



**THE EFFECT OF TEACHER IMPLICIT CORRECTION  
THROUGH RECAST VERSUS EXPLICIT SELF-CORRECTION  
THROUGH ELICITATION ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE  
EFL LEARNERS' USE OF COLLOCATIONS IN WRITING**

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**Abstract:**

Over the last decades, the vital role of corrective feedback has attracted much attention. However, few studies have considered the effects of feedback on the acquisition of specific lexical items such as collocations. To bridge this gap, the current research was conducted to investigate the effect of two types of feedback, recast and elicitation on the use of collocations in writing. The participants of the study were 45 intermediate EFL learners at Kish Air Institute, in Qaemshahr, Iran, which were homogenized by Solutions placement test. Three intact classes were used, which randomly assigned into two experimental and one control groups. Each group consisted of 15 participants. After the pretest, in the treatment phase, one experimental group received implicit feedback through recast, and the other one received explicit feedback through elicitation, and the control group received no feedback on their collocational errors. Then, the posttest was administered. Finally, the collected data were analyzed by one-way ANOVA. The findings of the current study illustrated that the two experimental groups outperformed the control one, which confirmed the effectiveness of providing feedback in the learning process. Moreover, it was revealed that the recast group performed significantly better than the elicitation group.

**Keywords:** feedback, recast, elicitation, collocation

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## 1. Introduction

Feedback plays an important role in the most theories and approaches of second language learning, and is an inevitable part of it. In both structure and communicative approaches, it was considered as a means of developing and enhancing learners' motivation and fostering their linguistic knowledge (Ellis, 2009).

Lyster and Ranta (1997) distinguished six different types of feedback namely, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, explicit correction, and repetition which teacher can utilize them in different stages of teaching. To this end, they should consider both context specifications and learners' moods, such as: age, proficiency level, personality, learning style and affective factors. Hedge (2006, p. 288) remarked *"in many foreign language situations, where there is little exposure to English to practice available in the community, error correction is an expected role for teacher"*.

Recast is one type of feedback in which teachers correct learners' errors implicitly and reformulate unacceptable form. In recent years, recast has widely attracted scholars' attention, and they have come to accept it as an inevitable factor in the language learning process. Recast is an indirect feedback and sometimes, learners are not aware of it. Implicit error correction is one of the most crucial superiorities of recast. Besides, recast can make positive evidence. Therefore, it is valuable for both, its implicit nature and positive evidence.

In contrast to implicit feedback through recast, there is another type of corrective feedback, which is called elicitation. Through elicitation, teacher draws out the correct form from learners directly and helps them for self-correction. Hence, in this corrective technique a teacher employs explicit feedback. Therefore, it can make negative evidence. To sum up, the current research attempted to ascertain the most effective feedback type in order to help the learners promote their collocational knowledge, and answer the following questions:

RQ1: Do teacher's implicit correction through recast versus explicit self-correction through elicitation have any statistically significant effect on the use of collocations in the written productions of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

RQ2: Is there any statistically significant difference between the effects of implicit correction through recast and explicit self-correction through elicitation on the use of collocations in the written productions of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Positive and Negative Feedback

Positive feedback shows that a learner response to an activity is correct. In the pedagogical theories, positive feedback is considered as substantial part of teaching or learning process, since it can support learners effectively and enhance their motivation, however, in SLA, it has received little attention. Discourse analytical studies about classroom interaction have illustrated that teacher's positive feedback does not

regularly signal that learner's responses are correct. For instance, "Good" or "Yes" do not always signal the learner is correct, since, sometimes their utterances should be corrected or modified by teacher subsequently. On the other hand, negative feedback has always demonstrated a linguistic error. It has a corrective nature inherently; hence, it can be called corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009).

## **2.2 Implicit and Explicit Corrective Feedback**

According to Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006), there are two different types of corrective feedback, namely, explicit and implicit feedback, which the teacher can utilize in the class. When teachers correct learners' errors directly, they provide explicit feedback and when indirectly draw learners' attention to erroneous forms and help them correct their errors, they employ implicit feedback.

## **2.3 Positive and Negative Evidence**

The crucial role of input in the process of second language acquisition is considered as an essential fact, but the form and type of it, which leads to learning occurs, is a controversial issue. Approximately all theory of language learning emphasizes the necessity for input (Abolhasanpour & Jabbari, 2014; Jabbari & Niroomizadeh, 2009). Positive evidence involves a grammatical and correct form of the target language, which can be established in communication. Negative evidence is an ungrammatical form. It can be produced through both feedback and explicit grammar teaching. Authentic input, like what occurs in conversations or teacher talk in the English class can be considered as positive evidence. On the other hand, the explanation of grammar rules or corrective feedback can be called negative evidence (Ellis & Sheen, 2006). In the typical model of first language acquisition, children receive only positive evidence to learn language. However, second language learning involves a large amount of negative evidence, such as, teacher's corrective feedback. This correction can be occurred in exams, written assignments or verbal feedback in classroom interactions. Hence, it can be considered as a significant difference between children and adults in language learning. (Finley, 2012).

## **2.4 Focused Versus Unfocused Corrective Feedback**

For corrective feedback, two distinct classifications can be taken into account, namely, focused and unfocused feedback. The former, refers to correct all types of errors in learners' utterances and the latter, opt a single error type and focus on a specific linguistic feature and ignore other errors. Unfocused corrective feedback can be considered as extensive and focused corrective feedback as intensive one (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008; Ellis, 2008). In unfocused corrective feedback, learners need to process a wide range of errors, so it can be more challenging for them rather than focused one. On the other hand, in focused corrective feedback, they can concentrate on a single error and reflect on its correct form more effectively (Ellis, 2008). Moreover, he argued that unfocused corrective feedback, which indicates all learners'

errors, might not be as impressive as focused one in helping learners enhance their linguistic knowledge about a specific feature. However, it might be more effective in the long term.

## **2.5 Recast versus Elicitation**

Recast is a type of corrective technique that the teacher utilizes in order to reformulate or expand learners' ill-formed utterances implicitly (Keshavarz, 2015). On the other hand, "*Recasts refer to the reformulation of the whole or part of learner's erroneous utterance without changing its meaning*" (Sheen, 2004, p. 278). Recasts are considered as implicit negative feedback, which provides positive evidence (Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006). Recast can be full or partial. Full recast involves a reformulation and repeat correct sentence completely, but in partial recast only the incorrect part of the sentence is reformulated and repeated. Recast also, can be single or multiple. Single recast occurs in one-single negotiated interaction, and multiple one occurs in extended negotiated interactions (Ellis & Sheen, 2006) Loewen and Philip (2006) expressed some key characteristics for recast. They believed that recast is essential for pedagogical context. It is a type of time-saving feedback, which can enhance learners' self-confidence. It can help teachers keep controlling over the classrooms. Besides, it has some advantages for learners; it can facilitate noticing problematic forms in the utterances. On the other hand, elicitation refers to the corrective technique that teachers do not provide the correct form, and learners should modify their ill-formed utterances (Ammar, 2003). It is a type of direct feedback. In this type of feedback, teachers draw out the correct form, from learners. Besides, often in elicitation teachers employ some strategies such as: asking a question or pausing in order to draw out the correct form from the student directly (Keshavarz, 2015).

## **3. Material and Methods**

### **3.1 Design**

In the present research, a pretest-treatment-posttest technique based on the quasi-experimental design was utilized. There were two experimental and one control groups. Each group consisted of 15 participants, which were selected non-randomly. Besides, intact classes were used, which were assigned to recast, elicitation and control groups, randomly. One dependent variable and one independent variable with three levels were employed. At one level of independent variable, one of the experimental groups received explicit corrective feedback through elicitation and at the second one, the implicit feedback through recast was implemented. At third level, the control group received no feedback. The dependent variable of this study was collocational knowledge of the participants, which was evaluated through the pretest.

### **3.2 Participants**

The present study was carried out in three intermediate level classrooms at Kish Air Language Institute in Qaemshahr, Iran. They were 45 female participants and native speakers of Farsi, and their age varied from 16 to 24. All of them were students at high schools or universities in different majors. In order to make sure that they were at the same English proficiency level, Solutions Placement Test (SPT) was administered to all the learners.

### **3.3 Materials**

Two types of materials were used in the current study:

#### **3.3.1 Instructional Materials**

The book, *English Collocation in Use for intermediate level* and some board pictures and printed exercises were employed by the teacher as instructional materials. This book had been selected by the researcher, since it was appropriate for both self-study and classroom use. It facilitated the learners' use with study tips, follow-up activities and was easy to use answer key.

#### **3.3.2 Testing Materials**

Three tests, namely, the homogeneity, the pretest and posttest, were employed at different stages of the current study as testing materials. For homogeneity test, SPT was used. According to the result of the test, it can be concluded that all the participants were at the intermediate level which was required for the research. The pretest and posttest were two different sets of test, which constructed by the researcher in the multiple-choice format. There were 30 collocational items in each test, which were designed based on the book, *English Collocation in Use for intermediate level*, and the learners responded to them in 40 minutes. Besides, in the pilot study, the validity and reliability of all three tests were established by the 15-participant group. Cronbach's Alpha was run to measure the reliability of three test. The reliability of SPT was 85%, the pretest 78%, and the posttest 79%. Moreover, the tests were validated by two experts.

#### **3.3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

In order to conduct the research, at the first step the homogeneity test was administered to 45 of the target participants at the intermediate level in three classes. The result of SPT illustrated that all of them obtained the plausible scores according to the rubric for this test, which was + 31 for grammar and vocabulary, + 8 for reading and + 8 for writing. Hence, it can be deduced that all 45 participants were at the same level of proficiency. The classes were randomly assigned into three groups, namely, recast, elicitation and control group. Then, the participants took the pretest in order to determine their level of collocational knowledge.

In the treatment phase, the participants received the different types of corrective feedback on their written productions. One experimental group received recast and the other one received elicitation on their collocational errors and the control group received no feedback. In this phase, immediate corrective feedback was implemented. The treatment lasted eight, 60-minute sessions, two sessions a week. Then, the posttest was administered to all three groups. During these different stages, required data were collected by the researcher. In order to analyze the collected data, one-way ANOVA was run.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Once the scores of 45 participants were obtained, the data of the pretest and posttest scores were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). One-way ANOVA was run to compute the means and standard deviations of study groups. In Table 1, the mean scores of the pretest and posttest for the three study groups have been shown. Recast and elicitation group received the treatment.

**Table 1:** Statistics for Paired- Samples of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Study Groups

Paired Samples Statistics		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Recast group posttest scores	25.20	15	1.859	.480
	Recast group pretest scores	8.47	15	1.407	.363
Pair 2	Elicitation group posttests cores	20.60	15	2.354	.608
	Elicitation group pretest scores	9.13	15	1.356	.350
Pair 3	Control group posttest scores	9.27	15	1.486	.384
	Control group pretest scores	8.33	15	1.397	.361

According to the comparison between mean scores, it can be concluded that the posttest scores in all the three groups are higher than the pretest scores. Besides, the three means seem not to vary greatly on the pretest, and the standard deviations are close to each other. Therefore, it can be concluded that three groups are homogeneous. In this phase, it should be shown that the mean difference between pretest and posttest scores of individual study groups is statically significant. To this end, a paired-samples differences was run. Table 2 shows the results of it.

**Table 2:** Statistics of Paired-Samples Differences for the Study Groups

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Recast group posttest scores - recast group pretest scores	32.717	14	.000
Pair 2	Elicitation group posttest scores - elicitation group pretest scores	15.061	14	.000
Pair 3	Control group posttest scores - control group pretest scores	2.709	14	.170

According to Table 2, the sig values for the two experimental groups are smaller than preset alpha level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the improvement of the experimental groups is statically significant. However, the p value for the control group is higher than 0.05 and as mentioned before, it can be concluded that the mean difference between the pretest and posttest test scores for this group is not statically significant. Therefore, the control group, could not help learners enhance their collocational knowledge like the two experimental groups. Therefore, the first research question was answered reasonably.

In order to answer the second research question, first, one-way ANOVA should run for posttest. Table 3 illustrates the results of descriptive statistics for the posttest scores.

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics for the Posttest Scores of the Study Groups

<b>Descriptives</b>						
<b>Posttest Scores</b>						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Elicitation	15	20.60	2.354	.608	19.30	21.90
Recast	15	25.20	1.859	.480	24.17	26.23
Control	15	9.27	1.486	.384	8.44	10.09
Total	45	18.36	7.030	1.048	16.24	20.47

The means seem to vary greatly, but it should be probed if the difference is statistically significant and meaningful. Therefore, one-way ANOVA can be employed. Table 4 illustrates the result of ANOVA.

**Table 4:** ANOVA for the Posttest Scores of the Study Groups

<b>ANOVA</b>					
<b>Posttest Scores</b>					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2017.378	2	1008.689	269.955	.000
Within Groups	156.933	42	3.737		

The small sig value obviously suggests that the mean difference is statistically significant. To sum up, according to the results of the study, it can be concluded that both recast and elicitation were impressive and had a positive effect on the use of collocations in writing. They can enhance learner's collocational knowledge. However, data analysis demonstrated that recast group took the posttest more successfully rather than two other groups and obtained the best scores.

Conventional pedagogical techniques argued language learners require feedback on error in order to enhance their linguistic knowledge and employ language in more target-like ways (Nicholas, Lightbown & Spada, 2001). Besides, they reported in modern pedagogy, errors should be considered as evidence of learners' progress. Error correction has different forms and there is a vast amount of researches in this field. The results of the present study are lined with Nassaji (2009) which tested the effect of two

types of feedback on learning linguistic forms, namely, recast and elicitation in his research, and reported, however, both recast and elicitation are beneficial for second language learning, but recast is more impressive rather than elicitation. He argued that recast is highly effective in learning new forms, since it can make input salient and draw learner's attention to those new forms. Furthermore, Zoghi and Etehad (2016) investigated the effect of reformulation and elicitation on Iranian EFL learners' use of verbs in the different present tenses. They argued since, recast can enhance learners noticing and encode the information in memory is more impressive than elicitation. Also, they mentioned, through providing a model of the acceptable forms recast can facilitate learning. Finally, the results of the study, which are in line with the present research revealed that reformulation in the form of recast is more effective than elicitation.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study compared the effect of two different modalities of feedback, namely, implicit feedback through recast versus explicit self-correction through elicitation on the use of collocations in the written productions of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The results of the experiment revealed providing feedback through implicit or explicit corrective techniques by teachers influence positively on promoting learners' collocational knowledge. Besides, the study verified, hence, employing language components such as, collocations in both writing and speaking, is essential for learners, therefore, teachers should be creative, and discover the best teaching techniques to support learners. To this end, learners' affective factors should be considered as significant characteristics. Correcting learners' errors, which increase their negative attitudes and anxiety or decrease their motivation and self-esteem can be harmful in learning process.

The research revealed, due to the implicit nature of error correction in recast, it can make a more positive atmosphere in the classroom, which can facilitate the learning process. Learners usually do not consider the teacher's recast as corrective feedback. According to these features, it can decrease affective barriers such as, anxiety, shyness and negative attitudes towards learning and error correction. Through employing recast, teachers can engage learners in a communicative process. Besides, it can diminish the effects of focus on forms in the classroom, which is less desired techniques in modern language teaching approaches. It encourages learners to notice teacher's utterances in order to find their errors and discover the correct structure. Therefore, it leads to a discovery learning process and enhances learners' noticing ability. It can warn learners about their ill-formed utterances and the gap between their erroneous productions and accepted structures and increase their noticing ability. On the other hand, according to the findings of the present study, since through using elicitation the teacher has to ask some questions in order to elicit correct form, then it can lead to some degrees of anxiety and make affective pressure on the learner. In some situations, it can



impede effective learning, and in some cases when they cannot respond appropriately, it makes them feel embarrassed, which is not eligible in the language learning process. To sum up, the experiment illustrated learners prefer to receive corrective feedback on their errors through recast to develop and enhance their collocational knowledge in order to write more fluently and accurately.

### About the Authors

**Azadeh Alizadeh Vandchali** has got her MA in TEFL from Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran. Her research interests include errors and different types of feedback, linguistics, learners' attitudes toward error correction and searching methods in order to engage learners in the learning process.

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