

## A REVIEW OF RECAST IN SLA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR L2 TEACHING

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### Abstract

Recast in the past decade has been the focus in both communicative and content based language teaching in SLA for its non intrusion into the meaning focused interaction . Recast is documented to be the dominant way of providing corrective feedback in various L2 learning contexts , and its facilitative role in the acquisition of some linguistic forms has been substantiated . With the deepening of research , learner uptake as a measurement of its effectiveness has been challenged and remedied . Stimulated recall as another way to examine learners perception of recasts in conversation helps reveal some factors constraining the effectiveness of recasts . The in - depth studies have enhanced our understanding of the nature of recast , and now researchers shift to examine what features of recasts facilitate learning . It is shown that recasts can be handled skillfully by teachers in classroom interaction . Therefore , in view of its predominant presence in instructional classroom and facilitative role in L2 learning , it is recommended that teachers should create beneficial classroom factors and draw on characteristics of recast so as to maximize the effectiveness of this corrective feedback strategy in classroom settings .

### Key words

recast ; effectiveness ; learner uptake ; perception ; corrective feedback

### 1 . Introduction

Recast in SLA is generally seen as the teacher's provision of a target like expression as a response to the students' nontarget like utterance without changing its meaning . As a type of corrective feedback ( CF , henceforth ) , recast has become the focus of investigation in both classroom studies of communicative L2 teaching and learning and in laboratory studies since the mid 1990s . Recasting is documented to be a pervasive way of providing feedback in various language contexts constituting the largest percentage of feedback : In immersion contexts , 60 % was reported by Lyster & Ranta ( 1997 ) and 54 - 65 % by Lyster & Mori ( 2006 ) ; in university level language classroom , 70 % were reported by Doughty ( 1994 ) ; and in the case of adult ESL classroom , 55 % was recorded by Panova & Lyster ( 2002 ) ; and 61 % was found in Nishita's ( 2004 ) small group learning context . The predominant use of recast warrants our serious attention to it , in that if handled properly , this resource of providing feedback can be maximized in its effectiveness in promoting L2 learning .

The facilitative role in L2 learning has been substantiated in many experimental studies and some classroom instructions . The initial research focuses on whether recast can promote learning and whether it is more effective than other types of CF . More recently , research into recast takes on a " differentiation " feature reflected in two directions . One is the categorization of recast itself according to its specific characteristics , and the other is the differentiated treatment of student uptake to it . The former helps to explain how recast facilitates learning through the examination of the relationship between recast characteristics and learning outcomes . The latter helps to reveal whether recast

contributes to acquisition by studying learners subsequent use of linguistic forms recast. With the deepening of research, learner uptake as a measurement of effectiveness of recast has been challenged and remedied, and stimulated recall as another way to examine if recasts can be perceived helps to reveal some factors constraining learner noticing of recasts. A growing number of articles in international journals have helped us enhance our understanding of the nature of recasts, and helped us see recasts as a manageable corrective feedback, which, if handled skillfully by classroom teachers, can become salient to students and helpful for their language learning. Under this context, the author reviews the research into recasts abroad over the past decade, and points out the pedagogical implications.

## 2. Defining recasts

Recast was first investigated in native language acquisition by children, and the term was first used by Nelson, Carskaddon & Bonvillian (1973) referring to the response by adults to the child language. In children's native language acquisition research, recasts have generally been defined as utterances that "rephrase a child's utterance by changing one or more sentence components (subject, verb, or object) while still referring to its central meaning" (Farrar 1990, 1992). Recast was found to help children's native language acquisition in these aspects: (1) reformulate and expand their utterance; (2) sustain the topic of conversation initiated by the children; and (3) follow on from what the child has said (Farrar 1990). Because of the tremendous similarities between SLA and native language acquisition (e.g. the developmental route to L1 and L2 acquisition), recast is receiving increasing attention in FL teaching and researching.

Recasting in SLA is seen as one type of CF. CF is used as an umbrella term to cover implicit and explicit negative feedback occurring in both natural conversational and instructional settings (Sheen 2004). Lyster & Ranta (1997), after observing and documenting 18.3 hours of immersion classroom interactions, categorized teacher feedback into six types: explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic clues, elicitation, and repetition. Teachers can use one of them or a combination of some of them when giving feedback. CF differs in terms of how implicit and explicit it is. Explicit feedback overtly states that an error has been committed in the learner's utterance, while implicit feedback retains the focus on meaning by implying the existence of an error rather than overtly stating it (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam 2006). Recast, as an input providing source, is generally seen as an implicit feedback, and performed through such CF strategies as repetition, clarification and requests to prompt learners output, while explicit correction, is often carried out through metalinguistic explanation, elicitation, paralinguistic signals and other explicit CF strategies (Ellis 2007). See Table 1.

Table 1. A taxonomy of CF strategies (Ellis 2007)

	Implicit	Explicit
Input providing	Recasts	Explicit correction
Output prompting	Repetition Clarification requests	Metalinguistic explanation Elicitation Paralinguistic signals

A CF episode is comprised of a trigger, recast and (optionally) uptake (Ellis 2007). The following is an example of recasting correction:

- T : When were you in school ?  
 S : Yes . I stand in the first row ? (trigger)  
 T : You stood in the first row . (recast)  
 S : Yes , in the first row , and sit , ah , sat the first row . (uptake)

In the above example, as the teacher and the student are engaged in discussing a topic, the teacher recasts a learner's utterance by reformulating the student's erroneous utterance (stand into stood) rather than overtly indicating that the student's utterance is incorrect. The teacher's correct restatement of the erroneous utterance retains the original meaning of the student's utterance so that the discourse can move ahead without disruption. In the example, recasting elicits student response in the form of an uptake — repairing the error. Still, the student may respond differently to the recast feedback. For example, the

student gets no chance to produce an uptake when the teacher pursues the conversation with topic continuation, and sometimes even when there is a chance for uptake, the student may choose not to respond. So uptake is an optional discursual move which allows student not to give an uptake even when there is a chance.

With the proliferating growth of recast studies over the past decade, our insight into recast has deepened. Some formerly controversial issues now hold consensus. The following details what has occurred.

### 2.1 Recasts have dual functions to perform

More recently, Sheen (2006) defines a recast as: "The teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance that contains at least one error within the context of a communicative activity in the classroom." This definition covers the dual functions of recasts —to recast for both didactic purpose and conversational purpose. That is, recasts function both to confirm the meaning of the student's utterance and to correct non-target language form. This proposal is winning more and more support. In defining recast, Loewen & Philp (2006) take it as a central point that: "Recasts retain the central meaning of the learner's utterance while changing the lexical, morphosyntactic, or phonological form." Sheen's emphasis on recasting in the course of meaning-focused interaction is congruous with the overall climate of English language teaching —the skill to communicate successfully is the orientation of English language teaching and learning.

### 2.2 Recasts vary in degree of implicitness

In earlier research, recasts without differentiation are seen as a way of providing implicit negative evidence (Braid 2002; Long & Robinson 1998; Long, Inagaki & Ortega 1998; Lyster 1998a, b; Long 1996). Until recently, it is contended that recasts may range in degree of explicitness constituting an implicit/explicit continuum (Sheen 2006). In meaning-based interaction, teachers may signal to learners the corrective force of the recast and cue their attention to the particular problem, thus greatly reducing the ambiguity of recasts (the likelihood of its corrective function not being perceived by the learners) (Loewen & Philp 2006). In this case, their illocutionary force as correction is quite transparent (i.e. the mismatch between the original and the recast element is noticed by learners), recasts should be seen as a relatively explicit form of negative feedback (Ellis & Sheen 2006).

### 2.3 Recasts provide both positive and negative evidence

What kind of evidence recasts provide was addressed very early, and the common view was that recasts can not be seen as providing only negative evidence (e.g. Long et al. 1998; Nicholas, Lightbown & Spada 2001). Today more and more researchers agree that recasts provide two types of evidence: positive evidence and negative evidence (e.g. Carpenter et al. 2006; Ellis & Sheen 2006; Leeman 2003). This argumentation is confirmed by Leeman's (2003) research, the results of which suggest that the effectiveness of recasts is derived at least in part from the positive evidence or the enhanced salience recasts contain. Whether recasts provide positive or negative evidence is tied up with how learners interpret the illocutionary force of recasts (Ellis & Sheen 2006). If learners have no conscious awareness that recasts are intended to be corrective, then they are seen as providing only positive evidence. Conversely, if they are interpreted as corrective (e.g. *stood* is recognized as corrective in the above example), then they constitute a source of negative evidence.

Although the once controversial issues now hold consensus among researchers, another thorny one arises. That is how to retain the meaning of the trigger utterance when recasting? If a teacher is not clear about the communicative intention of the student, how could he/she reformulate the utterance while keeping the intact meaning of the original utterance? This is the problem most researchers fail to address in their investigation. To my knowledge, Hauser (2005) is the first to bring up this problem and discuss it in detail though his essay is not about recast and L2 development. He states that the propositional content of an "error turn" may be ambiguous. In some research, the practice of coding may obscure what is happening in the interaction and what participants take to be the action or actions achieved by any particular turn (For details, refer to Hauser 2005).

### 3 . Efficacy of recasts on some linguistic structures

Most experimental studies of the effects of recasts choose some linguistic structures as the target for examination ,and the results find recast effective in the development of these linguistic forms ,e.g. question development in English ( Mackey & Philp 1998 ;McDonough & Mackey 2006 ) ,the past tense in English ( Han 2002 ) ,and verbal morphology in Japanese (Ishida 2004 ) .

Han s (2002 )small scale empirical study investigated the impact of recast on tense use by comparing the recast group of 4 learners with 8 pedagogical recast sessions and 4 non recast groups of 4 learners with regular sessions . The findings indicate that the recast group used past tense more successfully than the non recast group in both oral and written versions of a story telling test and that the recast group showed a far greater degree of consistency in use . Recasts in his study heightened the L2 learners awareness , which led to considerable improvement in their tense consistency ,and even in the delayed post test conducted a month later .

Ishida (2004 )investigated FL learners acquisition of Japanese aspectual form *te i (ru)* with a time-series design by using intensive recasting . “ Intensive recasting ” focuses on a particular linguistic item repeatedly during communicative discourse (Sheen 2006 ) . The four participants in her experiment were US undergraduate students taking Japanese course . In her treatment ,the recasts were provided as naturally as possible . The findings revealed that the overall accuracy rate increased significantly after the recasting treatment began ,and the high accuracy rate was retained both in the immediate -and delayed -post test sessions . This study provides additional evidence that recasting in meaning oriented activities can be an effective instructional technique that helps learners increase the accuracy in their use of certain grammatical constructions .

McDonough & Mackey (2006 ) examined the impact of recasts and different types of responses on English as a second language (ESL ) question development . In a pretest /post test design ,58 Thai English as FL university students have performed a series of communicative tasks with native English speakers and completed four tests over a 9 -week period . As in Ishida (2004 ) ,the NS -NNS (native speakers and non-native speakers )interactions are made as naturalistic and authentic as possible since recasts are provided when considered most contextually appropriate by the NS interlocutors . The results indicate that recasting is a significant predictor of ESL question development . Their findings to some extent are consistent with those of Mackey & Philp (1998 ) ,whose study ,through information gap task in the form of NS -NNS interaction ,indicate that advanced learners who have received recasts produce more advanced question forms than learners in the control group with no recasts .

In listing the positive effects of recasts ,the author does not suggest recast is effective anytime and anywhere . Although the utility of recast is recorded in many researches (e.g. McDonough & Mackey 2006 ;Ishida 2004 ;Han 2002 ;Doughty & Varela 1998 ;Mackey & Philp 1998 ) ,and it is even more effective than other types of CF (Robinson 2005 ;Long et al .1998 ) ,some classroom studies on CF show that recasts ,though highly frequent ,are found to be less effective when compared with other CF strategies (e.g. Am mar & Spada 2006 ;Ellis et al .2006 ;Panova & Lyster 2002 ;Lyster & Ranta 1997 ) .

Regarding these mixed findings ,Ellis & Sheen (2006 ) suggest that the problem of identifying the corrective function of recasts does not negate their acquisitional potential . The higher frequency in both naturalistic and classroom settings ensures that recasts have acquisitional potential at least some of the time ,and the relative low uptake in some studies suggests that learners may have perceived at least some of the recasts as feedback on errors .

### 4 . Learner uptake as a measurement of the effectiveness of recasts

The notion of uptake is drawn on speech act theory (Austin 1962 )into the error treatment sequence , and used in a very different sense ,referring to “ a student s utterance that immediately follows the teacher s feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher s intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student s initial utterance ” (Lyster & Ranta 1997 ) . The conceptualization of learner uptake provides an effective tool for identifying pattern in teacher student interaction that include a wide range of learners responses following teacher feedback ,thus allowing for an operationalization of pushed

output in classroom settings (Lyster & Mori 2006).

Learner uptake has been repeatedly used to measure the effect of recasts on learning, yet some inconsistency in coding practice and defining uptake among different researches can be identified with this method. It appears that researchers do not just borrow the total idea of Lyster & Ranta's uptake but make some adaptations of their own. With the growing in-depth research, our insight has been enhanced into how uptake could better serve as an efficient measurement.

4.1 Distinction between "no uptake" and "no opportunity for uptake" is made.

Learner uptake constitutes a response to the teacher CF; it reveals what the student attempts to do with the teacher's feedback. Generally speaking, there are three types of response concerning uptake: (1) uptake — the learner responds in some way; (2) no opportunity for uptake because of topic continuation; or (3) no uptake — there is an opportunity, but the learner does not respond. For example, a topic is initiated by the same student, in which case, the teacher's intention of correcting the error goes unheeded. In Lyster & Ranta's (1997) definition, there are two types of student uptake: (1) uptake that results in "repair" of the error on which the feedback focuses; and (2) uptake that results in an utterance that still needs repair (known as "needs repair"). Repair of error are recognized through four types: repetition, incorporation, self-repair, and peer-repair. Needs repair includes the following six types of utterances: acknowledgement, same error, different error, off target, hesitation, partial repair.

However, their method of distinguishing student reaction to CF gives rise to much controversy in later research. Lyster & Ranta make no distinction between "no uptake" and "no opportunity for uptake". It is one of the reasons that the notion of uptake is challenged. In fact, the two implies two different kinds of learner reaction to recasts. The recent research by Loewen & Philp (2006) classified four types of student reaction to recasts: successful uptake, unsuccessful uptake, no uptake, and no chance. Their distinction of "no uptake" from "no opportunity for uptake" is pedagogically significant, in that the rates of uptake following recasts can differ considerably depending on whether learners do or do not have a chance to uptake (Oliver 1995). Oliver (2000) in a study of ESL class found that nearly one third of the teacher's negative feedback moves were not followed by student uptake. Student lacked opportunity because of topic continuation on the part of the teacher, or the interruption from other students. So we could expect a higher rate of uptake if "no opportunity" episodes were removed from the exchanges. Consequently distinguishing "no uptake" from "no opportunity for uptake" is quite necessary. This necessity is also backed up by Robinson (2005), whose study demonstrates that learner uptake reached as high as 81% when given a chance to respond to recasting.

To differentiate "no uptake" from "no opportunity" in the data collected is not an easy job. To restore the whole picture, students' reflection about their thinking in exchanges is needed. In this regard, researchers fall back on stimulated recall to see whether learners can notice recasts or not.

4.2 A broader perspective of uptake is taken.

In many studies, successful uptake (or repair) refers to the correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single immediate student turn (e.g. Loewen 2004; Lyster 1998a, b; Lyster & Ranta 1997) and not to the sequence of turns resulting in the correct reformulation (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen 2001). Whether immediate response can be a true indicator of the effect on learning is not conclusive. Many researchers (e.g. Ellis et al. 2001; Loewen 2004; Ohta 2000; Mackey & Philp 1998) challenge uptake as a valid measurement of the effectiveness of recasts on learning. For example, they suggest that immediate successful uptake might be a reflection of students' attempts to continue the conversation. It is not sure whether learners agree with the reformulated language form or content of the recast feedback when they acknowledge a recast (Ellis et al. 2001). The repetition of reformulated linguistic forms may be seen as simple imitations or mimicking actions, which do not indicate developmental progression (McDonough & Mackey 2006), nor does it reflect any cognitive processing on language (Sheen 2004; Nabei & Swain 2002). To make things more complicated, the absence of immediate uptake may not be seen as a signal of no learning (e.g. Mackey & Philp 1998), since uptake might be delayed in the next exchange turns. Therefore, it is suggested that in order to measure the impact of recast on learning,

learners response should go beyond the immediate turn following the recasting move ,and include the responses to a recast that occur beyond .

Ellis et al .(2001 )took a broader perspective of uptake . On the one hand ,they acknowledged that uptake can occur even when the previous move does not involve corrective feedback ,uptake in the case of student initiated focus on form ,for instance . On the other hand ,they suggested that to obtain evidence of the effective role of recasts on acquisition ,it is necessary to demonstrate that the learners possess the autonomous ability to use the language feature ;for example ,by investigating whether they can produce the form correctly on subsequent occasions without prompting . This proposal is consistent with McDonough & Mackey s (2006 ) view that learners responses to recasts may also occur as syntactic priming (or structural priming) —a speaker s repeated production of a previously used syntactic structure across successive utterances .

The result of McDonough & Mackey s (2006 ) study shows that both recasts and learners primed production of the syntactic structures targeted in the recasts are predictive of subsequent development . Structural priming reflects implicit learning ( Bock & Griffin 2000 ) ,and this must be taken into consideration when the acquisitional effect of recast is examined . The differentiation of learner response is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of recasting on learning . Traditional method of examining its response should be modified to include the delayed uptake in the form of syntactic priming . It is suggested that the low repair rate of Lyster & Ranta (31 %) be interpreted cautiously ,for it does not take the uptake across successive turns into consideration . The high rate of uptake following recasts is supported by Ellis et al .(2001 ) ,who reported 73.9 % .

Since uptake is a discorsal move (e. g. Loewen 2004 ;Ellis et al .2001 ) ,to what extent does uptake reflect acquisition ?In deciding on how to demonstrate the effectiveness of CF in learners interlanguage development ,Lightbown (2000 ) contends that researchers must find the evidence that the effect of some CF is sustained over time . So it is true of recasting feedback . Only when a student can use the language feature correctly or has understood the feature recast ,can the uptake be considered successful . This is experimentally displayed by McDonough & Mackey s (2006 ) examination of learners autonomous use of the feature in the form of syntactic priming .

We consider learner uptake important as is concluded by Loewen (2004 ) because :(1 ) It may indicate L2 acquisition ,though it is not necessarily evidence of acquisition ;(2 ) It relates to the role of output in L2 learning for uptake constitutes one type of “pushed output” ;(3 ) It involves certain level of cognitive processing of language student must engage in . Further ,if we want to advance our understanding of learner uptake and its role in L2 acquisition ,a careful and refined examination of the response is needed .

## 5 . Learners perception of recasts through stimulated recall

With the shift of pedagogical focus to communicative language teaching ,recasts are generally provided during meaning based exchanges or classroom settings . Whether learners can in communication notice recasts has always drawn attention . In this regard ,most research uses stimulated recall seeking to answer whether learners can detect recasts in interaction and the target linguistic elements ,and most important what factors may constrain their perception .

Linguistic factor is one of the many known factors that affect the efficacy of recasts . Mackey et al . (2000 ) examined whether learners of Italian and English as FL can identify the CF and the target language forms . The results show that the learners of both languages can not identify the morphosyntactic errors while they can correctly identify the lexical and phonological errors . Most of the errors recast (75 %) are morphosyntactic errors . The difficulty in identifying errors of this type is also confirmed by Carpenter et al .(2006 ) . This can be explained by the fact that ,in contrast to morphosyntactic recasts , phonological and lexical recasts tend to be shorter in length ,which results in a perceptually salient contrast (Carpenter et al .2006 ) . Nabei & Swain s (2002 ) case study revealed that ,besides the linguistic elements of input (e. g. grammatical ,lexical or phonological in their study ) ,paralinguistic elements and learners autonomous utilization of the learning opportunities provided by the feedback can affect learner s awareness of recast feedback and learning ,thus the effect of recasts .

Factors revealed by Philp's (2003) study (2003) include learners' working memory, the difference between recast and the original expression, length and complexity of recasts. Morris & Tarone (2003) added another contextual factor — the unfriendly atmosphere in communication. The most recent research by Carpenter et al. (2006) examines the role the context and the nonlinguistic elements play in identifying recasts in meaningful interaction. In their treatment, one group of students watch the video clip with the removal of the erroneous utterances (Only the feedback in error feedback sequence is kept, while the error is deleted). The other group watch the video clip without the deletion of the erroneous utterances (Both the error and feedback are kept intact). This treatment of the two groups, in their terms, is innovative. The comparison of the two groups shows that the group of learners with access to the initial errors are more successful at distinguishing recasts from repetitions than the group with no access. This finding indicates the importance of conversational context in helping identify recast feedback. Another important finding in their investigation is that learners, for the most part, were not looking for nonlinguistic cues from the speakers to distinguish recasts from repetition, such as the gestures and facial expressions. Therefore, this finding is somewhat contradictory to Long's suggestion (cited in Carpenter et al., 2006) that learners might be able to distinguish recasts on the bases of paralinguistic and extralinguistic cues. The mixed findings might be seen as a reflection of the complexity of recasts as a discursive move. To what extent can learners make use of the paralinguistic signals, and which are the most useful for learners? The author here cannot avoid the cliché that further in-depth research is needed to shed light on this line of inquiry.

Another advantageous element for perceiving recasts revealed by Nabei & Swain's (2002) case study and Nishita's (2004) research is the small group contexts. They found the student was more likely to notice recasts in the group contexts and perceive them "accurately" as correction than recasts provided in teacher-fronted interaction. Nishita thought small group interaction or teaching environment was more directly engaging. Nabei & Swain also regarded student willingness as another factor affecting the student perception of the corrective force of recast. One example was that the student used the recast feedback for understanding the meaning of a phrase, ignoring the grammatical correction the recast provided in the episode. The recasts create "opportunities for acquisition" (Ellis et al., 2001) and what is learned from it depends on the learner (Nabei & Swain 2002).

According to "Noticing Hypothesis" (Schmidt 1990, 1993), learner's noticing is the first step toward acquisition. It is only what the learner notices about the input that holds potential for learning. In terms of recasts, when the inconsistency between the target expression and interlanguage is noticed, learners can reconstruct interlanguage system, thus improving their metalinguistic knowledge (Han 2002). Therefore, examining learner noticing of recasts is a rewarding undertaking. Research in this direction helps reveal various factors affecting learners' noticing of recasts. Until now, linguistic error type or language structure, conversational contexts (e.g. teacher-fronted classroom or small group seminar), learner's FL level and personal readiness are some of the known factors. However, stimulated recall, as a retrospective method, has its own limitation; students may fail to recall exactly what they were thinking.

## 6. A new trend: Refined treatment of recast characteristics

As noted earlier, the examination of effects of recasts on learning has been expanded to include the categorization of recasts based on their own features. In fact, categorization of this kind has been made in some earlier studies, but no detailed analyses of the relationship between the characteristics of uptake and learning outcomes have been made. Studies in this line worth mentioning are the recent work by Sheen (2006) and Lowen & Philp (2006). A detailed classification of recasts can be found in their articles. The teaching environment in both studies is the communicative classroom, and the characteristics of recasts observed in it are presented. Sheen's (2006) findings reveal that the majority of recasts arising in classrooms investigated are short, more likely to be declarative in mode, reduced, repeated, with a single error focus, and involve substitutions rather than deletions and additions. Furthermore, she analyzed the characteristics contributing to learner uptake/repair. A number of them are found to be related to uptake, such as pronunciation focus, shorter length and substitution. Loewen & Philp's (2006) investigation of recasts in adult classroom includes the paralinguistic features (cues provided by teachers when recasting). Recasts in these adult ESL classrooms tended to be segmented, short, and involve only singular change, more likely to be delivered as a declarative statement than as a

confirmation check with rising intonation, and likely to receive stress on the changed element. The research showed that effectiveness of recasts differed according to characteristics that emphasized their corrective purpose (the phrasal, prosodic, and discursal signals) and also are likely to be affected by some features like the number of feedback moves, prosodic cues, repetition, length of recast, number of changes (See Loewen & Philp 2006 for detailed categorization of recasts).

According to Sheen (2006), saliency is a psycholinguistic construct as it relates to whether a learner is able to notice a linguistic feature in the input, in contrast with the term "explicit" which is realized linguistically. When the corrective nature of the feedback is marked linguistically, it is more likely to become salient to the learner. The refined treatment of classroom recasts is significant in three aspects: (1) It presents a taxonomy for categorizing recasts arising in classroom interaction, which may be enlightening for research purpose; (2) It helps settle the dispute over the implicitness/explicitness of recasts; and (3) It signals that teachers can manage these cues skillfully in classroom interaction to draw learners noticing, which is pedagogically significant.

Examination of learner perception and the nuanced treatment of recast characteristics are enlightening for English language teaching. The factors and recasts features revealed so far seem to suggest that effectiveness of recasts is situation bound, signaling to us teachers that as recasts providers in classroom interaction we can take advantage of this CF by managing the contexts and the recasts themselves.

## 7. Incidental recasts in classroom instruction

### 7.1 Incidental and extensive recasting in classroom setting

In instructional contexts, recasts are usually extensive and incidental to the discourse, in response to the utterance learners produce rather than preplanned by the instructors (Loewen & Philp 2006). It is also referred to as one strategy of reactive focus on form, which occurs when a learner has said something that contains a real or perceived error and the teacher responds to this error (Ellis et al. 2001). That is, within the context of a single communicative task, a number of different linguistic forms are likely to be recast and each episode is brief. However, this leads to a question: what is the efficacy of recasts when no specific linguistic target is focused?

Many researchers (e.g. Ammar & Spada 2006; Ishida 2004; Lyster 2002) argued that embedding CF within communicative activities is possible and conducive to L2 development. Moreover, recasts can explicitly serve a corrective function in instructional settings (Nicholas et al. 2001). Recasts can help learners notice the inconsistency between their interlanguage and target form, and improve their metalinguistic knowledge. Recasting in instructional classroom is less obtrusive, face threatening and time saving. It functions both to confirm the meaning of learner utterances and provide correct language forms; they are not intrusive to class interaction; and teachers using this feedback technique can control the discourse.

However, it is true that recasts, in spite of their strengths, still go unnoticed sometimes in class. In communicative interaction, recasting is possibly seen as a confirmation of meaning, thus producing pragmatic ambivalence (Lyster 2002), resulting in low uptake in classroom observation. The factors impeding learners noticing of recasting may be multiple. For example, learners may fail to detect the corrective nature of recasting, especially when recasts are accompanied by expressions of approval as are repetitions of correct sentences. Teachers often respond positively to the meaning of student expression, using recasting with other confirmative words like "Ok, Yes" and pursuing the conversation with topic continuation, thus neglecting correcting the errors (Lyster 1998b). Other possible factors include: (1) Teachers reluctance to wait for a response from students; (2) Learning context or atmosphere; (3) No additional cues to alert the learner to the feedback function and focus of recasting; and (4) We teachers often are unwilling to correct students errors for the sake of saving their face or keeping smooth meaning exchange.

Recast as feedback is of great benefits when noticed by learners (Philp 2003; Schmidt 1993). So in classroom instruction it is important to explore certain elements that may make recasts salient to learners.

To this end, teachers should be heedful of the constraining factors and create supportive contexts (Ellis & Sheen 2006), handling recasting in an appropriate way (Doughty & Varela 1998). In recasts literature, some important methods have been mentioned. For example, Han (2002) suggests four conditions for recasts to be facilitative of L2 learning: individualized attention, consistent focus, developmental readiness, and intensity. However, current studies suggest no systematic manipulation of recasts. As a consequence, the author offers a tentative one for providing productive recasts based on the existing research findings.

## 7.2 Suggestions for effective use of recasting

### 7.2.1 Create beneficial learning contexts

It is suggested that recasts are more effective in small group interaction context rather than in teacher-fronted context (Nishita 2004; Nebel & Swain 2002). Learner noticing of recasts can differ depending on the social contexts since conversational contexts are supposed to influence learners' awareness (Nebel & Swain 2002; Morris & Tarone 2003). Small group interaction, in contrast with the larger one, has the advantage of drawing learners' attention, since there is a greater and more specific focus on teachers' correction of student problems. In such a favorable context, the students could participate more directly, and, therefore, are more likely and more often to notice recasts and repair their original ill-formed utterances. Further, in the focused context, recasts which provide the correct answer rather than merely cues (like negotiation of form) contribute to more learner repairs.

Realizing the importance of learning context, teachers should be good at arranging small/pair group work in classroom instruction. It is worth noting that interactive dynamics must be taken into account when arranging small groups. According to Morris & Tarone (2003), dynamics in language classroom seem to affect learners' ability to perceive accurately linguistic information provided in recast. For example, negative feelings about their conversation partners seem to cause some learners to interpret recasts not as helpful CF but as criticism and even mockery. They suggest that in order to maximize the efficacy of pair work in L2 classroom, language teachers should pay attention to the social dynamics among the students. In addition, learners might be asked to watch out for exclusionary attitudes advanced learners display toward less proficient and motivated learners. Teachers should be alert to watch for such practices if they arise. It is also important that teachers design activities in which the more proficient learners are given a less dominant role, when less proficient learners are more inclined to participate in and contribute more to the communicative task.

### 7.2.2 Enhance the explicitness and salience of recasts

In current research, a number of elements have been found to contribute to the saliency of recasts. A repetition of learner's incorrect form before the recasts proper benefits learners and has long-term effects on promoting the accuracy of the target form (Doughty & Varela 1998). Linguistic factors that tend to be beneficial to learners include the shorter recasts, those closer to the trigger utterance, and those that change the utterance in few ways (Philp 2003), the reduced word/short phrase length, and single error-focused recasts (Sheen 2006). The phrasal, prosodic and discoursal cues that teachers provide can greatly reduce the ambiguity of recasts (Lyster & Mori 2006). Besides these, what is equally enlightening is that classes can be preceded by some instruction on specific grammatical features, so that learners' awareness to recasts can be enhanced. This was confirmed by Ellis, Loewen & Basturkmen's (1999) observation which reported as high as 75% uptake for recasts.

Naturally, it is possible for teachers to highlight the salience of incidental recasting in classroom to draw learners' attention, telling learners that it is the form and not only the meaning of their utterance that is the focus of correction (Doughty 1999). The author suggests that teachers in providing feedback should be skilled at using the additional cues in interaction, like using intonation stressing or emphasizing on the features being corrected. Also, short recasts with few changes and with interrogative rather than declarative intonation are preferred (Loewen & Philp 2006).

### 7.2.3 Tailor teacher language according to learners' developmental readiness

Learners' L2 proficiency levels must be taken into consideration in evaluating the effectiveness of any

CF technique (Sheen 2006). Experimental studies suggest that recasts may more readily trigger the learners' attention to the target of the recasts when learners have prior or latent knowledge of it. That is to say, learners' readiness affects the effectiveness of recasting and subsequent development of the specific language form. In Lyster & Ranta's (1997) study, learners who were at more advanced stages of question development benefited more from interaction with recast than they did from interaction without recasts. They saw this as an indication that learners were able to perceive the corrective nature of the recast only when they had reached a stage of "developmental readiness". Also, teachers must be aware that continued recasting of what students already know is unlikely to be effective to ensure continued development of target language accuracy and may even have a leveling-off effect on their L2 development. Similarly, continued prompting of learners to draw on what they have not yet acquired will be equally ineffective (Panova & Lyster 2002). Teachers in classroom must know about the general L2 proficiency level of the class, and tailor their recasting in line with learners' developmental readiness. Only when students are cognitively ready to learn and are clear about teachers' intention, can they develop the motivation to use recasts as a way of correcting language error rather than using recasts for other purposes (e.g. comprehending the meaning of a phrase in Nabei & Swain 2002).

#### 7.2.4 Increase wait time for students to produce pushed output

According to Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, output promotes learner noticing of the inconsistency between feedback and interlanguage. However, in our teaching experience, we are not likely to wait long for student answer for fear of interrupting meaning exchanges or wasting class time. In this case, teachers, if possible, should be encouraged to give students opportunity to draw their attention to their nontarget utterance. Inexperienced teachers might not be skilled in providing feedback on the basis of the findings of Polio, Gass & Chapin (2006). In their study, though inexperienced teachers use recasting as feedback, almost as frequently as experienced teachers do, and are aware of the importance of feedback, yet they need more practice in learning how to implement it. Inexperienced teachers might not be aware of the importance of the various functions of output in language learning, nor are they skilled in generating output like experienced teachers who are able to ensure the production of more output of the students, thus creating more opportunities to give feedback to the errors that students have made. Ample wait time can help students frame their answers and give them opportunities to reflect on what they have said. Also it is a way to create easy and pressure-free learning atmosphere. Teachers should get used to giving students more response time after recasting and observe their reaction. If students fail to perceive the mismatch between their erroneous utterance and the recast, teachers can choose to add additional cues to make recasts salient or to proceed with topic continuation or to use other CF, whenever they consider appropriate.

## 8. Conclusion

It is useful to examine the relationship between specific features of recasts and learners' FL developmental outcomes, and to separate responses that are simple repetitions of a recast from responses that are reformulations of a previous utterance and to look for evidence of responses to a recast that occur beyond the immediate response turn (e.g. Sheen 2006; Loewen & Philp 2006; McDonough & Mackey 2006). Studies in this direction undertake a nuanced investigation into how these characteristics promote learning. A more detailed categorization of recasts according to its features is needed for conducting a comprehensive examination of which elements may increase the salience of the recast and how these elements promote learning. The exploration provides experimental evidence for the difference in the degree of implicitness/explicitness and it has implications for L2 teaching. If teachers are aware of these explicit features, they can use them when recasting in class to make recasts salient to learners. The acquisitional effect of recasts as CF still needs more research since research on learners' sustained ability and autonomous ability to use the particular structure is not adequate, and more linguistic forms are encouraged to be examined to test the long-term effect of recasts.

We teachers should be aware that corrective recasting, as one of corrective feedback techniques, is not necessary for acquisition, nor does it always promote acquisition, but can serve as an effective strategy in supportive contexts if handled appropriately. Evidently, recasts, as a CF strategy, can be realized in a number of ways. They may or may not include prosodic emphasis on the problematic form;

They may be performed with rising intonation (i. e. as a confirmation check) or with falling intonation (i. e. as a statement); They may be partial (i. e. reformulate only the erroneous segment in the learner's utterance) or complete (i. e. reformulate all of it); They may involve correcting just one or more than one feature. Thus, depending on the particular way the recast is realized, it may be implicit or much more explicit (Ellis 2007).

However, Polio et al. (2006) demonstrates the weakness in some teachers (especially young teachers) using recasting to elicit learner output. We use it often and unconsciously, yet we do not know how to use it effectively. The complexity of recasting and weakness in teachers highlight the need for training on the part of teachers.

In addition, teachers should be informed about the finding that particular targets are more likely to invite recasts as feedback, for example, grammatical and phonological error (Lyster 1998a), single error utterances (Doughty 1994; Lyster 1998a), syntactic and phonological errors (Nishita 2004). This is an intriguing issue in that teachers seem to select a particular feedback for recasting according to the category of student errors. Teachers are motivated to conduct in-depth study of their own recasting behavior, and contribute their own piece to this field of inquiry.

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