



Exploring the Use of Recast as the Most Frequent Spoken Corrective Feedback in Iranian EFL Classes

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ABSTRACT: Feedback has been considered as a remedial measure and consequently a substantial body of research has been done over the last decades into the value of different kind of responses offered to students and their effects on student performance. Feedbacks are commonly categorized based on Lyster and Ronata's model of corrective discourse which sorts them into six classes including explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition. Many studies are conducted on the effect of different types of spoken error correction in Iranian EFL classes and the type of feedback which is mostly used by teachers (but very few studies are carried out on finding teachers' intentions of preferring a certain type of feedback over other types. The present study explored the reasons of using recast as the most frequent type of corrective feedback in Iranian EFL context. Data was collected from 100 Iranian EFL teachers from different parts of Iran; they filled in a questionnaire in order to find the reasons of their preference. The study revealed that teachers rely on aspects of error correction such as being short, immediate and to the point as well as saving learners from negative feelings that does not fully go with what is likely to facilitate learning and increase uptake rate.

Key words: Error Correction, Feedback, Recast

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INTRODUCTION

Making error is an inevitable part of every learning process; there are many questions which inspire the researchers to tunnel their way into the truth, questions like should learners' errors be corrected? When should learners' errors be corrected? Which errors should be corrected? How should errors be corrected? Who should do the correcting? Are among those with no clear answer.

Feedback has been considered as a remedial measure and consequently a substantial body of research has been done over the last decades into the value of different kind of responses offered to students and their effects on student performance.

Feedbacks are commonly categorized based on Lyster [1] model of corrective discourse which sorts them into six classes including explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition. Many studies are conducted on the effect of different types of spoken error correction in Iranian EFL classes and the type of feedback which is mostly used by teachers [2, 3 and 4] but very few studies are carried out on finding teachers' intentions of preferring a certain type of feedback over other types.

Diab believes that if teachers and students both understand the purpose of certain correction techniques and agree on their use, they are more likely to be productive.

Studying learners' errors needs no explanation. It is something that teachers have done for many years and for practical outcomes. As errors made by learners are major blocks of feedback system is on the basis of information teacher gets from errors that he varies his teaching procedure and materials, the pace of the progress and the amount of practice which he plans at any moment [5]. Although it seems that giving feedback has been an inevitable part of teachers' attitude, a number of scholars have challenged the idea of giving feedback as an effective technique in educational settings. On the other hand, some scholars have been trying to elaborate the impact of teachers comment types on students' revision. Spada and Lightbown, White, Spada, Lightbown, and Ranta examined intensive ESL classrooms to see the effect of corrective feedback in combination with form-focused instructional materials. These studies involved structured experiments with pretests and posttests on particular linguistic forms. Specifically, Spada and Lightbown and White et al. targeted question formation, while White focused on adverb placement. There were positive effects observed in the ESL learners whose native language was French, but these results did not reflect the effectiveness of error correction alone in the highly controlled experiments, which involved intensive form-focused instruction [5].

1.1 Different types of feedback

Lyster and Ronata [1] proposed a model of corrective discourse including six classes of feedback:

1. Explicit correction – the explicit provision of the correct form (“Oh, you mean...” “You should say...”
2. Recast – reformulation by the teacher of the student's utterance, minus the error.

3. Clarification Request – indicates that the student’s utterance was misunderstood by the teacher or that the utterance is ill-formed in some way (can refer to either problems in accuracy or comprehensibility, or both)

4. Metalinguistic Feedback – contains either comments, information or questions related to the well-formedness of the student’s utterance without explicitly providing the correct form (“Can you find your error?”) Points to the nature of the error but attempts to elicit the information from the student

5. Elicitation – strategic pauses to allow students to fill in the blanks, questions to elicit correct forms (not yes/no), or asking students to reformulate utterances.

6. Repetition- – repetition to isolate student’s utterance, with changes in tone or inflection to highlight the error They also examined the ways in which learners reacted to different types of feedback in turns immediately following corrective feedback; they referred to such reactions as learners uptake and coded these utterances as either repaired or still in need of repair.

1. Repetition – repetition of teacher’s feedback when feedback includes the correct form

2. Incorporation – repetition of teacher’s correct form, which is then incorporated into a longer utterance by the student

3. Self-repair – self-correction produced by the student in response to teacher’s feedback when feedback does not include the correct form

4. Peer-repair – peer correction provided by a student other than the one who made the error

Vaezi et al 2011 studied patterns of corrective feedback in relation to error types in Iranian EFL learners, this study synthesizes findings from observational classroom research on corrective feedback and then presents an observational study of patterns of error treatment in an adult ESL classroom at two intermediate and advance levels.

They examined the range and types of feedback used by Iranian teachers in three different aspects (grammatical, phonological and lexical). The database consists of 18 hours of transcribed interaction at each level, based on the categories of Lyster and Ranata’s [1] model of corrective discourse. 18h of transcribed interaction at each level, transcribed records were analyzed about the types of feedback and their frequency.

The findings show an obvious tendency for implicit types of reformulative feedback, namely, recast at intermediate level, especially in relation to structural errors, leaving little opportunity for other feedback types and at advanced level recast was the most frequent one in phonological aspects.

Ahangari and Amirzadeh [3] explored the teachers’ use of spoken corrective feedback in teaching Iranian EFL learners. In this study the researchers used a database of 360 corrective feedback moves which two EFL teachers provided to their learners at three levels of proficiency. Eight types of corrective feedback were identified and their distribution in relation to proficiency levels of learners was determined. Findings show that recast was the most frequently used type of corrective feedback that teachers provided to their learners at various levels of proficiency.

The role and effectiveness of recast in L2 as the most frequent feedback has been the source of many arguments among scholars, while some researchers have criticized its value as an effective behavior some others have supported the idea of giving feedback in this form.

MATEREALS AND METHODS

Research question:

- Why recast is the most frequent Iranian EFL teachers’ spoken corrective feedback?

Design:

The present study was considered as an experimental research, participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire about advantages of using recasts in order to find out the underlying reasons for their preference.

Participants:

The data was collected from 100 EFL teachers from different cities in Iran.

Data analysis procedure

The distributed questionnaire had 13 items; the data collected in this study was analyzed descriptively. The analysis of the questions was carried out by extracting the frequencies of all the responses given in each of the items. Finally they were scanned and organized for relevance to the research questions posed in this study.

RESULTS

Four categories were recognized as having strong effect on teachers’ decision in choosing recast as their feedback strategy.

1) Recasts represent immediate reflection to incorrect utterance: 84 participants believe that immediate reflection is the reason behind teachers’ decision on choosing recasts as their corrective feedback.

2) Recast draw attention to certain linguistic features: 76 participants strongly agreed or agreed that the quality of drawing learner’s attention to certain features is one of the most important factors in using this type of corrective strategy.

3) Recasts are short: 76 participants strongly agreed or agreed that shortness can be considered as a quality that encourages teachers to use recast.

4) Recasts save the students from negative affective reactions: 72 participants admitted that reducing negative feelings is why teachers prefer to use recasts as their most frequent corrective feedback.

The results of the distributed questionnaire showed that most teachers tend to use recasts as their most frequent corrective feedback strategy based on two main reasons:

1) The nature of recasts which are short, immediate and to the point: they not only save the time and energy but also provide the learners with a faster uptake and facilitate the process of learning.

2) Saving learners from being exposed to negative feelings and consequently building up their confidence to keep using the language in real communication which is the ultimate goal of language teaching.

DISCUSSION

According to Sepehrinia et al. Recast is the most frequent type of feedback but probably the least effective one. Ur in a research study stated that recasts have the most frequency among corrective feedback strategies with 55% but have the least uptake rate with 18% which shows that teachers may have had misconceptions about their error corrections [6, 7].

The study revealed that teachers rely on aspects of error correction such as being short, immediate and to the point as well as saving learners from negative feelings that does not fully go with what is likely to facilitate learning and increase uptake rate [8, 9].

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