

**THE EFFECT OF RECASTS VERSUS META-LINGUISTIC FEEDBACK ON EFL LEARNERS' GRAMMAR PERFORMANCE AT THE FACULTIES OF SCIENCES AND ARTS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study investigated the effect implicit and explicit recasts versus meta-linguistic feedback on EFL Saudi Learners' grammar performance at the Faculty of Science and Arts. Eighty-six second-level English Department students were randomly assigned into three experimental groups: the implicit recasts group, the explicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group. While studying their Grammar course, the three groups received three types of feedback respectively. The three groups were pre-post tested using a grammar test prepared by the researcher. Seven hypotheses were formulated and tested. Results obtained from Chi-square, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and Mann-Whitney Test revealed that the three feedback techniques enhanced the participants' grammar performance. In addition, the explicit recasts group outperformed the other two groups. The superiority of explicit recasts, theoretically, implies a beneficial role for negative evidence in grammar instruction and implies that, pedagogically, explicit recasts is a better choice for teachers than implicit recasts in grammar classes.*

**KEYWORDS:** Corrective Feedback, Implicit Recasts, Explicit Recasts, Metalinguistic Feedback, Grammar Performance

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the last few years the pendulum of grammar instruction seems to be on the return swing worldwide. Grammar has been regarded as crucial to the ability to use English as foreign or second language .It has gained a vital role in language instruction. The reason for this is that mastering grammar is the foundation of proficiency in English language. Acquisition of grammatical structure probably helps EFL learners to expand the linguistic competence needed to communicate and to explore complex links such as those between grammatical structures and genres. In addition," it is very important in that not only does it help improve learners writing, but also it helps learners do better in reading comprehension and listening alike" (Ohta,2001:141;Wang, 2010:87). The importance of grammar is also due to the fact that it makes it possible for learners to talk about language; grammar names the types of words and word groups that make up sentences in English. Thus, to be able to talk about how sentences are built, about the types of words and word groups that make up sentences-that is to master grammar.

Also grammar is the sound, structure, and meaning system of language and only through grammar can sound and lexicon form meaningful language system. Therefore, linguists and EFL teachers agree that grammar is the most important part in a language system. A complete language system cannot be constituted without grammar. Grammar is just like a frame of a house. Without this framework, good materials and building blocks cannot constitute a solid

house. That's why Bastone (1994: 35)) emphasizes that "language without grammar would be chaotic; countless words without the indispensable guidelines for how they can be ordered and modified." Since language is primarily speech, the object of foreign language teaching is speech of target language. EFL learners cannot learn all the unlimited speech of the foreign language, but can only learn limited language paradigms to obtain the ability to produce speech. Accordingly, grammar as rules of language in foreign language teaching is just like "language paradigms" which are certainly necessary and indispensable to be taught to obtain the ability to communicate in the foreign language.

During grammar instruction classes, EFL teachers encourage various types of interaction which help learners receive comprehensible input, opportunities to negotiate for meaning, and opportunities to produce modified grammar output. However, results of previous studies showed that the authoritative, embarrassing and humiliating attitude of the teachers towards students, particularly when they make mistakes, can have severe consequences on learners' cognition and their willingness to communicate in the class (Price, 1991:101; Young, 1991: 429; Tanveer 2007: 58 and Hamouda, 2013:25). In addition, they revealed that exposure to input alone, is not sufficient for EFL/ESL learners to acquire the target language items to a high level of proficiency (e.g., Lightbown and Spada, 1990:429; Long and Robinson, 1998:17; and Norris and Ortega, 2000:417). To compensate for learners' failure to notice some aspects of input, researchers have attempted to direct learners' attention to some linguistic features in the input which are problematic for them. Corrective feedback is among the techniques which are believed to facilitate EFL development by providing learners with both positive and negative evidence (Heift, 2004:416). Positive evidence provides learners with the correct and target-like structure or what is acceptable in the foreign language, while negative evidence warns the learners as to what is unacceptable in the foreign language.

Current research in EFL/ESL has highlighted the role of grammar, corrective feedback, and/or focus on form in EFL/ESL classrooms. This renewed attention to 'form' in EFL/ESL has made the issue of providing corrective (written or oral) feedback in ESL/EFL classrooms the topic of a large number of studies. Many researchers attempted to investigate and compare the effect of different types of corrective feedback on different aspects of language including grammar, oral English accuracy, reading and writing (e.g., Sheen, 2007: 275; Ellis et al, 2008:353; Liang, 2008: 76), ;Song, 2009:118; Binger et al, 2011:160; Azar, 2012:58 and Farrokhi and Sattarpour, 2012:55). Various studies proved the positive effect of corrective feedback in improving EFL/ESL learners' language skills (e.g., Carroll and Swain 1993:357; Schmidt 1993:206; Ellis 1994: 79; Fotos 1994: 323; Long 1996:415, ;Lyster and Ranta, 1997: 37; Macky, Gass, and McDonough, 2000: 471; Loewen, 2004: 153 ;Lyster 2004:399; Sheen, 2004: 263 ; Entezari and Aminzadeh, 2010:23 and GHolizade, 2013: 1665), while few others questioned the effectiveness of grammar error correction (Truscott, 1996: 327). However, many studies emphasized the importance of feedback in enhancing EFL/ESL learners' ability to reprocess their output, thus helping them develop their language skills (Swain, 1995: 126; Sheen, 2007: 275; Liang, 2008: 76; Entezari and Aminzadeh, 2010:23 and GHolizade, 2013: 1665). Accordingly, good feedback is one of the most powerful means for fostering EFL/ESL learners' grammar performance and reducing their syntactical problems. It also enables teachers to provide proper scaffolding which helps learners perform their grammar tasks successfully. Recasts and meta-linguistic feedback are recent feedback techniques which have proved to be

effective in boosting EFL/ESL learners' ability to use of grammar accurately (Lyster and Ranta, 1997: 37; Ellis et al., 2001: 281; Nicholas et al., 2001: 719; Fukuya and Zhang – 2002: 28; Heift, 2004: 416; Sheen, 2004: 263; Ellis et al., 2006: 339; Ellis et al., 2009: 319; Lyster, R., and Saito, 2010: 265; Zhuo, 2010: 55; Sakai, 2011: 356; Yousefi and Biria, 2011: 1 and Rhee, 2012: 339).

### **Context of the Problem**

Unlike the past, the status of English in Saudi Arabia is completely different now. Due to the global demand and being the language of 'science and technology, business and commerce' 'window on the wall', English is considered now one of the major subjects in the education system of Saudi Arabia (Al-Shumaimeri, 2003: 5; Alresheed, 2012: 15 and Alhaison 2013: 113). Therefore, is a mandatory subject from class four to the university level; it is the only foreign language taught in public schools and in many private schools and universities. In addition, English is used as a medium of instruction in English departments in faculties of Science and Arts as well as Faculties of Medicine, Engineering and Dentistry. Thus, proficiency in English has become one of the pre-requisites for acceptance in those faculties. The need for English proficiency is even more important for post-graduate studies; it is a key factor in most majors.

In the Faculties of Science and Arts, English department students study grammar courses at four levels for two hours a week. The prescribed course-book for the first and second levels is "Fundamentals of English Grammar" by Betty Schramper Azar (2003). The book includes fourteen chapters. Seven chapters are studied at level one and the remaining seven chapters are studied at level two (Appendix One). Teaching Grammar to second-year English Department students at Bisha Faculty of Science and Arts for four years, the researcher observed that students' performance is far below the accepted level. For example, while presenting the passive voice (Chapter 10) in the second term of the academic year 2011-2012, the researcher noticed that level-two students did not know the tenses in the active voice although they had studied them in level one (Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4). So, the researcher had to present those tenses again. When asked about the causes of their low performance, students provided two reasons: (1) they said that they had been enrolled in the Computer Department in the first term in the college and then moved to English Department. This means that they had not been interviewed nor tested before joining English Department. The second reason-as cited by them-was that they had exhibited poor language performance in the previous stages (the intermediate and secondary stages), which was proved by recent studies (Al-Zubeiry, 2011: 18; Khan, 2011: 1248; Alresheed, 2012: 15 and Alhaison 2013: 113).

In Addition, being a supervisor of college trainees for nine years in primary, intermediate and secondary schools, the researcher observed that in most EFL classrooms around Bisha, the problem is not the exclusion of grammar, but too much emphasis is put on grammar which is still taught through traditional methods such as explicit grammar instruction in Arabic, memorization of grammatical rules, and translation of forms into first language in classes. Accordingly, after learning English for many years, students achieve little in terms of language proficiency; the proficiency of Saudi EFL learners is abysmal (Khan, 2011: 1248; Alresheed, 2012: 15 and Alhaison, 2013: 114). This was supported by Alshumaimeri (2003: 5) when he stated that "teachers have pointed out that students leave the secondary stage without the ability to carry out a short conversation." Student's low performance, at this stage, led The Higher

Committee of Education Policy (2007: 13) to consider the pupil passing if he or she gets 15 marks out of 50 in the final term exam.

Accordingly, the researcher conducted a pilot study by the end of the second term of the academic year 2011-2012. A grammar test was designed and administered to a sample of fifty-five second-level English Department students from Bisha Faculty of Science and Arts (Appendix Two). The purpose of the test was to measure students' grammar skills. The test was based on the Grammar-1 course and included seven dimensions: The Simple Present (7 items), The Simple Past (7 items), The Simple Future (7 items), The Present Perfect and The Past Perfect (8 items), Asking Questions (7 items) and Nouns and Pronouns (7 items), Modal Auxiliaries (7 items). Table (1) shows means, standard deviations of the participants in the pilot study.

**Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants in the Pilot Study**

M. and S. D. Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviations
The Simple Present	2.2727	1.100826
The Simple Past	2.509091	1.064463
The Simple Future	2.363636	1.2962
The Present Perfect and The Past Perfect	2.945455	1.223507
Asking Questions	2.854545	1.208277
Nouns and Pronouns	3.072727	1.184069
modal auxiliaries	2.890909	1.065846
Total	4.759669	2.151948

Table (1) indicates that the mean scores of the participants are low in the seven dimensions of the grammar test. The participants' mean scores are far below average. These results agree with the conclusions of Al-Hojaylan (2003: 34), Khan (2011: 1248), Alresheed (2012:15) and Alhaisoni (2013:114) about the fact that Saudi Arabian students lack the basic skills in the English language.

Since recasts and meta-linguistic feedback have proved to be effective in improving EFL/ESL students' ability to use grammar accurately (Lyster and Ranta, 1997: 37; Ellis et al., 2001: 281; Nicholas et al., 2001: 719; Fukuya and Zhang-2002: 28; Heift, 2004: 416; Sheen, 2004: 263; Entezari and Aminzadeh, 2010: 23; Zhuo, 2010: 66; Sakai, 2011: 356; Yousefi and Biria, 2011: 1 and Burrill (2012: 101), this study sought to investigate their effects on second-year English-Department students' grammar performance.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) plays a vital role in world politics and commerce. This entails better involvement in international communication in which English is the Lingua Franca of the world. So, the Saudi government has focused on increasing the proficiency of English at all levels of education. To this end English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been made mandatory at schools and the institutions of higher education. However, the proficiency of Saudi EFL learners is abysmal; although English is taught in Saudi Arabia from grade four to grade twelve in public schools, yet the output does not always meet the demands of higher education institutions. Complaints have been often voiced that pupils' proficiency is weak (Alhojaylan, 2003:34; Alshumaimeri,2003:5;Al-Zubeiry, 2011:18;Khan ,2011: 1248; Alresheed,2012:15 and Alhaison 2013:113).

Teaching the Grammar-2 course to second-level English Department students at Bisha Faculty of Science and Arts for four years, the researcher observed that students' performance is far below the accepted level. For example , while presenting the passive voice ( Chapter 10) in the second term of the academic year 2011-2012, the researcher noticed that students did not know the tenses in the active voice although they had studied them in the Grammar-1 course (level one, Chapters 1,2,3 ,4,5,6and7) .This was supported by a pilot study conducted by the researcher (Table one). This study was also motivated by the theoretical claim that, although a great deal of ESL/EFL learning takes place through exposure to comprehensible input, EFL/ESL learners are in bad need of negative evidence (i.e., information about their erroneous grammatical responses), in the form of either feedback on error or explicit instruction as they do not automatically pay attention to grammatical features during natural classroom communication (Long, 1996: 413;Long & Robinson, 1998: 15; Norris & Ortega, 2000: 417;Sheen, 2004: 263;Sheen, 2007: 257;Rassaei, and Moinzadeh, 2011:97;). In addition, careful review of existing research findings reveals the fact that although many studies investigated the effect of feedback on language acquisition, few examined the effect of recasts versus meta-linguistic feedback on EFL/ESL students' grammar performance (Asari, 2012: 1; Ding, 2012:83). Moreover, except for Loewen and Philp (2006:536) and Sheen (2006: 361), there has been no study designed to look into neither the types nor the characteristics of recasts. Finally, as concluded by (Zhuo, 2010:58) no study has investigated the relative effectiveness of implicit recasts combined with other explicit features. Accordingly, the present study attempted to fill these gaps and improve the learners' grammar performance in the prescribed course (Grammar-2) by examining the effect of implicit recasts and explicit recasts versus meta-linguistic feedback on English majors' grammar performance. To this end five research questions were addressed:

- 1-What is the effect of implicit recasts on second-level English department students' grammar performance?
- 2- What is the effect of explicit recasts on second-level English department students' grammar performance?
- 3-What is the effect of meta-linguistic feedback on second-level English department students' grammar performance?
- 4- Is there any difference in the effect of implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback on students' grammar performance?

5-Which is more effective, implicit recasts, explicit recasts or meta-linguistic feedback, in enhancing students' grammar performance?

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is three-fold:

- 1-to examine the effect of implicit recasts, explicit recasts versus meta-linguistic feedback on Saudi English majors' grammar performance.
- 2-to develop a framework which would illustrate how to use three two feedback techniques in grammar instruction.
- 3-to determine, through research, which feedback technique is more effective in improving EFL learners' grammar performance.

### **Significance of the Study**

Focusing on three types of corrective feedback in EFL classrooms, namely, implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback, the current study claims that the comparative effectiveness of the three types of corrective feedback techniques is an area of great research value for the following reasons: (1) theoretically, studies in this area can inform the issues such as the roles of input and output in TEFL and the cognitive roles of implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback in language learning; (2) pedagogically, research findings in this area may (a) provide EFL teachers with useful insights into their classroom error correction techniques and (b) fill in a research gap concerning the effectiveness of implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback on EFL learners' grammar performance since no study has investigated the relative effectiveness of relatively implicit recasts combined with other explicit features (Zhuo 2010 :58). Thus, the findings of this study may help EFL educators and teachers to make informed decisions in selecting feedback techniques that can enhance EFL learners' acquisition of grammar.

Specifically, it is hoped that the results of this study might achieve the following:

1. Provide Saudi educators and teachers with new insights concerning the effect of three types of feedback on Saudi students' grammar performance so that they can make good use of them while teaching grammar in similar settings.
2. Lead to further research in the relationship between the type of feedback and other skills of the English language (reading, writing, listening and speaking).
3. Provide useful information for other developing EFL/ESL studies that have a situation similar to the Saudi one.
- 4- Help to inform EFL teachers of some feedback techniques that can improve their teaching performance.
5. Help Saudi EFL students overcome of their grammatical problems by adopting effective feedback techniques on the part of their teachers.

### **Hypotheses**

To probe into the effect of the three feedback techniques (implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback) on the participants' grammar performance, seven hypotheses were formulated and tested.

- 1-There are significant differences at 0.05 levels between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group on the grammar test, in favor of the post test

- 2-There are significant differences at 0.05 levels between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the explicit recasts group on the grammar test, in favor of the post-test.
- 3-There are significant differences at 0.05 levels between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the meta-linguistic group on the grammar test, in favor of the post-test.
- 4- There are no significant differences between the post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group and the explicit recasts group on the grammar post-test.
- 5-There are no significant differences between the post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group and meta-linguistic group on the grammar post-test.
- 6-There are no significant differences between the post-test mean ranks of the explicit recasts group and meta-linguistic group on the grammar post-test.
- 7-There are no significant differences between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group, the explicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group on the grammar post-test.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited to:

- 1- second-level English Department students at the Faculty of Science and Arts in Bisha, K.S.A. Second-level English Department students were chosen because they lack the basic grammar skills as revealed by the pilot study.
- 2- implicit and explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback. These feedback techniques were chosen as students' limited linguistic proficiency, as evidenced by the results of the pilot study, may have predisposed the researcher to focus on means of providing linguistic input via reformulations (implicit and explicit recasts ) and comments (meta-linguistic feedback). Therefore, the researcher may have viewed recasts and meta-linguistic feedback as suitable techniques for providing exemplars of the target grammar items. In addition, these three types of feedback were chosen as they (a) occur relatively frequently during classroom interactions, (b) differ in the level of explicitness and (c) they have a significant effect on EFL/ESL learners' performance as revealed by recent studies (Mackey and Philp (1998:270;Song,2009:118; Rassaei and Moizadeh ,2011:100;Burrill,2012:101;Rassaei et al, 2012: 73). Moreover, as indicated by Panova and Lyster (2002: 579-586), because adults are more intentional in their learning than children, recasts and meta-linguistic feedback may be more salient for them than for children and thus a higher rate of uptake following recasts and meta-linguistic feedback is predicted in the adult EFL classrooms.
- 3- the seven grammar chapters prescribed to the participants: Chapter 8:Connecting Ideas; Chapter 9:Comparisons; Chapter,10:The Passive; Chapter11: Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles ; Chapter 12: Adjective Clauses; Chapter 13: Gerunds and Infinitives and Chapter 14: Noun Clauses.
- 4-Students' Book "Fundamentals of English grammar", by Betty Schramper Azar, of the second term (from unit 8 to 14).

### **Definition of Terms**

Some terms were repeatedly used in this study. The definition of these is presented below.

### **Corrective Feedback**

Corrective feedback is defined by Sheen (2007: 257) as a teacher's move that invites a learner to attend to the grammatical accuracy of his or her utterance. It is also defined by Lightbown and Spada (1999: 171-172) as any indication to learners that their use of the target language is incorrect. This includes various responses which learners receive. When an EFL learner says, "S/He visit the doctor every month", corrective feedback can be explicit, for example, "no, you should say visits, not visit" or implicit "yes s/he visits the doctor every month", and may or may not include meta-linguistic information, for example, "Don't forget to make the verb agree with the subject". The definition of Lightbown and Spada is adopted in the present study.

### **Explicit Recasts**

In this study explicit recasts were operationalized as recasts which were stressed, partial, and with only one change from the erroneous utterance. In doing so, the corrective force of recasts was quite obvious to the participants whose performance was very low at the beginning of the experiment as revealed by the pre-test (Table1). Therefore, it was easy for them to attend to the correction of their erroneous utterances and at the same time to make cognitive comparison between their erroneous utterance and the researcher's corrective reformulation.

### **Implicit Recasts**

This term is used in the present study to mean "utterances that repeat a learner's incorrect utterance, making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning" (Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001: 732-733).

### **Meta-linguistic Feedback**

In this study, the term meta-linguistic feedback is used to mean an explicit type of corrective feedback which provides' comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of students' utterances (Lyster, 2002:237).

### **EFL (English as a Foreign Language)**

English as a Foreign Language was defined by Mitchell and Myles (2004:1-2) as language that "have no immediately local uses or speakers." They went on and said "we believe it is sensible to include 'foreign' languages under our more general term of 'second' languages, because we believe that the underlying learning processes are essentially the same for more local and for more remote target languages". This term is used in this study to mean English learned in a country where it is not the primary language (for example, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan ... etc.).

### **ESL (English as a Second Language)**

English as a Second Language is usually characterized by the extent to which learners are surrounded by the target language. That is, if the target language, including a third or fourth, is not the native language or mother tongue, it is called a second language (Gass and Selinker, 2008 6). This term is used in this study to mean the study of English by nonnative speakers in an English speaking environment.

### **Scaffolding**

This term refers to the temporary help offered by the teacher or peers while providing feedback to enable learners to perform the assigned tasks and activities which are beyond their abilities if they are not helped.

### **Uptake**

In Lyster and Ranta's (1997: 49) model, uptake in the feedback sequence refers to "a student 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". It refers to different types of student responses immediately following the teacher's feedback, including responses with repair of the erroneous utterances. The definition of Lyster and Ranta is adopted in the present study.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This section consists of two parts. Part one (Feedback) deals with the concept of feedback, importance of feedback, types of corrective feedback, and scaffolding. It also sheds light on definitions of Recasts, features of recasts, recasts and language acquisition, benefits of recasts, types of recasts, factors influencing the effectiveness of recasts, meta-linguistic feedback, Part two (Grammar) deals with the definition of grammar, importance of grammar, the status of grammar instruction in Saudi Arabia, grammar error correction. In addition, it highlights sample approaches to grammar instruction in language classrooms.

### **Part One: Feedback**

Feedback has been one of the main techniques used by EFL/ESL teachers to guide their students about their use of the language. Teachers aim to help students comprehend and utilize the feedback they provide. Corrective feedback informs learners that they have said something inaccurate in the foreign language, enabling them to adopt changes and make progress towards a more accurate use of the foreign language. Therefore, it is essential to pinpoint which kinds of feedback are the most easily noticeable, comprehensible and helpful for learners.

### **The Concept of Feedback**

Corrective feedback is defined by Sheen (2007: 257) as a teacher's move that invites a learner to attend to the grammatical accuracy of his or her utterance. It is also defined by Lightbown and Spada (1999: 171-172) as any indication to learners that their use of the target language is incorrect. This includes various responses which learners receive. Thus, the term "corrective feedback" is used as an umbrella term covering explicit and implicit feedback techniques which take place in both natural conversational and instructional settings. Over the last decade, the field of ESL/EFL has witnessed considerable interest in corrective feedback (Lyster and Ranta, 1997: 49; Doughty and Varela, 1998: 114; Ohta, 2000:47; Oliver, 2000:119; Iwashita, 2003:1; Lyster and Mori, 2006:272).

### **Importance of Feedback**

A considerable body of research in the field of EFL/ESL has been devoted to the role of classroom interaction in language acquisition. It is concluded that during classroom interactions EFL/ESL learners receive comprehensible input, opportunities to negotiate for

meaning, and opportunities to produce modified output (Oliver, 1995: 459; Swain, 1995: 125). Meanwhile, research results revealed that exposure to input alone is not sufficient for learners to acquire the target language items to a high level of proficiency (Long, 1996:415; Long and Robinson, 1998:15; Norris and Ortega, 2000:417; Rassaei, 2011:97). Thus, much of research has been motivated by the learners' need for negative evidence (i.e., information about erroneous grammatical responses) in the form of either feedback on error or explicit instruction as they do not automatically pay attention to grammatical features during natural classroom communication (Carroll and Swain, 1993:357; Mackey and Oliver, 2002:260; Sheen, 2004: 263; Sheen, 2007: 257). They need teachers' scaffolding to help them attend to certain forms. Such scaffolding enables them to become aware of the gaps between their erroneous grammar use and the target grammar use.

To compensate for learners' failure to notice some aspects of input, EFL/ESL teachers and educators have sought to direct learners' attention to the linguistic features in the input which are problematic for them. Corrective feedback is among the techniques which proved to enhance EFL/ESL development by providing learners with both positive and negative evidence (Long, 1996: 415, Sheen, 2004: 263; Sheen, 2007: 257). Positive evidence provides learners with the correct/target structure or what is acceptable in the foreign/second language, while, negative evidence harbors learners as to what is unacceptable in the foreign/second language.

Accordingly, corrective feedback seems to play a vital role in grammar instruction in EFL/ESL classrooms. However, there has been disagreement about which type of corrective feedback is more effective and which type of is suitable for specific types of errors. This dispute led Maleki and Abdollahzadeh (2011:51) to state that "despite the numerous studies that have been conducted on corrective feedback in the last decade, these questions ((1) should learner error be corrected?,(2)If , so , when should learner errors be corrected? ,(3) Which learner errors should be corrected? , (4) How should learner errors be corrected? ,(5) Who should correct learner errors?) have remained largely unanswered to date and most answers provided to these questions by teachers and linguists have been speculative and non-empirical." That's why substantial attention in EFL/ESL research has been devoted to corrective feedback since the 1990s, (Swain, 1995: 125 ;Long, 1996: 413;Mackey et al. 2003: 35; Lyster, 2004: 399; Song,2009:118;Hamidun et al ,2012:591) .It is widely agreed that corrective feedback can enhance English language acquisition as it can lead learners to modify their output, which, in turn, can promote language acquisition (Lyster 2004: 399 ;Sheen, 2004: 263;Long,2007:361;Sheen,2007: 257 ;Lyster and Saito,2010:276;Yousefi and Biria,2011:2);GHolizade, 2013: 1617).

### **Types of Corrective Feedback**

Lyster and Ranta (1994:45) ,Rauber and Gil (2004:282),Sheen (2004 :263) , Lyster and Morri (2006: 272) ,Yousefi and Biria, (2011:2) identified the following feedback types which are illustrated by examples taken from experiment of the present study.

### **3. Explicit Correction**

Unlike implicit recasts, explicit correction provides a clear indication to learners that there are errors in their utterances and also informs them of the correct forms, as shown in example 1. Thus, as indicated by Lyster and Morri (2006: 272), the teacher provides the correct form

and clearly indicates that what the learner has said is incorrect "No, what you have just said is incorrect, or You don't say...". Sometimes, the wrong form is identified along with providing a correct form in the teacher's turn.

Example 1:

T: Where did you go yesterday?

S: I goed to the college. (Error- grammatical)

T: Say [went], not [goed] (Feedback- explicit)

As can be seen in example (1), the teacher is worried about the learners' comprehension of what has been explicitly corrected. S/he provides an immediate correction of the learner's erroneous utterance.

### **Recasts**

The term "recasts" originally emerged in the first language acquisition literature (e.g., Farrar, 1992: 90-98) and has been applied to L2 studies since the mid-1990s. However, definitions of recasts vary in the L2 literature, making comparisons across studies somewhat difficult. For the purposes of the current study, "recasts" are defined 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" (Sheen, 2006:365). Recasts occur relatively frequently in conversational interactions where both positive and negative evidence are considered to be the data required by learners for the acquisition of the target language (Long, 1996; 413). While positive evidence provides learners with the target language models, negative evidence highlights the unacceptable language features in the target language. Generally, there are two types of recasts: (1) implicit recasts and (2) explicit recasts.

### **Implicit Recasts**

Implicit recasts are the most common type in the ESL/EFL literature. They are looked upon by Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001: 732-733) as "utterances that repeat a learner's incorrect utterance, making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning" whereas Carpenter et al. (2006: 218) defined them as "the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a problematic learner utterance that corrected the error(s) without changing the central meaning of the utterance. These involved the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error". Thus, as indicated by Russell (2009:22), recasts are best embodied when a teacher or other more knowledgeable peer repeats a learner's incorrect utterance and replaces the error with the correct form.

The definition of Nicholas et al. (2001: 732-733), which sees implicit recasts as "utterances that repeat a learner's incorrect utterance, making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning" was adopted in this study. Recasts, as shown in examples 2 and 3, are seen as an implicit corrective feedback in which the researcher reformulated all or part of the participant's utterance but did not explicitly say that utterance was incorrect. They were generally implicit in that they were not introduced by phrases such as "You mean" and "You should say". That is, the researcher did not indicate nor point out that the participant had made an error, but merely gave the correct form.

Example 2 (Chapter 8: Connecting Ideas with "but", p.228):

R: What did you eat on the plane yesterday?

Fahd: I was hungry and didn't eat on the plane. [An erroneous utterance]

R: I was hungry but didn't eat on the plane. [An implicit recast]

Fahd: Yes.

Example 3 (Chapter 8: Connecting Ideas with "or", p.228).

S: Would you like some water and some fruit juice? (Error- grammatical)

R: Would you like some water or some fruit juice? Feedback-recast, implicit)

S: OK.

As shown in the above examples, when recasting grammatical features, the researcher tended not to encourage the learners to reprocess their output. He simply reformulated the sentence in order not to break the flow of the conversation, controlling frustration when solving a problem.

### **Explicit Recasts**

Like implicit recasts, explicit recasts can be defined as the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a problematic learner utterance that corrected the error(s) without changing the central meaning of the utterance (Carpenter et al., 2006:218). They involve the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error. However, explicit recasts are different from implicit recasts in that the teacher reformulates all or part of the student's utterance and explicitly informs the student that his/her utterance is incorrect. They are generally explicit in that they are introduced by phrases such as "You mean, and "You should say". Thus, the teacher indicates that the student has made an error so as to encourage him or her to correct the erroneous utterance.

In this study explicit recasts were used and operationalized as recasts which were stressed, partial, and with only one change from the erroneous utterance. In doing so, the corrective force of recasts was quite obvious to the participants whose performance was very low at the beginning of the experiment as revealed by the pre-test (Table One). In addition, they were introduced by phrases such as "You mean" and "You should say" (examples 4 and 5). Therefore, it was easy for them to attend to the correction of their erroneous utterances and at the same time to make cognitive comparison between their erroneous utterances and the researcher's corrective reformulations.

Example 4 (Chapter 9: Comparisons with "less .... than and not as .... as", p.259):

S: A bee is less big than a bird. (Error- grammatical)

R: you mean "A bee is not as big as a bird.(Feedback-recast, explicit)

S: OK.

Example 5 (Chapter 9: Repeating a comparative", p.262):

R: What happens when you get excited?

Faleh: My heart beats fast. (An erroneous utterance)

R: You should say: My heart beats faster and faster. (An explicit recast)

Faleh: Yes.

### **Clarification Requests**

The third type of corrective feedback is clarification requests which aim to elicit reformulation or repetition from learners in terms of their incorrect utterances. The teacher asks them to repeat their utterances. Thus, the teacher helps learners notice that something is inaccurate in their utterances. Clarification requests are generally accompanied by body gestures and/or facial expressions and, in most cases, the teacher approaches the learners who produce the erroneous

utterance in order to be closer and be able to scaffold them more naturally and efficiently. S/he uses phrases such as "Pardon", "Excuse me", "I'm sorry" and "I don't understand" after learners' errors to indicate to them that their utterance is incorrect in some way and that a reformulation is needed. Like implicit recasts, clarification requests are among implicit types of corrective feedback. But, unlike recasts, clarification requests serve the function of urging learners to attend to form and asking for clarifying the intended meaning (Loewen and Nabei, 2007: 361). This means that learners are less likely to notice the corrective purpose of clarification requests. In addition, prompting learners to correct themselves may require processing of language in a deeper level which ensures better error correction and more efficient learning (examples 6 and 7).

Example 6:

S: This letter must sent immediately. (Error- grammatical)

T: I'm sorry? (Feedback- clarification request, explicit)

S: This letter must sent immediately.(body gesture showing it is incorrect and something should be put between "must " and "sent ").

S: This letter must be sent immediately

T: Yes, excellent.

Example 7:

S: Ali helped she.

T: What's the sentence? (Facial expression showing it is incorrect.)

S: Ali helped .....

T: He helped + her. OK, uh, in this case, "her" is at the end of the sentence, but...

S: After the verb?

T: Yes, exactly. Because + it is after a verb. Right? Only for you to remember that, right? OK.

In the above-mentioned examples of clarification requests the teacher asks the learners to repeat their utterance twice or more so as to enable them to notice more complex kinds of errors and enhance self-repair. However, as can be seen in example (7) besides correcting, the teacher provides some explanation about how to properly use the object pronoun "her", a grammatical point which generally confuses beginners and low-proficiency learners.

### **Repetition**

Repetitions are defined by Carpenter et al (2006:218) as utterances that follow and repeat all or part of a learner's target-like utterance. The teacher repeats the learner's erroneous utterance, adjusting intonation to highlight the error; s/he repeats the wrong part of the learner's utterance in isolation, usually with a change in intonation. This enables the learner to self-repair his/her utterance (examples 8 and 9).

Example 8:

S: I can seen the Pacific Ocean on the map (Error-grammatical)

T: can seen.(Feedback-repetition, explicit)

Example 9:

T:What did you eat yesterday?

S: I eated qabsa. (Error-grammatical)

T: eated qabsa(Feedback-repetition, explicit)

### **Meta-linguistic Feedback**

In contrast to implicit recasts, meta-linguistic feedback is an explicit type of corrective feedback. It is defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997: 46), Lyster (2002:405) and Rauber and Gil (2004:284) as comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the learner's utterance. It reveals the nature of the learners' non-target-like forms without providing the target-like forms. In other words, meta-linguistic feedback refers to a process which is the result of error contrastive analysis on the part of the teacher who hints at the type of error the learner may have made but does not provide explicit correction (examples 9 and 10).

Example 9 (Chapter 10: The Passive, p.296):

S: My earrings are made from gold. (Error - grammatical)

R: are made from. We don't say it like that. (Feedback-meta-linguistic, implicit)

Example 10:

R: How did you feel when you fell into the fountain?

S: I was embarrassing. (Error- grammatical)

T: embarrassing. Does "The present participle" describe how a person feels ? (Feedback-meta-linguistic, implicit)

Examples (9) and (10) indicate that meta-linguistic feedback mainly provides learners with negative evidence explicitly. Thus, an important advantage of meta-linguistic feedback over implicit recasts is that it is self-evidently corrective and therefore empowers learners to perceive the corrective intentions of feedback. In addition, meta-linguistic feedback helps learners to determine the source of error in their utterances which in turn enables them to hold a cognitive comparison and/or notice the gap between their errors and the target forms. Such a cognitive comparison is believed to be crucial for language acquisition. Yet, a disadvantage of meta-linguistic feedback is that it is officious and obstructs the flow of communication.

### **Elicitation**

Elicitation refers to feedback that does not correctly reformulate the error but encourages learners to reformulate them (Lyster and Ranta,1997: 47; Lyster, 2004:399;Rauber and Gil ,2004:283;Loewen and Philp, 2006: 536 ; Nassaji, 2007:533).It refers to techniques that teachers use to directly elicit the correct form from learners (examples 11 and 12). Lyster and Ranta (1997: 47) identified three ways of eliciting the correct forms: (a) when the teacher pauses and lets the student complete the utterance, (b) when the teacher asks an open question, and (c) when the teacher requests a reformulation of the ill-formed utterance. Thus, elicitation provides opportunities for negotiation of form through various forms of requests for clarification and correction.

Example 11:

S: Dr. Ali's classes are interested. (Error - grammatical)

T: Say it again. (Feedback- elicitation, explicit)

S: Dr. Ali's classes are interesting.

T: Excellent.

Example 12:

T: The weather is hot?

S1: I am used hot weather. (Error- grammatical)

T: Say the sentence again (Feedback- elicitation, explicit)

S1: I am used hot weather.

T: Excellent. Or the T. may encourage peer correction:

T: Who can say it?

S2: I am used to hot weather.

T (to S1): T: Remember...? Say it again.

S2: I am used to hot weather.

T: Very good. OK.

The above examples show that when the teacher adopts elicitation to help learners notice their errors, s/he tends to give them some time to reflect on where the error might be, encouraging them for self-repairing their wrong utterances. In most examples, the teacher provides constructive feedback which Tsui (2003: 43) and Hamidun et al (2012:591) see as an important technique for appreciating every contribution in order to motivate learners to learn and participate in class activities. If the learner is not able to self-repair his/her utterance, the teacher adopts two procedures: s/he naturally allocates enough time for the other learners to reflect on the error resulting in spontaneous peer-correction (example 12) and when elicitation does not help the learner to notice how the utterance can be repaired, s/he explicitly corrects the mistake.

### **Cues**

Generally, EFL teachers cannot do without cues. Gestures and facial expressions are used to cue learners to correct their wrong utterances. When cueing is used, the teacher corrects the conjugation of a verb that should be corrected. Since cues are looked upon an integral part in language instruction, they were used in this study as explicit signals accompanying the three feedback techniques (implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback) to make them more salient and help the participants to notice that the cues were negative evidence, which resulted in reprocessing of their output.

### **Scaffolding**

The concept of scaffolding is based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which refers to the range of tasks and activities learners can achieve with scaffolding. These tasks and activities should be beyond the learners' abilities if they are not helped. So, teachers need to assess, and then exploit the learners' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). So, teacher and peer scaffolding is one of the main components of the constructivist feedback as it enables learners to perform beyond the limits of their abilities. It provides temporary support which helps learners to bridge the gap between what they have said (the erroneous utterance) and the target (correct) utterance. In addition, it allows EFL teachers to intervene and provide clues, questions, comments guidance and clarification requests needed by the learners to correct their responses before they are able to correct them independently. Thus, scaffolding enables students to bridge the gap between their erroneous response and the target forms.

Following the socio-cultural approach to language instruction, Donato and Adair-Hauck (1994: 40) and Antón (1999: 303) emphasized that teachers should explain grammatical structures by scaffolding learners in the foreign language classroom. According to them, in social classroom interaction, more proficient learners can create supportive conditions to help less proficient learners, by means of speech, to participate in classroom interaction and boost their current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence. They identified six features used by

teachers when they scaffold learners: 1) recruiting interest in the task, 2) simplifying the task, 3) maintaining pursuit of the goal, 4) marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution, 5) controlling frustration during problem solving, and 6) demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed. Features 4, 5 and 6 are completely related to feedback, since the correction of learners' errors can create a collaborative effort involving not only the teacher and the learner, but also the whole class. Thus, through scaffolding and interactional feedback the teacher can shift the authority and control of the activity of providing feedback to the class, which is likely to result in a challenging but supportive environment for learning. This dialogic relationship is defined by Donato and Adair-Hauck (1992:73) as "proleptic instruction", a robust type of formal instruction in collaboration and negotiation with students.

In this study, the three types of feedback (explicit recasts, implicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback) were provided to the participants in a dialogic way so as to enable them to reflect on the errors they make and provide correct responses. Also, the participants were given the responsibility to help their peers to correct their errors. This attitude of allowing the participants to take part in and negotiate in the error correction process is a good example of how feedback can be effective when based on negotiation and motivating the participants to reflect on their non-target linguistic mismatches.

### Definitions of Recasts

In their review of recasts literature, Nicholas et al. (2001: 732-733) and Sheen (2006:361) found that researchers have failed to solve their definitional differences about the term "recasts". This makes it difficult to compare the results provided by different studies, given that, more often than not, these studies are not investigating the same thing. Sample definitions of recasts are illustrated in table (2).

**Table 2. Sample Definitions of Recasts**

No	Name and Year	Definition
1	Long (1996: 434)	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"
2	Lyster and Ranta (1997: 46)	Recasts involve "the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance minus the error".
	Nicholas et al.(2001: 732-733)	Recasts are "utterances that repeat a learner's incorrect utterance, making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning".
3	Braidi (2002: 20)	"A response was coded as a recast if it incorporated the content words of the immediately preceding incorrect NNS utterance and also changed and corrected the utterance in some way, e.g., phonological, syntactic, morphological, or lexical".

4	Long (2007: 77)	A corrective recast may be defined as "a reformulation of all or part of a learner's immediately preceding utterance in which one or more non-target-like items (lexical, grammatical, etc.) are replaced by the corresponding target language form(s), and where, through the exchange, the focus of the interlocutors is on meaning, not language as object".
5	Sheen (2006: 365)	Recasts are defined 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".

The definitions in table (2) are dexterous but mainly different. While Sheen's (2006) definition makes reference to the context of interaction, Long's (2007:361) definition focuses on the interlocutors' orientation in interaction. On the contrary, the definitions of Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Nicholas et al. (2001) tackle neither of these two aspects. In addition, the definitions of Lyster and Ranta (1997), Nicholas et al. (2001) and Sheen (2006) include form-focused recasts, while Long's (2006) definition seems to preclude such form-focused recasts. Also, neither Lyster nor Ranta's (1997) nor Braid's (2002) definitions made reference to the teachers' and learners' orientation to the discourse, whether the major focus of attention is on language as an object or on message-conveyance. Moreover, Long's (1996) definition states that a recast rephrases an erroneous learner utterance "while still referring to its central meaning". In a more recent work, Long's (2007:361) definition emphasizes that "throughout the exchange, the focus of the teachers is on meaning not language as an object". Thus, it seems that the difference between the two definitions is definitive and probably reflects Long's desire to exclude reformulations that refer to the central meaning of learners utterances that that are clearly didactic from the perspective of the person providing recasts, rather than communicative ,i.e., they do not seek to solve a communication problem. The following examples illustrate this point.

Example (1)

S: A train is more faster .....

T: Is faster. (Recast)

S: Is faster than a car

T: OK. Thank you.

Example (2)

S: What do you spend on weekends?

T: What? (Clarification request)

S: What do you spend your leisure time on weekends?

T: Ah, how do you spend? (Reduced recast)

S: How do you spend?

T: OK. Thank you.

In example (1), it seems that the teacher has no difficulty grasping what the student means to say, but provides a recast that corrects the learner's grammatical error. Also, the teacher's reformulation clearly focuses on the central meaning of the student's utterance. It can be concluded that Long, in accordance with his later definition, would not wish to consider the reformulation in example (1) a recast. In contrast, the teacher's reformulation in example (2) appears to be motivated by an attempt to understand what the learner means. In these examples, the teachers seem to focus on meaning throughout; thus, the reformulation is looked upon as a recast in Long's later terms. Moreover, given the contexts from which the abovementioned definitions were drawn (immersion classrooms and task-based interaction) it is clear that the main focus was on the message, although it is probable that some repair sequences resulted from form rather than message. Thus, the proposed definitions of recasts may include reformulated utterances from interactions within traditional, form-focused classes.

In addition to the definitions quoted in table (2), Doughty and Varela (1998: 124) and Leeman (2003:48) proposed operational definitions which differ even more greatly (examples 1 and 2). According to Doughty and Varela (1998:124), recasts were operationalized as follows: When a learner produces an error in past reference, the teacher repeats the learner's incorrect utterance, putting emphasis on the incorrect form through rising intonation. The teacher then encourages self and peer correction. Recasts are provided only when learners fail to provide the correct form. Once provided, learners are asked to repeat the teachers' reformulation (Example 1). In contrast, Leeman's (2003:48) definition of recasts only includes a reformulation of the erroneous part, and is followed by the question (What else?) to avoid learner repetition.

Example 1:

S: I think that the worm will go under the soil.

T: I think that the worm will go under the soil?

L: (no response)

T: I thought that the worm would go under the soil.

L: I thought that the worm would go under the soil. (Doughty and Varela, 2006: 124)

(Example 2)

S: "On the table there's a red cup".

T: "Um hmm, a red cup. What else?" (Leeman, 2003: 48)

A comparison of the aforementioned definitions may lead one to wonder whether these studies were really looking at the same thing. Scrutinizing all the definitional differences throughout previous studies, it is no surprise they came to different conclusions even though they attempted to answer nearly the same research questions. This urged Ellis and Sheen (2006: 575) to state that it is better to work with a very general definition of recasts, and then subcategorize recasts into distinct types depending on clearly distinguishable formal characteristics. Also, Hauser (2005:310) provided an objection to the way recasts have been defined and coded. He stated that definitions such as Long's (1996:434) make reference to recasts that maintain the meaning of the learner's initial utterance. He also pointed out that this may result in a problematic meaning which, whether seen as propositional content or action, is not established by the learner's initial utterance but, rather, is "open to negotiation" and "emerges through the interaction". He concluded that coding practices based on the idea of maintaining meaning "obscure what is happening in the interaction". Nonetheless, Lyster and Ranta's (1997) and

Braidi's (2002) definitions make no mention of meaning; they are based on purely formal criteria, namely that a recast (a) reformulates and (b) corrects a preceding learner utterance. Accordingly, Hauser's criticism of the coding practices of recasts studies turned out to be unjustifiable.

### **Features of Recasts**

A number of descriptive studies examined the occurrence and nature of recasts, learners' response to recasts as well as their noticing and interpretation of recasts. They generally found that that recasts occur with high frequency in conversational interaction. They also revealed some features of recasts which influence their importance. These features include length, intonation, stress, segmentation, and the number of changes (Mackey et al, 2000: 471; Panova and Lyster, 2002: 573; Loewen and Philp, 2006 : 536 ; Sheen, 2006:365 and Gass and Selinker, 2008: 329 ).

For example, Sheen (2006:365) investigated the relationship between different features of recasts and learner uptake/repair. She examined the effect of features such as mode, i.e., whether recasts were declarative or interrogative in form, linguistic focus, i.e., whether recasts targeted phonological, lexical, or grammatical features, and type of change, i.e., whether the change involved substituting an item in the learner utterance or some other kind of change on the learner's repair. She came to the conclusion that features such as length of recasts (short vs. long), linguistic focus (pronunciation vs. grammar), types of change (substitution vs. addition), mode (declarative vs. interrogative), the use of reduction partial recasts) and the number of changes (one vs. multiple) affected the explicitness of recasts. Recasts used in her study were short, more likely to be declarative in mode, reduced, repeated, with a single-error focus. In addition, they involved substitution rather than deletions and additions. These features were observed to be positively related to learner uptake and/or repair. She stressed that such recasts are explicit rather than implicit and therefore more likely to be salient.

Loewen and Philp (2006:336) examined five characteristics which were the same as Sheen's (2006: 361). The characteristics they identified were linguistic focus, length of recast, segmentation ,i.e., whether recasts repeated all or just part of the learner's utterance, number of changes, and complexity ,i.e., whether the corrective sequences were simple or complex, involving several turns. However, in their study, they went a step further to examine not only the relationship between characteristics of recasts and learner uptake but the learners' subsequent use of different recasts types in terms of posttest performance. They revealed that declarative intonation, stress, one change, and multiple feedback moves were predictive of successful uptake, whereas interrogative intonation, shortened length, and one change promoted posttest performance.

Accordingly, previous research investigating the different features of recasts asserted how some recasts may enhance salience of positive and negative evidence depending on the way recasts are provided (Loewen and Philp, 2006: 536; Sheen, 2006: 361). Such recasts trigger uptake which provides ample opportunities for production practice. These results may lead to the conclusion that recasts can function as a catalyst in their immediate production and ideally, short and long term language learning.

### **Recasts and Language Acquisition**

Since EFL language instruction has increasingly become meaning-oriented, teachers have to make sure that learners are also learning the correct form of the language they are studying. One of the ways to achieve this task is to provide negative feedback-correcting learners' errors, either implicitly or explicitly. The most common type of negative feedback used in the classroom is recasts (Panova and Lyster, 2002: 573; Loewen and Philp, 2006: 536; Sheen, 2006: 361 and Gass and Selinker, 2008: 329). They are common as they allow the teacher to maintain a focus on meaning while still giving the learner implicit correction on form (Han, 2002:543). The prevalence of recasts in the classroom has led to many studies on the topic, but results from the research have generally not provided clear-cut evidence of their effectiveness. Some researchers have questioned whether recasts in general are effective means of enhancing language acquisition. The reasons for doubts resulted from the problems which language learners face in identifying the corrective force of implicit recasts ,i.e., in perceiving recasts as providing negative evidence, due to the multifunctional nature of recasts. However, as indicated by Leeman (2003: 48), it should be noted that the problem of identifying the corrective function of recasts does not negate their acquisitional potential. This has been proved by a number of studies (, e.g., Doughty and Varela, 1998: 114; Han, 2002: 543; Leeman, 2003:48). These studies proved that the ambiguity of recasts can be reduced by ensuring that they focus on a single linguistic feature and that their corrective force is linguistically signaled by, for example, the use of emphatic stress on the target language item.

According to Ellis (1997:575) and Lyster (2004: 399), there are two types of language acquisition: (1) acquisition as the internalization of new forms, and (2) acquisition as an increase in control over forms that have already been internalized, by using in context. The first type includes acquisition of new declarative knowledge and the second type involves the transition from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge use. They further stated that recasts, as they provide target-like paradigms, can facilitate the encoding of new declarative knowledge. Thus, recasts play a vital role in the cognitive process of FFL/ESL acquisition, facilitating the internalization of new knowledge and the control over already-acquired knowledge. This was also supported by Doughty and Varela (1998: 114) when they concluded that "recasts are potentially effective, since the aim is to add attention to form to a primarily communicative task rather than to depart from an already communicative goal in order to discuss a linguistic feature". Since recasts can keep the learners' focus on meaning but at the same time allow the teacher to maintain control over the linguistic form, they are described by Loewen and Philp (2006:537) as "pedagogically expeditious" and "time-saving". Thus, the pedagogical function of recasts is to develop linguistic accuracy.

In addition, the semantic and discursal characteristics of recasts that repeat the information generated by learners and that are juxtaposed with the erroneous utterances make it easier for learners to make cognitive comparisons between their interlanguage and the target language (Long, 1996:415; 2007: 361). That's why a number of descriptive studies showed that recasts are the most frequent negative feedback types (e.g., Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 1998b:51; Panova and Lyster, 2002:573). Other studies found recasts effective in augmenting language acquisition (e.g., Carroll and Swain, 1993:357; Doughty and Varela, 1998:114; Long et al.

1998: 17 ; Ayoun, 2001 226; Han, 2002:543; Iwashita, 2003:1 ; Leeman, 2003:48; Ishida, 2004; Ellis, 2007:339; Gass and Mackey, 2007: 175; Loewen and Nabei, 2007: 361; Long, 2007:76; Mackey and Goo, 2007:407).

Accordingly, the benefits of recasts in language acquisition can be summarized as follows:

1- In his discussion of the interaction hypothesis, Long (1996:415) maintained that recasts are effective in promoting language development as they usually occur during meaning focused activities. In such cases, recasts are believed to provide learners with both comprehensible input and focus on form.

2- Some researchers concluded that recasts help learners notice the gap between their inter-language forms and the target forms, thus serving as "negative evidence" (Ellis,1994:79;Long, 1996:415; Long et al.1998:17; Long and Robinson, 1998:17 and Doughty, 2001:206). Thus, when the teacher reformulates a learner's error, the reformulation may draw the learner's attention to the target form by signaling to the learner that his or her utterance is deviant in some way. Thus, recasts create optimal opportunities for cognitive comparison because they are assumed to promote noticing of form while a focus on the meaning/message is maintained.

3-Recasts may provide learners with opportunities for modified output which proved to be crucial for language development (Swain, 1995:126; Doughty, 2001:206 ; Nassaji, 2009: 411).

4- According to Ellis and Sheen (2006:575), recasts provide the linguistic data of both positive evidence (i.e., what is grammatical in the target language) and negative evidence (i.e., what is ungrammatical in the target language) at the same time.

5- Recasts provide supportive scaffolding that helps learners self-correct or peer-correct their erroneous forms when the target forms in question are beyond their current abilities.

### **Types of Recasts**

The literature on recasts is in fact replete with a whole host of terms that describe the different kinds of recasts. These are corrective recasts and non-corrective recasts, implicit recasts, explicit recasts, full recasts and partial recasts, single or multiple and simple or complex recasts (Farrar, 1992:92; Lyster and Ranta, 1997:37; Braidi, 2002:20 and Philp, 2003:99).

### **Corrective Recasts and Non-Corrective Recasts**

While Farrar (1992:92) distinguished between "corrective recasts", which aims to correct a target error and "non-corrective recasts" that do not correct a target but models a target, Lyster and Ranta (1997:37) used the same terms but defined non-corrective recasts as reformulations of learners' error-free utterances (examples 1 and 2).

Example 1 (Non-corrective recasts):

T: What do we call the baby of a hen, Ali?

S: Chicks.

T: Chicks. That's good. (Recasts are complete with signs of approval)

Example 2 (Corrective recasts):

T: A hole in which a rabbit lives, Ahmed?

S: A din.

T: A den, that's good.

**Full and Partial Recasts**

Another distinction of vital importance is that between full recasts and partial recasts. In full recasts, the whole erroneous utterance is repeated whereas in partial recasts only the part of the erroneous utterance including the error is repeated. Example (1) illustrates a full recast, in which the teacher repeats the whole erroneous utterance while Example (2) illustrates a partial recast, in which the teacher repeats only erroneous utterance.

Example 1:

S: Yeah, a good idea comes to my mind.

T: A good idea comes to mind.

Example 2:

S: Yeah, a good idea comes to my mind.

T: Comes to mind.

**Multi-Move Recasts and Single-Move Recasts**

Sheen (2006:365) classified recasts moves in the sequences of error treatment under two categories: Multi-move recasts and single-move recasts. Multi-move recasts included corrective recasts that are preceded by repetition, repeated recasts in which the teacher repeated either fully or partially and combination recasts which included recasts combined with other types of feedback except explicit correction. In contrast to multi-move recasts, single-move recasts comprised only one recast move in a single turn. Sheen identified seven characteristics of single-move recasts: The first characteristic involved mode (declarative or interrogative). The second one described the "scope" of recasts which included "secluded" (during which the erroneous form was secluded and reformulated) and "incorporated" recasts which were followed by additional semantic content. The third characteristic involved "reduction" in which the teacher's corrective response could be either shorter than the wrong utterance (reduction) or just a repetition of the learner's erroneous utterance (non-reduction). The fourth characteristic was length of the corrective recasts which were classified as short, long or a clause involving at least two phrasal components. The fifth characteristic included number of changes which means that recasts may involve only one change or multiple changes. The sixth characteristic was the type of change depending on whether one adds or supplies a missing element (addition) or removes it (deletion). The seventh characteristic was the linguistic focus. Learners might also be corrected on different linguistic areas including grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. This means that the kind of error identifies the type of linguistic focus in recasts. The teacher can provide recasts once (Example 1) or repeats recasts (Example 2).

Example 1:

S: Sami told me, your height is rather shorter.

T: Rather short.

Example 2:

S: Sami told me, your height is rather shorter.

T: Rather short. Rather short.

**Simple and Complex Recasts**

Recasts also differ in terms of whether they are simple or complex (Philp, 2003:99). This depends on whether the changes to the learner's erroneous utterance are minimal or substantial and on the nature of the change—that is, whether it entails a substitution of the erroneous form, an addition, a deletion, or a reordering of the target utterance.

**Implicit and Explicit Recast**

The prevailing view in previous research is that recasts constitute an implicit form of negative feedback. Long (2007: 76) pointed out that "implicit negative feedback in the form of corrective recasts seems particularly promising". In the study of Ellis et al. (2006:364), the implicit corrective feedback took the form of recasts. So is the case with Long et al. (1998:357) and Ammar and Spada (2006:543). In addition, implicit recasts are looked upon by Nicholas et al (2001: 732-733) as "utterances that repeat a learner's incorrect utterance, making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning".

Yet, as concluded recently by Ellis and Sheen (2006:583), recasts are not always as implicit as Long (1996:415, 2007:77) claimed. For example, it can be concluded that the recasts used in Doughty and Varela's (1998:114) study contain clear signals, such as repetition and stress, which made their corrective force quite explicit. Therefore, recasts should not be seen as necessarily implicit, but, depending on the linguistic signals encoding them; they should be taken as being more or less implicit or explicit. This was supported by Ellis and Sheen (2006: 583) when they pointed out that "recasts can lie at various points on a continuum of linguistic implicitness-explicitness". In fact, the terms "explicit recasts" and "implicit recasts" are only introduced by Sheen (2006: 388) after her study of the characteristics of recasts.

Like implicit recasts, explicit recasts can be defined as the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a learner's erroneous utterance that corrected the error (s) without changing the central meaning of the utterance (Carpenter et.al, 2006:218). They involved the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a learner's utterance, minus the error. However, explicit recasts are different from implicit recasts in that the teacher reformulates all or part of the learner's utterance and explicitly informs him/her that the utterance is incorrect. They are generally explicit in that they are introduced by phrases such as "You mean" and "you should say". Thus, the teacher indicates that the student has made an error so as to encourage him or her to correct his utterance. In addition, these recasts are stressed, partial, and with only one change from the erroneous utterance. In doing so, the corrective force of recasts becomes quite obvious to the learners. Therefore, it is easy for them to attend to the correction of their erroneous utterances and at the same time to make cognitive comparison between the erroneous utterances and the teacher's corrective reformulation. This kind of cognitive comparison is beneficial for language acquisition. Moreover, this explicit correction, which occurred in a communicative activity and constituted a temporary focus-on-form, may be more salient to learners.

**Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Recasts**

The data collected from review of literature show varying results about the effectiveness of recasts as facilitators of language acquisition. Looking deeper than results, however, entails an investigation into the factors that may have influenced these results. Many studies revealed important aspects regarding the nature of the recasting environment, the participant's preparedness, the teacher's artistry in delivering recasts, and other factors. In this section, seven of the most prominent factors influencing the effectiveness recasts are addressed, according to the studies that used tests to assess the participants' improvement (Sepehrinia et al, 2011:18).

**Length of Recasts and Number of Changes**

Length of the recast proved to have an eminent influence on the effectiveness of recasts and thus on learners' language performance (Loewen and Philp, 2006: 550; Kim and Han, 2007: 269; Lyster and Izquierdo's, 2009: 453). For example, in Lyster and Izquierdo's (2009: 453) study, the teacher used short recasts that involved no more than one noun phrase. This made the errors more salient to the learners, and thus made the implicit feedback more obvious and comprehensible. Also, Sheen (2004: 263) and Sheen (2006: 365) found that short recasts were noticed more easily and consistently than long recasts irrespective of the learners' level of proficiency. It was also revealed that the fewer the number of changes, the better the participants could recall recasts. Accordingly, length of recasts and number of changes were determining factors in the way language learners were able to remember and notice the provided implicit feedback.

**Class Size**

Class size is one of the factors which influence the effectiveness of recasts. For instance, Han's (2002: 568) and Lyster and Izquierdo's (2009: 453) studies, which showed that recasts were effective, included learner groups composed of 4 learners and 12 learners, respectively. In such small class sizes, compared to the average and large classrooms, the individualized attention may have augmented the learners' success rate.

**Group Work and Class Interaction**

Nabei and Swain (2002:58) found that students performed better on grammaticality judgment questions that were taken from recasts used in a group work setting, rather than a teacher-fronted setting. They found that "recasts provided in group interaction, rather than teacher-fronted interaction, were more likely perceived accurately as correction". Thus, learners seemed to respond more to recasts that were directed at them, even if they were in groups.

**Simple or Complex Recasts**

Kim and Han (2007: 269) came to the conclusion that learners were able to grasp gaps between their wrong utterances and the target utterance when recasts were simple rather than complex. In addition, Han (2002:544) revealed that recasts, focusing only on one form, such as tense, make error correction more salient to the learners. In addition, she found that recasts focused almost completely on tense made the learners more aware of the pedagogical focus of the instruction. The exit questionnaires in Lyster and Izquierdo's (2009: 453) study also showed that the participants in their study were aware of receiving feedback only on grammatical gender. In this case, the implicit recasting had effectively become explicit. In contrast, Loewen and Philp (2006: 550) did not limit the focus of recasts in their study; learners received and were tested on a variety of morphosyntactic and phonetic recasts. Maybe, due to this lack of consistency, learners did not show a significant testing difference between those who extradited recasts and those who received other forms of corrective feedback. Moreover, they concluded that learners were more likely to achieve higher test scores when they were provided with recasts consisting of five morphemes or fewer and no more than one change.

**The Learning Environment**

Learners seem to be more successful when recasts are delivered in an intensive environment where they can practice the forms regularly and receive a high amount of feedback. For

example, in Han's (2002:543) study, instruction occurred in eight classes over a period of four weeks, and the participants received recasts as their only form of instruction. Lyster's and Izquierdo's (2009: 483) study was similarly intensive in that the participants attended additional classes outside of their regular French class, which focused on grammatical gender through exclusively recasts or using prompts. Accordingly, lack of intensity may have also influenced the results of Nabei and Swain's (2002:58) study on young girls (Shoko). In their study, the teacher did not use a lot of corrective feedback in general. When recasts were used, there was often no chance for students to process the feedback because the teacher would continue the topic without pausing for students to notice any kind of correction. The fact that the teacher's recasts were infrequent and not carried out in a form-focused way may explain why Shoko seemed rarely aware of form-based corrections.

### **The Learning Context**

The word 'context' has been used quite differently by many researchers. Just to list a few usages, it can be used to refer to social circumstances affecting language usages (Sociolinguistics- e.g., Morris and Tarone,2003:325),conditions of language processing (Psycholinguistics-e.g., Batstone, 2002:1), foci of language teachers' feedback (Instructed SLA-e.g, Oliver and Mackey, 2003:519;Egi, 2007: 511 and Egi, 2010: 1), and discrepancies between target language cultures and cultures where languages are taught (Foreign Language Pedagogy-e.g., Kramsch, 1993:26).Thus, the word context may be used to mean a research setting where a study is conducted, which presupposes an official status of the language, geographical places, and institution types. Generally, as Sheen (2004: 263) pointed out,"the extent to which recasts lead to learner uptake and repair may be greater in contexts where the focus of the recasts is more salient".

Comparing foreign and second language contexts as a variable in recasts effectiveness, Mackey and Goo's (2007:407) meta-analysis revealed significant differences. Although they seemingly provided evidence that L2 learning behaviors differ depending on contexts, the selection criteria they used did not account for how they splitted their studies into two contexts. In contrast, Lyster and Saito (2010: 265) found no significant differences between second and foreign language classroom settings. In their study, decision was made according to official or recognized status of the target language following Stern's (1983:376-377) definition. However, this way of distinction may not be justifiable because the research context does not necessarily represent the learning history of each participant. In other words, it is highly possible that participants in a study may different cognitive processes as they come from different educational and social backgrounds. Nonetheless, Sheen (2004: 263) found that the number of both recasts and repairs was much higher in EFL and ESL classroom contexts than in immersion contexts. The difference was attributed to the fact that students in the ESL and EFL classes were more likely to attend to linguistic forms than students in the immersion classes, who were probably more focused on meaning.

Sheen (2004:263) and Lyster and Mori (2006:269) descriptively provided a new point of view; that is, implicit feedback in the form of recasts functions considerably differently depending on the context in which they are used. These two studies revealed that learners who noticed recasts more were students in language schools where learners are keen on learning language

forms and thereby tending to repeat recasts more. Thus, contexts should be considered as important variables affecting recasts effectiveness.

### **The Social Dynamics in the Classroom**

Morris and Tarone (2003:344) investigated negative social dynamics and interpersonal conflicts among learners in L2 classrooms, specifically learners working in pairs, to determine if the social dynamics of a classroom could affect learners' perceptions of recasts. They collected data on the interactional discourse of pairs of students participating in jigsaw tasks. Errors were identified and corrections, if provided by the partner, were assorted into one of three types: 1) explicit correction, 2) recasts, or 3) negotiation. In addition, conversations were analyzed for instances of interpersonal conflict such as mockery, expressions of annoyance, and arrogance. The study revealed that learners' expectations of being negatively evaluated socially by their partners on occasion led them to perceive mockery when it was not overtly apparent in the discourse data, and when this happened, they failed to notice the recasts form. Thus, when interpersonal conflict exists among learners in the L2 classroom, they tend to see recasts as criticism or mockery rather than as error correction technique.

Accordingly, if social dynamics between learners during pair group work influence their perceptions of recasts, then it would be plausible to conclude that social dynamics between teachers and learners could also cause misinterpretation of recasts, which Morris and Tarone (2003:325) found negatively influence learners' uptake of the correction. The teacher's tone and behavior as well as other paralinguistic cues may have either a positive or a negative effect on how learners perceive oral error correction.

### **Learners' age**

Unlike children, adult and adolescent learners have a higher attention span which enables them to focus on the input provided to them in the form of recasts. This was supported by Trofimovich et al. (2007:174) when they concluded that "adult learners are believed to have higher attention span than children and are more likely to notice recasts than younger learners".

### **Learner Readiness**

A key factor that influences the effectiveness of recasts is the learners' developmental readiness; that is, the extent to which the learners have reached a stage of development which empowers them to assimilate and incorporate the target forms, addressed by recasts, into their inter-language. Thus, if recasts targeted forms that learners are developmentally ready to acquire, those recasts will be effective. On the contrary, if recasts address forms that lie far beyond the learners' existing developmental stage, they are likely to fail or have a dim effect. This was proved by Mackey and Philp (1998: 270) and Nicholas et al. (2001:752) when they concluded that recasts can be effective if learners have already begun to use particular linguistic features and are in a position to choose between linguistic alternatives. That is why Han (2002:543) emphasized that the participants of her study were upper-intermediate level English learners. They had generally acquired the knowledge of when to use present and past tense forms but they lacked control of these forms. Also, Lyster and Izquierdo (2009:482) selected subjects who were at the intermediate level of French and who therefore were familiar with French grammatical gender forms before they participated in the study.

**Learner Orientation**

Learner's orientation is another significant factor that may affect effectiveness of recasts relates. When learners look upon language as an object to be studied, then they may find out the corrective force of recasts and thus understand their negative evidence. On the contrary, if they act as language users and see language a means to pass the exam, then they are less likely to notice recasts as a corrective feedback technique. Lyster and Izquierdo (2009: 483) found that the participants in their study were extremely focused on acquiring form, as they were volunteers who attended five extra laboratory sessions that were advertised as being specifically designed to help them learn French grammatical gender. Accordingly, they concluded that the participants were indeed treating language as an object to be studied.

**Learner Proficiency Level**

Proficiency is an important factor can enhance recasts effectiveness. Various studies revealed that learners with higher proficiency tend to benefit more from recasts. For example, Lin and Hedgcock (1996: 567) who assigned the participants into high-and low-proficiency groups according to their levels of speech as judged holistically by trained raters, in addition to the length of their residence in the L2 environment and their formal education of the target language. Also, Havranek and Cesnik (2001:99) identified verbal intelligence and relative English fluency as variables that positively affected the effectiveness of corrective feedback. Verbal intelligence was not clearly defined and relative English fluency was measured by combining the school-administered English final exam scores and C-test scores (a type of cloze test). Furthermore, in Ammar and Spada's (2006: 543) experimental study, the participants were assigned to low and high proficiency groups based on the pretest scores of the passage-correction task and picture-description task. Finally, Trofimovich et al. (2007: 175) also concluded that the positive effect of proficiency level was confirmed by the fact that higher proficiency learners benefited from recasts more than the lower proficiency learners. Accordingly, low-proficiency learners need some kind of assistance in order to notice the feedback provided in the form of recasts especially complex recasts. This may be due to their lack the competence needed to figure out the gap between their interlanguage and the input delivered to them through recasts on their own. So, teachers should make recasts salient and easy to notice.

**Part two: Grammar**

Grammar is the most important part in a language system. A complete language system cannot do without grammar. According to Bastone (1994:35), "language without grammar would be chaotic; countless words without the indispensable guidelines for how they can be ordered and modified". Thus, for foreign language teachers, grammar is an indispensable part in language instruction.

**Definition of Grammar**

Batstone (1994:35) states that grammar is "multi-dimensional" and has multi-meanings. It is generally looked upon a set of rules for choosing words and putting words together to make sense. Every language has its own grammar. Thus, if a language is a building, the words are bricks and grammar is the architect's plan. Million bricks do not make a building without a plan. Similarly, if a learner knows a million English words, but s/he doesn't know how to put them together, then s/he cannot speak English (Brumfit, 2000: 5).

Accordingly, grammar is seen as a set of rules by which unlimited number of sentences can be structured. These rules constitute the underlying linguistic system of language which is intuitively known by its native speakers. The systematic description of language features is also looked upon as grammar. These language features include phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. English grammar is the body of rules that describe the structure of expressions in the English language. This comprises the structure of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences to make sense. It is a set of rules for choosing words and putting words together to make sense. So, it plays a significant role in language teaching and learning.

### **The importance of Grammar**

The basic components and features of language entail the need for grammar. Wang (2010:87) states that although contemporary linguists have objections on what is the language, they all agree that language consists of sounds, lexicon and grammar and these three elements interact with and affect each other and constitute the main basis of the language system, i.e., the content of language can be expressed through sounds which have to use lexicon and grammar to achieve their functions. Thus, grammar is the sound, structure, and meaning system of language and only through grammar can sounds and lexicon form a meaningful language system. That's why linguists emphasize that grammar is the most important part in a language system. Grammar is just like a frame of a house, without which good materials and building blocks cannot establish a solid house.

In addition, one of the basic features of language is that it is a creative system, that is, learners can use specific rules of language to create endless structures for communicating meanings and messages. According to Wang (2010:88), "the object of foreign language teaching is speech of target language. Speech is the product of language. Learners cannot learn all the unlimited speech of the target language, but can only learn the limited language paradigms to obtain the ability to produce speech". Accordingly, grammar as rules of language in foreign language instruction are the language paradigms needed to secure a better acquisition of the target language. Therefore, for EFL teachers, grammar is an indispensable part in language instruction.

### **The Status of Grammar Instruction in Saudi Arabia**

With the development of new EFL course in Saudi Arabia in 2005, the communicative approach was recommended as one of the teaching approaches/methods in those courses which aimed to emphasize the learners' communicative ability to use the English language in real situations. However, in most EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia the problem is not the exclusion of grammar, but too much emphasis is put on grammar as it was found that English is still taught through traditional methods such as giving or working out grammar rules, memorization of structure and translation of forms into the first language in classes. In addition, grammar is taught in isolation, not in context. This led learners to use grammar rules mechanically but fail to use them in communicative tasks which are challenging for them.

Moreover, as indicated by Al-Yousef (2007:3), the place of grammar during instruction and how teachers should deal with grammar is very obscure both in student and teachers' books, giving the impression that students are expected to naturally acquire these forms through

exposure and use. However, the wrong applications with grammar instruction in classrooms cannot be remedied by going to another extreme by completely excluding grammar instruction. Instead, the goal should be to move from "focus-on-formS" to a "focus-on-form" approach, which seems to be more realistic and practical in EFL contexts which are characterized by crowded classes, limited classroom time, and inadequate exposure to language input and output practice.

### **Grammar Error Correction**

Error correction, especially in grammar instruction, has been constantly investigated because of its celebrity and importance in EFL contexts. With the changing of trends in TEFL from traditional methods to the communicative approach, attitudes towards learner errors and the roles of error correction have incubated astonishingly. During the prominence of the audio-lingual approach, from the 1950s to the 1960s, error correction was stressed by all means. Then, in the late 1960s error correction was stigmatized due to its harmful effects (Krashen 1981:50 and Truscott 1996:327) and in the 1970s, with the advent of the communicative approach which focused on meaning rather than form, the correction of errors in grammar instruction became less prominent, and in some cases, was obsolete (Harmer 2001:156 and Richards and Rodgers 2001: 6). Later on, when the task-based language teaching prevailed, more attention was paid to meaning with little or no attention to form which became a blemish in task-based grammar instruction.

Current research in EFL/ESL has refurbished the role of grammar error correction and focus-on form in language instruction. This renewed interest in 'form' has made the issue of providing corrective (written or oral) feedback in language classrooms the topic of a large number of studies which investigated the effect of various types of corrective feedback on different aspects of language including grammar, pronunciation, and writing accuracy (Ellis et al. 2006:364 ; Bitchener and Knoch,2009:322 and Gass et al. 2011:189; ).Some studies emphasized the effectiveness of corrective feedback in improving EFL/ESL learners' language skills(e.g., Carroll and Swain 1993:357; Schmidt 1993:206 ; Ellis 1994:79; Fotos 1994:323; Long 1996:413;Lyster 2004:399,) while some others questioned the effectiveness of grammar error correction (Truscott 1996:327 and Maleki, and Abdollahzadeh:2011:51).

### **Approaches to Grammar Instruction in EFL/ESL Language Classrooms**

In recent years, there has been a major shift within the context English language instruction pertaining the nature of what is to be taught and how it can be taught. In simple terms, there has been a change of emphasis from presenting grammar deductively as a set of structures to be memorized, to presenting grammar inductively as functional structures accomplishing specific communicative tasks. Thus, two main tendencies have predominated the scene of grammar instruction: methods in which the teacher plays the most important role and chooses the items students will learn opposing the one where focus shifts away from the teacher to the learners who are more responsible for their own learning. The following are sample teaching approaches which are still widely used in grammar instruction (Erlam, 2003:242; Larsen-Freeman, 2003:11; Chalipa, 2013:76):

### **Deductive Approaches (Rule Driven Approaches)**

When a deductive approach is used an example of the target structures and the grammatical rules are given first and then the structures are practiced. Thus, the teacher starts the lesson by telling learners explicitly what structures he or she is going to deal with. Then, the teacher gives the grammar rules and sets up some activities for learners to practice of the target structures.

### **Possible Stages of a Lesson Based on Deductive Approaches(Gower,1995:137-138)**

Generally, there is no correct way of presenting grammar using a deductive approach. However, one possible way of presenting such lesson can include the following stages:

1-Presenting the target structure and the grammar rule in a way that involves the learners. For example, if the objective is to enable learners to compare the tenses used to talk about the future, the teacher may write these sentences on the board: "I am visiting my uncle tomorrow" and "I will visit my uncle tomorrow". Then, s/he encourages the learners to discuss the difference in use and meaning.

2-Writing up the target structure (s).

3-Setting up some activities for learners to practice the target structure(s) in meaningful contexts (for example in a demonstration, a role-play, a speaking or writing activity...etc.).

### **Advantages of Deductive Approaches (Chalipa ,2013:79):**

1- They get straight to the point, and can therefore be time-saving. This allows more time for practice and application.

2- They acknowledge the role of cognitive processes in language acquisition.

3- They meet the needs of analytical learning style learners..

4- They allow teachers to deal with language points as they come up, rather than having to anticipate them and prepare for them in advance.

### **Disadvantages of Deductive Approaches**

1-Starting the lesson with grammar explanation may be difficult and boring for some EFL learners, especially younger ones who may not have adequate grammar terminology to talk about the target grammar rules.

2-Grammar explanation is hardly as memorable as other methods of presentation, such as the inductive approaches, demonstrations ...etc.

3-Grammar explanation creates teacher-fronted classrooms where teacher explanation dominates and hinders learners' involvement and interaction.

4- Deductive approaches look upon learning language as simply a process of rules knowledge.

### **Inductive Approaches (Rule Discovery Approaches)**

When an inductive approach is used, a context is established first from which the target structure is inferred and then the structure is practiced. Thus, the teacher starts the lesson by creating contexts which enable learners to work rules out for themselves.

### **Possible Stages of a Lesson Based Inductive Approaches (Gower,1995:136)**

There are a number of variations, but the following is an example of how to proceed

1-Creating suitable visual/aural context(s). For example, if the objective is to enable learners to use comparative adjectives, the teacher may show a picture of tall, thin man called Fahd and indicates through hand gestures that Fahd is tall and elicits from the learners that Fahd is tall.

Then, the teacher shows a second picture of an even taller, even thinner man called Said and elicits Said is tall. After that, the teacher puts the two pictures side by side and says Fahd is tall and Said is tall, but Said is taller than Fahd. The teacher can do the same for 'thin'; s/he shows more pictures to present other adjectives like short, fat, young, old...etc.

2-Learners draw the target structure(s) from context. The teacher encourages learners to work rules out for themselves. Then, s/he elicits the target structure from the learners.

3- Checking learners understanding of the target structure meaning. For example, in the lesson presenting comparative adjectives above, the target structure is 'Said is taller than Fahd'. Learners are asked to generate other sentences, using other adjectives. To ensure better learners understanding of the target structure, they are asked to use the pattern 'A is .....er than B' to generate their sentences.

4- Setting up some activities for learners to practice of the target structure(s) in meaningful contexts. Students are encouraged to practice the target structure in new contexts (in pairs or groups).

### **Advantages of Inductive Approaches (Zhou2008:17)**

1- Inductive approaches are based on English native speakers' subconscious knowledge of English grammar and make use of their grammatical judgments about the sentence well-formedness and sentence structure to "rediscover" and establish a set of conscious grammatical rules that underlie their grammatical competence.

2. Inductive approaches actively involve students in their grammar learning process, because they have to formulate grammatical rules by themselves rather than to receive them passively from their teachers.

3. Inductive approaches help students understand and establish the English grammatical rule system.

4-Inducting grammar rules makes learners more self-reliant and leads therefore to learner autonomy.

### **Disadvantages of Inductive Approaches**

1-The time spent in inducting rules may lessen the time allocated for rule practice.

2-The time and energy spent on drawing rules may lead learners to believe that rules are the objective of language learning, rather than a means for language practice.

3- Students may infer wrong rules, especially when the teacher fails to create contexts suitable for rule elicitation.

4-Inductive approaches place heavy demands on the teacher as they entail careful, well-thought of preparation.

5-Not all grammar rules can be inducted. Some rules are better 'given' than 'inducted'.

## **The Grammar-Translation Method vs. the Communicative Approach**

### **The Grammar-Translation Method**

The grammar-translation method is one of the oldest teaching methods, dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was originally used to teach 'dead' languages (and literatures) such as Latin and Greek. It aims at inculcating an understanding of the language grammar and training learners to write the new language accurately by regular practice in translation from the native language (Larsen-Freeman, 2003:11). Most of the class instruction is provided in the learners' mother tongue. Vocabulary is not taught in context, but in isolation,

using bilingual word lists. Reading and writing are mainly preferred to speaking and listening. Little time is spent on oral practice and learners are not allowed to produce sentences on their own. Each lesson consists of three main sections:

- 1- a grammar rule and paradigms;
- 2- a list of words together with their translation equivalents in the mother tongue;
- 3- a large number of exercises in which sentences in the mother tongue were to be translated into the foreign (target) language.

### **Disadvantages of the Grammar-Translation Method**

- 1- It concentrates the rules of grammar. It does not help learners develop fluency in language use.
- 2- Vocabulary is not taught in context.
- 3- The only drills are exercises in translation.
- 4- Classes are usually taught in the mother tongue.

Despite all of the drawbacks mentioned above, there are several positive aspects to be found in this approach. For learners who respond well to rules, structure and correction, the grammar-translation method can provide a challenging and even appealing language learning environment. In addition, knowledge of grammar rules enables learners to generate sentences. Thus, appropriate grammar analysis helps learners acquire the linguistic competence necessary for comprehensible communication.

### **The Communicative Approach**

The communicative approach is an umbrella term to describe the methodology which aims at developing the learners' ability to communicate efficiently and spontaneously in unstructured situations. Its origins can be found in 'discourse analysis' school of linguistics and in the 'experience' school of psychology. According the 'discourse analysis' school of linguistics, language is a system in a social context, not in isolation. The cognitive (experience) school of psychology states that learning happens as a result of understanding. So, it stresses the learners' responsibility for their own learning which should be meaningful. The communicative approach seeks language acquisition rather than conscious language learning. According to Krashen, (1987:10) "acquisition is a natural process, similar to the way children develop ability in their first language. It is subconscious process when students are not aware of the fact they are acquiring language but are using the language for communication".

### **Assumptions of the Communicative Approach**

#### **Linguistic Assumptions**

- 1-Language is a system in a social context.
- 2-Language is functional. It is always used to fulfill certain functions.
- 3-In communication, the whole is more than the sum of parts.
- 4- Language is creative.

#### **Teaching/Learning Assumptions**

- 1-Language use, not language knowledge. Students should use the language not learn about the language.

2- Learning is most effective in realistic situations. So, the teacher should prepare classroom environment in a way which provides learners with opportunities to use the language in realistic situations.

3- Students should know what they are doing. All learning activities should be meaningful.

4- To learn it, do it. Students should be allowed to practice real communication inside the classroom.

5- Mistakes are not always mistakes.

### **Possible Stages of a Communicative Lesson**

1-T. provides warming-up which aims to draw learners' attention and prepare them for the new language material.

2-T. gives a short presentation of a grammar or vocabulary item(s),-using visual/aural contexts.

3-Then, s/he gives the learners opportunity to practice the item(s) in a controlled exercise. (Interaction: T-Ss)

4-Learners carry out the controlled exercise while T. monitors and intervenes where appropriate. (Interaction: S-S)

5-Learners are asked to take part in an activity designed to get them to produce the vocabulary and grammar they have been taught. T monitors and notes errors and interesting points. T intervenes only when asked or when absolutely necessary. (Interaction: S-S)

6-T. provides constructive feedback on the learners' performance. Learners also have the opportunity to clear up puzzling points. (Interaction: T-Ss)

### **METHODOLOGY**

This section deals with the design of the study, participants, instruments and procedures.

#### **Design**

The design of the study is quasi-experimental design consisting of three experimental groups: the implicit recasts group (N=27), the explicit recasts group (N=29) and the meta-linguistic group (N=30). At the beginning of the second week of the first term of the academic year 2012-2013, the pre-test (The Grammar Test) was administered to the three groups. Then, the three experimental groups were taught seven chapters in the prescribed course-book "Fundamentals of English Grammar" using the three feedback techniques (implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback). The duration of the experiment was about seventeen weeks, three hours a week. At the end of the experiment, the three groups were post-tested using the same grammar test.

#### **Participants**

Eighty-six second-level English Department students were randomly assigned into three experimental groups: the implicit recasts group (N=27), the explicit recasts group (N=29) and the meta-linguistic group (N=30). The participants were enrolled in the Grammar-Two course "Fundamentals of English Grammar", during which they received the three types of feedback to their erroneous grammar utterances.

### **Instruments**

To collect data, a grammar test was designed and administered (Appendix Three). The test was prepared to measure the participants' ability to use the seven prescribed grammar items in context. The test included seven dimensions: Connecting Ideas (7 items), Comparisons (7 items), The Passive (7 items), Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles (8 items), Adjective Clauses (7 items), Gerunds and Infinitives (7 items) and Noun Clauses (7 items).

### **Test Validity**

Two methods were used for determining the test validity, namely, face validity and intrinsic validity.

#### **a) Face Validity**

The grammar test was submitted to a jury of Five college staff members to state how far they measure the seven grammar skills and make the necessary modifications (Appendix Four). Based on the jury members' remarks, items of questionable validity were revised or deleted. In addition, other new items were added.

#### **b) Intrinsic Validity**

The test intrinsic validity was determined through the square root of the test reliability coefficient (El-Said, 1979:553). The test reliability coefficient was  $\sqrt{0.823}$ . The intrinsic validity is 0.907. Thus, the test was valid.

### **Test Reliability**

The test-retest reliability was adopted. The test was administered to forty-one second-level English Department students at the end of the second term of the academic year 2011-2012 with an interval of two weeks. Pearson Product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated (Brown, 1996:155). It was 0.85. Thus, the calculated correlation coefficient is larger than the critical value (0.3218). This means that the calculated correlation coefficient is statistically significant (Brown, 1996:163).

### **Procedures**

Before the experiment, the grammar test designed. Then, the test validity and reliability were identified by the end of the second term of the academic year 2011-2012. At the beginning of the experiment (the second week of the first term of the academic year 2012-2013), the participants were introduced to the purposes of the study. Then, they were assigned either to the implicit recasts group (N=27), the explicit recasts group (N=29) or the meta-linguistic group (N=30). Afterwards, the researcher explained to each group what to do during the experiment. Next, the pre-test (The Grammar Test) was administered to the three groups. During the experiment which lasted for fourteen weeks, the researcher taught the grammar course (from chapter 8 to 14 in the course book "Fundamentals of English Grammar", applying the three feedback techniques; the two recasts groups received implicit recasts (the implicit recasts group) and explicit recasts (the explicit recasts group) to their erroneous grammar utterances, whereas the meta-linguistic group received meta-linguistic feedback. At the end of the experiment, the post-test (The Grammar Test) was administered to the three groups. Finally, based on the statistical analysis of the obtained data, results were discussed and recommendations were made.

Results and Discussion:

In this section, results will be presented along with a discussion based on the statistical analysis of the collected data. To make sure that there were no significant differences between the frequencies of the three experimental groups (the implicit recasts group, the explicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group) at the beginning of the experiment, chi-square (Kruskal Wallistest) was used. Table (3) shows mean ranks, sum of ranks and chi-square of the three groups on the Pre-Test.

Dimension	Group	N.	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Connecting Ideas	Implicit Recast Group	27	39.63	1070.01	2	2.308	0.315
	Explicit Recast Group	29	41.69	1209.01			
	Meta-linguistic Group	30	48.73	1461.9			
Comparisons	Implicit Recast Group	27	41.87	1130.49	2	0.520	0.771
	Explicit Recast Group	29	42.43	1230.47			
	Meta-linguistic Group	30	46.00	1380			
The Passive	Implicit Recast Group	27	38.76	1046.52	2	1.735	0.420
	Explicit Recast Group	29	44.52	1291.08			
	Meta-linguistic Group	30	46.78	1406.1			
Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Implicit Recast Group	27	42.74	1153.98	2	0.428	0.807
	Explicit Recast Group	29	41.84	1213.36			
	Meta-linguistic Group	30	45.78	1373.4			
Adjective Clauses	Implicit Recast Group	27	43.65	1178.55	2	0.069	0.966
	Explicit Recast Group	29	42.62	1235.98			
	Meta-linguistic Group	30	44.22	1326.6			
Gerunds and Infinitives	Implicit Recast Group	27	39.11	1055.97	2	1.791	0.408
	Explicit Recast Group	29	43.28	1255.12			
	Meta-linguistic Group	30	47.67	1430.1			
Noun Clauses	Implicit Recast Group	27	38.24	1032.48	2	2.266	0.322
	Explicit Recast Group	29	44.10	1278.9			
	Meta-linguistic Group	30	47.65	1429.5			

**Table 3. Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Chi-square of the Three Groups on the Pre-Test.**

Results in table (3) show that there were no significant differences between the mean ranks of the three experimental groups (the implicit recasts group, the explicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group) at the beginning of the experiment. Results also reveal that the mean ranks of the three groups were relatively low. This was interpreted by the participants when

they cited two reasons for their low performance: (1) they said that they had been enrolled in the Computer Department in the first term in the college and then moved to English Department. This means that they had not been interviewed nor tested before joining English Department. The second reason-as cited by them-was that they had exhibited poor language performance in the previous stages (the intermediate and secondary stages), which was proved by recent studies (Al-Zubeiry, 2011:18;Khan ,2011: 1248;Alresheed,2012:15 and Alhaison 2013:113).

Another plausible interpretation is that the participants had come from the summer vacation in which they might not have used English for any purpose. This supports the claims that it is difficult for EFL learners to learn language in the same way children learn their native language as they are in a situation which is different from that of the native language learner. For example they do not use language outside the classroom.

A third reasonable interpretation which was revealed through discussions with the participants is that they used to memorize grammar rules as they take only one type of questions in the final exam; that is multiple choice questions which measure rule recognition rather than language acquisition. Also, they used to focus on specific grammar exercises to answer in the final exam. Moreover, they do their assigned homework either by copying answers from the answer book or buying ready-answered homework from libraries and stationary shops. This indicates that little or no time is allocated for real practice of grammar rules. Thus, they do not acquire language rules to be used in real communication but rather memorize them to pass the exam.

In response to the first research question: "What is the effect of implicit recasts on second-year English department students' grammar performance?", Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used. Table (4) shows mean ranks, sum of ranks and Z values of the implicit recasts group on the pre and post-test.

**Table 4. Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Z Values of the Implicit Recasts Group on the Pre and Post Test.**

Dimension	Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z values	Sig.
Connecting Ideas	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.347	.000
	Positive Ranks	21	11.00	231.00		
	Ties	6				
	Total	27				
Comparisons	Negative Ranks	1	8.00	8.00	3.532	.000
	Positive Ranks	16	9.06	145.00		
	Ties	10				
	Total	27				
The Passive	Negative Ranks	1	6.50	6.50	3.116	.002
	Positive Ranks	13	7.58	98.50		
	Ties	13				

	Total	27				
Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	3.416	.001
	Positive Ranks	14	7.50	105.00		
	Ties	13				
	Total	27				
Adjective Clauses	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	3.819	.000
	Positive Ranks	16	8.50	136.00		
	Ties	11				
	Total	27				
Gerunds and Infinitives	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	3.787	.000
	Positive Ranks	17	9.00	153.00		
	Ties	10				
	Total	27				
Noun Clauses	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	3.217	.001
	Positive Ranks	12	6.50	78.00		
	Ties	15				
	Total	27				

Results in table (4) show that, in spite of the low performance of the participants in the pretest, there were significant differences at 0.05 level between the pre-and-post mean ranks of the implicit recasts group in the seven dimensions of the grammar test, in favor of the post-test. Thus, the first hypothesis stating that "There are significant differences at 0.05 levels between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group on the grammar test, in favor of the post-test" was verified. These results mean that implicit recasts led to significant improvement in the participants' grammar performance. This improvement may be due to the fact that the implicit recasts used in the present study were corrective in nature. This type of recasts consisted of two steps: 1) repetition (usually with rising intonation) to draw the participants' attention followed by 2) recasts to provide, contrastively, the necessary target exemplar. This made recasts more salient and easier to notice.

These results are congruent with the conclusion of Doughty and Varela (1998:114) that corrective recasts were noticeable especially for learners with low language abilities. They also agree with the results of Panova and Lyster, 2002: 573) who concluded that adding stress and reducing the error makes it likely for learners to notice recasts. Accordingly, the low uptake in observational studies (Lyster and Ranta, 1997:37; Panova and Lyster, 1998 and Ellis et al., 2006:339...etc.) may be attributed to the non-saliency of recasts, the low proficiency of the learners and their inability to cope with the ambiguity in implicit recasts and find the gap in their inter-language.

Another plausible interpretation is that, since recasts' length and number of changes proved to be influential factors affecting the way language learners notice and remember implicit recasts (Sheen, 2004: 263; Sheen, 2006:365), the implicit recasts used in this study were short, one change and accompanied by clues and gestures which empowered the participants to pinpoint the errors and hence bridge the gap between their erroneous utterances and the target utterances. This was supported by a number of studies which revealed that the ambiguity of implicit recasts can be reduced by ensuring that they focus on a single linguistic feature and that their corrective force is linguistically signaled by, for example, the use of emphatic stress on the target language item (e.g., Doughty and Varela, 1998:183; Lyster, 1998b: 51; Han, 2002:544; Leeman, 2003: 48; Philp, 2003: 99; Sheen, 2004: 263; Ammar and Spada, 2006:543 and Loewen and Philp, 2006:540)

A third possible interpretation is that the participants were adult enough to notice the implicit recasts provided to them. Unlike children, they had a higher attention span which enabled them to focus on the input provided to them in the form of recasts. This was supported by Trofimovich et al. (2007:174) when they concluded that "adult learners are believed to have higher attention span than children and are more likely to notice recasts than younger learners".

A fourth reasonable interpretation is that the participants of the implicit recasts group were taught grammar explicitly in context, not in isolation. This enabled them to respond to and benefit from implicit recasts effectively. This supports the conclusions about the positive relationship between explicit knowledge and noticing. These conclusions revealed that learners who tended to respond to recasts had learned grammar rules explicitly. For example, Nicholas et al. (2001:750) and Rhee (2012:339) found that contexts and explicit knowledge interdependently created the cognitive ability that enhanced the efficacy of implicit recasts on second/foreign language processing, which then arguably determined subsequent language development.

These results agree with the conclusions of Lyster and Izquierdo (2009: 453) who indicated that recasts can be as effective as other more explicit types of corrective feedback which they called prompts, whereby learners were pushed to self-correct. Mackey and Philp (1998:270) also reported the beneficial effects of recasts on learning with respect to L2 learners' acquisition of question forms. More specifically, they indicated that developmentally ready learners who were repeatedly exposed to recasts during communicative tasks outperformed both the group that received no recasts in producing more advanced question forms as well as those learners who were not developmentally ready to acquire the target form.

In response to the second research question: What is the effect of explicit recasts on second-year English department students' grammar performance?, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test used. Table (5) shows mean ranks, sum of ranks and Z values of the explicit recast group on the Pre and post test.

**Table 5. Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Z Values of the Explicit Recast Group on the Pre and Post-test**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Ranks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>	<b>Z Values</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Connecting Ideas	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.677	0.000
	Positive Ranks	28	14.5-0	406.00		
	Ties	1				
	Total	29				
Comparisons	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.739	0.000
	Positive Ranks	29	15.00	435.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	29				
The Passive	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.654	0.000
	Positive Ranks	28	14.50	406.00		
	Ties	1				
	Total	29				
Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.786	0.000
	Positive Ranks	29	15.00	435.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	29				
Adjective Clauses	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.731	0.000
	Positive Ranks	29	15.00	435.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	29				
Gerunds and Infinitives	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.738	0.000
	Positive Ranks	29	15.00	435.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	29				

Noun Clauses	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.743	0.000
	Positive Ranks	29	15.00	435.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	29				

Results in table (5) show that there were significant differences at 0.05 level between the pre-and-post mean ranks of the explicit recasts group in the seven dimensions of the grammar test, in favor of the post-test. Thus, these results verified the second hypothesis stating that "There are significant differences at 0.05 levels between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the explicit recasts group on the grammar test, in favor of the post-test". This indicates that explicit recasts led to significant improvement in the participants' grammar performance. This improvement may be due to the fact that the researcher used explicit recasts which were stressed, declarative in mode, reduced, repeated, with a single-error focus, and one or two changes from the erroneous utterance. In doing so, the corrective force of recasts was quite obvious to the participants whose performance was very low at the beginning of the experiment as revealed by the pre-test (Table 3). Therefore, it was easy for them to attend to the correction of their erroneous utterances and at the same time to make cognitive comparison between their erroneous utterance and the researcher's corrective reformulation.

Another plausible interpretation why explicit recasts led to significant improvement in the participants' performance on the post-test is that the researcher used to reformulate the participants' problematic utterance that corrected the error(s) without changing the central meaning of the utterance. Also, explicit recasts involved the researcher's reformulation of the participants' utterance, minus the error and explicitly informing them that their utterances were incorrect. In this way, explicit recasts were salient enough for the participants to notice and correct their errors accordingly. These results are consistent with the conclusions of Carpenter et al. (2006:218), Mackey (2006:405) and Sepehrinia et al (2011:18) about the positive effects of explicit recasts on learners' performance in grammar.

A third interpretation may be that explicit recasts were used in supportive social contexts where meaning focused activities were predominant. This equipped the participants with both comprehensible input and focus on form. Thus, explicit recasts - as indicated by Long (1996: 413), Schmidt (2001: 3) and Leeman (2003:48) - provided the participants with opportunities for modifying their output, which has been suggested to be crucial for L2 development (Swain, 1995:125; Doughty, 2001:206 and Nassaji, 2009: 411).

While these results did not agree with the findings of Nicholas et al. (2001:719) who revealed that recasts do not always work, they supported the conclusions of Sheen (2006:365) that features such as length of recasts (short vs. long), linguistic focus (pronunciation vs. grammar), types of change (substitution vs. addition), mode (declarative vs. interrogative), the use of reduction partial recasts) and the number of changes (one vs. multiple) turned out to be positively related to learner uptake and/or repair. Recasts arising in her study proved to be effective as they were short, more likely to be declarative in mode, reduced, and repeated, with a single-error focus. In addition, they involved substitution rather than deletions and additions.

Also, the abovementioned results are congruent with the conclusions of Loewen and Philp (2006: 540) who examined five characteristics which were the same as Sheen's (2006:361). The characteristics they identified were linguistic focus, length of recasts, segmentation ,i.e., whether recasts repeated all or just part of the learner's utterance, number of changes, and complexity ,i.e., whether corrective recasts were simple or complex, involving several turns. However, in their study they went a step further to examine not only the relationship between characteristics of recasts and learner uptake but the learners' subsequent exploitation of different recasts types in terms of posttest performance. They detected that declarative intonation, stress, one change, and multiple feedback moves were predictive of successful uptake, whereas interrogative intonation, shortened length, and one change promoted posttest performance. These results are also consistent with the conclusion of Brown (2007:277) about the positive effects of recasts which "reformulates or expands an ill-formed or incomplete utterance in an unobtrusive way". Such recasts have the advantage that they do not obstruct communication and they are contingent on learners' errors.

To provide an answer to the third research question: "What is the effect of meta-linguistic feedback on second-year English department students' grammar performance?", Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test used. Table (6) shows mean ranks, sum of ranks and Z values of the meta-linguistic feedback group on the pre and post-test.

**Table 6. Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Z Values of the Meta-Linguistic Feedback Group on the Pre and Post-test.**

Dimension	Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z values	Sig.
Connecting Ideas	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.909	0.000
	Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30				
Comparisons	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.789	0.000
	Positive Ranks	28	14.50	406.00		
	Ties	2				
	Total	30				
The Passive	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.941	0.000
	Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30				

Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.922	0.000
	Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30				
Adjective Clauses	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.920	0.000
	Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30				
Gerunds and Infinitives	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.893	0.000
	Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30				
Noun Clauses	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.352	0.000
	Positive Ranks	24	12.50	300.00		
	Ties	6				
	Total	30				

Results in table (6) show that there were significant differences at 0.05 level between the pre-and-post mean ranks of the meta-linguistic group in the seven dimensions of the grammar test, in favor of the post-test. Thus, these results verified the third hypothesis stating that "There are significant differences at 0.05 levels between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the meta-linguistic group on the grammar test, in favor of the post-test". This indicates that meta-linguistic feedback led to significant improvement in the participants' grammar performance. This improvement may be attributed to the fact that, in contrast to implicit recasts, metalinguistic feedback is an explicit type of corrective feedback. It mainly provided the participants with negative evidence explicitly. Thus, an important advantage of meta-linguistic feedback over implicit recasts was that it is self-evidently corrective and therefore enabled the participants to recognize the corrective intentions of feedback. Accordingly, as revealed by Lyster (2002:405), the participants were less likely to misunderstand the purpose of meta-linguistic feedback.

Another plausible interpretation why meta-linguistic feedback led to significant improvement in the participants' grammar performance on the post-test is that meta-linguistic feedback provided the participants with comments, information, clues and/or questions related to the well-formedness of their utterances. This enabled them to locate the source of error in their utterances which in turn helped them to carry out the cognitive comparison, notice the gap between their errors and target forms and bridge that gap. Such a cognitive comparison is believed to be crucial for language acquisition (Lyster and Ranta, 1997: 46 and Rauber and Gil, 2004:284). These results are consistent with the conclusions of Lyster and Ranta (1997: 46);

Lyster ( 2002:237) and Rauber and Gil (2004:284) about the positive effects of meta-linguistic feedback on learners' grammar performance.

To give an answer to the fourth research question "Is there any difference in the effect of implicit recasts, explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback on students' grammar performance?", Mann-Whitney test was used to compare the scores of each two groups (the implicit recast group and the explicit recast group (Table 7) ; The implicit recast group and the meta-linguistic feedback group (Table 8) and the explicit recast group and the meta-linguistic feedback group (Table 9). Tables (7, 8 and 9) show mean ranks, sum of ranks and Mann-Whitney U values of each two groups.

**Table (7): Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Mann-Whitney U values of the Implicit Recast Group and the Explicit Recast Group on the Post-Test.**

Dimension	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U Values	Sig.
Connecting Ideas	Implicit Recast G.	27	16.09	434.50	56.500	0.000
	Explicit Recast G.	29	40.05	1161.50		
Comparisons	Implicit Recast G.	27	15.22	411.00	33.000	0.000
	Explicit Recast G.	29	40.86	1185.00		
The Passive	Implicit Recast G.	27	15.63	422.00	44.000	0.000
	Explicit Recast G.	29	40.48	1174.00		
Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Implicit Recast G.	27	16.28	439.50	61.500	0.000
	Explicit Recast G.	29	39.88	1156.50		
Adjective Clauses	Implicit Recast G.	27	15.20	410.50	32.500	0.000
	Explicit Recast G.	29	40.88	1185.50		

Gerunds and Infinitives	Implicit Recast G.	27	15.70	424.00	46.000	0.000
	Explicit Recast G.	29	40.41	1172.00		
Noun Clauses	Implicit Recast G.	27	15.37	415.00	37.000	0.000
	Explicit Recast G.	29	40.72	1181.00		

Results in table (7) show that there were significant differences at 0.05 level between the post mean ranks of the implicit recasts group and the explicit recasts group in the seven dimensions of the grammar test, in favor of the explicit recasts group. Thus, the fourth hypothesis stating that "There are no significant differences between the post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group and the explicit recasts group on the grammar post-test" was rejected. This proves that explicit recasts were more effective in improving the participants' grammar performance than implicit recasts. The superiority of the explicit recasts group over the implicit recasts group may be due to the following reasons. First is the explicit nature of explicit recasts which made their corrective intentions perceivable by the participants. Thus, the participants of the explicit recasts group were more able to locate their errors and hence correct them. Second, this superiority can be explained by the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 2001: 3). Schmidt points out that it is necessary to draw learners' attention to formal properties of language to help them notice language forms if they are to successfully learn them. While explicit recasts can draw learners' attention to language forms within the communicative context, implicit recasts need more effort on the part of teachers and learners to do so. Accordingly, explicit recasts were more salient to the participants than implicit recasts.

Another possible interpretation is that, in explicit recasts, the contrast between correct forms and incorrect forms was emphasized while the meaning remained constant. In this way, they might free up the participants' processing resources by allowing them to attend to the form of the target structures; it was easy for them to attend to the correction of their erroneous utterances and at the same time to make cognitive comparison between their erroneous utterances and the researcher's corrective reformulation. This was supported by VanPatten (1990: 287) who argued that learners cannot attend to and process both meaning and form at the same time. He showed, however, that learners could consciously focus on form if the input was easily comprehended. This lent support to the superiority of explicit recasts group over the implicit recasts group.

Accordingly, these results provided empirical support for the interaction hypothesis which proposed a facilitative role of interaction in foreign/second language acquisition. The less facilitative role of implicit recasts, compared with explicit recasts, provided empirical evidence to the noticing hypothesis and other theories which claim a beneficial role for learner attention in language learning. The superiority of explicit recasts over implicit recasts theoretically implied a beneficial role for negative evidence in foreign language acquisition and indicated

that pedagogically, explicit recasts proved to a better choice for EFL teachers than implicit recasts in EFL classrooms. Also, these results support Zhuo's study (2010: 58-67) in which the explicit recasts group significantly out-performed the implicit recasts group in the posttest. However, unlike Zhuo's study which concluded that implicit recasts were ineffective in improving the learner's performance, implicit recasts, in this study, proved to effective. They also agree with the studies of Carrol and Swain (1993: 357) and Carrol (2001: 43), which revealed that those learners who received explicit corrective feedback outperformed those learners who received implicit error correction.

**Table (8): Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Mann-Whitney U Values of the Implicit Recast Group and the Meta-linguistic Feedback Group on the Post-Test.**

Dimension	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U Values	Sig.
Connecting Ideas	Implicit Recast G. Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	27 30	20.69 36.48	558.50 1094.50	180.500	0.000
Comparisons	Implicit Recast G. Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	27 30	20.87 36.32	563.50 1089.50	185.500	0.000
The Passive	Implicit Recast G. Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	27 30	17.46 39.38	471.50 1181.50	93.500	0.000
Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Implicit Recast G. Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	27 30	20.13 36.98	543.50 1109.50	165.500	0.000
Adjective Clauses	Implicit Recast G. Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	27 30	16.69 40.08	450.50 1202.50	72.500	0.000
Gerunds and Infinitives	Implicit Recast G. Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	27 30	18.20 38.72	491.50 1161.50	113.500	0.000
Noun Clauses	Implicit Recast G. Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	27 30	19.31 37.72	521.50 1131.50	143.500	0.000

Results in table (8) show that there were significant differences at 0.05 level between the post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic feedback group in the seven dimensions of the grammar test, in favor of the meta-linguistic feedback group. Thus,

the fifth hypothesis stating that "There are no significant differences between the post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group and meta-linguistic group on the grammar post-test", was rejected. This means that meta-linguistic feedback was more effective in enhancing the participants' grammar performance than implicit recasts. The superiority of the meta-linguistic feedback group over the implicit recasts group may be attributed to the fact that metalinguistic feedback, in the form of error/contrastive analyses, provided some signals or metalinguistic clues which draw the participants' attention to the target-non-target mismatches in the interactional input. Thus, metalinguistic feedback was more effective in facilitating self-correction which resulted in more attention to the analysis of target-non-target mismatches than does the repetition of implicit recasts.

In addition, an important advantage of meta-linguistic feedback over implicit recasts is that meta-linguistic feedback is self-evidently corrective and therefore enabled the participants to recognize the corrective intentions of feedback. Furthermore, meta-linguistic feedback enabled the participants to pinpoint the source of error in their utterances which in turn helped them to carry out the cognitive comparison, the gap between their errors and target forms and hence bridge that gap. These results are congruent with the conclusions of Lyster and Ranta (1997: 46), Lyster (1998: 59), Lyster (2002:405) Rauber and Gil (2004:284), Ellis et al. (2006: 364) and Maleki and Abdollahzadeh (2011:51), which confirmed a clear advantage for metalinguistic feedback over implicit recasts.

**Table (9): Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Mann-Whitney U Values of the Explicit Recast Group and the Meta-linguistic Feedback Group on the Post-Test**

Dimension	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U Values	Sig.
Connecting Ideas	Explicit Recast Group	29	40.17	1165.00	140.000	0.000
	Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	30	20.17	605.00		
Comparisons	Explicit Recast Group	29	39.62	1149.00	156.000	0.000
	Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	30	20.70	621.00		
The Passive	Explicit Recast Group	29	39.19	1136.50	168.500	0.000
	Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	30	21.12	633.50		
Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Explicit Recast Group	29	37.43	1085.50	219.500	0.000
	Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	30	22.82	684.50		
Adjective Clauses	Explicit Recast Group	29	37.57	1089.50	215.500	0.000
	Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	30	22.68	680.50		

Gerunds and Infinitives	Explicit Recast Group Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	29 30	38.12 22.15	1105.50 664.50	199.500	.000
Noun Clauses	Explicit Recast Group Meta-linguistic Feedback G.	29 30	40.14 20.20	1164.00 606.00	141.000	0.000

Results in table (9) show that there were significant differences at 0.05 level between the post-test mean ranks of the explicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic feedback group in the seven dimensions of the grammar test, in favor of the explicit recasts group. Thus, the sixth hypothesis stating that "There are no significant differences between the post-test mean ranks of the explicit recasts group and meta-linguistic group on the grammar post-test", was rejected. This reveals that explicit recasts were more effective in boosting the participants' grammar performance than meta-linguistic feedback. The superiority of the explicit recasts group over the meta-linguistic feedback group may be due to the fact that explicit recasts provided reformulations of the participants' problematic utterances that corrected their error(s) without obstructing flow of communication while meta-linguistic feedback seemed to be officious and obstructed the flow of communication.

These results seem to run counter to the conclusions of some previous studies which generally found the provision of meta-linguistic feedback more effective than the provision of recasts. For example, Carroll and Swain (1993: 357), investigated the effects of four different types of corrective feedback on the acquisition of English dative alternation by 100 adult Spanish-speaking learners of English as a second language and found that the groups who received explicit feedback (i.e. metalinguistic feedback) performed significantly better than all the other groups which received more implicit types of feedback. Similarly, Ellis et al. (2006:575) found that explicit corrective feedback in terms of metalinguistic feedback is more effective than recasts on the acquisition of English regular past tense by lower intermediate EFL learners. Sheen (2007:257) also examined the effect of recasts and metalinguistic corrective feedback on the acquisition of English articles and the extent to which learners' language analytic ability and attitudes towards corrective feedback. The study comprised three groups of intermediate-level EFL learners. Results showed that the metalinguistic group outperformed both the recasts group and the control group whereas the recasts group did not perform significantly better than the control group. Results also indicated a significant relationship between benefiting from metalinguistic feedback and learners' language analysis ability and also their attitudes towards error correction. No such relations were found for the recasts group. Thus, Sheen (2007:257) concluded that the insignificant relationship found between the effectiveness of recasts and analytic language ability and learners' attitudes could be attributed to the fact that recasts were not as salient as metalinguistic feedback and learners in the recasts group were not aware that they were being corrected.

As for the fifth research question "Which is more effective, implicit recasts, explicit recasts or meta-linguistic feedback, in enhancing students' grammar performance?", chi-square (Kruskal Wallis test) was used and provided an answer. Table (10) shows mean ranks, sum of ranks and chi-square of the three groups on the Post-Test

**Table (10): Mean Ranks, Sum of Ranks and Chi-square of the three Groups on the Post-Test**

Dimension	Group	N.	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	df	Chi-Square	Sig.
Connecting Ideas	Implicit Recast Gr.	27	22.78	615.06	2	42.563	0.000
	Explicit Recast Gr.	29	65.22	1891.38			
	Meta-linguistic Gr.	30	41.15	1234.5			
Comparisons	Implicit Recast Gr.	27	22.09	596.43	2	44.357	0.000
	Explicit Recast Gr.	29	65.48	1898.92			
	Meta-linguistic Gr.	30	41.52	1245.6			
The Passive	Implicit Recast Gr.	27	19.09	515.43	2	48.486	0.000
	Explicit Recast Gr.	29	64.67	1875.43			
	Meta-linguistic Gr.	30	45.00	1350			
Count/Non-count Nouns and Articles	Implicit Recast Gr.	27	22.41	606.07	2	37.498	0.000
	Explicit Recast Gr.	29	62.31	1806.99			
	Meta-linguistic Gr.	30	44.30	1329			
Adjective Clauses	Implicit Recast Gr.	27	17.89	483.03	2	49.271	0.000
	Explicit Recast Gr.	29	63.45	1840.05			
	Meta-linguistic Gr.	30	47.27	1418.1			
Gerunds and Infinitives	Implicit Recast Gr.	27	19.91	537.57	2	45.137	0.000
	Explicit Recast Gr.	29	63.53	1842.37			
	Meta-linguistic Gr.	30	45.37	1361.1			
Noun Clauses	Implicit Recast Gr.	27	20.69	558.63	2	47.205	0.000
	Explicit Recast Gr.	29	65.86	1909.94			
	Meta-linguistic Gr.	30	42.42	1272.6			

Results in table (10) show that there were significant differences between the mean ranks of the three experimental groups (the implicit recasts group, the explicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group) in the seven dimensions of the grammar test, in favor of the explicit recasts group. Thus, the seventh hypothesis stating that "There are no significant differences between the pre-and-post-test mean ranks of the implicit recasts group, the explicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group on the grammar post-test" was rejected. It is clear that the explicit recasts group significantly out-performed both the implicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group. It is also evident that the explicit recasts group and the metalinguistic feedback group significantly out-performed the implicit recasts group.

The superiority of both the explicit recasts group and the metalinguistic feedback group over the implicit recasts group may be attributed to the fact that that the corrective force entailed in implicit recasts made them less easy to notice by the participants due to their implicit nature. That's why implicit recasts were less effective than explicit recasts and metalinguistic feedback in enhancing the participants' grammar performance.

These results are consistent with the studies of Han (2002:544), Ishida (2004:311), Ammar and Spada (2006), Lyster and Izquierdo (2009:453) and Zhuo (2010:58). These studies reported the superiority of explicit feedback (explicit recasts, meta-linguistic feedback, prompts ...etc.) over implicit recasts. One of the major explanations they proposed for the superiority of explicit feedback over implicit recasts was its explicitness highlighting the teacher's corrective objective, which was far less explicit and quite ambiguous in implicit recasts. Another interpretation was that explicit feedback (explicit recasts, meta-linguistic feedback, prompts ...etc.) can be more effective with low level language learners, implicit feedback can be more

effective with higher level language learners Sakai (2011: 358). However, the findings of the current study revealed that implicit recasts seemed to be an effective type of corrective feedback with low level language learners as they were short, one change and accompanied by clues and gestures which empowered the participants to pinpoint their errors and hence bridge the gap between their erroneous utterances and the target utterances. This was supported by a number of studies which revealed that the ambiguity of implicit recasts were reduced by ensuring that they focus on a single linguistic feature and that their corrective force is linguistically signaled by, for example, the use of emphatic stress on the target language item (, e.g., Lyster ,1998b: 51; Doughty and Varela, 1998:183; Han, 2002: ;Leeman ,2003: 48 Philp ,2003: 99; Sheen ,2004: 263; Ammar and Spada ,2006:543 and Loewen and Philp's , 2006:540)

## CONCLUSION

The present study attempted to investigate the effect of two types of recasts (implicit and explicit recasts) versus meta-linguistic feedback on EFL Saudi Learners' grammar performance at the Faculty of Science and arts. Results are encouraging as far as the three types of feedback in grammar are concerned. They revealed that the three feedback techniques (explicit recasts, implicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback) were effective in enhancing the participants' grammar performance. In addition, compared to the implicit recasts group and the meta-linguistic group, the explicit recasts group outperformed the two groups. This indicates that explicit recasts were more effective in enhancing the participants' grammar performance. The superiority of explicit recasts over implicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback theoretically highlights the beneficial role of negative evidence in TEFL and implies that, pedagogically, explicit recasts are a better choice for EFL teachers than implicit recast in EFL classrooms. These results substantiate the importance of implementing explicit recasts in EFL classrooms as they proved to be conducive to better grammar performance and provided a scaffolding learning environment which encouraged the participants to interact with their teacher and colleagues while they receive constructive feedback on their grammar performance. Finally, recasts should be accompanied with facial expressions and gestures to make them more salient.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- Explicit recasts should be adopted in Grammar classes at the tertiary level.
- Explicit recasts should be short, one change and accompanied by clues and gestures.
- EFL teachers should be trained to adopt explicit recasts Grammar classes.
- EFL learners should be trained to respond to various feedback techniques, especially explicit recasts.

## Suggestions for Further Research

- Future research can investigate the effect of the three types feedback (implicit , explicit recasts and meta-linguistic feedback) on EFL students' listening, speaking ,reading and writing skills.
- More experimentation is needed to examine the effect of the three types feedback on the language skills of other subjects, bigger and/or different samples.
- It is possible to investigate the effect of various feedback techniques on EFL students' attitudes towards English grammar.

- More empirical studies in the future that directly investigate how contextual factors and explicit knowledge play a role in learning language through recasts.
- Since this study was conducted on male students and because it is likely that male and female students learn better through different teaching methods, the present study needs to be replicated with female students.
- Future research studies can direct due attention to investigating the effect EFL learners' responses to feedback on teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession.
- There is a large gap in the literature regarding student and teacher dynamics and how this may affect interactional patterns in EFL classrooms. Specifically, there is a lack of research on EFL learners' perceptions of their teachers' intent as they provide oral corrective feedback to them.

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