

The Investigation of Recasts Researches in SLA

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Abstract: *Currently, there has been growing interest in recast research. Why have recasts received intensive attention from SLA researchers? In this paper, first recast defined from different point of views then the theories of which like negative evidence or positive evidence, implicit feedback or explicit feedback, noticing hypothesis, and focus on form presented. Moreover, the conditions, the benefits, and the shortcomings of recasts as well as the difficulties in recasts research discussed after that some recasts researches which have been done in recent years were concerned. Finally, recast researches were evaluated by considering Geoff Jordan's guidelines (2004).*

Key words: *Recast, feedback, Geoff Jordan's Guidelines, and SLA.*

1. Introduction

Recast, a corrective technique, first came to the attention of L1 acquisition researchers (Bohannon & Stanowicz, 1988), who noticed that adults tended to correct children's faulty speech by recasting morphosyntactic or semantic errors. Recasts are also used in the L2 naturalistic and instructional environment. Recasts occur with great frequency in interaction of language classroom. According to Sheen (2004), on average, 60% of all the feedback moves involves recast. Therefore, this might justify why researchers choice recasts as a favored subject of inquiry.

There are many different definitions of recasts in SLA. Long (1996, p. 434) pointed out that recasts are utterances that rephrase a child's utterance by changing one or more components (subject, verb, object) while still referring to its central meaning. On the other hand, Sheen (2006) proposed a recast consists of 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. Generally, recast is defined as utterances that repeat a learner's incorrect utterance,

making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning.

Recasts come in a number of different forms. Recasts can be single or multiple. They can also occur in one-signal negotiated interactions or in extended negotiated interactions. Recast can be simple or complex, it depends on whether the changes to the learner's utterance are minimal or substantial, whether it entails an addition, a deletion, or a reordering of the trigger utterance. As Ellis (2006) mentioned recasts are chameleon like. Recasts can take many different forms and perform a variety of functions, which makes definition difficult. Consequently, there are many researches according to each definition. To solve this problem, Sheen (2006) offered a description of the key characteristics.

Multi-move Recast:

1. Corrective recasts
2. Repetitive recasts
3. Combination recasts

Single-move Recast:

1. Mode: declarative, interrogative
2. Scope: isolated, incorporated
3. Reduction: shorter, non - reduction
4. Length: a single word, short phrase, long phrase, or clause.
5. Number of changes: a single change or more than one change.
6. Type of change: an addition, a substitution, a reordering, or a combination of all.
7. Linguistics Focus: pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar.

A recast is first judged to be a multi-move or single-move recast, if it is a multi-move recast then it is classified as a corrective recast, a repeated recast or a combination recast. A signal move recast is coded in terms of each of the seven characteristics shown below. To understand what exactly recast is and makes Sheen's description of recast characteristics more clearly, consider the following example:

Student: I think she'll travel together her girlfriend after course.

Teacher: I think she'll travel together with her girlfriend.

The recast in this sequence would be coded as mode (declarative), scope (isolated), reduction (non-reduced), length (clause), number of changes (one change), type of changes (addition), and linguistics focus (grammar). This description is useful because it enables researchers to examine the relationship between different types and characteristics of recasts and learner uptake (i.e. whether the learner's response successfully incorporates the correction) and acquisition (i.e.

whether as a result of exposure to a recast the learner is subsequently able to use the corrected form accurately).

2. Recast and its Embedding Issues

In addition recast itself is an appealing topic in SLA; it provides an appropriate discourse to study SLA theories and hypotheses. For example, can recast provide positive or negative evidence? Which one facilitates learning? Is explicit feedback more effective or implicit feedback? Will learning happen in recast without attention? Can recast provide a good context for focus on form? In this part, they discuss in short.

2.1. Negative Evidence or Positive Evidence

It is not clear whether recasts must be viewed as providing negative evidence (i.e. information about what is ungrammatical or unacceptable in a language) or just positive evidence (i.e. samples of what is grammatical or acceptable in language)? Nicholas et al. (2001) posited whether recasts provide positive or negative evidence is tied up with how learners interpret illocutionary force. If learners have no conscious awareness that the recast is intended to be corrective, then recasts are to be seen as providing only positive evidence. Conversely, if they are interpreted as corrective, then they constitute a source of negative evidence. Thus, recasts can constitute a positive evidence only or both negative and positive evidence. In this respect, Leeman (2003) designed a study to investigate whether recasts work for acquisition as positive or as negative evidence. She concluded that recasts facilitate acquisition because they provide positive evidence, not because they constitute negative evidence.

To conclude, recasts can provide positive or negative evidence, it depends on their characteristics. They can constitute positive evidence alone when their corrective force is not recognized by the learner. Although some researches showed that recasts with positive evidence can facilitate acquisition, it remains possible that recasts with both positive and negative evidence are even more effective.

2.2. Implicit feedback or Explicit feedback

In many books and articles, it is mentioned that recasts constitute an implicit form of negative feedback. But what does exactly implicit mean? Which linguistic signals indicate explicitness and which ones indicate implicitness? When teachers recast the student's errors, stress the deviant parts, as the result the corrected items are become salient to the learners. In so doing, it is made the corrective nature of the recasts quite explicit. so; explicitness or implicitness of recast depends on the linguistic signals that encode them and the discursual context.

Ellis and Sheen (2006) pointed out recasts should not be viewed as necessarily implicit or explicit. Recast should be taken as more or less implicit or explicit. In other words, recasts can lie at various points on a continuum of linguistic implicitness- explicitness.

2.3. Noticing Hypothesis

The findings of research on learners' perceptions of recasts and responses (Takako Egi 2010) show that when learners perceive recasts as feedback and notice the gap, they are more likely to successfully repair their problematic utterances.

Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1994) postulated that the L2 learner must consciously notice the L2's linguistic forms to learn them. Recast gives learners a chance to notice syntactic or lexical gaps in the L2. Clearly, Recasts can provide opportunities to learners not only be conscious about their outputs but also to compare their interlanguage to target language.

2.4. Focus on Form

In instructional contexts, recasts are usually incidental to the discourse; it means they are not preplanned by the teacher. They arise in response to the language the student produces. Recasts function not only to rectify the form but also to confirm the meaning of the student's utterance what exactly focus on form (i.e. incidental attention to form in teaching that is meaning-based or communicatively-oriented) means. Recast can be a very effective way to help learners make form-meaning connections that will help them acquire the L2. (Doughty & Varela, 1998).

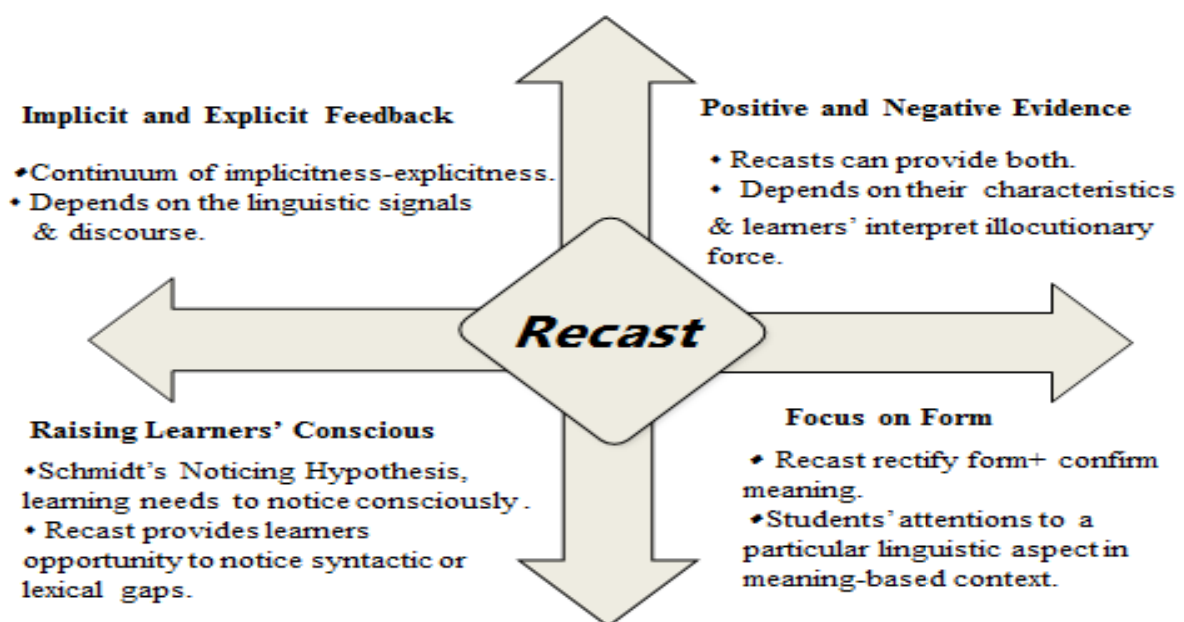


Figure 1. Recast and its embedding issues, implicit/explicit feedback, positive/negative evidence, raising learner's conscious, and focus on form.

3. The Conditions, Potential Benefits and Shortcomings of Recasts

3.1. Necessary Conditions

The fact that recasts have been found to occur with high frequency in classroom settings (Sheen 2006), lead us that recasts can work for acquisition if some necessary conditions will meet. According to Loewen (2005); Loewen and Philp, in press, these conditions can be namely individualized attention. If recasts can attract learners' attention, and provide a situation that learners notice the gap between their outputs and target forms then learners try to correct themselves. Teachers who provide recast must consider that keeping consistent focus and intensity have significant roles in beneficial recast. Another condition (Ellis et al. 2001) is developmental readiness; surely, adults understand recasts better than children, and also advanced learners better than elementary learners. If the recasts target features that lie too far beyond the learner's current stage of development, they are likely to fail. Therefore, the classroom context including the age of participants and their literacy level must be considered. Bigelow and Delams, Tarone (2006) through the research of literacy and the processing of oral recasts in SLA evidenced that literacy level is significantly related to ability to recall recasts. Moreover, the extent to which language is a focus of study must be concerned like intonation, morpheme length, and number of changes in recasts.

3.2. The Potential Benefits of Recasts

By considering studies that investigated recasts (e.g., Braid, 2002; Ellis et al., 2001; Loewen, 2005; Loewen & Philp, in press; Lyster, 1998a; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Oliver, 2000; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Sheen, 2004, 2006), The benefits that a recast brings by itself can be summarized as, First, recasts construct a situation that is time-saving, less threatening to student confidence, and less intrusive to the flow of interaction. Second, recasts as positive and negative evidence provide opportunities for cognitive comparison. Third, recasts convey information about language in context. So they have potential ability to motivate learners to attend and notice. And finally, recasts by providing form-function mapping help learners make form-meaning connections that can facilitate acquisition.

3.3. The Shortcomings of Recasts

According to Loewen & Philp (2006) and other researchers such as Nicholous, Lightbown, Spada (2001); Ellis & Sheen (2006), and Ammar & Spada (2006), we can concern these shortcomings:

1. Due to recasts multiple functions, they may convey an ambiguous message to a learner possibly resulting in a mismatch between the learner's interpretation and the feedback provider's intention.
2. The learner may misunderstand because of his or her proficiency level or metalinguistic skills, or because of qualities of the recast, such as the length of the recast or the number of lexical or syntactic changes in the recast to the original utterance.
3. Recasts are less likely to be offered when the learner utterance has many errors and recasts on such trigger utterances are also less likely to be noticed by learners.
4. Recasts may pass unnoticed. As other learners take the subsequent turn or as the teacher moves on to the content at hand, the opportunity to notice or incorporate the recast verbally disappears.

Here it is just mentioned four important shortcomings. Indeed, there are many unknown features that future researches may be concerned with them.

4. Researches on Recasts

According to Zhaohanghan (2002) investigation of recasts in SLA has theoretical and pedagogical fronts. On the theoretical front, recasts, as a form of negative feedback of frequent occurrence in face-to-face interaction, provide a unique source of information to test Interaction Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, and Noticing Hypothesis. On the pedagogical front, L2 research on recasts represents a response to the need to integrate form-related activities into meaning-based instructions. SLA studies and researches in recasts have offered mixed evidence regarding their impact on learning. For example, some experimental and quasi-experimental studies of recasts showed that recasts are capable of promoting SLA. Descriptive studies, on the other hand, found that recasts are often followed by a low rate of learner uptake and cross-sectional descriptive studies documented the use of recasts in different settings and under different participatory structures and also examining the learners' uptake of recasts. Moreover, longitudinal studies designed to investigate the relative effectiveness of recasts as opposed to other instructional strategies on acquisition. It is worth pointing out some significant researches here. Such as *Conversational Interaction and Second Language Development: Recasts, Responses, and Red Herrings?* by Mackey & Philp (1998), This research tested the effect of recast on learners' interlanguage (IL) development, The results suggested that recasts may be beneficial for IL development even though they are not incorporated in learners' immediate responses. In fact, the responses may be red herrings. Another research, *Recasts in the Adult English L2 Classroom: Characteristics, Explicitness, and Effectiveness* by Loewen & Philp (2006), it is proposed recasts are less effective than other forms of feedback because of the ambiguity of their potentially corrective purpose. This study suggested that the ambiguity of

recasts is greatly reduced by the phrasal, prosodic, and discoursal cues that teachers provide. The effectiveness of recasts is likely to be affected by these cues.

Generally speaking, the main findings from these studies is that recasts have a positive impact on learning. Although some learners appear to be more receptive to recasts than others and some structures seem more tractable to recasts than others.

5. Discussion

Ellis& Sheen (2006) mentioned that recasts and their role in the acquisition process is developing and will continue to grow. There are, however, a number of difficulties that researchers face in investigating recasts.

5.1. Difficulties in Investigating Recasts

- 1) There are different forms of recasts and researchers have differing views on how they operationalized recasts, for this reason, it is difficult to compare results of different studies.
- 2) As discussed before, recasts cannot be viewed as a purely implicit form of negative feedback. It can be explicit and recasts can lie at various points on a continuum of linguistic implicitness-explicitness. However, determining the implicitness or explicitness of recasts that is in terms of learners' perceptions address another problem how can understand the reformulated feature in the recast is noticed by the learner and whether noticing implicates or explicitness.
- 3) Whether recasts supply positive or negative evidence is depending on their characteristics, they can constitute positive evidence alone or both positive and negative evidence. Although there is evidence that recasts with just positive evidence can facilitate acquisition, it is not possible to say with any certainty whether recasts constitute a source of negative evidence or positive evidence, because it depends on the learner's orientation to the interaction.
- 4) Learners orientation might influence how they interpret recasts and to what they attend. Therefore, differences in learners' orientation might account for the different frequency of recasts and uptake found in different instructional contexts.
- 5) Recasts in researches viewed almost exclusively in terms of their linguistic and cognitive impact on acquisition. However, recasts do not occur in a social vacuum, so their social and sociocognitive aspects must take to account as well.
- 6) There are some researches to show that learner factors (e.g., learner readiness and literacy level), the linguistic target of the recasts (e.g. Syntax, vocabulary or pronunciation), and the characteristics of the recasts (e.g., the type and number of changes made in the recast) play a role in the effects of recasts in SLA. Nevertheless, there is no evidence how these factors interact each other and how their interactions will influence recasts in SLA.

To conclude, there are some difficulties in doing recast researches. It is better to keep in mind the role of factors and their interactions in any recasts research. Jordan (2006) in his book *Theory Construction in Second Language Acquisition* mentioned some guidelines that every theories and researchers in SLA must be considered them.

5.2. Evaluation of Recasts Researches in SLA by Geoff Jordan's Guidelines

1. Researchers must assume that *an external world exists independently of our perceptions of it*. Researchers assume that learners response to recast by uptake that includes repair as well (no meaning). However, noticing maybe happened without any uptake as a result failure to repair the original errors cannot take as evidence of a failure to notice the target forms in recast. In this view, it is not possible to conclude whether it is the recasts alone or recast with repair that is more effective.

2. *Research is inseparable from theory*. Recasts provide a context to support and test interaction hypotheses, output hypotheses, and noticing hypotheses and also to use them to understand how recasts work.

3. *Theories attempt to explain phenomena*. Whereas recasts as a phenomenon can facilitate acquisition in L1 and L2, we still do not have a clear picture of how and when they will do. To take account, learner factors, the nature of the targeted features, and the characteristics of the recasts and their interaction may help to determine, in complex ways, when recasts work for acquisition and when they do not.

4. *Research is fundamentally concerned with problem-solving*. The frequency of recasts used in class is high but a large number of recasts won't noticed by learners. Henceforward considering the factors that involved in recasts and doing research under what conditions recast are more effective maybe recasts can be used to solve many learning problems.

5. *We cannot formalize "the scientific method"*. There are many laboratory recasts researches. Most obviously, laboratory interaction is not like real classroom.

6. *There is no need for paradigmatic theories*. Recasts are known as negative feedback. However, they can be both positive and negative feedbacks.

7. *Research, hypotheses, and theories should be coherent, cohesive, expressed in the clearest possible terms, and consistent*. Recasts can take many different forms and functions hence, There are many different definitions of recasts. Sheen (2006) by describing the characteristics of recasts provides a clear the way to examine the relationship between different types and characteristics of recasts, learner uptake and acquisition. so, researchers must exactly define recast and its characteristics before doing research.

8. *Theories should have empirical content. And it should be done in such a way that it can be observed, evaluated and replicated by others. The operational definition of variables is an extremely important way of ensuring that hypotheses and theories have empirical content.* According to Ellis first researchers must clearly define recasts to show bases on what definition the results are concluded. And mention how they collect data.

9. *Theories should be fruitful.* By considering under what conditions recasts are beneficial and how they can provide opportunities for cognitive comparison recast can be used to motivate and facilitate acquisition.

10. *Theories should be broad in scope.* Researchers must consider all factors play role in the effect of recasts in acquisition. In doing so, learner factors, the linguistic target of the recasts, the characteristics of the recasts, and their interaction as well as linguistic, cognitive and, social aspects must be considered.

11. *Theories should be simple.* This maxim assumes a thing must not be multiplied beyond necessity. In doing recasts research, it is vain to considers all different forms of recasts. Just some basics entities such as learners' factors, linguistics factors, context in every recasts research are essential.

6. Conclusion

Finally, as Ellis (2006) indicted recasts are just one flower among many that they are a very varied species of flora. So, it is worthwhile issue in SLA for further research and much might be gained by engaging in a careful, qualitative analysis of recasts in order to tease out the variations and the contextual constraints that give rise to recasts.

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