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# The Comparative Impact of Recast and Prompt on EFL Learners' Autonomy and Motivation

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## Abstract

This study was a quasi-experimental research conducted in Mojtabe-Fani in Tehran. The 60 participants were homogenized through a PET test, moreover, they were homogenized through their level of motivation Dornyei's (1990) Questionnaire and autonomy through Zhang and Li's (2004) Questionnaire. Then they were assigned to two experimental groups. One group received prompt and the other received recast. Finally, the autonomy and motivation tests were administered; and the result revealed that there was no significant difference between the effect of recast and prompt on the learners' motivation. Furthermore, it was found that recast and prompt increased the EFL learners' autonomy; however, there was no significant difference between the impact of recast and prompt on autonomy.

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*Keywords:* Recast; prompt; motivation; autonomy

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## 1. Introduction

The central goal of corrective feedback is to determine the suitable types of feedback which lead to greatest gains in L2 learning. Among different types of feedback, recast seems to be the most effective implicit negative feedback (Ayoum, 2001; Inagaki & Ortega, 1998). Long, Inagaki and Ortega (1998) refer recast as corrective one and define it as responses which, although communicatively oriented and focused on meaning rather than form, incidentally reformulate all or part of the learners' utterance, providing information that was missing or ill-produced.

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Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001), believe that recasts are “utterances that repeat a learner’s incorrect utterance, making only the changes necessary to produce a correct utterance, without changing the meaning” (pp. 732-733). Recasts are considered to provide the linguistic data of both positive and negative evidence showing what is grammatical and ungrammatical in the target language respectively at the same time.

On the other hand, “prompts, the detailed explanations by the instructor of the content and organization expected in the written product, are characteristics of academic writing assignments” (Yao, 1996, p. 148). Some prompts are mainly focused on the form, length, number of pages, typing, documentation, and other detailed content and organization of the written text. According to Hinkle (1994), writing prompts are commonly found in written tests and in English writing classes.

According to Hinkle (2002) the type of prompt affects the texts students write by comparing students’ responses to different prompts. She concluded that the prompt that led students to draw on their own experiences resulted in essays with personal narratives or statements of belief.

Another key aspect of modern pedagogy has been to boost learners’ autonomy, a concept which was introduced as the result of a new shift in foreign language studies, viewing learners more as producers of language rather than users of a system imposed on them by the society. Learners’ autonomy is becoming a necessity for learning language as well as playing a prominent role in developing the learners’ language acquisition and achievement. Autonomy is usually defined as the capacity to take charge of, or responsibility for, one’s own learning.

The other influential factor in the history of language learning and teaching is motivation. The concept of motivation is notorious for being complex since it takes a respectable number of different disciplines to arrive at a reasonable understanding of its different facets. General, educational, social, and cognitive psychologies, as well as general educational and social theories and sociolinguistic theories have something to contribute to the understanding of language learning motivation within a formal pedagogic context.

Gardner (1985) defined motivation as a “combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language” (p.10). In his model, Gardner talked about two kinds of motivation, the integrative and the instrumental, with much emphasis on the former. The integrative motivation refers to learners’ desire to at least communicate or at most integrate (or even assimilate) with the members of the target language. The instrumental motivation refers to more functional reasons for learning the language such as getting a better job, a higher salary or passing an examination (Gardner, 1985).

### *1.1 Key Terms*

#### *1.1.1 Recast*

Recasts belong to implicit corrective feedback, where teachers reformulate all or part of ill-formed utterances provided by learners without changing their central meaning (Iwashita, 2003; Leeman, 2003; Long, Inagaki, & Ortega, 1998; Morris, 2002). This could be illustrated in the following example:

T: What’s the currency of the UK?

St: /pondo/.

T: Yes, pound. [Feedback-Recast](Kato, 2007)

#### *1.1.2. Prompt*

“Prompts, the detailed explanations by the instructor of the content and organization expected in the written product, are characteristics of academic writing assignments” Yao (1996, p. 148). Some prompts are mainly focused on the form, length, number of pages, typing, documentation, and other detailed content and organization of the written text. According to Hinkle (1994), writing prompts are commonly found in written tests and in English writing class.

For example, that is how a teacher might try prompt correction during a session in a typical "English as a Second Language" class. STUDENT: "That's intelligenter." TEACHER: "Huh?" Or, if a more explicit prompt were required: "Huh?...More what?" Or if a still more explicit prompt were required: "'Intelligenter'?...Ah, you mean 'smarter', huh?...Or 'more intelligent'?"

### *1.1.3. Autonomy*

Autonomy can be defined as the capacity to take control over one's own learning. According to Holec (1981), taking charge of one's own learning is to have the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning, that is to say defining objectives, selecting materials and evaluating progression.

Learners' autonomy in the present study is operationally defined by measuring the participants' responses to the autonomy questionnaire by Zhang and Li (2004) with Likert-scale, attributing scores of one, two, three, four, and five choices from A (never) to E (always), respectively.

### *1.1.4. Motivation*

Colman (2003) in Oxford Dictionary of psychology defines motivation as "a driving force or forces responsible for the initiation, persistence, direction, and vigor of goal directed behavior. It includes the biological drives, and social forms of motivation such as need for achievement and need for affiliation" ( p. 464). This term in our study specifically refers to the need felt by the learners to succeed in language learning.

Learners' motivation in the present study is operationally defined by measuring the participants' responses to the motivation questionnaire by (1990) Dörnyie with Likert-scale, attributing scores of one, two, three, to seven choices from A (Strongly Agree ) to G (Strongly Disagree), respectively.

## *1.2. Significance of the study*

Swain and Lapkin, (1998) say that recast provides an opportunity to learn based on socio-cultural perspective, however; to design an appropriate prompt within a class, the teacher must identify what the short and long term objectives of the class are, and at what point in the term the test occurs.

On the other hand, autonomous learners who accept responsibility for their learning are more likely to achieve their learning targets; thus, they are more likely to maintain a positive attitude to learning in the future (Dickinson, 1987), in addition; it has also been found that 'motivation and goal setting is most effective when there is feedback showing progress in relation to the goal' (Locke, 1996).

## *2.1. Research Questions*

To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. Does recast have any significant impact on EFL learners' autonomy?
2. Does recast have any significant impact on EFL learners' motivation?
3. Does prompt have any significant impact on EFL learners' autonomy?
4. Does prompt have any significant impact on EFL learners' motivation?
5. Is there any significant difference between the impact of recast and prompt on Iranian EFL learners' autonomy?

6. Is there any significant difference between the impact of recast and prompt on Iranian EFL learners’ motivation?

2.2. Participants

Sixty (60) participants at Mojtaba Fani in Tehran were screened to be given the treatments in the form of two groups. Thirty (30) participants attended each experimental group.

2.3. Measures

Table 1. Estimated Reliability of the PET pilot study

Number of Participants	Number of Items	Cronbach alpha
117	67	0.91

The item facility (IF) and item discrimination (ID) of all 67 items (except two items of writing that were not closed-ended) were calculated and the reliability of the test was calculated through Alpha-Cronbach at 0.91. The analyses indicated that there were no malfunctioning items in the test.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Pet Pilot Study

Descriptive Statistics							
PET Homogenization	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Statistics	Std. Error	Std. Statistics	Variance
	67	22.62	69.64	36.72	1.03	10.60	111.1

Table 3. Independent Samples Test between the motivation mean scores of the two groups before the treatment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
Motivation	Equal variances assumed	.008	.931	-1.547	58	.127	-4.53333	2.93005	-10.39847	1.33181
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.547	57.708	.127	-4.53333	2.93005	-10.39910	1.33244

With the homogeneity of variances assumed ( $F=.008, p=.931>.05$ ), the t test can be relied upon as being non-significant ( $t=-1.54, p=.127>.05$ ). Therefore, it is shown that the two groups were similar regarding their motivation at the outset.

Table 4. Independent Samples Test between the autonomy mean scores of the two groups before the treatment

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Autono	Equal variances assumed	.045	.832	-.982	58	.330	-2.53333	2.57897	-7.69571	2.62905
	Equal variances not assumed			-.982	57.998	.330	-2.53333	2.57897	-7.69572	2.62905

As shown above the two groups were not significantly different with respect to their variances ( $F=.045, p=.832$ ), And the t test result reveals that the two groups were homogenous regarding their autonomy as the differences turned out to be non-significant ( $t=-.982, p=.330>.05$ ).

Table 5. Paired Samples T-Test

		Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	MotRec1 - MotRec2	8.20000	15.05713	2.74904	2.57757	13.82243	2.983	29	.006
Pair 2	AutRec1 - AutRec2	-8.33333	6.08182	1.11038	-10.60432	-6.06235	-7.505	29	.000
Pair 3	MotPro1 - MotPro2	17.10000	19.83266	3.62093	9.69436	24.50564	4.723	29	.000
Pair 4	AutPro1 - AutPro2	10.10000	7.45723	1.36150	-12.88458	-7.31542	-7.418	29	.000

As table 5 depicts, the difference between the motivation pretest mean score with motivation posttest mean score of the recast group turned out to be significant ( $t=2.98$ ,  $p=.006<.05$ ) which lead to the rejection of the hypothesis stating that *Recast does not have any significant effect on the motivation of EFL learners*. Also, the difference between the autonomy pretest mean score of the recast group and their posttest scores on the same test turned out to be significant ( $p=.000<.05$ ), leading to the rejection of the hypothesis stating that *Recast does not have any significant effect on the autonomy of EFL learners*.

### 3. Result

As it is illustrated, recast and prompt have direct significant effects on the autonomy level and an adverse effect on the motivation level of the learners which leaves the room for the researcher to propose some reasons. On the one hand, the rise in the autonomy level could be attributed to this fact that corrective feedback entails consciousness-raising which in turn would result in a higher level of autonomy enabling the learners to detect the problematic areas in their own education and try to come up with solutions. This matter is highlighted by Ahmed (2009, p. 74): "Grammar consciousness-raising tasks could drive further students' autonomy and responsibility for learning, and thus increase their self-confidence". On the other hand, it is crystal clear that bringing the problems and mistakes to the face of learner causes their demotivation which could be the result of what Szextay (2004) calls feeling "absolutely stupid". We might be able to conclude that any form of feedback would have this negative impact on the learners, for they create the same kind of feeling on their students.

The following graphs compare the pretest and posttest mean scores:

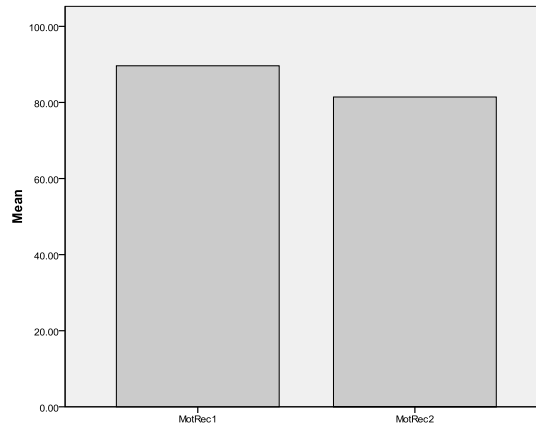


Figure 1. Bar graph representing the motivation pretest and posttest means of recast group

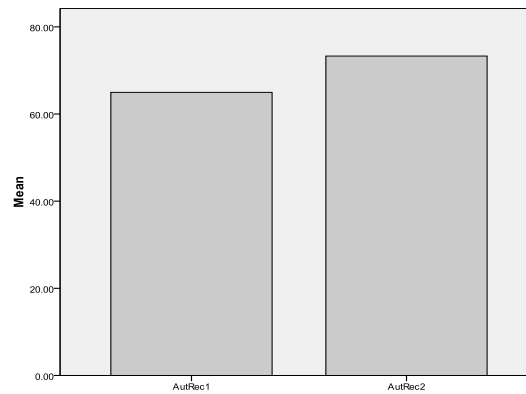


Figure 2. Bar graph representing the autonomy pretest posttest means of the recast group

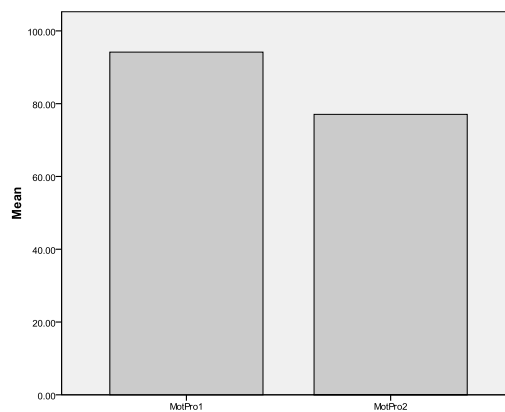


Figure 3. Bar graph representing the motivation pretest posttest means of the prompt group

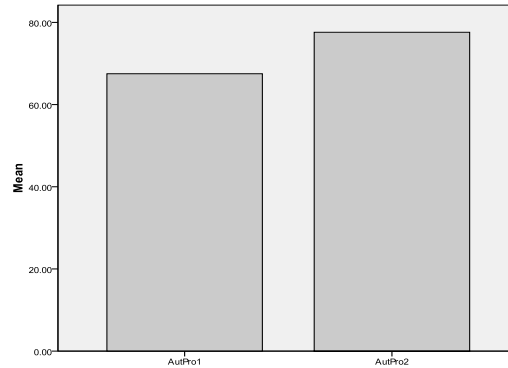


Figure 4. Bar graph representing the autonomy pretest posttest means of the prompt group

#### 4. Conclusion

The rise in the autonomy level could be attributed to this fact that corrective feedback entails consciousness-raising which in turn would result in a higher level of autonomy enabling the learners to detect the problematic areas in their own education and try to come up with solutions. This matter is highlighted by Ahmed (2009) "Grammar consciousness-raising tasks could drive further students' autonomy and responsibility for learning, and thus increase their self-confidence.

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