

Learner Recognition of Recasts and Its Relation with Language Analytic Ability and Communicative Value

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ABSTRACT. Not all grammar features are equally noticeable in input. The communicative value of a linguistic feature is one of the important factors that affect perceptual salience. In addition, it is claimed that language learners' recognition of certain grammar features in incoming input is related to their language analytic ability. However, little research has been conducted to examine the relationship between these two issues. Thus, this study explored how learners recognized recasts that targeted two grammatical morphemes (3rd person -s and locative prepositions), which have different communicative values and relationships with the learners' language analytic ability. Thirty Korean adult learners of English and three native speakers participated in the study. Each Korean participant engaged in information gap tasks with a native speaker and received recasts on their errors including the two targeted features. The participants' recognition was documented through stimulated recall protocols. The results showed that learners recognized recasts as correction more often when the feature had a high communicative value (prepositions) and this resulted in more recognition of where they committed errors (i.e., recognition of gaps) compared to cases where the recasts targeted the feature with low communicative value (3rd person -s). In addition, it is also revealed that learners with high analytic ability recognized recasts and gaps better than those with low analytic ability, and this was not affected by the communicative value of the language feature that the recasts targeted.

Key words: Recognition of recasts, Communicative values, Language analytic ability

I. Introduction

The role of recasts in second language (L2) development has been widely investigated and discussed in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research. Recasts, as a type of corrective feedback, can be defined as "a reformulation of all or part of a learner immediately preceding utterances in which one or more non-targetlike (lexical, grammatical, etc.) items is/are replaced by the corresponding target language form (s)" (Long, 2007, p. 77). This means that the incorrect form and the correct form are juxtaposed and learners already have some of the prior knowledge of the message. Thus, recasts provide learners with appropriate psychological conditions where they can notice the difference between their current interlanguage system and the target form (i.e., noticing the gap). Furthermore, compared to other types of corrective feedback, recasts are non-obtrusive and are less likely to interrupt the flow of communication.

Ironically, this unobtrusive nature of recasts can actually deplete their psycholinguistic benefits. Put differently, recasts may not be explicit enough to trigger learners to notice the gap. Recasts also have multiple functions in discourse besides the corrective function: "recasts serve to

respond to the semantic content of a learner's utterance by a) providing or b) seeking confirmation of the learners' message, or by c) providing or d) seeking additional information related to the learner's message" (Lyster, 1998, p. 59). Therefore, learners may, at times, recognize recasts as a response to the content of their own utterances, interpreting recasts as an alternative form or as a confirmation of meaning rather than as a linguistic correction.

Due to the implicit nature and ambiguity caused by the multiple functions of recasts, learners may not be able to accurately notice the differences between their initial erroneous utterance and the corrected form delivered in recasts even when they recognize recasts as correction. Recognition of the corrected form is a catalyst in the process of intake of L2 input (Schmidt, 1990, 2001). According to Schmidt (2001), perception of recasts is a vehicle for internalizing the linguistic information in recasts (i.e., reformulation embedded in recasts). Carroll (2001), in her detectable hypothesis, also asserts that for implicit feedback to be effective, it is necessary for learners to recognize the linguistic problems targeted by the feedback.

In many L2 studies, learner recognition of recasts is often equated with the absence and presence of learner uptake (i.e., learners' immediate response to recasts) (Lys-

ter & Ranta, 1997). Learner uptake could be a signal of learner recognition of recasts, but no uptake does not necessarily mean no recognition considering the fact that recasts, in nature, are input-based feedback; thus, learner uptake as a type of output is not encouraged, and it is thus up to learners to produce output.

As a response to the arguments over the interpretation of learner uptake, L2 researchers made several attempts to directly measure learner perception by employing introspective measures (i.e., stimulated recall and immediate recall) (Egi, 2007; Kim & Han, 2007; Yoshida, 2010). The accumulated empirical evidence shows that learners, to a considerable extent, do not accurately perceive the corrective nature of recasts. In addition, learner perception, to a greater or lesser extent, appears to be modulated by learner external factors such as instructional settings, the nature of targeted language forms, and types of recasts, and internal factors including learners' prior knowledge and working memory capacity (Kim & Han, 2007; Mackey, Philp, Egi, Fujii, Tatsumi, 2002).

Existing studies have afforded some important insights into learner recognition of recasts. However, this strand of research is still limited in both breadth and depth. In particular, there is a lack of research which considers both learner internal and external factors as mediations of learner recognition of recasts. Thus, the present study, as an effort to further explore learner recognition, concerns both learner internal and external factors.

The learner internal factor examined in this study is language aptitude, which has been considered as a reliable predictor of second language success (Robinson, 2005). Language aptitude refers to a special ability for learning a new language and it is viewed as a primarily innate, fairly stable trait that is not affected by training (Li, 2013). Language aptitude is typically held to involve four distinct abilities: (1) phonemic coding ability, which is an ability to perceive and memorize new sounds, (2) grammatical sensitivity, which is an ability to demonstrate awareness of syntactical patterns in sentences, (3) inductive learning ability, which refers to an ability to infer or induce the rules or generalizations about language from samples of the language, and (d) memorization ability, which is an ability to memorize and remember second language words and other information. Skehan (1998) simplified this model by collapsing the grammatical sensitivity and inductive learning ability into one called language analytic ability: "the capacity to infer rules of language and make linguistic generalization or extrapolations" (Skehan, 1998, p. 207).

Early aptitude research showed learner aptitude is a good predictor of L2 learning outcome. For example, Harley and Hart (1997) reported strong correlations between language aptitude and L2 proficiency involving both formal and informal tasks in immersion learners. Robinson (2001), in his thorough and comprehensive research which investigated the correlation between language aptitude in implicit and explicit learning, also proved that language learning aptitude is positively related to both explicit and implicit learning processes. However, recently, L2 researchers realized the limitation of investigating aptitude as a predictor of language learning success. Their attention was drawn to the question how language aptitude interacts with learning conditions (e.g., instruction types) (Robinson, 2005; Spada, 2011).

While the role of corrective feedback, as a type of instructional conditions, has been widely investigated in L2 studies, there are not many studies into its relationship with language aptitude. Furthermore, the results from a few existing studies in this issue are conflicting. DeKeyser (1993) found no relationship between language aptitude defined as grammatical sensitivity and explicit error correction while Sheen (2007) reported explicit feedback has a strong positive correlation with learners' analytic ability and their development of the English article. Yet no relationship was found between the effects of recasts and analytic ability. However, Li (2013) found that language analytic ability is strongly related to the effectiveness of recasts in the development of Chinese classifiers.

Another mediated factor the present study focuses on is the nature of the language forms that recasts target. In their review of recast studies, Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001) notes that "the effectiveness of recast has been found to differ, depending on the area of language (e.g., pronunciation or grammar) or on the specific linguistic feature (e.g., articles and personal pronouns)" (p. 752). Long, Inagaki, and Ortega (1998) also reported that recasts were found to be more effective than models (positive evidence) in the acquisition of Spanish adverb placement but not in Spanish direct object topicalization. They attributed the different effects of recasts to different level of perceptual salience.

Perceptual salience concerns "how prominent a form is in input" (Skehan, 1998, p. 48). Perceptual salience is closely related to the communicative value of a linguistic item, which is relevant to the question of whether production and/or comprehension problems with the item would result in a communicative breakdown. It has been claimed that items with high communicative value are

more likely to be noticed because a failure to comprehend the item may cause a communication breakdown. On the other hand, items with low communicative value may go unnoticed as non-comprehension would not interrupt the flow of communication. Previous studies including Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000), Carpenter, Jeon, MacGregor, and Mackey (2006), and Kim and Han (2007) showed that learners are more likely to recognize recasts targeting lexical and phonological errors than ones to morphosyntactic errors, and this result can in part be explained by the intrinsic communicative value of the morphosyntactic features. In general, lexical and phonological items carry more communicative value than morphosyntactic forms.

The association between learner recognition of recasts and the area of language has been frequently discussed in L2 literature. However, little experimental research has been carried out to investigate how learners perceive linguistic features differently within the same category due to the distinct nature of the specific forms. Thus, the present study aims to explore how recasts targeting two grammatical morphemes (3rd person *-s* and locative prepositions) which have a different level of communicative value. Communicative value is defined as “the relative contribution a form makes to the referential meaning of an utterance and is based on the presence or absence of two features: inherent semantic value and redundancy within the sentence-utterance” (VanPatten, 1996, p. 24). Communicative value is conceived as a factor that affects the salience of a linguistic feature. If a form has inherent semantic value and is not redundant, the form has high communicative value. Conversely, a form which has semantic value but is formally redundant has low communicative value. The communicative value of the two target features will be discussed in details in the following section.

Guided by the above considerations and in an effort to broaden our understanding of learner recognition of recasts, the present study explores learners’ recognition of recasts and its relationship with the nature of the targeted features (i.e., the degree of communicative value) and language aptitude. The research questions are following.

1. Is the nature of targeted linguistic feature related to learner recognition of recasts?
2. Is learners’ analytic ability related to their recognition of recasts?

II. Methods

1. Participants

Thirty adult Korean learners of English (11 males, 19

females; aged between 20 and 28) enrolled in four different low intermediate classes in a language program affiliated with a university in Korea participated in the present study. They were assigned to the intermediate classes based on the program’s placement test. All learners had learned English in elementary, middle, and high schools in Korea, and none of them had lived in an English-speaking country. Prior to the data collection, the researcher met each learner to explain the procedure and preliminarily test their ability to use the target forms. They were asked to describe pictures designed to elicit the target forms, and they often omitted 3rd person *-s* and incorrectly use or left out the prepositions (i.e., all showed less than 20% accuracy). Three native speakers of English with several years of teaching experiences in Korea also took part in the study in order to have one-to-one interaction with the learners.

2. Task/Test Instruments

A. Recasts

The way in which recasts are delivered can have impact on their effectiveness (Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Kim & Han, 2007). In order to ensure effective delivery, this study required that recasts be provided in declarative form without adding or asking further information or questions, i.e., isolated recasts in Lyster’s (1998) definition. An example of the recasts used in the present study follow:

Example 1

NNS: He leave his company at 6.

NS: He leaves his company.

NNS: He leaves.

The NSs were familiar with using recasts as correction, but they received a detailed instruction about the way recasts were used during interaction and practiced recasts with the researcher. The training took about 30 minutes.

B. Language Analytic Ability Test

In the present study, language analytic ability was measured by the test Schmitt, Dörnyei, Adolphs, and Durow (2003) employed (see Appendix). The test included 14 multiple choice items. The participants were given a list of words and sentences from an artificial language and their English translations. They were given 14 English sentences and asked to choose the correct translation for each sentence from the choices provided in the artificial language. To choose the correct translation, they needed to induce the rules from the listed examples. Since the test

was new and challenging to them, the researcher guided them through the first item in the test. A perfect score on the test would total 14. Participants' final scores were calculated as percentages.

C. Targeted Linguistic Features

The study chose two features known to be different in communicative value, English third person *-s* and locative prepositions. Third person *-s* is considered to have a low communicative value (VanPatten, 1996). It certainly has semantic content in that it encodes the semantic notion of third person singular and the temporal frame within which the action takes place. However, the co-occurrence of lexical items (e.g., *he, everyday*) that express the same meaning causes redundancy. Furthermore, syntactically, the English canonical subject-verb word order renders the *-s* redundant since the notion of third person singular is already carried out by the subject. Compared to third person *-s*, locative prepositions have a high communicative value since they present high semantic content and an absence of redundancy. This is especially true in this study since they are a key clue for the participants to solve the problem in a given task.

D. Interaction Tasks

Five different information gap tasks were carried out in NS-NNS interaction. One of them was used to help the participants familiarize themselves with information gap tasks. The NS-NNS interaction in the first task was not analyzed for the present study. Two tasks were designed to elicit 3rd person *-s*, and the other two tasks were designed to elicit locative prepositions (e.g., *in, at, on, below, under, and next*). The tasks were adapted from *Keep Talking* (Klippel, 2001) and *Fifty-Fifty: A Basic Course of Communicative English* (Wilson & Barnard, 1991).

3. Procedures

A. NS-NNS Interaction

Each NNS participant met twice with an NS interlocutor, the researcher, and a research assistant, who was a graduate student in TESOL and trained for the data collection procedures. On the first day, each NNS participant completed a questionnaire including their personal information (e.g., age and educational background) and took the aptitude test. After that, the participant engaged in the first task with an NS interlocutor, and the NS provided recasts on participants' errors. On the second day, each NNS interacted with the same NS s/he met on the first day and engaged in four different tasks. In the first and third

task, the NNSs were asked to describe the routines of two fictional characters (John and Harry) which were arranged in chronological order. The NS has the same picture but not in order. The NNSs were instructed to help the NS interlocutor put the pictures in order. In order to encourage the NNSs to use simple present tense, a first sentence for each story was given (e.g., *He wakes up at 7*). In the second and fourth tasks, the NNSs received pictures of John' and Harry's rooms and the NSs had similar pictures which were missing some of the objects (e.g., *clock and reading glasses*) present in the NNSs' pictures. The NNSs were instructed to describe John's and Harry's room to help the NSs find out the missing information and draw the objects onto the pictures. The instructions were given in both oral and written forms. While the NSs not only provided recasts to the errors of the targeted features, but also of other features such as pronouns and adverbial phrases, their recasts mainly addressed the targeted forms. All interactions were recorded on video and they lasted 20 minutes on average.

B. Stimulated recalls

Immediately after each interaction, an NNS had a recall session with either the researcher or the assistant. In the recall session, the NNS watched the video recording of her/his interaction with the NS, and was asked to recall what s/he was thinking at the time the NS provided the responses to her/his utterances (e.g., *"Can you tell me what you thought when your partner said that?"*). The interview was conducted in Korean in order to make sure that the NNSs' recalls would not be obscured by their lack of English proficiency. On average, it took 40 minutes to finish each recall session. The procedure was recorded on video.

The NNSs' recall comments on recasts were classified into three types: no recognition of recast (NRR), and recognition of recast (RR), and no comment (NC). Recognition, in this study, was operationalized as isomorphic noticing at the level of awareness (Schmidt, 1990, 2001) – interpretative comments on the NS's recasts as correction. Thus, recognition of recast refers to the case where the NNS interpreted a recast as correction while no recognition of recast includes the instance where the NNS did not interpret a recast as correction but a response to the content of her/his utterance. The category of recognition of recasts was further classified into no recognition of gap and recognition of gap. Gap denotes the difference between a recast and its trigger utterance. No recognition of gap refers to the instance where the NNS recognized a

recast as correction, but failed to identify the locus of the problem in his/her utterance. Recognition of gap includes the case where the NNS recognized a recast as correction and the difference between the NS's recast and his/her own utterance (i.e., recognition of the locus of the problem).

4. Statistic Analysis

In order to analyze learner recognition according to the types of targeted forms, first, the number of the participants' recall comments across recognition types were counted. Then, Pearson's Chi-square analyses were performed on the raw frequencies to investigate the association between learner recognition of recasts and the targeted linguistic features. The relationship between learner recognition and language aptitude was examined using a correlation analysis. To do so, the number of each participant's recognition was converted into percentages.

III. Results and Discussion

There were 587 recast episodes related to the targeted linguistic forms in the 30 NS-NNS dyads. Detailed results are organized and reported below according to the research questions.

1. Extent of Learner Recognition of Recasts/Gaps Across Types of Linguistic Features

Of the 587 recast episodes the participants commented on 554 (94.4%) episodes. Consequently, the recalls of 554 recast episodes were analyzed to examine the type of learner recognition of recasts. As presented in *Table 1*, out of the 554 episodes, the participants did not recognize 235 (42.42%) recast episodes as correction while they recognized 315 (57.58%) recasts as correction. More than a half of the recasts were considered as correction, and this is a relatively higher number than findings from some of the previous studies (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). It has been reported that recasts were more likely to be accepted as correction in an EFL context, especially in laboratory settings (Kim & Han, 2007; Nicholas et al., 2001) since EFL

learners tended to be more accuracy-oriented as compared to ESL learners, and recasts were focused on targeted features and provided more intensively in laboratory settings compared to ones used in intact classrooms. Considering that the present study was conducted in an EFL laboratory setting, a high rate of learner recognition of recasts as correction is expected.

When the targeted features were considered, out of 269 recasts targeting errors related to 3rd person *-s*, 128 (47.58%) recasts were not treated as correction while 146 (52.42%) recasts were thought as correction. In the case of recasts targeting the preposition errors, out of 285 recasts, 107 (37.54%) were not regarded as correction while 178 (62.46%) recasts were considered as correction. When learner recognition of recasts was further analyzed according to whether or not recasts resulted in noticing the gap, recasts targeting 3rd person *-s* brought about 73 (27.14%) instances while recasts for prepositions resulted in 119 (41.76%) instances of noticing the gap.

Three chi-square analyses were performed to investigate whether or not the number of instances of learner recognition was statistically different across the types of recognition and targeted linguistic features. As *Table 2* shows, when the rate of learner recognition/no recognition of recasts was considered, a difference was observed. This result can be interpreted as that there was a difference in the rate of learner recognition across recasts targeting 3rd person *-s* and prepositions, which implies that participants recognized recasts targeting preposition errors as correction more often than ones for 3rd person *-s*. When three recognition types (i.e., no recognition of recasts, recognition of gaps, and no recognition of gaps) were considered, similar results were found. Further-

Table 2. Chi-square analysis of learner recognition of recasts

Recognition	Chi-Square	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
NRR vs. RR	5.711	1	.017
NRR vs. RG vs. NRG	13.084	2	.001
RG vs. NRG	7.468	1	.006

Note: NRR=No Recognition of Recasts; RR: Recognition of Recasts; No Recognition of Gaps; RG=Recognition of Gaps; *p* < .05

Table 1. Learner recognition of recasts

	NRR	RR		Total
		RG	NRG	
3rd person <i>-s</i>	128 (47.58%)	73 (27.14%)	68 (25.78%)	269 (100%)
Prepositions	107 (37.54%)	119 (41.76%)	59 (20.70%)	285 (100%)
Total	235 (42.42%)	192 (34.66%)	127 (22.92%)	554 (100%)

more, when the analysis focused on the case where the participants recognized recasts as correction, a similar outcome was reported: recasts targeting prepositions brought about more recognition of gap than ones toward 3rd person *-s*.

This finding is congruent with the claim made in L2 literature with regard to the relation between communicative value and salience: “it is the relative communicative value of a grammatical form that plays a major role in determining the learner’s attention to it during input processing and the likelihood of its becoming detected and thus part of intake” (VanPatten, 1996, p. 24). Needless to say, learner recognition and intake does not guarantee acquisition. In other words, whether or not participants could acquire noticed features is a separate issue. However, considering noticing the gap is a critical process for L2 development, it can be assumed that recasts targeting grammatical features with high communicative value are more likely to result in acquisition compared to ones targeting features with low communicative value. SLA literature claims that the degree of required attention for learning varies with aspects of language (Gass, Svetics, & Lemelin, 2004; Schmidt, 1990, 2001). In this regard, the result that recasts targeting errors related to 3rd person *-s* brought about only 27.14% of recognition of gap suggests that such errors might need more explicit treatments than recasts.

One interesting finding is that the participants tended to look for the information they wanted to know in the input. See the following two examples:

Example 2

NNS: *There is a desk, down, uh, down side...*

NS: *Below the window, there is a desk?*

NNS: *Yes, below the window.*

(Recall: *I was not sure which preposition I should use here. I expected he taught to me what to say. It is ‘below.’*)

Example 3

NNS: *You know, trash can, garbage... uh... toy... one toy...*

NS: *There is a toy **in** the trash can?*

NNS: *There is a toy.*

(Recall: *I knew I needed something before ‘a toy.’ So, I carefully listened to what he said. I should have said ‘there is a toy.’*)

In both episodes, the participants realized that they could not say what they wanted to express. In other words,

they noticed a ‘hole’ in their interlanguage (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Swain (1998) claims that such ‘noticing the hole’ can facilitate ‘noticing the gap,’ and this is proved by both episodes. However, it must be noted that, in the second episode, the NNS recognized the correction made to ‘there is’ but not to ‘in,’ despite the fact the NS put a prosodic stress on ‘in.’ In other words, learner-generated attention to the form inhibited the NNS from processing the other enhanced information (i.e., correction to ‘in’). This can be deemed an instance in which a mismatch takes place between externally generated salience by feedback providers and internally generated salience by learners (Sharwood Smith, 1991). Example 3 shows that learner-generated attention overrides externally generated attention even though the targeted feature has a high communicative value, which is in line with Tomlin and Villa’s (1998) claim. Learner-generated attention is a similar concept to ‘orientation’ in their study, and they argued that orientation actually can shape a learner’s conscious processing of incoming information.

Another interesting finding is reported in the case the participants did not recognize recasts to prepositions. See the following example:

Example 4

NNS: *The other picture is higher... um... yes, higher than different picture. Left picture in left is higher.*

NS: *The picture on the left is higher than the picture on the right?*

NNS: *No, uh... Yes, yes. left... right? You know, higher picture has sun and mountain.*

(Recall: *To me, it was very difficult to describe the location of the two pictures. But, I tried, but it seemed that he didn't understand me.*)

In this episode, the participant had a hard time expressing the position of the picture to the interlocutor, which might hinder her from paying attention to the correction to the preposition. This finding is congruent with VanPatten’s (1996) claim that conscious attention to meaning in the input competes with conscious attention to form, especially in the case of unskillful learners. Dual processing (i.e., focusing on meaning and form simultaneously) might be too much of a cognitive load for the learners.

2. Relationship between Learner Recognition and Language Aptitude

Table 3 shows the relationship between the frequency of learner recognition and language aptitude scores. Pearson

Table 3. Correlations between learner recognition and language analysis scores

		<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
RR	3rd person- <i>s</i>	.796	.000
	Prepositions	.854	.000
RG	3rd person- <i>s</i>	.725	.000
	Prepositions	.786	.000

$p < .05$

correlation analyses proved that there was a strong association between learner recognition and language analytic ability regardless of the nature of targeted linguistic features.

Learner recognition of certain forms is not equivalent to learning of the features. However, considering the crucial effects on learners' conscious processing of input on L2 learning, the finding of the present study is congruent with Li (2013), which reported that learners with high analytic ability benefited more from recasts in their learning of Chinese classifiers than those who had low analytic ability. Recasts do not explicitly draw learners' attention to form or provide any explanations of the rule (s) related to the errors they have made. Thus, in order to recognize recasts as correction, and furthermore, recognize the difference between the correct form delivered in the form of recasts and the initial non-target-like utterance, learners need to direct their attention to form and figure out the rule underlying the corrected forms on their own, which may require analytic ability.

In this regard, the close relationship between learner recognition and language analytic ability can be easily predicted. What seems unexpected is that this strong relationship was found in both 3rd person *-s* and prepositions. It was expected that learner recognition of recasts targeting 3rd person *-s* was closely related to language analytic ability since its violation does not interfere with the flow of communication; thus, learners are unlikely to recognize the gap during meaning-based interaction unless they pay attention to form and figure out the rule. In contrast, prepositions have high lexical and communicative value, so it can be assumed that learners' attention naturally goes to the form. Contrary to these assumptions, learner recognition of both forms was highly related to language analytic ability. In other words, the participants with high language analytic ability recognized recasts as correction and the gaps in both features more frequently than those who had low analytic ability. Considering the lack of previous study in this matter, it is hard to conclude

that language analytic ability affects learner recognition of forms regardless of their level of communicative value only based on the findings of the present study. However, based on Erlam's (2005) finding that proved that learners with high analytic ability overall showed better performance in communicative classrooms, it can be suggested that language analytic ability may positively influence learner recognition of language forms regardless of their communicative value.

VI. Conclusion

The present study found that learners' recognition of recasts they received in one-to-one meaning-based interaction with a native interlocutor is related to the nature of targeted forms. Learners recognized recasts as correction more often when the feature had a high communicative value (i.e., prepositions in this study) and this resulted in a more frequent recognition of their errors (i.e., recognition of gaps) compared to the case where recasts targeted the feature with low communicative value (i.e., 3rd person *-s*). In addition, the study revealed that learners with high language analytic ability recognized recasts and gaps better than those with low analytic ability, and this relationship was not affected by the communicative value of the language feature recasts targeted.

The present study proved that recasts are not equally effective in drawing learner attention to form during meaning-based interaction. This suggests that corrective feedback needs to be practiced differently considering the characteristics of targeted language forms. For example, language features with low perceptual salience and communicative value can be treated more effectively through explicit corrective feedback than implicit corrective feedback (i.e., recasts), while implicit corrective feedback may be adequate to treat language forms with high perceptual salience and communicative value. Especially, for learners with weak language analytic ability, explicit corrective feedback may be more effective than implicit feedback in a meaning-based context.

This study also suggests that externally generated focus on form by the feedback provider is not always consistent with learner internally generated focus on form. Where there is a match, there will be a great chance for acquisition of the targeted form. However, where there is a mismatch, there will be a slim chance. In addition, when learners' attention is drawn to meaning due to the semantic complexity caused by a task they are engaged in, it may impinge on their recognition of corrective functions of

recasts and the difference between their interlanguage and the target language form. As a result, it is important to adjust the semantic loads required by tasks according to the level learners are able to handle.

The present study shed light on the relationship between learner recognition of recasts, the nature of targeted language forms, and learner language analytic ability. However, it has some limitations in methodology and scopes. The obvious limitations are its small sample size and lack of control for individual differences (e.g., prior knowledge of the targeted form). In addition, the study followed Schmidt's notion of 'noticing,' where recognition of recasts is defined as the ability to give a verbal report, and the participants' recognition was measured by the stimulated recall. Admittedly, this raised complicated methodological and interpretive issues. Due to the retrospective nature of stimulated recall, there is no guarantee that the participants' verbal reports were consistent with their actual thoughts at the moments the recasts occurred. In other words, the thoughts elicited by the recall were not exclusively the thoughts they had at the time a recast was given. Some of the recall comments may have been second thoughts they had at the time of the recall session. By the same token, a lack of verbal reports does not necessarily mean that the participants did not recognize recasts. Considering that recognition of a momentary experience, they might have recognized more than what they reported (Mackey, 2006; Mackey & Gass, 2006). Consequently, in interpreting the findings of the study, one should keep the well-worn research maxim in mind that an absence of reports of recognition cannot be equated with the evidence of an absence.

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Appendix: An Example of Language Analytic Test

Name: _____

The list in the box below contains words/phrases from an imaginary language along with their English translation. Following this, there will be 14 short English sentences, each with four possible translations into the imaginary language. Based on the examples given in the box, we would like to ask you to try and work out which of the four options is the correct translation of each sentence. Thank you very much.

kau	dog	pa	we, us
meu	cat	xa	you
kau meud bo	The dog is chasing the cat.	pasau meud bo	Our dog is chasing the cat.
kau meud bi	The dog was chasing the cat.	pa meud bo	We are chasing the cat.
so	watch	paxbo	We are chasing you.
ciu	mouse	pa meud bor	We aren't chasing the cat.

- The dog is watching the cat.
 - kau meud so
 - kau meud si
 - meu kaud so
 - meu kaud si
- The cat was watching the mouse.
 - meud ciu so
 - meu ciud so
 - meud ciu si
 - meu ciud si