more on meaning. In addition, more structured tasks, such as text editing or picture placement tasks, led these learners to focus more on form and meaning, respectively, than their modality counterparts.

Outcome of LREs

There were no major task-related differences regarding the outcome of LREs. However, in line with previous findings (Adams & Ross-Feldman 2008; Azkarai & García Mayo 2012;

Ross-Feldman 2007), participants resolved more LREs in the writing tasks than they did in the oral tasks, specifically in the dictogloss; however, they addressed significantly more LREs in the oral tasks than in the writing tasks.

The majority of LREs in oral tasks were related to vocabulary issues. If participants did not know how to say a specific word in English, they were not able to help their partner resolve his/her doubt and, therefore, the LRE was left unresolved. However, most made an attempt to resolve the problems they encountered and they did try to reach a consensus (consider example 1).

In the writing tasks, participants may have felt unable to deal with some of the grammar-related issues that arose during interaction and they simply ignored them (consider example 4 above). However, possibly due to the emphasis on formal grammatical aspects in foreign language classrooms, when they felt they could provide a correct answer, they deliberated about it until they could find common ground, even if it was non target-like.

In same-modality tasks, significant differences were only found in the case of target-like resolved LREs, as participants correctly resolved significantly more LREs in the dictogloss and the picture differences tasks than in their modality counterparts. Possible explanations for why this might be so would be merely speculative. More detailed research on differences between same-modality tasks is needed.

To sum up, the analysis of the outcome of LREs in this study showed that the writing tasks led these learners to resolve more LREs than in the oral tasks. However, although participants left more LREs unresolved in the oral tasks, they at least addressed their linguistic concerns significantly more when working in these tasks than in the writing tasks. No major

differences were found between same-modality tasks, but dictogloss and picture differences led to significantly more target-like resolved LREs than their modality counterparts.

Level of engagement in LREs

The analysis of the level of engagement in LREs showed that, overall, participants' engagement was elaborate and very similar in both task-modalities. These findings support the benefits of collaborative work and are similar to those reported above in ESL settings (Storch 2008; Storch & Wigglesworth 2010; Wigglesworth & Storch 2012). Our findings suggest that despite the few hours of exposure and opportunities to practice English outside the classroom, EFL learners are as engaged as ESL learners when completing these types of task. However, our findings also showed that L LREs were significantly more frequent in the writing tasks than in the oral tasks, which suggests that in the writing tasks at least one member of the dyad was not as engaged as the one that raised an issue about language.

Regarding same-modality tasks, the results indicated differences only when comparing the amount of E LREs between the dictogloss and text editing: E LREs were more frequent in the dictogloss probably because, as indicated above, text editing is a more structured task and participants may have felt unable to resolve some of the linguistic issues that arose during interaction. This might have led them to a more limited engagement (consider examples 4 and 5). No differences were found regarding level of engagement in the picture placement and the picture differences tasks.

Overall, these results suggest that engagement in LREs is similar in both task modalities and that the participants deliberated over language items, looking for answers and sharing them

with their partners. There was a difference regarding the limited engagement of one of the participants in the writing tasks (L LREs). As the writing tasks were more structured than the oral tasks, these participants could have felt that the linguistic concerns of their partners were too complex to deal with and instead of trying, they just ignored them. In addition, as reported in the post-questionnaire, the writing tasks were their least favorite tasks and the picture differences (oral task) the most popular. This could also have influenced their engagement in the LREs generated in those tasks.

Conclusion and pedagogical implications

The present study set out to investigate the impact of task modality on the production, nature, and outcome of LREs and on the learners' level of engagement while completing four collaborative tasks in an EFL setting. Research on these topics is clearly needed in this context because the learners' quality and quantity of exposure to the target language differs from that in ESL settings. Our findings have shown that the participants generated more LREs in the writing tasks, which also focused their attention more on form, than in oral tasks, which focused their attention more on meaning. The participants also resolved more LREs in the writing tasks. These findings support previous research in ESL settings. Regarding the impact of task modality on learners' level of engagement, the findings pointed to a high learner involvement in all tasks while discussing LREs.

These findings are encouraging considering the specific characteristics of foreign language settings, where teachers do not have many hours of classroom contact with the learners

and where learners have barely any chance of using the target language outside the classroom. Foreign language teachers therefore might want to consider the use of communicative tasks that include a writing component because these tasks seem to provide learners with many language learning opportunities (operationalized as LREs in this study) and help them focus their attention on formal language issues. During task completion, the learners discuss language choices, help each other and provide appropriate answers to their common concerns. Our findings seem to indicate that in EFL collaborative pair work learners can profit from each other's knowledge, work together to move the task along and co-construct meaning. In this sense, "[...] students act as language users with the explicit analysis of language structures and forms emerging from difficulties experienced during the completion of tasks" (Ogilvie & Dunn 2010: 162).

Although this study has provided evidence about the role of task modality in EFL learner-learner interaction, there are limitations that should be addressed in future studies. For example, further research should consider a larger sample of participants to obtain more robust conclusions. Our study was experimental and took place in an EFL laboratory setting; future research should consider using classroom settings in order to have more ecological validity. Different instructional settings should also be analyzed in detail, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), as little experimental research has been conducted in this context known from the extra amount of input provided to learners in foreign language settings and a more interactive methodology (Basterrechea & García Mayo 2013; Dalton-Puffer 2011). Further studies should also consider learners' proficiency and its impact on level of engagement, as well as the relationship between task-modality and task complexity (Robinson 2011) since this study has reported differences between same-modality tasks that might be related to task difficulty.

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Appendix

Some examples of tasks employed in the present study:

Dictogloss (lower-intermediate level version)

Instructions: You will be listening to a text that will be read twice at normal speed. Your task will be to reproduce the original text as faithfully as possible and in a grammatically accurate form. The first time you listen to the text you should not write down anything; the second time your partner and you are allowed to write down some key words that you feel will help you to reproduce the original text. Together, you have to reproduce the original text and one of you will write the final version, which I will collect once you finish. Please, make sure you explain your choices.

Text: I was very optimistic when I went to meet Claire. My first impression was that she was very friendly and very extrovert. Physically she was my type: she was quite slim and not very tall with long dark hair, very pretty! And she was very funny too! She had a great sense of humor, we laughed a lot. But the only problem was that Claire was very talkative.

Text Editing (upper-intermediate level version)

Instructions: Read the following text. Work with your partner to insert the missing words and make whatever changes necessary to produce a meaningful and grammatically correct paragraph. Explain why you make those changes.

Original Text: Louise Woodward was the 18-year old nanny convicted in 1998 by a court in the United States of murdering the infant Matthew Eappen. Recently she spoke about her experience of a televised court case at the Edinburg Television Festival.

Louise criticized the televising of trials. ‘It should never be the case of looking into a defendant’s eyes and making a decision on their guilt or innocence’, she told the Edinburg Television Festival. ‘It should be the law that decides on a person’s guilt, but television, with its human and emotional interest, takes the attention away from this.’

Although she thought it was an inevitable development, she added: ‘Television turns everything into entertainment. We should remember that in the end courtrooms are serious places. It is people’s lives and future lives that you are dealing with. It is not a soap opera and people should not see it like that. Serious issues should not be trivialized.’ [...]

Modified Text: Louise Woodward was the 18-year nanny convicted in 1998 by a court in the United States of murder the infant Matthew Eappen. Recently she speak her experience of a televised court case the Edinburg Television Festival.

Louise criticize the televising of trials. ‘It should never be the case of looking into a defendant’s eyes and making a decision their guilt or innocence’, she told the Edinburg Television Festival. ‘It should be the law decides on a person’s guilt, but television, with its human and emotional interest, takes the attention from this.’

Although she thought it was an inevitable development, she add: ‘Television turn everything in entertainment. We should remember that in end courtrooms are serious places. It is people lives and future lives you are dealing with. It is not a soap opera and people should not see it like that. Serious things should not be trivialized.’ [...]

Picture Placement (in color in the original task)

Instructions: You and your partner each have a picture of the same bathroom with some bathroom items in it. The names of half of the items are in your bathroom and the other half of the names are in your partner's bathroom. **DO NOT LOOK AT YOUR PARTNER'S PICTURE!** You want to make your pictures look the same. You need to learn where the items are in your partner's bathroom so that you can put them in the correct place in your bathroom. For example, your partner does not know where the towel is. You know that it is hanging on the wall between the window and the bathtub.

Version A*Version B*

Picture Differences (in color in the original task)

Instructions: You and your partner each have a picture. Do not show your picture to your partner. Your pictures are very similar, but there are some differences. Ask your partner questions to find the differences between your pictures.

Version A



Version B



Note. Pictures taken from “Klik – Mental Fitness