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Department of English Studies, Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts, Adam Mickiewicz University, Kalisz

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Patterns of uptake and repair following recasts and prompts in an EFL context: Does feedback explicitness play a role?

Reza Shirani

University of Victoria, Canada

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4746-7719>

rezashirani70@gmail.com

Abstract

This study sought to examine the effectiveness of two categories of feedback, namely recasts and prompts. Also, the study focused on the relationship between subsets of each feedback type and the extent to which they led to learner uptake and repair in an EFL context. Data were collected through non-participant observations of three intact upper-intermediate EFL classes where 36 hours of interactions among 59 students and three teachers were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed in terms of pre-specified coding systems that addressed four different subtypes of prompts – clarification requests, repetitions, elicitations, and metalinguistic clues – and two recast subtypes – explicit and implicit recasts. Data analysis showed that among prompts, clarification requests led to the highest percentage of uptake whereas elicitations were associated with the highest repair percentage. As for recasts, more explicit ones led to higher percentages of uptake and repair. The results of the study may contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the patterns of uptake and repair in an EFL context. The study confirms the role of feedback explicitness in such a context.

Keywords: corrective feedback; prompts; recasts; repair; uptake

1. Introduction

Recently, classroom interaction has been a major research topic due to its important role in language learning. Interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive input and generate output as they attend to linguistic form and negotiate for meaning. Whereas some underscored the role of comprehensible input as the only necessary source of language learning (e.g., Krashen, 1982; Schwartz, 1993; Truscott, 1996), there was a growing consensus among other researchers that input is not sufficient by itself if learners are to achieve favorable mastery of an L2 (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2012; Norris & Ortega, 2000). Most of these researchers have shown that, besides receiving input, learners need to produce output and receive feedback when necessary. Defined as feedback on erroneous language production, corrective feedback (CF) is a focus-on-form (FonF) technique that draws learners' attention to linguistic forms and features (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

CF falls into four broad categories of prompts, recasts, explicit feedback, and direct correction. Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001) define recasts as "utterances that repeat a learner's incorrect utterance, making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning" (p. 733). Prompts, on the other hand, are elicitation strategies which "withhold correct forms (and other signs of approval) and instead offer learners an opportunity to self-repair by generating their own modified response" (Lyster, 2004, p. 405). To assess the effectiveness of CF, it has been suggested that researchers consider *learner uptake*, "a student's utterance that immediately follows the teachers' feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teachers' intention to draw attention to some aspects of the student's initial utterance" (Lyster & Ranta 1997, p. 49). Uptake then may be either successful or unsuccessful.

To date, many studies (e.g., Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen 2001; Fu & Nassaji, 2016; Llinares & Lyster 2014; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002) have explored the relationship between different types of CF and learner uptake. However, further research is needed to examine the relationship between implicit and explicit feedback types and learner uptake and repair in a *foreign language* (FL) context, where the provision of appropriate types of CF is of vital importance. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the patterns of uptake and repair following implicit and explicit recasts and prompts in three FL classes.

2. Recasts, prompts, and feedback explicitness

To date, most of the previous studies (e.g., Llinares & Lyster, 2014; Lyster & Mori, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002) have considered recasts a

single implicit feedback type. Some other studies (Erlam & Loewen, 2010; Nassaji, 2007; Sheen, 2006), however, have demonstrated that recasts fall on a continuum of explicitness, depending on their features. On the whole, the following features have been found to influence the explicitness of recasts:

- *Prosodic emphasis*: If a recast is provided with added intonational emphasis, it will be less implicit and therefore more salient to the learner (e.g., Nassaji, 2007).
- *Length*: Shorter recasts are more explicit than longer ones because they focus on the part of the utterance that contains the error (e.g., Sheen, 2006).
- *Intensity of focus*: Recasts provided intensively on a particular linguistic form are generally more explicit than the ones given extensively on any random form (e.g., Erlam & Loewen, 2010).
- *Number of feedback moves*: Recasts accompanied by a second feedback move become more salient to the learner (e.g., Erlam & Loewen, 2010; Sheen, 2006).

Moreover, a controversial feature that may affect the explicitness of recasts is whether they are declarative or interrogative. Whereas some (e.g., Loewen & Philp, 2006; Sheen, 2006) have provided evidence that recasts with declarative intonation are more salient and thus more explicit, others have argued the opposite (e.g., Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). All in all, previous research has shown that not all recasts are implicit.

On the other hand, according to Lyster (2004), clarification requests, repetitions, metalinguistic clues and elicitations are the four types of CF that are classified as prompts, in that they push or prompt the learner to self-correct. Theoretically, prompts are believed to be highly effective as they provide negative feedback, draw learners' attention to form, and provoke self-repair. Prompts can, for example, lead to *noticing the hole* (i.e., when learners realize that they are not able to generate the output they desire to [Swain, 1993]). Moreover, Swain (2005) posited that prompts can result in *noticing the gap* (i.e., when learners discern the differences between their interlanguage and the target language). Although it is generally suggested that both recasts and prompts contribute to L2 acquisition, there is controversy over which type can contribute more.

3. Previous studies

Many experimental and descriptive studies have investigated the efficacy of CF. However, because the main focus of the current study is on the relationship between feedback and uptake, only the previous studies on uptake are reviewed here.

A widely-cited observational study into CF by Lyster and Ranta (1997) investigated the frequency of CF types and uptake in four elementary French immersion

classes and reported that recasts were the most frequent type (55%) whereas elicitations (14%), clarification requests (11%), metalinguistic feedback (8%), and repetitions (5%) occurred less frequently. Also, it was found that prompts led to more uptake and repair vis-à-vis recasts. However, the repair percentage of recasts (18%) was calculated according to the overall number of recasts and not based on the total number of uptake moves succeeding those recasts. Clearly, not all recasts did lead to uptake in their observation. As noted by Oliver (1995), uptake opportunity has a decisive effect on the number of uptake moves. Uptake opportunity was not, however, considered in the above study. Panova and Lyster's (2002) study also explored CF and uptake patterns in an L2 classroom setting and found similar results to those obtained by Lyster and Ranta (1997). Analyzing 10 hours of interaction, they observed that although recasts occurred more frequently than other kinds of feedback, they led to fewer uptake moves (40%) and repair (13%) than prompts.

Ellis et al. (2001) conducted another study into feedback, uptake, and repair in an English as a second language (ESL) context and also found that recasts were the most dominant type of feedback, but in contrast to Lyster and Ranta (1997), Ellis et al. (2001) discovered that recasts could be highly facilitative as they led to a great deal of uptake (71.6%) and repair (76.3%). Unlike Lyster and Ranta, Ellis et al. computed the percentage of repair based on the total number of uptake moves following recasts, and not according to the overall number of recasts.

Nassaji's (2007) study also examined whether uptake and repair can be influenced by how a feedback type is provided. Forty-two ESL learners were randomly paired up with a teacher and engaged in task based interactions in which they received CF in different ways. Six types of recasts and five subtypes of elicitations were identified and coded on the basis of the extent to which they were accompanied by certain signals that could make the feedback more salient. The analyses revealed that whenever a feedback move was provided more explicitly, learners were more likely to generate uptake with repair. Loewen and Philp (2006), too, reported that the degree to which recasts are accompanied by explicit features can have a positive influence on uptake and repair.

In another study, Lyster and Mori (2006) compared recasts and prompts in French immersion (FI) and Japanese immersion (JI) classes. First, they examined the relationship between different types of feedback and learner uptake and repair in each context. Second, they compared the overall communicative orientation of the two contexts. As for the first comparison, in the FI context, prompts resulted in higher percentages of uptake (62%) and repair (53%) whereas in the JI context, recasts were found to be more effective (61% uptake; 68% repair). As for the second comparison, the JI context demonstrated some extent of form-focused orientation, which was not observed in the FI context.

More recently, Llinares and Lyster's (2014) study of feedback and uptake across content and language integrated learning (CLIL), French immersion (FI), and Japanese immersion (JI) instructional settings revealed that teachers applied prompts and recasts at a similar rate in all three instructional settings, with recasts being the most dominant type of feedback. Moreover, whereas recasts led to a higher percentage of repair (77%) in the CLIL setting, prompts resulted in more repair (53%) in the FI instructional setting.

Fu and Nassaji's (2016) investigation of a Chinese as a FL class also reported that recasts were the most prevalent type of feedback (56.5%). One intriguing inference from the findings of this study is that although recasts failed to lead to a large number of uptake moves (49.6%), whenever they did result in uptake, they led to a high number of repair moves. However, similar to Lyster and Ranta (1997), computations in this study were based on recasts-repair ratio, rather than uptake-repair ratio. As for prompts, clarification requests were found to lead to larger amounts of uptake (100%) and repair (66.7%) than other types of elicitation strategies.

Research into CF in relation to uptake patterns has reported conflicting findings. Although most of the previous studies have, as discussed earlier, agreed on the higher frequency of recasts compared to prompts, they have revealed conflicting results with regard to which type may lead to more uptake and repair episodes, with some favoring prompts and some favoring recasts.

Moreover, most of the previous studies of CF and uptake (cf. Sheen, 2006) have ignored how the explicitness and implicitness of prompt and recast subtypes may affect the patterns of uptake and repair in language classrooms. These studies (e.g., Llinares & Lyster, 2014; Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Panova and Lyster, 2002) have, for example, coded all of the recasts as one single type regardless of their explicitness or implicitness. Yet, as discussed earlier, recasts may vary in terms of explicitness under the influence of certain factors such as intonation, the number of moves and length.

Finally, further research is needed to broaden the understanding of the nature of CF, its types, and patterns of uptake and repair in a *FL* context because, to date, the studies of CF in ESL contexts have comprised a larger proportion of research than those in FL classrooms. In FL contexts, where the classroom may be the only place for learners to learn, use, and practice a foreign language (Brown & Lee, 2015), it is important for teachers and practitioners to provide the most efficient types of CF to facilitate learning.

4. This study

In light of the need for further research, this study examined discourse patterns of uptake and repair following different types of prompts and recasts during interactions in three FL classrooms. Also, a more specific aim of the study was to explore the

effects of recasts that are more or less explicit. Hence, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the frequency of recasts and prompts and their subtypes during classroom interactions in a FL context?
2. To what extent do recasts, prompts, and their subtypes lead to learner uptake in a FL context?
3. To what extent do recasts, prompts, and their subtypes lead to learner repair in a FL context?

5. Method

5.1. Participants

Participants were 59 students and three teachers from three intact upper-intermediate classes (class A: 25, class B: 16, class C: 18) at a language school in Iran. All were present during the observations and audio recordings of the classes investigated in the study. The classes were true reflections of a FL context as all of the students shared the same linguistic background, Farsi. Also, none of them had ever stayed in an English-speaking country. The participants were placed in this level after passing oral and written tests at the end of the previous semester. With the exception of five students (three from class A; two from class C), who had just joined this language school after leaving another school, all other participants had been studying English for more than three years at the language school investigated in this study. Finally, it should be noted that all of the participants were either university freshmen or school seniors who were going to improve their English skills. Information about the students and teachers in each class is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Participants of the study

Classes	Teachers	Students
Class A	One 29 year-old male language teacher; spoke Farsi as his native language; had obtained an overall score of 8.5 on the IELTS Academic Module; had taught English for nine years; held an MA in applied linguistics.	Fifteen female and 10 male upper-intermediate students; ranged in age from 16 to 19; had been learning English for three to four years.
Class B	One 26 year-old male language teacher; spoke Farsi as his native language; had obtained an overall score of 8 on the IELTS Academic Module; had taught English for four years; held a BA in TEFL.	Seven female and nine male upper-intermediate students; ranged in age from 18 to 21; had been learning English for three to four years.
Class C	One 31 year-old female language teacher; spoke Farsi as her native language; had obtained an overall score of 8.5 on the IELTS Academic Module; had taught English for seven years; held an MA in TEFL.	Ten female and eight male upper-intermediate students; ranged in age from 16 to 20; had been learning English for three to four years.

5.2. Context

The EFL classes in this study constituted 22 90-minute sessions in total, and they were held three days a week over approximately two months. The aim of these classes was to develop all linguistic skills of language learners with a primary emphasis on oral and aural abilities, and a secondary emphasis on writing and reading skills, within the communicative orientation of language teaching and learning. The language institute where the classes were observed expected the teachers to follow task-based teaching together with some form-focused instruction. To achieve this, in addition to employing teachers who were inspired by task-based and form-focused instruction, the institute held a number of instructional meetings and workshops in order for the teachers to stay au courant with the latest advances. Over the course of such workshops, the teachers were encouraged to utilize adequate explicit instruction to make sure that together with the fluency of the learners, their accuracy also improves. Aside from these training sessions, the teachers were observed and given feedback twice a year by a more experienced professional. Also, every teacher was required to observe at least 630 minutes of two other teachers' classes each year to maintain consistency in teaching methodology.

The policy of following task-based and form-focused principles was also implemented by the teachers of the classes in this study. Thus, although most of the time was spent on completing and working on meaning-focused tasks, at times, the teachers were observed to teach some of the linguistic features (especially L2 grammar) explicitly.

The textbook used in these classes was *American English File 4* (Latham-Koenig & Oxenden, 2014). This textbook is task-based in design with the majority of the tasks focusing on meaning. It also provides learners with opportunities for both dyadic and group interactions and with a decent deal of written and oral input.

Although the teachers used different tasks and activities (and sometimes different materials) from time to time, the basic teaching routine in these classes did not seem to change considerably during the study. It was observed that the teachers usually divided the class time into three main sections. The first 15-20 minutes of the class was devoted to reviewing the major topics that were worked on during the previous session. This section involved asking learners questions related to the linguistic features that were taught before. For instance, to check that conditionals had been learned, students were asked questions such as "what would you buy if you had one million dollars?," "where will you go tonight if the weather is good?" and so on. When a student failed to provide a targetlike answer, the teachers usually provided CF.

During the next 50-60 minutes of the class, the focus was on the topics and features that were introduced in the new lesson. This section usually began with some explicit instruction (e.g., an explicit grammar explanation, or a short lecture in L1) concerning particular linguistic features, together with some awareness-raising activities (e.g., input flood, input enhancement, and CF). It then continued with assigning learners to pairs and groups to do meaning- and form-focused tasks (as required by the textbook) collaboratively. Meanwhile, the teachers tended to walk around the classroom, monitor the students, and provide feedback when necessary. When all of the students were done with the task, each pair/group was asked to present the task to the whole class. Again, CF was provided, especially when an error was associated with the linguistic features that were supposed to be learned in that session.

At the end of each session, the teachers tended to involve learners in whole-class discussions about real-world topics. This kind of activity was usually related to the linguistic features that were covered in that very session, and it contained a good deal of CF provided during teacher-student interactions. The teachers tended to avoid any kind of explicit explanation of grammatical rules at this point and also prevented the learners from using L1 for any purpose. As with previous sections, all the interactions in this section were recorded.

5.3. Data collection

After debriefing sessions with the teachers, each class was observed and audio-recorded for eight sessions (36 hours of classroom time in total; 12 hours from each class). During observations, the observer sat unobtrusively at the back of the classrooms with no involvement in any of the activities and events. The observer wrote down notes to make real-time records of paralinguistic, nonverbal, and contextual events that might transcend the audio recordings. For example, it was observed that some feedback moves were followed by specific gestures and facial expressions instead of uptake.

Example 1 (S = student, T = teacher)

S: There are many people who overlook at the role of women in the society.

T: They overlook the role of women in the society?

According to the notes, the feedback in Example 1 was followed by the student nodding his head, which could be a sign of either understanding the correct form or providing a “yes” answer to the teacher’s interrogative utterance. Thus, the role of observing and taking notes was to ease the codification procedures, which are explained in the next section. Also, it should be noted that the classes

could not be video-recorded because permission to do so was not obtained from both the institute and the participants.

To capture every possible interaction and feedback move such as unplanned and spontaneous interactions and feedback, the interactions were audio-recorded from the beginning of each session to the end.

5.4. Data codification

Thirty-six hours of audio-recorded data were transcribed by the researcher and checked and confirmed by a research assistant to make sure that the transcription was clear and inclusive. Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model was used to identify the sequences of error treatment in the transcribed data. Lyster and Ranta explain their model as follows:

The sequence begins with a learner's utterance containing at least one error. The erroneous utterance is followed either by the teacher's corrective feedback or not; if not, then there is topic continuation. If corrective feedback is provided by the teacher, then it is either followed by uptake on the part of the student or not (no uptake entails topic continuation). If there is uptake, then the student's initially erroneous utterance is either repaired or continues to need repair in some way. If the utterance needs repair, then corrective feedback may again be provided by the teacher; if no further feedback is provided, then there is topic continuation. If and when there is repair, then it is followed either by topic continuation or by some repair-related reinforcement provided by the teacher. Following the reinforcement, there is topic continuation. (p. 45)

The data were then coded for *error*, *feedback types*, and *uptake* based on the definitions below.

5.4.1. Error

Learners' utterances that included one or more phonological (e.g., incorrect pronunciation), grammatical (e.g., subject-verb agreement), or lexical (e.g., use of a wrong word) nontargetlike form(s) were coded as *erroneous*. For instance, in the following interaction move, the student's utterance was coded as erroneous because it contained a grammatically nontargetlike form.

Example 2

S: My father used to went to the gym when he was younger.

T: He used to go to the gym when he was younger.

In some cases, the students' utterances contained more than one nontargetlike form. Lyster and Ranta referred to these types of errors as *multiple*. However, in

this study utterances with more than one error were coded the way utterances with one error were coded: Both were categorized as erroneous.

5.4.2. Feedback types

Initially, three major categories of feedback, namely *recasts*, *prompts*, and *others* were identified. Recasts were coded as a broad type of CF that reformulated all or parts of a student's erroneous utterance and that provided the targetlike form. Prompts were coded as feedback that pushed learners to correct their erroneous utterances, and then were categorized as *elicitations*, *metalinguistic clues*, *clarification requests*, and *repetitions* (Lyster, 2004). Because the study focused mainly on recasts and prompts, and because other types of feedback rarely occurred in the interactions, any other kinds of feedback were categorized as *others* (e.g., explicit correction, nonverbal feedback, and using L1).

Moreover, two main types of recasts were recognized, namely *explicit recasts* and *implicit recasts*, based on certain factors which will be discussed thoroughly in Section 5.4.2.2. The data were thus coded for six types of feedback – four types of prompts and two types of recasts.

5.4.2.1. Prompts

Clarification requests occur when the teacher uses such interrogative phrases as *pardon me?* or *I'm sorry?* to push the learner to reformulate or modify their utterance because there is either an error in form or lack of comprehensibility in meaning (Panova & Lyster, 2002).

Example 3

S: You looked that movie?

T: Excuse me?

Elicitation refers to overt strategies aimed at eliciting the targetlike form from the students by indicating to them that their linguistic production is erroneous. Elicitation may occur in the form of overt questions like *Would you come again?* or requests for reformulation of an utterance. Also, the teacher may repeat the erroneous utterance up to the nontargetlike form and then pause in hopes that the student will fill in the blank with the correct form.

Example 4

S: She'll goes to the pool to tomorrow. I'm sure.

T: Hmm, she'll ...?

Repetitions occur when the teacher repeats all or part of the student's erroneous utterance usually with a rising intonation to signal that the student's utterance is erroneous.

Example 5

S: We discussed about our school subjects and then had dinner.

T: Discussed about?

Metalinguistic clues are metalinguistic comments on the correctness of the student's utterance in a declarative or interrogative form without providing the correct form.

Example 6

S: I was pretty sure she had took the man to the hospital.

T: In the past perfect tense, you need the past participle form of the verb.

5.4.2.2. Recasts: Explicit and implicit recasts

Explicit and implicit recasts were distinguished based on four inherent features suggested by different researchers: length (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Sheen 2006), prosodic emphasis (Loewen & Philp, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011), intensity of focus on a particular linguistic feature (Ellis 2001; Erlam & Loewen, 2010), and the number of feedback moves (see Doughty & Varela, 1998; Loewen & Philp, 2006). These factors were considered for three reasons. First, among other characteristics (e.g., contextual, social, and cultural issues), the above-mentioned factors are considered inherent features of recasts. Second, despite controversy over other features (e.g., interrogative and declarative intonation), these characteristics have been widely agreed on in the literature. Third, an analysis of the data revealed that categorizing recasts based on these four factors was the most appropriate because there was no trace of any other characteristics of explicit recasts in the data.

First, coding explicit recasts will be discussed. *Short recasts* are a single word or a short phrase with one content word (Sheen, 2006). Because short recasts reformulate only the erroneous part of the utterance, they are more salient.

Example 7

S: I think it is really necessary that one washes his hands regularly.

T: Wash.

Recasts with prosodic emphasis reformulate the erroneous utterance by putting an intonational stress on the correct form. This may occur in either a declarative or an interrogative form.

Example 8

S: Once upon a time, everyone used to enjoyed the clean weather in our city.

T: Everyone used to *enjoy* the clean weather.

Example 9

S: If they forbidded smoking, we would have a less polluted city.

T: If they *forbade* smoking?

Intensive recasts “focus on one or two particular linguistic structures” (Erlam & Loewen, 2010, p. 880). Intensive recasts are considered more explicit than extensive ones (Ellis, 2001; Lyster, 1998b). The teachers in this study provided intensive recasts, particularly after they had taught the grammar and pronunciation sections of the textbook. For instance, when the textbook concentrated on a specific grammar feature, say conditionals, they tended to constantly provide students with intensive feedback.

Example 10

S: If I had had a car, I have not gone to work by bus.

T: If I had had a car, I wouldn't have gone to work by bus.

Multi-move recasts contain at least one recast accompanied by another feedback move in a single turn. Multi-move recasts are considered explicit because they offer a double emphasis on the nontargetlike form (see Doughty & Varela, 1998; Erlam & Loewen, 2010; Loewen & Philp, 2006).

Example 11

S: I'm quite sure happiness was more rampant in the past.

T: Happiness was rampant? It was everywhere.

In Example 11, the teacher uses two feedback moves to address the same error (i.e., a repetition and a recast). As noted by Sheen (2006), multi-move recasts may occur (a) after the repetition of feedback (i.e., corrective recasts), (b) after another full or partial recast move (i.e., repeated recasts), and (c) with any other types of feedback other than explicit correction (i.e., combination recasts).

The second category of recasts were implicit ones. *Long recasts* consist of more than two words (Erlam & Loewen, 2010, p. 880), and therefore their corrective nature may be implicit to the learner.

Example 12

S: Animals protect their babies from dangerous.

T: They protect their babies from danger.

Recasts without prosodic emphasis implicitly reformulate (with either a declarative or an interrogative intonation) the student's erroneous utterance without putting an intonational stress on the correct form.

Example 13

S: There are many people who overlook at the role of women in the society.

T: They overlook the role of women in the society?

Extensive recasts are concerned with a range of linguistic items any time during interaction without a deliberate focus on one or two particular linguistic features.

Explicit recasts were coded as possessing at least one of the characteristics of explicitness discussed above. Inevitably, there were particular circumstances where a recast entailed both an implicit feature (e.g., it was long) and an explicit feature (e.g., it was intensive). On such occasions, because the recast move contained at least one explicit feature, it was coded as *explicit*. Moreover, on a few occasions, explicit recasts exhibited more than one of the explicit features. For example, a recast could be simultaneously intensive and short. As with recasts entailing one feature of explicitness, recasts with more than one property of explicitness were coded as *explicit recasts*. On the other hand, *implicit recasts* were coded as possessing all implicit features and no explicit features. In other words, every single-move extensive long recast without any prosodic emphasis – whether interrogative or declarative – was coded as *implicit*.

5.4.3. Uptake

Uptake was defined as “a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterances” (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 49). In this study, two types of uptake were identified, namely *repair* and *needs repair*. *Repair* referred to a student's successful correction of a nontargetlike form.

Example 14

S: She's much more smarter than I expected.

T: She's much...?

S: Much smarter.

Needs repair referred to a partial correction or off-target reformulation of an erroneous utterance.

Example 15

S: I had no idea what did he use to do as a child.

T: I had no idea what he used to do as a child.

S: No idea.

Such acknowledgments as *yes*, *ok*, or *yeah* were also coded as *needs repair* because the student did not provide any correction. Moreover, the term *no uptake* referred to the cases when the student did not produce any verbal response to CF.

5.5. Reliability

After codification of the data (from all of the classes) by the researcher, the research assistant recoded a random sample of 50% of the data to ensure the reliability of the codification. Inconsistencies in coding were then negotiated. Table 2 shows the inter-rater reliability scores for erroneous utterances, broad categories of CF, subsets of CF, and learner uptake.

Table 2 Inter-rater reliability scores

	% agreement
Erroneous utterances	87
Recasts	90
Explicit recasts	83
Implicit recasts	86
Prompts	91
Clarification requests	92
Repetitions	89
Metalinguistic clues	96
Elicitation	87
Others	89
Uptake and uptake types	93

5.6. Data analysis

The study used frequency data and simple percentages to describe the frequencies of different types of CF as well as the relationship between each feedback type and uptake/repair. It should be noted that for the same purposes, some of the prior studies (e.g., Sheen, 2006) have employed chi-square tests. However, as Nassaji (2007, p. 532) correctly points out,

One of the assumptions of the chi-square is that the data must be independent within and across cells. Although chi-square has sometimes been used in SLA research in such conditions, the independent assumption is violated if one participant contributes more data to one cell than the others.

Thus, like in many other studies (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Nassaji, 2007; Panova & Lyster, 2002), simple percentages were used to analyze the data.

6. Results

6.1. Feedback frequency

The numbers and percentages of the occurrence of the general types of CF are presented in Table 3. Following 678 erroneous utterances, prompts constituted more than half of the feedback moves and were the most frequently used type of feedback, whereas recasts occurred after 36.6% of the erroneous utterances.

Table 3 The distribution of broad categories of CF

	Prompts		Recasts		Others	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Class A	234	57.3	157	38.5	17	4.2
Class B	201	61.2	121	36.8	6	1.8
Class C	243	60.9	142	35.5	14	3.5
Total	678	59.2	420	36.6	37	3.2

To compare the distribution of different subsets of recasts and prompts, further analyses were conducted. As can be seen in Table 4, the most frequently used subtypes of prompts in all of the classes were elicitations and repetitions, which occurred after 229 and 213 erroneous utterances respectively. It should be noted that the difference in the distribution of elicitations and repetitions was too small. The least frequent subtype of prompts, however, was metalinguistic clues, which constituted 10.4% of all prompt moves.

Table 4 The distribution of different subsets of prompts

	Elicitation		Repetitions		Clarification requests		Metalinguistic clues	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Class A	76	32.5	74	31.6	51	21.8	33	14.1
Class B	61	30.0	60	29.8	54	26.8	26	12.9
Class C	92	37.8	79	32.5	60	24.6	12	4.9
Total	229	33.7	213	31.4	165	24.3	71	10.4

Within recasts, as shown in Table 5, whereas explicit ones were provided after 255 erroneous utterances, 165 recast moves possessed implicit features.

Table 5 The distribution of different subsets of recasts

	Explicit recasts		Implicit recasts	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Class A	90	57.3	67	42.7
Class B	66	54.5	55	45.5
Class C	99	69.7	43	30.3
Total	255	60.7	165	39.3

6.2. Feedback and uptake

Further, the numbers and percentages of learner uptake after each broad category of feedback were calculated. The results are shown in Table 6. As for prompts, 91.0% led to uptake and only 9.0% did not. As for recasts, 62.6% led and 37.4% did not lead to uptake. As can be seen, prompts led to much greater percentages of uptake than did recasts.

Table 6 The number and percentage of uptake following general categories of CF

	Uptake		No uptake	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Prompts (<i>N</i> = 678)	617	91.0	61	9.0
Recasts (<i>N</i> = 420)	263	62.6	157	37.4
Total	880	80.1	218	19.9

The frequencies of uptake following subtypes of recasts and prompts were also compared. Table 7 presents the results. Within prompts, clarification led to the greatest percentage of uptake (97.6%). Likewise, elicitation (91.7%) and repetitions (91.5%) led to great percentages of uptake. Thus, the difference in uptake was quite insignificant when elicitations, repetitions, and clarification requests were provided. However, metalinguistic clues led to a smaller percentage of uptake compared to other types of prompts.

Table 7 The relationship between subtypes of feedback and learners' uptake

	Uptake		No uptake	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Prompts				
Elicitation (<i>N</i> = 229)	210	91.7	19	8.3
Repetitions (<i>N</i> = 213)	195	91.5	18	8.4
Clarification requests (<i>N</i> = 165)	161	97.6	4	2.4
Metalinguistic clues (<i>N</i> = 71)	51	71.8	20	28.2
Recasts				
Explicit recasts (<i>N</i> = 255)	193	75.7	62	24.3
Implicit recasts (<i>N</i> = 165)	95	70	42.4	57.6

Furthermore, as Table 7 shows, whereas explicit recasts led to 75.7% of uptake, implicit recasts resulted in 42.4% of uptake. Therefore, as the above analyses suggest, the implicitness and explicitness of recasts might have influenced the frequencies of uptake. Apparently, explicit recasts were more likely to provoke a learner response.

6.3. Feedback and repair

The frequencies of learner repair following each broad category of CF were calculated based on the total moves of (a) each feedback type and (b) immediate uptake. As Table 8 shows, 41.6% of prompts led to repair and 49.4% led to needs repair. Also, 45.7% of uptake following prompts contained repair and 54.3% included needs repair. This seems to suggest that whenever prompts did lead to uptake, the possibility of repair was less than half of the whole uptake moves whereas the likelihood of needs-repair was more than half of the total uptake. As for recasts, 46.6% led to repair and 15.9% led to needs repair. Moreover, 74.5% of uptake following recasts contained full repair whereas 25.5% of uptake needed further repair. In total, recasts led to a larger repair percentage with regard to both the number of feedback moves and the frequencies of uptake.

Table 8 The relationship between general categories of feedback and learners' repair

	Repair			Needs repair		
	<i>N</i>	% of feedback	% of uptake	<i>N</i>	% of feedback	% of uptake
Prompts	282	41.6	45.7	335	49.4	54.3
Recasts	196	46.6	74.5	67	15.9	25.5
Total	478	43.5	54.3	402	36.6	45.7

The relationship between different subtypes of feedback and learner repair was also analyzed. As can be seen in Table 9, among prompts, elicitation led to the greatest amount of repair (51.5% of feedback and 56.2% of uptake). The smallest percentage of repair, however, was associated with repetitions (35.7% of feedback and 39% of uptake). Repetitions and uptake following them, therefore, offered the highest percentage of needs repair vis-à-vis other prompts. Moreover, as far as the ratio of repair to feedback moves was concerned, clarification requests (43.4%) were found to result in a higher percentage of repair compared to metalinguistic clues (39.4%). However, when the ratio of uptake and repair was considered, whereas 44.7% of uptake following clarification requests brought about repair, 54.9% of uptake following metalinguistic clues was the cause of learners' repair. Therefore, the extent to which prompts led to repair could noticeably vary according to whether the total numbers of feedback moves or the overall frequencies of uptake were considered.

As for recasts, the explicit ones were associated with a larger repair percentage than the implicit ones. Whereas 58.2% of explicit recasts and 67.9% of uptake following such feedback led to repair, 21.8% of implicit recasts and 51.4% of uptake following them were related to full repair. This implies that when an implicit recast did lead to uptake, on more than half of the occasions, the uptake was likely to contain the correct form. Moreover, the above analyses seem to suggest that when recasts are accompanied with some characteristics of explicitness, they are more likely to provoke repair.

Table 9 The relationship between subsets of feedback and learners' repair

	Repair			Needs repair		
	<i>N</i>	% of feedback	% of uptake	<i>N</i>	% of feedback	% of uptake
Prompts						
Elicitation	118	51.5	56.2	92	40.2	43.8
Repetitions	76	35.7	39.0	119	55.9	61.0
Clarification requests	72	43.4	44.7	89	54.0	55.3
Metalinguistic clues	28	39.4	54.9	23	32.4	45.1
Recasts						
Explicit recasts	131	58.2	67.9	62	27.5	32.1
Implicit recasts	36	21.8	51.4	34	20.6	48.6

In summary, according to the analyses, learner repair might be, to some extent, influenced by the way feedback was provided. When the students were given the correct form, and when they responded to such feedback, the possibility of repair was stronger than when the learners were invited to self-repair. Moreover, it should be noted that although prompts led to a higher percentage of uptake, recasts, especially explicit ones, might lead to a higher percentage of repair than prompts. This might be particularly true when the ratio of uptake to repair is considered.

7. Discussion

The first research question in this study concerned the frequency of recasts and prompts and their subtypes in the Iranian EFL context. In all of the three classes, prompts occurred more frequently than recasts. These findings might imply teachers have a tendency to encourage students to self-repair rather than providing the correct form instantly. The findings stand in contrast to those of many studies (e.g., Ellis et al., 2001; Fu & Nassaji, 2016; Nabei & Swain, 2002; Panova & Lyster, 2002) in which the higher frequency of recasts has been accounted for in terms of the assumption that recasts perform a more communicative function than prompts and that they result in fewer communication breakdowns as they keep the interlocutors' attention primarily on meaning. Yet,

some studies (e.g., Kennedy, 2010; Lyster & Ranta, 1997) have shown that for more proficient learners, teachers usually provide prompts more than recasts because such learners are believed to have adequate linguistic resources to rely on when they are prompted to self-repair. Accordingly, the higher frequency of prompts in this study might be attributed to the participants' proficiency level, which was rated as upper-intermediate by the language school, and to their considerable language learning experience, which ranged from three to four years.

Furthermore, data analysis revealed that among prompts, elicitation, an explicit feedback type (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011), was the most dominant type of feedback before repetitions, clarification requests, and metalinguistic clues. Similarly, explicit recasts occurred more frequently than implicit ones. The teachers' tendency to provide more salient and explicit feedback types may be attributed to the context of the study. Unlike students in many other contexts, Iranian learners have minimum exposure to English outside the classroom, and to compensate for this, most of the language schools, including the one in this study, hold training courses and workshops for their teachers to make sure that students receive appropriate instruction. Such training courses are usually taught by an invited professor or researcher who provides a theoretical and practical presentation of appropriate CF techniques. During the training courses at the language school in this study, the teachers were encouraged to use sufficient explicit feedback to make sure that students would notice the corrective nature of feedback in some way. In one of the between-semester workshops, for example, it was observed that the invited researcher made frequent references to the studies that have confirmed the positive role of explicit instruction and explicit feedback in the Iranian EFL context. Thus, the teachers' training background might play a role in how CF was provided in this study.

Another factor that might have encouraged the teachers to use explicit feedback frequently might have to do with Iranian students' preferences for different types of CF. The present researcher did not conduct any formal surveys to explore the participants' preferences and perceptions of CF, but previous research (e.g., Kaivanpanah, Alavi, & Sepehrnia, 2015) has shown that the majority of Iranian EFL learners view CF as positive and even necessary. Very casual post-study interviews with a few random participants also revealed their preference for explicit feedback. A 19-year-old male student from Class A, for example, said: "I think we deserve to get feedback from teacher. I want to know where I am wrong. I just want to correct it." Another 17-year-old female student from Class C stated: "When I do not realize my mistakes in conversation, I will repeat them again and again. I think teachers should let us know."

The second research question concerned the extent to which recasts, prompts, and their subtypes lead to learner uptake in a FL context. Similarly to

previous studies (e.g., Fu & Nassaji 2016; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002), prompts were found to provide more uptake opportunities vis-à-vis recasts. This may be related to the efficacy of prompts in pushing learners to produce output; according to Swain's (1993) output hypothesis, pushing learners to produce output helps them notice gaps in their interlanguage as they struggle to convey their meaning. To compensate for their gaps, learners are pushed to make use of their linguistic resources, engage in hypothesis testing, and reflect on their output more carefully. The greater uptake opportunity following prompts might be attributed to their greater saliency and their elicitive force (Yang & Lyster, 2010).

Moreover, it was found that within prompts, clarification requests led to the largest uptake percentage. This might be explained by the assumption that clarification requests were used after either miscomprehension of the message or emergence of an error (Panova & Lyster, 2002). As the observer took notes, even when the teachers provided clarification requests to encourage the students to self-repair an error, the students sometimes responded to such requests as if there were lack of message comprehensibility. The following extract from the data may exemplify that kind of situation:

Example 16

S: All he had to do was went running to lose weight.

T: Sorry?

S: Running! He could lose weight if he did sports.

T: So... All he had to do was go running.

S: Yes.

As can be seen, in the first sentence, the learner uses the word *went* when the base form of the verb should have been used. When the teacher makes a clarification request, the learner, according to the researcher's notes, along with his oral language production, gesticulates and imitates running with his body language, which is probably an attempt to get the message across. The teacher's second attempt to provide CF (in the form of a recast), however, indicates that the intention behind the first feedback is probably corrective.

The third research question concerned the extent to which recasts, prompts, and their subtypes lead to repair in a FL context. Compared to prompts, recasts led to a higher percentage of full repair both when the ratio of feedback to repair and the ratio of uptake to repair were considered. Of course, when examining the efficacy of recasts on measures of repair, it should be noted that recasts may not elicit student-generated repair other than the repetition of the feedback, and therefore, those feedback types that give learners more language production opportunities might be more effective (Lyster 1998a, 1998b; Lyster & Ranta 1997; Panova & Lyster 2002).

Moreover, it was found that within prompts, although clarification requests led to many uptake moves, they were not as effective as elicitations and metalinguistic clues – the more salient types of prompts – as far as learner repair was concerned. The role of feedback saliency in generating a higher percentage of repair is even more tangible within recasts, among which those with explicit features were associated with a larger number of both uptake and repair moves when compared to implicit ones. These findings confirm Loewen and Philp's (2006) finding that the efficacy of recasts could depend considerably on their characteristics. They were found to be more effective if combined with more explicit features like stress, multiple feedback moves, shortened length, and interrogative intonation (see also Sheen, 2006). Nassaji (2007), too, concludes that the extent to which a feedback type results in learner repair may depend on how explicitly it is provided and that whenever a feedback move is combined with salient intonational or verbal cues, learners are more likely to generate uptake with repair.

8. Conclusions, implications, and directions

The findings of this study suggest that the efficacy of prompts and recasts in an EFL context may depend on how explicitly they are provided. In other words, these findings and the findings of some other studies (e.g., Doughty & Varela, 1998; Loewen & Philp, 2006; Nassaji, 2007; Sheen, 2006) seem to imply that the effectiveness of CF may depend on how successfully it draws learners' attention to form. This confirms Schmidt's *noticing hypothesis* (1995), whereby in order for CF to be effective, it is important for learners to notice the corrective nature of such feedback so that they can make use of it to improve their interlanguage. The fact that more explicit feedback types led to higher percentages of repair verified the effective roles of *explicitness*, *saliency*, and *noticing* – three interrelated concepts.

Moreover, it should be noted that in developing an in-depth understanding of CF, uptake and repair should not be ignored. Chaudron (1997, p. 440), for instance, claimed that "the main immediate measurement of effectiveness of any type of corrective reaction would be a frequency count of the students' correct responses following each type." Accordingly, although providing uptake does not indicate language acquisition (Loewen, 2004; Panova & Lyster, 2002), it may contribute to L2 development as it indicates that the learner has noticed the feedback and used it in some way (Mackey & Philp, 1998; Sheen, 2004). In addition, immediate repair has been believed to contribute to language development to some extent (McDonough, 2005; Nassaji, 2007; Pica, 1994). Lastly, even if one assumes that uptake does not play a major role in acquisition, it is still quite clear that it influences language use.

Now that learner uptake and repair seems to be fair criteria to assess CF, it should be further noted that investigating learner uptake in relation to different factors (explicitness/implicitness of feedback in this study) is of vital importance in an EFL context, particularly in Iran, where there is usually minimum exposure to L2 outside the classroom, and where a variety of instructional techniques and curricula are used across language schools. Reporting that in an EFL context the effectiveness of different types of CF may be positively influenced by how explicitly they are provided, this study may have practical implications for language teachers and practitioners who seek to provide their students with the most beneficial kind of feedback.

When considering the findings of this study, one, however, should exercise due caution. For one thing, this study was conducted with Iranian upper-intermediate students in one single language school, and therefore generalizing the findings to other students with different levels of proficiency might be problematic, especially given that previous studies (e.g., Mackey & Philp, 1998; Philp, 2003) have found that the efficacy and distribution of different types of CF vary significantly across different proficiency levels. Thus, an open issue for future research could be how the effect of CF explicitness and implicitness vary under the influence of learner proficiency.

Also, as mentioned earlier, some (e.g., Loewen, 2004; Panova & Lyster, 2002) have suggested that uptake should not be equated with language acquisition. Thus, a more appropriate approach to CF may be illustrated by carefully controlled experimental or quasi-experimental studies (e.g., Lee & Lyster, 2016; Nassaji, 2017) that address the relationship between CF and the acquisition of particular linguistic forms. Such studies may provide a more tangible insight into the relationship between CF and actual language learning.

Finally, this study investigated CF effectiveness in terms of how explicitly it is provided. However, there might be other factors that influence the efficacy of CF. For example, such learner-related variables as motivation, anxiety, attitude towards an L2, and so forth may all play a role in how learners benefit from CF. Another open issue for future research, therefore, is how the usefulness of CF varies under the influence of such factors.

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