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Impact of Instruction on the Use of L2 Discourse Markers

Todd A. Hernandez
Marquette University, todd.hernandez@marquette.edu

Eva Rodríguez-González
Miami University - Oxford

ARTICLES

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Todd Hernández, Marquette University, USA

Eva Rodríguez-González, Miami University, USA

Abstract

The present study compares the acquisition of L2 Spanish discourse markers under explicit and implicit learning conditions. Subjects were fifth-semester Spanish students assigned to one of three groups: an explicit instruction combined with input flood group, an input flood alone group, or a control group. The explicit instruction combined with input flood group was provided with explicit information about discourse markers. The group then received a flood of written input containing the target forms. Learners were also provided with communicative practice and feedback. The input flood group did not receive explicit instruction on discourse markers. The group received the same flood of input as the other experimental group. The input flood group was presented with communicative practice although there was no feedback. Prior to instruction, a questionnaire was administered to assess learners' previous knowledge and use of Spanish discourse markers. In addition, a speaking task was administered as a pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest. Their results indicated that both experimental treatments had a positive impact on learners' overall use of discourse markers. No significant differences were found between the two groups on the posttests. Quantitative and qualitative data, however, revealed that the explicit instruction combined with input flood group was more effective than the input flood group in employing new discourse markers to structure their narratives. Taken together, these results confirm the positive impact of instruction on the use of L2 Spanish discourse markers.

Keywords: explicit instruction, implicit instruction, input flood, Spanish discourse markers, form-focused instruction

Introduction

Although most second language acquisition (SLA) researchers agree that input is essential for successful SLA, some scholars continue to question whether explicit instruction, defined here as giving learners specific information or rule formulation about a target form (DeKeyser, 1995, 2003), has a significant role in adult second language (L2) learning. Some researchers suggest that explicit instruction enhances SLA. A growing number of empirical studies have found that explicit instruction has a positive effect on acquisition (Alanen, 1995; Carroll & Swain, 1993; de Graaff, 1997; DeKeyser, 1995, 1997; de la Fuente, 2009; N. Ellis, 1993; Hernández, 2008; Nagata, 1993; Nagata & Swisher, 1995; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Robinson, 1996, 1997; Rosa & Leow, 2004; Yoshimi, 2001; Zyzik & Marqués Pascual, 2012). Others, however, have offered evidence that explicit instruction is not a significant contributor to SLA (Hernández, 2011; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004; VanPatten & Oikennon, 1996). Given the general disagreement surrounding the role of explicit instruction in adult SLA, we investigate the effect of explicit instruction when combined with increased exposure to target forms, input flooding, compared to input flooding alone, on learners' use of L2 Spanish discourse markers.

Much of the research on explicit instruction has found that it enhances SLA (e.g., Alanen, 1995; de Graaff, 1997; DeKeyser, 1995; Hernández, 2008; Norris & Ortega, 2000). Alanen (1995) examined whether explicit instruction combined with textual enhancement was more effective than textual enhancement alone. She found that explicit rules-based instruction had a positive impact on acquisition. De Graaff (1997), who incorporated practice into his research design, examined the effect of explicit instruction on the learning of the artificial language eXperanto. The explicit group was exposed to rule presentation, and then engaged in practice of the target forms, whereas the implicit group practiced the target forms without receiving explicit rule presentation. The explicit group outperformed the implicit group on all assessment measures. These results suggested a positive effect for combining explicit instruction with practice of the target structure.

Yoshimi (2001) examined the impact of explicit instruction on L2 Japanese discourse markers. She found that explicit instruction had a positive effect on learners' use of discourse markers to frame extended discourse. Likewise, Hernández (2008) discovered that L2 learners exposed to explicit instruction outperformed a control group in their use of discourse markers to narrate a past event. In 2009, de la Fuente also examined the effect of explicit instruction on the development of L2 Spanish discourse markers. She too found that the explicit group outperformed the implicit group on a posttest measuring comprehension of

discourse markers, concluding that, given their lack of salience, explicit instruction and metalinguistic awareness might be a prerequisite for even advanced L2 learners to acquire discourse markers.

Although the findings of the previous studies suggest that explicit instruction enhances L2 learning, other researchers have offered evidence that refutes this assertion (Benati, 2004; Farley, 2004; Hernández, 2011; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004; VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996; Wong, 2004). These scholars argue that when L2 learners are exposed to an input-rich environment combined with meaningful task-based practice, explicit information about a target structure is not a requirement for acquisition. VanPatten and Oikennon (1996) found this to be the case with structured input activities. L2 Spanish learners were exposed to either explicit information prior to structured input activities or structured input activities alone. The authors found that the students in the structured input activities alone group made gains on sentence-level interpretation tasks equivalent to those students receiving both explicit instruction and structured input activities. VanPatten and Oikennon concluded that the structured input activities in themselves were sufficient to draw learners' attention to these forms and thus promote acquisition. These results were confirmed in a series of replication studies with different target forms (Benati, 2004; Farley, 2004; Fernández, 2008; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004; Wong, 2004).

Like structured input activities, input flood seeks to attract learners' attention to a target form by making it more frequent and salient in the input (Wong, 2005). Drawing on the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001) and the Frequency Hypothesis, (N. Ellis, 2002; Gass, 1997; Hatch & Wagner-Gough, 1976), some researchers argue that the increased exposure to a target form provided with input flood can assist L2 learners in noticing and then acquiring the form or structure.

Previous research on input flooding (Trahey, 1996; Trahey & White, 1993) has suggested that it is effective in increasing L2 learners' knowledge of what is possible in the target language. It does not assure, however, that learners understand what is not possible in the L2. VanPatten and Lesser (2006) agreed, stating that while input flood could increase the chances that an L2 learner would notice a specific target form, it did not guarantee noticing. Given the potential limitations of input flooding, researchers have begun to examine the effect of combining explicit instruction with input flood (Hernández, 2008, 2011; Reinders & Ellis, 2009; Zyzik & Marqués Pascual, 2012).

Hernández (2008), for example, examined whether explicit instruction combined with input flood had a greater effect than input flood alone on L2 Spanish learners' use of discourse markers. The explicit group was provided with explicit information on how to use discourse markers to narrate a past event. Learners were then provided with a flood of written input consisting of one written text containing 15 discourse markers. The implicit group was exposed to the same flood of input as the explicit group but did not receive explicit information about the target form. Results showed that the group who received explicit instruction and input flood used more discourse markers on the posttest-speaking task than the input flood alone group.

The success of input flooding might be subject to factors such as: the timing of posttests, the length of treatment and number of exposures to the target linguistic structure (Hernández, 2011; Zyzik & Marqués Pascual, 2012), and the nature of the target structure (Reinders & Ellis, 2009; Zyzik & Marqués Pascual, 2012). For example, whereas Hernández (2008) did not use a delayed posttest, Hernández (2011) incorporated a delayed posttest in order to better assess the long-term retention of discourse markers. In addition, subjects in Hernández (2011) received a longer and more intense input flood treatment (60 discourse markers across three separate texts in 2011 versus 15 discourse markers in one text in 2008).

L2 Spanish Discourse Markers

Our target linguistic feature was Spanish discourse markers used in spoken narratives to sequence and structure information when narrating and describing a past event or experience (ACTFL, 1999; Portolés, 2001; Rivas & Brown, 2009). Discourse markers function at a referential, interpersonal, structural, and cognitive level as signposts that orient speakers and listeners during a communicative exchange (Aijmer, 2002; Fung & Carter, 2007; Jones, 2009). Some examples include *así que* (so that), *cuando* (when), *después* (after), *en cuanto* (as soon as), and *entonces* (then or therefore) (cf. Table 1 below with a list of discourse markers used in the current research design).

Discourse markers represent a significant challenge to L2 classroom learners. First, despite their importance for spoken language, instructional materials rarely target discourse markers as an important goal of classroom instruction (de la Fuente, 2009; Jones, 2009). Second, discourse markers are difficult to acquire because of their lack of perceptual salience for even advanced L2 learners (de la Fuente, 2009; Hernández, 2008, 2011) and perceived low communicative value (VanPatten, 1985) in comparison to other forms. L2 learners, who

often tend to string together nouns as concrete objects in order to establish the meaning or purpose of an utterance rather than processing target language forms, might not notice discourse markers in the input (VanPatten, 1996, 2004). Further, as Andersen (1984, 1990) describes in his One-to-One Principle, L2 learners often assume that each specific language form has one specific meaning and function. While this might be the case with some target structures, this is not so with discourse markers. The same discourse marker can have distinct uses, each dependent on a specific context and on the speaker's intentions (Aijmer, 2002; Fung & Carter, 2007). A final challenge is that discourse markers can and do occur in the initial, middle, or final position of an utterance. Input processing research suggests that L2 learners perceive and process forms in sentence initial position before those in the middle and final position (VanPatten, 1996, 2004). Discourse markers in sentence initial position would therefore be considered to be more salient than those in the middle or final position.

As with other aspects of L2 vocabulary acquisition, L2 discourse markers are acquired in an incremental fashion (Schmitt, 2000; Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham, 2001; Terrazas Gallego & Agustín Llach, 2009). Knowledge of discourse markers can therefore be conceived of as a continuum of progressive degrees of knowledge (Faerch, Haastrup & Phillipson, 1984; Palmberg, 1987; Wesche and Paribakht, 1996). In this regard, Jiang (2000) identifies three phases of acquisition. In the first phase, language learners focus on formal specifications of a specific lexical item and relate new L2 forms to their L1 equivalent translations. During the second phase, as experience with the target language increases, Jiang points to a 'L1 lemma mediation stage' where learners add semantic and syntactic properties of specific new words with their L1 meanings (N. Ellis, 1997). The third phase consists of a movement away from L1 mediation toward integration of L2 lexical items as learners continue to gain more experience with the target language and acquire more semantic, syntactic, and morphological knowledge (Agustín Llach, 2011).

Wesche and Paribakht (1996) created a *Vocabulary Knowledge Scale* with five stages of knowledge: (1) "I don't remember having seen this word before"; (2) "I have seen this word before but I don't know what it means"; (3) " I have seen this word before and I think it means..."; (4) I know this word. It means..."; and (5) "I can use this word in a sentence such as…" The main purpose of their scale was not to calculate general vocabulary knowledge, but rather to capture the initial stages or levels in learning a word which are subject to self-report and which are precise enough to reflect gains during a brief instructional period (27). Whether seen as a continuum or as an increment, it is reasonable to argue in favor of stages of development to also account for the acquisition of L2 discourse markers. We would

therefore predict an initial stage where a new discourse marker is introduced. If the new discourse marker is noticed (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001), the learner searches for its direct correlate with a pre-existing L1 meaning. A similar development in the research of L2 lexical errors is observable where L1 meanings are transferred to L2 words use in an "interlanguage" stage of SLA (Selinker, 1972). Lexical errors occur as language learners are not yet aware of L1-L2 distinctions in terms of word knowledge and use of L2 discourse markers. As frequency of occurrence of the new L2 discourse marker increases, so does the incorporation of more formal properties of the new marker such as its semantic and syntactic features.

Limitations of the previous studies reviewed above make it difficult to assess the relative contributions of explicit and implicit instruction on SLA. For one, L2 knowledge was often measured with discrete-point or controlled production assessments (e.g., Alanen, 1995; de la Fuente, 2009) that would seem to favor explicit instruction. The length of treatments was also often short or gave language learners limited exposure to the target structure (e.g., Alanen, 1995; de la Fuente, 2009; Hernández, 2008; Yoshimi, 2001; Zyzik & Marqués Pascual, 2012). As N. Ellis (1993, 2005) suggests, implicit instruction takes a longer time to be effective because it is contingent on frequent exposure to the target form in order to induce noticing of rules and linguistic patterns. Lack of delayed posttests in some studies could also favor explicit instruction (e.g., de la Fuente, 2009; Hernández, 2008; Yoshimi, 2001; Zyzik & Marqués Pascual, 2012). In some studies, learners did not engage in task-based, meaningful practice after exposure to the target form (e.g., Alanen, 1995; DeKeyser, 1995, 1997; de la Fuente, 2009). Swain (1995, 2005) would argue that output practice could further draw learners' attention to target forms. In addition, as far as we know, studies have not measured previous knowledge of L2 discourse markers. By measuring previous knowledge of L2 Spanish discourse markers in our current investigation, we can better determine if instruction had an impact on learning of the target structure or if it was because the target structure was familiar to our L2 learners or was part of their L1 knowledge base.

The Present Study

The present study expands on previous research on the effect of explicit and implicit instruction on the acquisition of L2 Spanish discourse markers. With the exception of de la Fuente (2009) and Hernández (2008, 2011), few studies have examined the impact of instruction on the acquisition of discourse markers for L2 classroom learners of Spanish. Given the importance of discourse markers for advanced language competence (ACTFL, 1999; de la Fuente, 2009; Hernández, 2008, 2011; Yoshimi, 2001), this is an important but

underrepresented area of SLA research. Notable features of the current research design include: (1) We measure previous knowledge of L2 Spanish discourse markers to determine the impact of instructional approaches on the use of new or unfamiliar L2 discourse markers versus more familiar discourse markers; (2) We measure acquisition with a picture-description task to evaluate spontaneous, communicative L2 use; (3) We include a delayed posttest four-weeks after instruction to measure long-term retention of discourse markers; (4) Our treatment, consisting of two 50-minute instructional sessions, is longer than most studies comparing the effects of explicit and implicit instruction; (5) Both quantitative and qualitative results provide insights into the effect of instruction on the two experimental groups' use of discourse markers over time. We addressed two research questions:

RQ 1: Does explicit instruction combined with input flood have a greater impact on L2 Spanish learners' overall use of discourse markers than input flood alone?
RQ2: Does explicit instruction combined with input flood have a greater impact on L2 Spanish learners' use of new or unfamiliar discourse markers than input flood alone?

Method

Subjects

Our subjects were 53 L2 Spanish learners recruited from three sections of a fifth-semester Intermediate Spanish Grammar Review course at a Midwestern University in the United States. The first two sections of the course were assigned as the experimental groups ($n = 22$) and ($n = 21$), and the third section as the control group ($n = 10$). All subjects were native speakers of English. Most had taken four years of high school Spanish. The regular classroom instructor taught all three sections of the course to eliminate potential differences in instruction.

Table 1: List of thirty seven Spanish discourse markers used in the present study with L2 Spanish ratings of word familiarity and use based on a 5 point Likert-scale: 1= "I have never heard or used this word in Spanish"; 2= I have heard this word in Spanish but I do not know what it means and I have not used it in Spanish; 3= "I sometimes hear this word in Spanish. I know what it means but I do not use it often in Spanish"; 4= "I often hear this word in Spanish. I know what it means and I sometimes use it in Spanish"; 5= "I often hear this word in Spanish. I know what it means and I often use it in Spanish".

Spanish Discourse marker		Means of familiarity ratings (1-5)	Word knowledge based on degree of familiarity
Antes	Before	4.98	Very familiar
Después	Afterward	4.98	Very familiar
Pero	But	4.98	Very familiar
Durante	During	4.95	Very familiar
Porque	Because	4.95	Very familiar
Cuando	When	4.93	Very familiar
También	Also	4.90	Very familiar
Por ejemplo	For instance	4.88	Very familiar
Entonces 1	Then	4.83	Very familiar
Primero	First	4.80	Very familiar
Mientras	While	4.75	Very familiar
Finalmente	Finally	4.73	Very familiar
Sabes que	You know that	4.68	Very familiar
Pues	So	4.53	Very familiar
Por eso	Therefore	4.50	Very familiar
En realidad	In fact	4.59	Very familiar
Entonces 2	Therefore	4.53	Very familiar
Hasta que	Until	4.18	Familiar
Al principio	At first	3.90	Familiar
Más tarde	Later	3.88	Familiar
Al contrario	On the contrary	3.75	Familiar
De repente	Suddenly	3.58	Familiar
Es que	The thing is that	3.50	Familiar

En cambio	Instead	3.48	Familiar
Sin embargo	However	3.45	Familiar
Además	Besides	3.40	Familiar
Spanish Discourse marker		**Means of familiarity ratings (1-5)**	**Word knowledge based on degree of familiarity**
Es decir	That is	3.23	Familiar
Así que	So	3.20	Familiar
De hecho	As a matter of fact	2.78	Not familiar
Mejor dicho	Better said	2.73	Not familiar
Por lo tanto	Therefore	2.68	Not familiar
En cuanto	As soon as	2.65	Not familiar
Ya que	Since, given that	2.40	Not familiar
En el fondo	Deep down	2.23	Not familiar
A todo esto	Speaking of that	2.08	Not familiar
Puesto que	Since, given that	2.05	Not familiar
O sea	That is	1.90	Not familiar

Treatment

Instruction consisted of two 50-minute sessions in a one-week time period. The same teacher was responsible for conducting instructional activities for both experimental groups and the control group. Prior to the treatment period, one of the researchers conducted a two-hour training for the teacher on how to implement instruction. Table 2 outlines the activities for the two treatments:

Table 2: Comparison of Explicit Instruction + Input Flood Group and Input Flood Group Instruction

Explicit Instruction + Input Flood Group	**Input Flood Group**
Explicit instruction of discourse markers	---
Flood of input	Flood of input
Communicative practice	Communicative practice
Feedback on discourse markers and preterite and imperfect	Feedback on preterite and imperfect
Group writing tasks	Group writing tasks

The explicit instruction and input flood (EI + IF) group (n = 22) received explicit information in the form of a handout (cf. handout in Figure 1 of Hernández 2011: pp. 166) on the function and use of discourse markers to narrate an event or experience in the past. Learners were provided with a flood of written input. The input flood consisted of a total of three texts.[1] The teacher asked learners to examine how the narrators in each of the texts used the preterite and imperfect and discourse markers to structure their narratives. Learners responded to comprehension questions concerning the content of each reading passage, and then underlined preterite and imperfect verbs and discourse markers in order to further draw their attention to these forms. Responses to both activities were reviewed with the teacher. The input flood alone (IF) group (n = 21) did not receive explicit instruction on the function and use of discourse markers. The IF group received the same flood of input as the EI + IF group. The teacher asked learners to observe how the narrators used the preterite and imperfect to shape their narratives. Learners responded to comprehension questions and then underlined preterite and imperfect verbs. Responses to these activities were reviewed with the teacher.

Both experimental groups performed a series of three information gap activities adapted from Caycedo Garner, Rusch, and Domínguez (1991) and Rusch, Domínguez, and Caycedo Garner (2005). Information gap activities were selected as a core component of the two experimental treatments for their potential role in drawing learner attention to linguistic forms that are often difficult to notice and acquire (Pica, Kang, & Sauro, 2006). The goal of these activities was to provide learners with communicative practice in narrating a series of events in the past. Furthermore, each of the information gap activities was designed to elicit use of the target structure, Spanish discourse markers. All activities required students to narrate a series of events using a set of pictures. In the first task, students exchanged information about an unfortunate incident that happened to a friend. In the second task, students had to narrate a disastrous spring break vacation. In the third task, students were asked to arrange a series of events in chronological order (for more detail on the activities cf. Hernández, 2011).

The control group (n = 10) was not exposed to either of the treatments outlined above for the two experimental groups. However, students in the control group engaged in tasks and activities that required them to narrate in the past, as it was one the instructional goals of their class.

Data Gathering and Assessment

In order to determine the degree of previous knowledge and use of L2 Spanish discourse markers of L2 Spanish Intermediate learners, familiarity ratings were obtained through a questionnaire administered to 40 students enrolled in a different section of the same course. The questionnaire measured degree of familiarity with and use of L2 Spanish discourse markers by means of a 5-point Likert scale based on Wesche and Paribakht's (1996) *Vocabulary Knowledge Scale* (see Table 2 below for a complete list and ratings of Spanish discourse markers used). It also measured degree of knowledge of Spanish discourse markers by asking participants to provide the English translation of Spanish discourse markers. A total of 66 items were rated and translated. A total of 37 items were discourse markers and the remaining 29 were filter words (verbs, nouns and adjectives). We coded discourse markers by degree of familiarity based on the ratings provided by the 40 students that served as outside raters. A discourse marker was coded as "very familiar/know the meaning and use" for mean ratings ranging from 4.5 or higher on the 5-point Likert scale; "familiar/know the meaning but not regular use" for mean ratings from 3.0 to 4.49; and "not familiar/do not know the meaning or/and use" for mean ratings of 2.99 or lower.

In order to examine learners' use of L2 discourse markers, the same picture-description task from a Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) test was administered one week prior to instruction (pretest), a week after instruction (immediate posttest), and four weeks after instruction (delayed posttest). The picture-description task allowed us to measure the learners' productive knowledge of Spanish discourse markers and provided a similar communicative context to what took place during classroom instruction. For the picture-description task, learners read the directions in English and then had 30 seconds to prepare. Learners had 70 seconds to complete the speaking task. During the period of time between both posttests, the classroom teacher did not focus on past narration in Spanish as the primary goal of instruction.

Results

We report on results on the number and distribution of L2 Spanish discourse markers used on the pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest for the two experimental groups and the control group. Subjects were asked to submit each speech sample using *Audacity* (pretest, immediate and delayed posttest) via the course online platform on a specific day of the semester. Subjects were given specific instructions about the *spontaneity* of the description of pictures (no script) and the length of the speech. A graduate student transcribed all speech samples. The graduate student was trained by one of the researchers

in terms of speech notations and coding procedures. The transcriptions reflected actual production of L2 Spanish. In addition to quantitative results, qualitative data in the form of transcripts from the three speaking tasks provide further insights into learners' discourse marker use.

Frequency and Nature of Distribution of L2 Spanish Discourse markers

Learners' use of Spanish discourse markers on the pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest was calculated[2] and compared to the control group. A visual representation of this data is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Frequency effect of discourse markers on Spanish speaking tasks*: Means and Standard Deviations based on total counts of discourse markers per each speaking task (pretest and posttests) in two experimental groups (group 1 represents Explicit Instruction + Input Flood treatment; group 2 represents Input Flood treatment) and a control group (group 3). Means for each condition are shown above each bar.
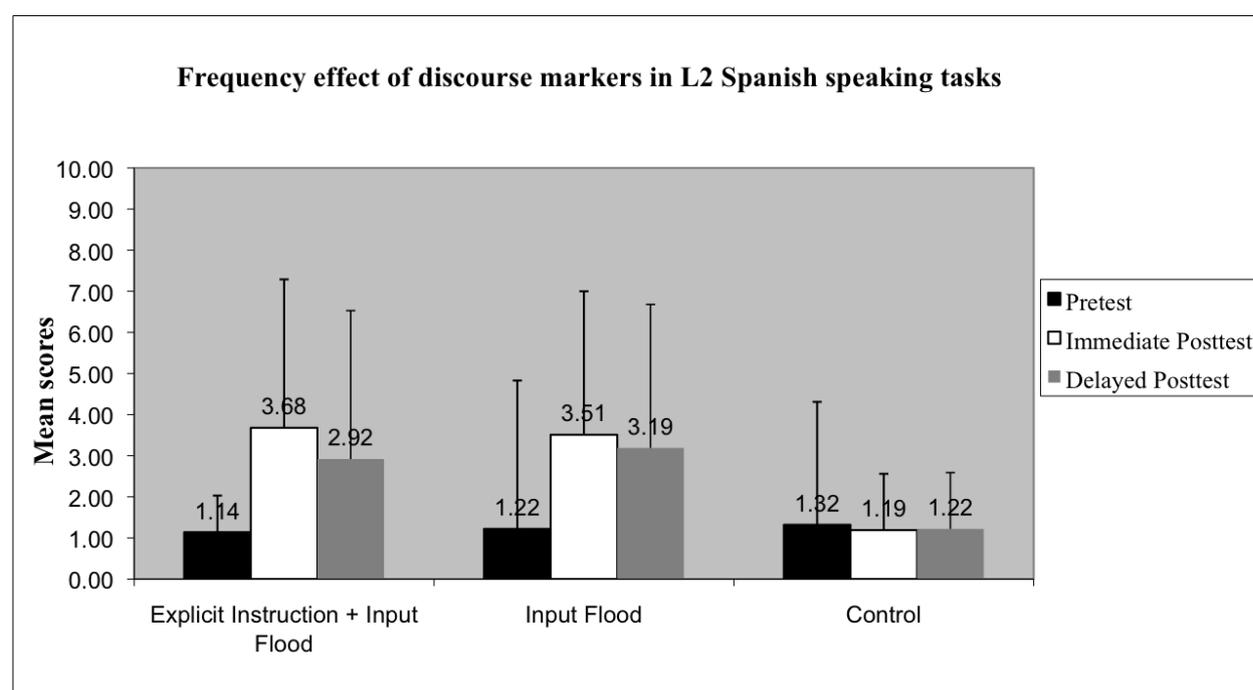
As shown in Figure 1, the EI + IF group used an average of 1.14 discourse markers ($M =$ 1.14, $SD = 0.89$) on the pretest. This group increased their use of discourse markers on the immediate posttest ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 3.61$) but slightly decreased its frequency on the posttest ($M= 2.92$, $SD= 2.99$). The IF group used an average of 1.22 discourse markers on the pretest ($M = 1.22$, $SD = 1.20$). This group increased their discourse marker use to 3.51 ($M =$

3.51, SD = 3.49) on the immediate posttest, and maintained this increase on the delayed posttest (M = 3.19, SD = 3.25). Unlike the two experimental groups, the control group's means and standard deviations were constant across the three speaking tasks.

A repeated-measures ANOVA with one between group factor (treatment) and one within-group factor (time of test) was performed on the groups' scores using a General Linear Model. This yielded significant results for the interaction of treatment group with time of test, F (4, 216 10.108, p = .000, as well as significant main effects for treatment, F (2, 108) =5.299, p =.006, and time of test, F (2, 216) = 33.567, p = .000. Separate univariate ANOVAs were conducted on the pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest results. No significant differences were found between the three groups on the pretest, F (2, 108) = .236, p = .790. Significant differences were found on the immediate posttest, F (2, 108) = 7.948, p = .001 and the delayed posttest, F (1, 108) = 5.979, p =.003. A Tukey HSD post hoc analysis revealed that both experimental groups outperformed the control group on the immediate posttest (EI+IF vs. control, p = .002 and IF vs. control, p = .003). No significant differences were found between the two experimental groups on the immediate posttest (p = .971). On the delayed posttest, the Tukey HSD again found significant differences between the two experimental groups and the control group (EI+IF vs. control, p = .019 and IF vs. control, p = .005). Both experimental groups outperformed the control group on the delayed posttest. When comparing the performance between both experimental groups on the delayed posttest, no significant differences were found (EI+IF vs. IF, p = .900). The results outlined above indicated that both experimental treatments had a positive impact on learners' use of discourse markers, given that both groups outperformed the control group on the immediate and delayed posttests after obtaining similar scores on the pretest.

Table 3 below shows the distribution of twenty five Spanish discourse markers on the pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest for both experimental groups and the control group. Although thirty seven discourse markers were used in the teaching materials and activities, only twenty five of them were used by L2 Spanish learners in their speaking tasks:

Table 3: *Distribution of twenty five different discourse markers on speaking tasks*: Total counts of different types discourse markers per each speaking task (pretest and posttests) in two experimental groups (group 1 represents Explicit Instruction + Input Flood intervention procedure; group 2 represents Input Flood intervention procedure) and a control group (group 3). Information in parenthesis corresponds to percentage of use per item.

Discourse marker	Pretest			Immediate Posttest			Delayed Posttest		
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Antes			2 (4.76)	3 (2.83)	1 (1)	1 (2.56)	2 (2.35)	1 (1.13)	
Así (que)	1 (2.63)	3 (7.5)		4 (3.77)	4 (4)	2 (5.12)	6 (7.05)	1 (1.13)	1 (2.56)
Cuando		6 (15)	9 (21.42)	29 (27.35)	29 (29)	6 (15.38)	20 (23.52)	21 (23.86)	10 (25.64)
De repente				1 (0.94)			1 (1.17)		
Después	4 (10.52)	4 (10)	8 (19.04)	7 (6.60)	6 (6)	6 (15.38)	6 (7.05)	5 (5.68)	3 (7.69)
Durante		1 (2.5)			2 (2)			2 (2.27)	
En cuanto				1 (0.94)					
En el fondo				2 (1.88)					
En realidad			1 (2.38)		4 (4)	2 (5.12)		4 (4.54)	2 (5.12)
Entonces (then)	6 (15.78)	5 (12.5)	6 (14.28)	7 (6.60)	7 (7)	3 (7.69)	8 (9.41)	6 (6.81)	3 (7.69)
Finalmente				2 (1.88)	2 (2)		1 (1.17)	2 (2.27)	
Entonces (therefore)	2 (5.26)			3 (2.83)	1 (1)		2 (2.35)	1 (1.13)	
Mejor dicho									
Mientras							1 (1.17)		1 (2.56)
Pero	12 (31.57)	9 (22.5)	10 (23.80)	20 (18.86)	23 (23)	10 (25.64)	16 (18.82)	18 (20.45)	10 (25.64)
Por ejemplo		1 (2.5)							1 (2.56)
Por eso	4 (10.52)	1 (2.5)		5 (4.71)	2 (2)			4 (4.54)	
Por lo tanto									
Porque	4 (10.52)	3 (7.5)	3 (7.14)	9 (8.49)	9 (9)	4 (10.25)	10 (11.76)	10 (11.36)	5 (2.56)
Pues		1 (2.5)			1 (1)			2 (2.27)	
Puesto que						2 (5.12)			1 (2.56)
Sabes que								2 (2.27)	
Sin embargo				1 (0.94)	1 (1)	1 (2.56)	1 (1.17)		
También	4 (10.52)	6 (15)	3 (7.14)	9 (8.49)	8 (8)	2 (5.12)	8 (9.41)	9 (10.22)	2 (5.12)
Ya que	1 (2.63)			3 (2.83)			3 (3.52)		
Total	**38**	**40**	**42**	**106**	**100**	**39**	**85**	**88**	**39**

As shown in Table 3, participants in the two experimental groups used a wider range of discourse markers after instruction. The EI + IF group used nine different discourse markers on the pretest, increasing this number to 15 on the immediate posttest, and then 13 on the

delayed posttest. The IF group used 11 different markers on the pretest, 15 on the immediate posttest, and 15 again on the delayed posttest. The control group, on the other hand, used a quasi-identical range of different discourse markers for each test period (eight on the pretest, 11 and 10 on each posttest).

The present study also considered the influence of previous knowledge of Spanish discourse markers in order to determine the impact of instruction based on "previously known" or familiar discourse markers and "new" or non-familiar discourse markers in L2 Spanish speaking tasks. As shown in Table 4, the majority of the discourse markers used in the present study in both experimental groups were familiar to the participants before the study began. The experimental treatments helped participants to consistently use familiar discourse markers based on their L2 Spanish vocabulary repertoire. In terms of frequency, the two experimental groups used more familiar discourse markers on the immediate test (198 total) than on the delayed test (169 total). The experimental groups did not significantly differ in their use of discourse markers on the immediate posttest (100 discourse markers from the EI + IF group and 98 from the IF group) and on the delayed posttest (82 discourse markers from the EI +IF group and 87 from the IF group).

Table 4: *Distribution of previously known (familiar) discourse markers on speaking tasks*: Total counts of new discourse markers for two speaking posttest tasks (immediate and delayed) in the two experimental groups where these two discourse markers were introduced (group 1 represents Explicit Instruction + Input Flood intervention procedure; group 2 represents Input Flood intervention procedure). Counts for familiar discourse markers are based on 3 or higher subjective ratings in a 1-5 Likert-scale of familiarity ratings of discourse markers (cf. Table 1 in methods section). Degree of familiarity was subdivided into two main groups: "familiar" discourse markers (3-4 subjective ratings) and "very familiar" discourse markers (4.5-5 subjective ratings). Information in parenthesis corresponds to percentage of use per item.

Previously known (familiar) Discourse marker	Degree of familiarity	Immediate Posttest		Delayed Posttest	
		Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
Así que	Familiar	4 (4)	4 (4.08)	6 (7.31)	1 (1.14)
De repente	Familiar	1 (1)		1 (1.21)	
Sin embargo	Familiar	1 (1)	1 (1.02)	1 (1.21)	
Antes	Very familiar	3 (3)	1 (1.02)	2 (2.43)	1 (1.14)
Cuando	Very familiar	29 (29)	29 (29.59)	20 (24.39)	21 (24.13)
Después	Very familiar	7 (7)	6 (6.12)	6 (7.31)	5 (5.74)
Durante	Very familiar		2 (2.04)		2 (2.29)
En realidad	Very familiar		4 (4.08)		4 (4.59)
Entonces (then)	Very familiar	7 (7)	7 (7.14)	8 (9.75)	6 (6.89)
Finalmente	Very familiar	2 (2)	2 (2.04)	1 (1.21)	2 (2.29)
Entonces (therefore)	Very familiar	2 (2)	2 (2.04)	1 (1.21)	2 (2.29)
Mientras	Very familiar			1 (1.21)	
Pero	Very familiar	20 (20)	23 (23.46)	16 (19.51)	18 (20.68)
Por eso	Very familiar	5 (5)	2 (2.04)		4 (4.59)

Porque	Very familiar	9 (9)	9 (9.18)	10 (12.19)	10 (11.49)
Pues	Very familiar		1 (1.02)		2 (2.29)
Sabes que	Very familiar				2 (2.29)
También	Very familiar	9 (9)	8 (8.16)	8 (9.75)	9 (10.34)
Total		**100**	**98**	**82**	**87**

The distribution of "familiar" discourse markers for the two experimental treatment groups revealed similar ranges on the immediate posttest and on the delayed posttest. Both experimental groups used 13 discourse markers on the immediate posttest and 15 discourse markers on the delayed posttest.

The analysis of "new" discourse markers is of a particular interest for the present study. When measuring the effectiveness of a specific teaching intervention, the use of new vocabulary becomes crucial after a teaching intervention has occurred. None of the participants in the control group used the "new" discourse markers. Out of the nine "new" discourse markers that were used in both experimental treatment groups, four of them were present in the speech samples on the immediate and delayed posttests. As shown in Table 5, the causative discourse marker "ya que" (English "because/since") was used in both posttests. On the immediate posttest, the EI+IF group used more new discourse markers than the IF group (cf. Table 5, six and two discourse markers respectively). The EI+IF group also used three different discourse markers as compared to the one discourse marker attested in the IF group. Despite its low occurrence, it is important to highlight that these results revealed that instruction does appear to facilitate the emergence and use of new discourse markers in L2 speaking tasks as shown in the immediate and delayed posttests.

Table 5: *Distribution of nine new (non familiar) Spanish discourse markers on speaking tasks*: Total counts of new discourse markers for two speaking posttest tasks (immediate and delayed) in the two experimental groups where these two discourse markers were introduced (group 1 represents Explicit Instruction + Input Flood intervention procedure; group 2 represents Input Flood intervention procedure)

New (non familiar) Discourse marker	Immediate Posttest		Delayed Posttest	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
A todo esto				
De hecho				
En cuanto	1 (16.66)			
En el fondo	2 (33.33)			
Mejor dicho				
O sea				
Por lo tanto				
Puesto que		2		
Ya que	3 (50)		3	1
Total	**6**	**2**	**3**	**1**

Qualitative data from Speech Samples

In this section we examined the efficiency of use of Spanish discourse markers when being incorporated into Spanish narrations of stories in the past. We followed Yoshimi's (2001) criteria to assess effective discourse markers in order to provide organization, coherence, and cohesion to a speech narrative. A discourse marker was considered to be effective if it contributed to structuring and sequencing of information or if it highlighted details of the narration. Overall, participants confirmed their perceptions from the preliminary questionnaire that was distributed before instruction occurred. The most effectively used discourse markers were Spanish *cuando* (when) (cf. Table 4, 58 and 41 tokens on the immediate and delayed posttests respectively) and Spanish *pero* (but) (cf. Table 4, 43 on the immediate posttest and 34 on the delayed posttest). Both discourse markers were rated as "very familiar" before the study took place and were effectively used in the three groups as seen in examples (a), (b) and (c). No examples of non-target-like use of the Spanish discourse markers *cuando* and *pero* were found in the narratives.

Spanish *cuando*

(a) "Carmen fue a centro commercial para comprar una vestida nueva. Ella buscaba una vestida muy bonita y <u>cuando</u> ella quería pagar para su vestida, ella realizaba que no era su vestida, era el vestida de otra chica en el centro comercial…" (IF group, immediate posttest)

[Carmen went to the mall to buy a new dress. She looked for a very nice dress and <u>when</u> she wanted to pay for her dress, she realized that it was not her dress, it was another girl's dress in the mall]

(b) "La semana pasada fue el cumpleaños de mi amiga Carmen y Carmen fue a la tienda de ropas para comprar una falda nueva y <u>cuando</u> compró la falda y regresó a casa realizó que no fue la falda correcta y la falda que compró fue en las manos de otra chica…" (EI+IF group, immediate posttest)

[Last week it was my friend Carmen's b-day and Carmen went to the clothing store to by a new skirt and when she bought the skirt and came back home she realized that it was not the right skirt and the skirt she bought was in another girl's hands]

(c) "Mi amiga Carmen para su cumpleaños quería comprar un vestido y fue a la tienda, probó el vestido, pero tuvo una problema <u>cuando</u> quería pagar…Otra chica llevó su vestido…" (Control group, immediate posttest)

[My friend Carmen wanted to buy a dress for her b-day and went to the store, tried the dress on, but had a problem <u>when </u>she wanted to pay…another girl took her dress]

Spanish discourse markers *porque* (because) and *también* (also) were effectively used by all three groups in the three time periods. Both discourse markers added coherence to the narratives in terms of providing detailed information about a specific event. However, neither of them had been identified by L2 learners as commonly used discourse markers (cf. Table 4, 34 tokens for *porque* and 26 tokens for *también*).

Participants identified *aunque* (although) and *sin embargo* (however) as the most difficult discourse markers for them to use when speaking Spanish. Data transcripts from the control group revealed that participants still do not know how to use these discourse markers to structure and sequence their narratives. Example in (d) from the control group shows that the participant knew the contrastive meaning of *sin embargo* but used it in the middle of a sentence where *pero* would have been more appropriate. This participant did not know the

allocation and use of *sin embargo* at the very beginning of a sentence (vs. using *pero* to start an adversative dependent clause). However, the accuracy of use of *aunque* and *sin embargo* was very high in both experimental groups (97% accurate in the case of *aunque* and 87% for *sin embargo*). In the case of *sin embargo*, the EI + IF group showed a more appropriate use of the discourse marker than the IF group. Examples from immediate and delayed posttests are provided in (d), (e), (f) and (g):

Spanish *sin embargo*

(d) "Carmen fue a la tienda para comprar el vestido nuevo para la fiesta <u>sin embargo</u> tuve un problema allí…" (immediate posttest, control group)

[Carmen went to the store to buy a new dress <u>however</u> had a problem there]

(e) "Fue a la tienda a comprar un vestido. Encontró un vestido perfecto…era un día muy suerte…<u>sin embargo</u> cuando estaba comprando el vestido otra mujer compró el vestido también…" (immediate posttest, IF group)

[(She) went to the store to buy a dress. She found the perfect dress…it was a very lucky day…however when she was buying the dress another woman bought the dress as well]

(f) "La semana pasada fue el cumpleaños de Carmen y fue a la tienda para comprar una vestida nueva…se vistió una vestida y le gustaba mucho…ella decidió comprar la vestida y estaba feliz…<u>sin embargo</u> algo pasó que cambió todo…otra chica compró el vestido por error…" (immediate posttest, EI + IF group)

[Last week it was Carmen's b-day and she went to the store to buy a new dress… she put the dress on and she liked it very much…she decided to buy the dress and was happy…<u>however</u> something happened that changed everything…another girl bought the dress by mistake]

Data transcripts from the EI+IF group also revealed a more effective use than the IF group of "new" discourse markers. As a reminder to the reader, none of these new markers were used by participants in the control group. In addition to using more new discourse markers in the EI+IF group (cf. Table 5), participants in this group used the Spanish causative marker *ya que* (since, given that) more effectively than participants in the IF group in delayed posttests as attested in (g). In (h) the participant used *ya que* when another causative discourse marker such as Spanish *que* [that] would have sounded more coherent in the narrative:

Spanish *ya que*

(g) "Ayer Carmen fue al centro commercial con su mejor amiga…ella quería un
vestido para su fiesta de cumpleaños…decidió que quería un vestido blanco <u>ya que</u>
era verano y tenía la piel después del sol…" (EI+IF group, delayed posttest)
[Yesterday Carmen went to the mall with her best friend…she wanted a dress for her
b-day…she decided she wanted to buy a white dress since it was summer and had a
tanned skin]

(h) "Un día una mujer compró un vestido nuevo <u>ya que</u> miró en la tienda para su
cumpleaños…" (IF group, delayed posttest)
[One day a woman decided to buy a new dress <u>since</u> she saw (it) in the store for her
b-day]

Examples in (i) and (f) from the EI+IF group show how a participant attempted to use a
recently acquired discourse marker such as the Spanish *en el fondo* [deep-down] with the
goal of concluding a statement instead of the Spanish discourse marker *finalmente* (finally).
Inaccurate uses of new and emerging vocabulary (Meara, 1997) are common when an L2
learner is attempting to use a new word:

(i) "Carmen regresé a la tienda y buscó el vestido…estaba muy preocupada porque
necesitó el vestido para la fiesta…<u>en el fondo</u> la muchacha de la tienda le dio el
vestido. La otra mujer retornó el vestido unos minutos antes" (immediate posttest)
[Carmen came back to the store and looked for the dress. she was very worried
because she needed the dress for the party….<u>deep down</u> the girl from the store gave
her the dress. The other woman returned the dress some minutos ago]

(f) "Carmen estaba contenta con su fiesta y la problema con el vestido era historia…<u>en
el fondo</u> ella tuvo un buen tiempo con sus amigos (immediate posttest)
[Carmen was happy with her party and the problem with the dress was history…<u>deep
down</u> she had a great time with her friends]

Discussion

Our first research question examined whether EI + IF had a greater impact on learners'
overall use of discourse markers than IF alone. We found that both experimental treatments
had a positive effect on discourse marker use and distribution in comparison to the control

group. Data transcripts also showed how both groups used discourse markers in the posttest speaking tasks to sequence and structure information in their narratives. These findings, taken together, indicate that EI + IF did not have a greater impact on learners' overall use of Spanish discourse markers than IF alone. Indeed, it appears that when combined with meaningful, task-essential language practice, IF alone is sufficient to promote discourse marker use to narrate a past event. The answer to this first research question therefore confirms previous studies on the positive impact of input flood on SLA (e.g., Hernández, 2011).

The second research question was concerned with whether or not EI + IF had a greater impact on learners' use of new or unfamiliar discourse markers than IF alone. Quantitative results showed that both experimental groups used more of these discourse markers on the posttest speaking tasks than the control group. In comparing the two experimental groups, however, it appears that the EI + IF treatment was more effective in drawing learners' attention (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001) to new or unfamiliar discourse markers, given that this group used more of them on the posttests than the IF alone group. The EI + IF group's more consistent use of new discourse markers during the posttest speaking tasks suggests that they were more aware of the need to use a wide range of target forms to sequence and structure their narratives. This finding is consistent with Yoshimi (2001) and de la Fuente (2009). Yoshimi (2001), for example, found that those learners who received explicit information about Japanese interactional discourse markers were better able to incorporate them into extended discourse. Thus, interventions such as E+IF used in the present study made a positive impact on the use of new discourse markers since it focused on noticing of new L2 vocabulary. L2 learners begin with noticing the ways in which these new vocabulary items differ from L1 equivalents (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001). For noticing to occur, however, frequency of occurrence of new L2 vocabulary in the language input is crucial. We have seen how a recently acquired word such as Spanish *en el fondo* [deep-down] in the present study is used by L2 learners with some degree of inadequacy (Meara, 1997). It is important to note that the small sample size of new L2 discourse markers such as *en el fondo* and its limited exposure in the communicative activities presented in the training sessions does not allow the results to strongly favor E+IF interventions instead of IF only. Future studies should measure the degree of exposure and frequency of occurrence of newly introduced L2 vocabulary so that learners and instructors do not overuse specific discourse markers that are either frequently used in English and Spanish or are already known in L2 Spanish.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative results suggest that the combined effect of EI + IF did not have a greater impact on learners' overall use of Spanish discourse markers than IF alone. Our findings suggest that input flood is sufficient to foster discourse marker use when L2 learners are exposed to an input-rich environment combined with task-based communicative practice. Similar results were found in other studies that have also incorporated frequent exposure to target language input and meaningful, task-essential practice (e.g., Hernández, 2011; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004). At the same time, our findings also indicate a potential role for explicit instruction in focusing learners' attention on new and unfamiliar discourse markers, given the fact that the EI + IF group demonstrated more consistent use of new discourse markers, or at the least, an emerging knowledge (Meara, 1997) of new discourse markers. Given these findings, we draw the following implications for teaching:

1. Data transcripts revealed that L2 learners exposed to the experimental treatments created more coherent discourse on the posttest speaking tasks by means of using a variety of Spanish discourse markers. Classroom instructors should therefore incorporate discourse markers into instruction in order to support L2 learners in the development of advanced language competence.

2. Given that both experimental groups used more discourse markers on the posttests, our findings confirm the importance of frequent exposure to target forms in the input (N. Ellis, 2005; Gass, 1997; Hatch & Wagner-Gough, 1976). We therefore argue that it is essential to provide L2 learners with frequent exposure to specific target forms through input-enhanced tasks and activities.

3. Both experimental treatments had a positive impact on learners' overall use of discourse markers. Brief explicit instruction, however, might be an important component for the learning of new or unfamiliar discourse markers. Classroom instructors should therefore consider how to best draw learners' attention to discourse markers through a combination of explicit instruction and input flood.

4. Task-based communicative practice was a central component of our experimental treatments. Our findings corroborate previous research on the importance of creating classroom-based communication activities that promote language awareness and motivate productive use of the target form (Skehan & Foster, 2001). Furthermore, we agree with Swain (1995, 2005) that output can draw learners' attention to target features. Classroom instructors should therefore combine input- and output-oriented tasks and activities with communicative practice and feedback to reinforce target-like language use and check task performance.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all classroom-based SLA research, our investigation is not without several limitations. The first limitation is concerned with whether the number of discourse markers targeted for instruction surpassed the attentional resources of some learners. Lee and VanPatten (2003) would argue that a more effective approach would be to focus learners' attention on five or six specific discourse markers during a given lesson. The second limitation is the length of treatment. Given that implicit instruction takes a longer time to be effective (N. Ellis, 2005), we might not be able to measure the true, long-lasting effects of input flood without increasing exposure to the target form over an extended period of time. While our treatment was longer than most previous studies on explicit and implicit instruction, we believe that a longer input flood treatment combined with meaningful, task-essential language practice could have promoted even stronger gains on the posttests for both experimental groups. Related to length of treatment, the third limitation centers on lack of a second delayed posttest. We believe that a second delayed posttest might have been able to better measure learners' emerging knowledge of new and unfamiliar discourse markers that might not have appeared in their speech patterns without more input and more language practice. Taken together, these limitations suggest that an important avenue for future research might be to focus learners' attention on fewer discourse markers over a longer period of time.

In sum, our results suggest that carefully planned teaching interventions such as the ones described in the present investigation have a positive impact on L2 Spanish discourse marker use. Further, we found that previous exposure to and knowledge of L1 and L2 discourse markers can shape how L2 learners use Spanish discourse markers to narrate a past event. When introducing L2 learners with new L2 items such as new or unfamiliar Spanish discourse markers in input-enhanced tasks and activities, explicit instruction can be a powerful tool for making L2 learners aware of new form-meaning relationships and promoting their subsequent use in speaking tasks.

Notes

1. For details on examples of teaching materials, see Hernández 2011. For reasons of space, we do not include questionnaires, classroom activities, and other related research materials used in the present study. All these materials are available upon request to the authors.

2. When a speaker self-corrected or repeated a discourse marker, the second discourse marker was counted. The first discourse marker was not included in the count.

Biodata

Todd A. Hernández is Language Program Coordinator for Spanish and Associate Professor of Spanish Applied Linguistics at Marquette University. His research interests include second language acquisition, foreign language pedagogy, and language learning during study abroad.

Eva Rodríguez-González is Assistant Professor of Spanish Linguistics at Miami University, Oh. Her research interests include second language acquisition, foreign language pedagogy, psycholinguistics, and bilingualism.

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