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IMPACT OF RECASTS ON THE ACCURACY IN EFL LEARNERS' WRITING

MA THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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Since the famous Truscott's "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing class" (1996) there has been an ongoing debate in SLA research about the value of corrective feedback and its different forms. A growing number of empirical research is now investigating the question, and although more and more evidence is obtained against Truscott's statement, there are still no definite conclusions about whether the feedback should be given, and if yes, in what form.

The present study, designed as a longitudinal single-subject study with two participants, contributes to this research base, investigating one particular form of written corrective feedback – focused recast. During seven weeks thirteen written texts of each participant (first three served as a pre-test, the last one as a post-test) were given feedback in the form of focused recasts and then analysed for errors. All types of errors were targeted in the study. Also item-based and rule-based errors were considered separately to find out whether Ferris's (2002) assumption about treatable and untreatable errors could be confirmed.

The results showed significant decrease in the number of errors immediately after the baseline, and then steady downtrend throughout the treatment phase up to the post-test. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores let to conclude that recasts significantly assisted in increasing accuracy of writing. Quantitative analysis showed that the number of rule-based errors decreased more than the number of item-based errors.

Qualitative analysis of the data of one of the participants showed, that item-based errors were treatable. It also brought up the suggestion that item-based features cannot be treated as a group. Each item is a single phenomenon which is not a part of any grammatical system of the language, and unlike rule-based features, no generalization can be applied to item-based features. The study showed that if to take item-based errors as single phenomenon, then both rule-based

errors and item-based errors are equally treatable, thus questioning the ground for classifying errors as treatable and untreatable.

The study also suggests a direction of the further research on the effect of recasts on the complex feature systems, such as Conditional III or Modal Verbs for expressing possibility in the past. These features failed to be corrected through recasts, but due to their complexity a longer study is needed to investigate the possibilities of recasts.

Key words: EFL writing, corrective feedback, recasts.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Problem

Corrective recasts have been studied as a corrective feedback in speaking in more than 60 descriptive, quasi-experimental and experimental studies. As Long (2007) claims, there is mounting support from research in SLA that recasts facilitate language development (p. 76). Studies by Doughty and Varela (1998), M. Ishida (2002), Choi (2000), Ortega and Long (1997) researched recasts in speaking in SLA and obtained results favouring recasts.

Focused recast is a corrective negative feedback that juxtaposes a deviant non-target language form with its correct target-language form without explicit explanation, which allows a learner to contrasts two forms and see an error while attending to meaning thus assisting acquisition as opposed to learning. In speaking focused recasts consist of the repetition of the deviant learner utterance with rising intonation, followed immediately by a corrective recast that is always delivered with falling intonation (Long, 2007).

While focused recasts in speaking have been investigated actively and there is a bigger number of studies that found them quite an effective way of feedback (Iwashita, 2003; Leeman, 2003; Long, Inagaki & Ortega, 1998;) than a number of studies that claimed recasts less effective than other types of feedback (Lyster, 1998b; Lyster & Ranta, 1997), writing recasts unfortunately cannot boast with such flourishing research. However, both writing and speaking being productive skills share much in common. It is quite logical to suppose that what works for the one can as well work for the other.

The efficacy of recasts for promoting language development lies in the immediate juxtaposition of the learner's error and the correct reformulation provided by the more advanced speaker (Farrar, 1990; Long, 1996; Saxton, 1997, 2005). Unlike direct error corrections, recasts are contextualised, they allow to focus on a problematic item not in isolation, but in a context. Such contextualised focus can lead to acquisition of item-based phenomena (like prepositions, collocations and set phrases) and generalisation of rule-based phenomena (like articles, tenses, etc.).

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), which is actually Internet-mediated communication, has at last attracted attention of SLA researchers to its huge educational potential. Pelletieri (2000) states: "Because CMC fosters negotiation of meaning and form-focused interaction and because students communicating through this medium have more time to process and monitor the interlanguage, I believe that CMC can play a significant role in the development of grammatical competence." (p. 83). The emergent environment of interactive internet-mediated written discourse is still a largely unexplored pedagogical context for recasts. As Long (2006) notes, there is a need for further research in this area because the written modality is a robust environment for manipulating the degrees of saliency of target items, and findings from this line of research may have important pedagogical implications for teachers and materials developers in distance language instruction programs.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The present study attempts to investigate the effect of corrective feedback in the form of focused recasts on the development of L2 learners literacy in writing.

The main focus of the study is on learners' linguistic errors, which are subject to consistent treatment by means of focused recasts and whether such treatment can lead to improved literacy over time. Also a developmental change of each problematic item that comes into contact with a recast is investigated, thus, because the study is contextual, it allows a deeper insight into a process of acquisition.

Also the learners' attitude and response to such type of corrective feedback is targeted in this study. Attention to the learner's perspective on corrective feedback is of a primary importance, for it is through comprehension of how a learner processes and uptakes feedback, that a teacher can better understand when a certain type of feedback is more effective and suitable.

The study assumes that the findings might contribute to the improvement of the techniques of teaching writing in an Internet-mediated teaching/learning environment.

1.3. Problem Statement and Research Question

Out of all types of written corrective feedback, recasts alongside with reformulations stand out as the types of feedback that while focusing on errors are also focused on the context.

There is an apparent similarity between reformulation and focused recast, since focused recast *is* a reformulation. The difference however lies in the focused character of recasts as opposed to indirect reformulation. Reformulations happen at a text level, so that to notice an error a learner has to compare two texts - original and a reformulated variant and find original and reformulated items. Whereas recasts happen at a sentence level. An underlined sentence containing an error is immediately juxtaposed to a correct sentence, and although errors are not directly marked, to find problematic items within an original sentence by comparing it with its recasted variant is easier, thus it is easier to notice and process the errors. Yet, unlike error corrections, which draw attention to a grammatical form as it is, excluding the context, recasts provide the correct form within the context, pointing at interdependence of form and meaning. In the long run continuous written recasts of the same erroneous item in different contexts can enable a learner to generalise about rule-based language items and acquire item-based phenomena. Moreover, like reformulations, recasts allow for native-likeness of style that is especially valued by learners (Santos, Serrano & Manchon, 2010). So preserving all positive sides of reformulations, recasts at the same time should be easier to notice and process.

These assumptions form the foundation of the present study.

This study considers the following research questions:

1. Do focused recasts encourage learners to attend to form and increase accuracy?
2. Are some types of errors more affected by focused recasts than others, or not?
3. How do learners perceive focused recasts? What is their attitude to such kind of feedback?

The first two questions deal with the effect the recasts may or may not have on the development of L2 literacy. To put it simpler, the questions imply whether focused recasts can lead to a change of L2 knowledge, and of what kind this change can be.

The second question was prompted by the Ferris's (2002) argument that if a grammatical feature is clearly rule-based, it is more treatable than when a feature is item-based.

The third question deals with the learners' reaction to recasts. It probes into learners' response to such kind of feedback, what kind of response it is and whether this response facilitate learning

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its attempt to discover a new way of teacher's response to learners' writing which can render help in improving L2 learners accuracy.

It seems especially relevant now, when the vast and unceasing argument is carried on between supporters and opposers of a form-oriented written feedback, while teachers-practitioners are seeking ways to deal with grammar illiteracy in their writing classes. There is also no agreement among the supporters on which types of feedback are more effective. So, a deep study into a less researched forms of written feedback can bring results of a great practical value.

There is also another important issue to be taken into consideration. In the modern world of electronic communication forms of language teaching/learning are being reconsidered. With the appearance of Internet-mediated teaching/learning appropriate teaching methods are demanded in different spheres including writing. The findings of the present study contribute to the development of teaching/learning writing via Internet communication.

1.5. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Limitations of the present study come with the chosen design. Single subject research may produce results that have strong internal validity, when all internal validity threats are addressed. However, due to the small number of study participants, single subject research tends to have poor external validity, limiting the ability to generalise the findings to a wider audience. Indeed, the results of the study may reveal positive effect of a treatment for a particular subject, but the same conclusion cannot be made for all L2 learners.

However, a single subject study involves careful examination and description of participants and conditions, as well as detailed definition of a target behaviour (in our case accuracy in writing) and a used treatment. The assumption is that under the same conditions

(Internet-mediated teaching/learning environment) other subjects of the same proficiency level and with the same level of motivation can achieve the same results if the same treatment is applied.

Moreover, the study can be replicated under different conditions to investigate whether the same treatment proves to be effective for example in a classroom setting.

On the whole, the research is cumulative. More studies of the same nature will provide opportunity for wider generalisation.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Perhaps of all the four skills that are taught in ELT writing is the most challenging due to many factors influencing literacy development in L2. However, the importance of writing as a language skill is difficult to overestimate and over years the interest of researchers to writing has increased. The present chapter is reviewing some of the most interesting studies on written feedback in SLA.

2.1. Present State of Affairs in the Research on Written Feedback in SLA

The question of corrective feedback in SLA for years has been one of the most confusing problems both for students and teachers due to the contradictory attitude to error correction. The opinions stay divided into two main streams: against corrections (Krashen, 1982; Truscott, 1996; 2007) vs for thoughtful appropriate corrections (Chandler, 2003; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2007). Within the second group the research on different types of feedback is flourishing to discover what thoughtful appropriate corrections actually are.

The attitude to writing has always been as to "a secondary form of language - highly dependent upon the more primary oral forms (listening and speaking) (MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006, p. 171). Also students' writing has been always interpreted as either a finished product to be evaluated by a teacher (product-oriented approach) or a series of drafts each commented by a teacher on form, vocabulary, organisation and content ideally leading to creating a good balanced written composition (process-oriented approach) (Ferris, 2003, p. 20). Hence, the two lines of discussion about the role of teacher's feedback and how it can affect (if it can) the development of writing skills: discussion about content feedback and error feedback (or corrective feedback on form).

By the end of the last century feedback on form was widely unpopular "due no doubt to the prominence of the process-writing paradigm in ESL writing classes at the time with its consequent de-emphasising of sentence-level accuracy issues" (Ferris, 2003, p. 42). Many writing teachers were discouraged to focus on form, persuaded by Krashen's Natural Approach which stated that if students' content were emphasised, appropriate form would follow naturally, as it does in children's L1 oral acquisition (Krashen, 1984). Perhaps the most severe opponent to

corrective feedback on form, or grammar correction, has been John Truscott. In his review article " The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes" (1996) he straightforwardly calls to teachers to totally abandon grammar correction, because: " (a) Substancial research shows it to be ineffective and none shows it to be helpful in any interesting sense; (b) for both theoretical and practical reasons, one can expect it to be ineffective; and (c) it has harmful effects" (p.328). The author argues precisely against grammar correction as "correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately" (p. 329). His conclusion is that no matter what form or type of grammar correction a teacher uses, it will not have any positive effect on literacy improvement.

However, with time it became more and more obvious that such content-oriented approach in writing was not resulting in disappearance of students' errors, that students' lack of accuracy might well be held against them in various academic and professional contexts, and that students themselves were frustrated by the lack of grammar feedback instruction.

That has brought teachers and researchers back to the issue of corrective feedback on form.

A number of studies on the effect of corrective feedback have suggested that the form-focused feedback can be effective (Fatham & Walley, 1990; Ferris, 2002; Chandler, 2003), and even desired by learners (Grami, 2004). Also now researchers have been looking at different types of feedback to evaluate each of them. The findings about traditional types of feedback on form are contradictory.

There are four main types of traditional corrective feedback that have been studied: explicit correction (the error is fully corrected by a teacher), marking mistakes without explanations (the problematic issue is underlined, no explanation is given), number of errors per line in a margin (no explanation or location of the errors is given), and correction codes (special signs to indicate different types of mistakes, e.g W. W stands for a wrong choice of word), that label an error, but do not correct it, so that a learner has to correct them himself.

In the study by Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) all four types were tested. The students were assigned to four groups with different types of feedback and were told then to rewrite their essays. No group showed significant improvement. Some authors therefore have drawn a conclusion that corrections in writing do not work (Grey.R, 2004). Others say that grammar feedback that indicates the place but not the type of errors (marking mistakes without

explanation) give better results (Fathman & Walley,1990) or that only written feedback coupled with student-teacher conferencing is effective (Brender, 1998).

Therefore, taking into consideration the two contradictory conclusions that corrective feedback is necessary, but traditional types of error feedback do not always show significant impact on the improvement of literacy, there has obviously been a need for investigation of other types of corrective feedback that could be helpful in literacy development of L2 students.

2.2. Direct vs. Indirect Feedback

However, not all researchers and teachers are so categorical about corrections.

Indeed, despite the fact that the feedback on form was severely judged and "found guilty" of uselessness and even causing harm, most teachers do use corrective feedback in class as well as most students expect them to do so (Zacharias, 2007).

The supporters of corrective feedback are now actively investigating the effect of different types of correction on L2 learners accuracy. Especially big attention is drawn to direct vs indirect feedback research. The findings are controversial, from "research in general has not demonstrated that direct correction of errors by teachers is effective in helping students improve either the accuracy or substance of their writing... indirect techniques such as noting the location of errors helps students improve their overall accuracy, both on subsequent drafts of the same paper and later assignments" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, p. 127) to the conclusion that direct error corrections lead to improved accuracy in immediate revisions and subsequent writing (Chandler, 2003).

In the quasi-experimental study Bitchener and Knoch (2010) investigated the extent to which written corrective feedback can help advanced L2 learners, who already demonstrate a high level of accuracy in two functional uses of the English article system and the extent to which there may be a differential effect for different types of feedback on any observed improvement. Sixty-three advanced L2 learners at a university in the USA formed a control group and three treatment groups: (1) those who received written meta-linguistic explanation; (2) indirect circling of errors; and (3) written meta-linguistic feedback and oral form-focused instruction. On three occasions (pre-test, immediate post-test, delayed post-test) the participants

were asked to describe what was happening in a picture of a different social setting. Significant differences were found in the level of accuracy on (1) the immediate post-test piece of writing between the control group and all three treatment groups; and (2) on the delayed post-test piece between the control and indirect groups and the two direct treatment groups. The results of the study favoured direct written feedback over indirect one.

A longitudinal study by Lalande (1982), studies by Ferris (2003), Fratzen (1995) revealed the advantage of indirect feedback over direct corrections, while Chandler (2003) discovered that direct feedback lead to the biggest gains in accuracy. Thus the results of the studies exploring direct vs indirect feedback are still inconclusive.

2.3. Focused vs. Unfocused Feedback

Recently a few attempts to study focused feedback have been undertaken (Sheen, 2007; Rouhi & Samiei, 2010; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008). Among supporters of corrections research into such kind of feedback (also known as selective correction as opposed to comprehensive correction) has become widespread.

The researchers have defined focused feedback as a feedback that selects specific errors to be corrected and ignores the others (Ellis *at all.*, 2008). The assumption is that if attention and understanding is important for acquisition, as cognitive theories of SLA argue (Ellis, 2005; Schmidt, 1994) then focused feedback must be more beneficial to learners, because " they are more likely to attend to corrections directed at a single error type and more likely to develop clearer understanding of the nature of the error and the correction needed" (Rouhi & Samiei, 2010, p.5).

However, the results of the studies are contradictory. While Sheen (2007) and Zacharias (2007) reported the efficacy of focused corrective feedback, others (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Fazio, 2001; Truscott and Hsu, 2008; Rouhi & Samiei, 2010) found no greater improvement of accuracy in learners' writing when focused feedback was implemented compared to other types of feedback.

For example Ellis *et al*. (2008) undertook a comparative study to investigate the effect of focused vs unfocused written corrective feedback on the accuracy with which Japanese

university students used the English indefinite and definite articles to denote first and anaphoric reference in written narratives. The research was designed as a pre-test - immediate post-test - delayed post-test study. The focused group received correction of just article errors on three written narratives while the unfocused group received correction of article errors alongside corrections of other errors. Both groups gained from pre-test to post-tests on both an error correction test and on a test involving a new piece of narrative writing and also outperformed a control group, which received no correction, on the second post-test. The conclusion is that corrective feedback is equally effective for the focused and unfocused groups and there is no evidence in favour of focused feedback.

It has also been reported that both students and teachers prefer comprehensive error feedback (Lee, 2004).

2.4. Research on Recasts and Reformulations

Written recasts have been the least investigated type of written feedback, though as it was mentioned previously it has been quite heavily researched in speaking with the results mostly favouring recast. In writing there are quite few studies probing into such kind of feedback.

Long (2007) defines corrective recast as "reformulation of all or part of a learner's immediately preceding utterance in which one or more non-target like items are replaced by the correspondent target language forms, and where, throughout the exchange, the focus of the interlocutors is on meaning, not language as object...so error correction is implicit and incidental" (p.77).

Of course taking into consideration the nature of writing, written recasts are less implicit and incidental than oral recasts, yet less explicit than direct error corrections, since the focus is on a sentence as a unit, not on an error as such. There is one more issue that seems to give written recasts an advantage over an oral recast. While oral recasts have been found by some researchers ambiguous and thus ineffective (Lyster, 1998b), written recasts cannot be taken by learners for mere repetition of their utterance, so the question of ambiguity is eliminated here.

Reformulations as well as recasts also involve replacement of non-target items by the target forms, but because they deal with rhetorical factors as well as grammar, lexis and syntax (Levenston, 1978), the difference as Cohen (1989) explains it, is that a reformulator should

“rewrite the paper so as to preserve as many of the writers’ ideas as possible, while expressing them in his/her own words so as to make the piece sound native-like” (p. 4). Not only does it present a big time-consuming work for teachers, but also a tremendous difficulty for learners to detect errors, since in a reformulated text problematic items can be completely paraphrased by a teacher or even omitted.

In the study by Sachs and Polio (2007) reformulations and error corrections have been researched for their effect on improving learners' grammatical accuracy. The study was designed as a three-stage composition-comparison-revision task. Concurrent verbal protocols were employed during the comparison stage in order to study the learners' reported awareness of the more targetlike reformulations. The reactivity of think-alouds as a research tool was also assessed. First, 15 adult learners of English participated in a repeated-measures study with three experimental conditions: error correction, reformulation, and reformulation + think-aloud. Participant reports of awareness in the reformulation + think-aloud condition suggested that noticing of feedback was related to the accuracy of subsequent revisions. A second nonrepeated-measures study was then carried out with 54 participants; a control group was added and the design was modified in an attempt to eliminate the reported tendency of learners to develop and use memorisation strategies while processing the written feedback. In both experiments, participants performed significantly better in the error correction condition than in the reformulation condition. Error corrections were found to be more effective.

The findings are not surprising however,taking into consideration the complexity of error noticing and detecting with such kind of feedback. The advantage of reformulations is in their ability to offer learners a sample of native-like written text that speaks their ideas and thoughts, this is what learners themselves value in such kind of feedback. Santos *et al*.(2010) attempted to compare the effect of direct error correction vs reformulation on the foreign language learners of intermediate level of proficiency in L2. Reformulation in the research presented an original learner's text reformulated by a teacher to make it look native-like. Reformulations concerned erroneous grammar forms and inappropriate choice of words. Their findings were as followed:

Written corrective feedback on the whole has positive effect on noticing and uptake.

Error correction has clear advantage over reformulation.

There are other important findings to be noticed in connection with the mentioned study by Santos *et al*. The first is the existence of individual differences between the learners in

processing corrective feedback. This issue was of a primary importance when the research design was considered, and will be discussed later.

The other interesting fact mentioned by Santos is learners' attitude to error corrections and reformulations. The participants were interviewed about both types of feedback and manifested that:

Their preference of error corrections over reformulations is explained by the fact that error corrections are easier to detect and notice

Reformulation was a completely new type of feedback for them, and they would need time to get used to it.

All participants noted, that reformulations could greatly improve their mastery of language, since "they will be processing their own writing with near-native style" (p.149).

Thus, despite the complexity and difficulty for error detection, reformulations have the advantage of presenting native-like language.

In a quasi-experimental study by Doughty and Varela (1998) the first time the effect of focused recasts in writing alongside with speaking was tested. In the case of written works of the learners errors involving the target structures were circled, and written recasts juxtaposed. The learners of the treatment group showed significant gains in speaking and in writing.

Written recasts have been investigated to check their effect on the acquisition of specific language features, like for example in the study by Ayoun (2001) in which written recasts were tested against models and traditional grammar instructions in acquisition of *passè composè* and *imparfait* in French with a pre-test, repeated exposure, and post-test design. Participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 3 conditions: R (recasting: implicit negative feedback), M (modelling: pre-emptive positive evidence), and G (grammar: explicit positive evidence and negative feedback). The M and R groups read a different story with illustrations each week. The M group was presented with a sentence corresponding to the illustration for 3 seconds, then the participants were asked to answer a related question. The R group had to form a sentence using given elements based on the illustration, then the participants were exposed to the correct answer for 3 seconds. The G group read traditional grammar lessons, took a short practice, and were presented with the answer key. Post-test results revealed that the R group performed significantly better than the G group but not the M group. The conclusion was drawn that recasting is the most effective form of feedback alongside with models.

In 2004 Ayoun carried out a follow-up study on the effectiveness of written recasts vs models and traditional grammar instruction, and the development of temporality in the interlanguage of French college students as second language learners. The results of the study weakened the previous finding. The G group outperformed the R and M groups in accuracy and frequency in *the passè composè* all three groups decreased in their accuracy and frequency in *the imparfait*, but the G group outperformed the other two groups; the three groups were practically identical in the production of various predicate types in *the passè compose* and *imparfait* on the pre- and post-tests. Overall, it was the G group's performance that showed a greater aspectual use of predicate frequency and type in *the imparfait,* thus questioning the conclusions of the previously conducted research.

Z. Han (2002) investigated recasts in a small-scale empirical study designed s a quasi-experiment. Eight L2 learners of English were randomly assigned to a recast and a nonrecast group. The study adopted a pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest design, with eight pedagogical recast sessions between the pretest and the posttest for the recast group paralleled by eight regular sessions for the nonrecast group. Data collected consisted of written and oral narratives primed by cartoon strips and produced by the subjects in both groups. Recasts appeared to be successful in this study in that they heightened the L2 learners' awareness and led to considerable improvement in their tense consistency during oral and written performance. Importantly, the study identified four conditions that may be necessary for recasts to facilitate learning: individualized attention, consistent focus, developmental readiness, and intensity.

Mohammadi and Javadi (2009) researched the effect of written recasts vs explicit negative feedback in the acquisition of the auxiliary verb “do/did” and the irregular vs. regular form of verbs in the simple past tense. Twenty students and a teacher participated in the study. Students were divided into two groups. The learners in the treatment group received recasts while learners in the control group received the same instruction as the experimental group plus explicit negative feedback. Pictures were used to elicit written output and a written test was performed to collect the data. The analysis of the data indicated out-performance of participants in the experimental group over that of the control group.

Some studies have found recasts less effective when compared to other types of feedback (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006), or even ineffective (Ayoun, 2004; Sauro, 2007).

Sauro, for example, compared recasts and metalinguistic feedback through computer mediated communication on the development of L2 knowledge and production accuracy. High intermediate to advanced adult Swedish university learners of English (n=23) from an intact class were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (two feedback conditions and one control) and were randomly paired with English native speakers. During task-based interaction via text-chat, the Swedish learners received focused corrective feedback on omission of the zero article with noncount nouns of generic reference (e.g. employment, global warming, culture). Pretests, post-tests and delayed post-tests of knowledge (acceptability judgments) and production accuracy (short-answer questions) measured learning outcomes. Results showed a significant advantage for metalinguistic information on the immediate development of target form knowledge with noncount nouns of generic reference that had been introduced during the intervention.

Among studies that suggest a benefit for feedback which contains positive evidence is Leeman's (2003) investigation of two components of recasts (negative evidence and the enhanced salience of positive evidence), which found an advantage for feedback that contained only positive evidence over feedback that contained only negative evidence.

Research that suggests a superior benefit for corrective feedback that generates modified or pushed output or repair includes Lyster's (1998a) study of French immersion classes. Written posttest results showed a significant advantage for students receiving prompts (written feedback which prompts learners to attempt self-repair) while students in the recast condition performed similarly to students in the no feedback condition. Similarly, McDonough's (2005) study of four corrective feedback combinations included two groups that received types of corrective feedback that allowed them to modify output and two groups that did not. The results indicated that the number of learners who progressed to a more advanced level of question formation was greater for the first two groups than for the latter.

The second of these two studies also investigated whether corrective feedback facilitated the development of implicit and explicit knowledge. Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) examined learners' use of the English past tense marker -ed following exposure to either explicit corrective feedback (metalinguistic information) or implicit corrective feedback (recasts).

Findings indicated that learners who received corrective feedback containing metalinguistic information significantly outperformed learners in the recast and control groups

on tests of both implicit (oral elicited information) and explicit (grammaticality judgments) L2 knowledge. Furthermore, metalinguistic corrective feedback and not recasts also seemed to promote generalization of the -ed form to new contexts.

The study that have been briefly reviewed above present different, sometimes contradictory conclusions. What is clearly seen from the review is that, although the research on oral recast is plentiful, it is still inconclusive. Scarcer and even less inconclusive is the research on written recasts as a form of corrective feedback. To generalize, more studies on recasts are needed.

The literature review has shown that:

a) there is a continuous argument about whether corrective feedback should be implemented in SLA or not,

b) among the supporters of written corrective feedback there is still no agreement as to what type of feedback is most effective,

c) numerous study produce different results, hence no possibility for definite conclusions,

d) most of the studies conducted on written recasts so far have been of group experimental design, probing into one grammatical phenomenon, but no single-subject longitudinal study has been yet undertaken to see how sustained written corrective feedback n the form of recasts can affect learners' accuracy on an individual learner level.

CHAPTER 3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

Single-subject AB research design has been chosen as a frame for the study. The design allows for deep qualitative analysis of the data, natural setting of the study, attention to context and individual characteristics of the participants of the study. There are several reasons for choosing such design.

Firstly, a deep and true commitment of the author to personal individualised approach in pedagogy. As Kumaravadivelu (2001) notices: "language pedagogy, to be relevant, must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers, teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociology-cultural milieu". These particularities play a decisive role in language learning, making doubtful the necessity of external validity of the language research. Indeed, "it is reasonable to claim, that generalisations of the findings and a-one-size-fits-all perspective towards the findings in SLA research is a wrong assumption" (Navidinia & Eghtesadi, 2009, p.58) and a comprehensive approach must be considered when studying a phenomenon in SLA (Ortega, 2005).

Secondly, to choose just one grammatical phenomenon as an object for recast treatment is a common point of most of the studies on written recast: tenses were investigated by Han (2002), auxiliary *do/did* by Mohammadi and Javadi (2009), grammatical gender by Dasse-Askildson (2008), the Past Tense by Maftoon, Ahmadi and Daffarifard (2010), the Past Tense and conditional form by Doughty and Varela (1998), articles by Bitchener and Knoch (2009), etc. But no study has yet been undertaken to investigate effects of extensive longitudinal written recast treatment on L2 accuracy, though such study would allow not only for comparison of how different error categories are affected by recast treatment, but, what is more important, for getting a whole picture of dynamic developmental process of learning writing. The task that a researcher undertakes is huge and involves continuous treatment and following the

developmental change of every erroneous item in a learner's writing for a certain period of time, but it can help obtain interesting results.

And the last reason, but not the least: Doughty and Williams (1998) argue that the effects of any corrective feedback are "gradual and cumulative rather than instantaneous and categorical" (p. 40). Lyster and Ranta point out how complex the process of L2 learning is (1997). Taking into consideration the slow, non-linear and partial nature of many of the processes involved in SLA other kinds of studies should be undertaken, "future studies should therefore be longitudinal in nature in order to allow for longer periods of exposure than has been the case to date" (Tatawy, 2006, p. 15).

Hence a longitudinal single-subject AB research design was adopted for this study.

3.2. Operationalisation

Errors/ mistakes were operationalised as non-target forms or/and non-target-like usage of target forms in the written samples of the participants. No differentiation was made between errors and mistakes due to the impossibility to define the nature of a problem with each erroneous item in the writing (whether a problem was due to the lack of knowledge, or due to the other factors involved).

Accuracy was operationalised as usage of target language forms and target-like usage of target forms in the written samples of the participants.

Recast was operationalised as a reformulation of a non-target form or a non-target-like usage of a target form within a sentence into a target form or target-like usage of the target form within the sentence. Recasts reformulated ill-formed utterances in their entirety (no partial or segmented recasts was provided). Unlike other types of focused corrective feedback which are focused because they concentrate on treating one or two grammatical errors, recast in the present study was defined as focused, because it focused learner's attention on a language unit containing an error; in the study such unit was a sentence.

Rule-based errors were operationalised as errors relating to features that occur in "a patterned, rule-governed way" (Ferris, 1999, p. 6).

Item-based errors were operationalised as errors relating to unsystematic features of the language that are not governed by the rules.

All the errors in the participants' writing were subject to corrective feedback in the form of focused recasts.

No additional emphasis was placed on the source of the error.

3.3. Participants

Reviewing research on the effectiveness of recasts in first and second language acquisition Nicholas, H., Lightbown, P. M., and Spada, N. (2001) concluded that recasts appear to be most effective in contexts where it is clear to the learner that the recast is a reaction to the accuracy of the form, not the content, of the original utterance. This conclusion was later confirmed by Dasse-Askildson (2008) in the experimental study of the effect of written recasts on grammatical gender acquisition by L2 learners. Thus to be effective recasts should be addressed to learners of quite a high level of proficiency. This conclusion defined the choice of the participants for the study: two upper-intermediate English L2 leaners were invited to part-take in the study. Both participants were native Russian speakers. In 2008 they took a 5 month course of English in a language school in Russia, then after a short break they started individual English lessons up to the end of the year. In 2009 they took a course of Internet-mediated English lessons, which was finished in autumn. Since then both participants have been trying to maintain their level of English on their own.

There were also other requirements to participants which were determined by the research design. In the AB type of design a baseline "A" is tracked, and then some treatment "B" is implemented. If there is a change then the treatment is said to have had an effect. By its nature, a single-subject design has quite high internal validity. Out of 8 threats to internal validity in experimental studies, only one is a concern in adult longitudinal studies - history (Abrahams, 1997). To control a history variable, ABAB and multiple baseline variant of a single-subject design have been introduced.

However, in the present study neither ABAB nor multiple baseline design is applicable due to the impossibility of unlearning in the first case, and a limited number of participants in the

second. Hence the requirement for the participants with a minimised possibility of learning from sources other than the treatment "B" implemented in the study. Both participants were not taking English lessons or communicating with other English speakers besides the experimenter up to the last session. Between the last session and the test the participants had limited short-time communication with English speakers while visiting Cyprus. The length of the gap between the let session and the test was too short for any learning to occur.

The participants were told that the study was focused on writing, but no detail about feedback or recasts was provided to prevent the participants from being influenced by the objectives of the study.

3.4. Tasks, Treatment and Procedures

3.4.1 Baseline

In the "A" stage three samples of writing of each participant were examined for errors, thus serving as a pre-test. The first sample (numbered as N0) was a piece of writing done prior to the beginning of the study during the informal correspondence between the researcher and the subjects. This was done for two reasons:

1) to have more material for error analysis in the baseline,

2) to see whether the awareness that they participate in the study could influence the subjects' accuracy (i.e whether there would be a gap in score between sample N0 and samples N1 and N2).

3) to obtain three measures for establishing a valid baseline. Three measures are usually named as a minimum data points required for a baseline (Alberto & Troutman, 2006).

3.4.2. Treatment phase

The writing samples of the phase "B" consisted of diary-entries and topic-based compositions; each sample was submitted once a week.

After samples N1 and N2 (the last in the "A"phase) were submitted they were analysed for errors, sentences containing erroneous items were recasted using Google Docs software (each sentence containing an error was highlighted, recasted variant was placed in the margin opposite the highlighted sentence) and both samples containing recasts were emailed back to the participants before they started their next task. The same procedure was implemented for each following sample.

The participants were not instructed how to process the feedback, nor were they required to do revisions. It was up to them to decide in what way they could use the feedback

3.4.3. Post-test

The last session was designed as a post-test. Unlike the previous sessions it was neither a diary-entry, nor a topic-based composition. The task represented a set of questions, which the participants were to answer in a free manner. The questions were designed to elicit a maximum number of structures and items that had been identified as problematic for the participants (that had been used incorrectly in any of the previous sessions) some time during the study.

The test consisted of two parts. After the first set of questions was answered, the answers were analysed in relation to the number of elicited problematic structures and items. The purpose of the analysis was to find out which of the problematic items the participants had used in their answers and which – not. Then the second set of questions was presented to the participants in the attempt to encourage them to use those problematic structures that they avoided to use while answering the first set of questions.

The questions referred to the life experience of the participants, no grammar questions or any questions concerning language knowledge were asked. Thus the attention of the participants was still focused on the content as it had been all the way through the study.

The score for the test was calculated exactly as the scores for the previous sessions, and was also mapped onto the graph.

3.4.4. Questionnaire for research question N 3

To address the third research question the participants were presented with a set of questions that they were to answer in writing after the test was completed. The questions were:

1) How do you feel about the teacher's feedback that you encountered in this study? Is it helpful? Does it help to notice errors?

2) What does such kind of feedback lack in your opinion?

3) How did you handle the feedback? What exactly did you do with the teacher's comments in the margin?

3.5. Data Analysis

The primary data for the study consisted of thirteen written texts from each participant (26 texts in total), the first three serving as data for baseline condition, the next nine - as data for treatment condition and the last one - as an immediate post-test.

Each text in the treatment condition was written after receiving corrective feedback in the form of focused recasts on a previous text.

Each text was analysed for errors.

The errors were coded as follows:

- WW - wrong word (e.g *view* meaning *look*)
- Spr - set phrase (using a set phrase incorrectly (e.g. *On the one hand... on the other hand* meaning *firstly... secondly,* or using direct translation from Russian: *it doesn't care* meaning *I don't care*)
- P - preposition (using a wrong preposition, omitting a preposition or using a preposition where it should not be used)
- WS - wrong structure (omitting a subject, incorrect construction of any grammatical structure apart from those mentioned separately in the present list)
- WO - word order
- Cond - conditional clause
- Partcl - participle clause

- Interr - wrong formation of interrogative sentence
- Seq - sequence of tenses
- Indirs - indirect speech
- CO - complex object
- Copulab - copula "be"
- PastSN - wrong formation of Past Simple negative
- TF - wrong tense formation
- Gen - genetive
- Missedw - missed word
- Quant - quantifier
- Demonp - demonstrative pronoun
- Determ - determiner
- Indp - indefinite pronoun
- A - article
- WF - wrong form (using an incorrect part of speech: *you have to just give your warm to me,* meaning *warmth;* incorrect verb form: *I can found* etc.)
- Nasa - noun as adjective (*leave's ocean, student's life* etc.)
- Partpre - participle as premodifier
- Inf - infinitive
- Gerund
- Adv - adverb after "be" and " sound"
- S/Pl - singular or plural
- Poss - possessive
- T - tense (incorrect choice of tense)
- Mod - modal verb
- SVOA - subject verb object agreement (wrong subject - verb or verb - object agreement)
- Sp - spelling

Each sample was printed out, errors were underlined and a corresponding code for each error was placed in the margin. At the end of each sample a total number of words and a total numbers of errors were indicated.

Also to address the third research question all the coded errors were classified into two types: item-based features (prepositions, set phrases, wrong words and spelling) and rule-based features (all the rest). The number of errors of each type was calculated in every sample.

3.5.1. Scoring

The score for each sample was calculated as a percentage, with total number of words in a sample taken as 100%.

The scores for item-based and rule-based features were also calculated in the same manner (as a percentage of each type with the total number of words in a sample taken as 100%).

The obtained data were mapped onto 4 graphs (see appendix):

1) Total scores of errors. Participant J.

2) Total scores of errors. Participant K.

3) Item-based and rule-based (IBRB) scores of errors. Participant J.

4) Item-based and rule- based (IBRB) scores of errors. Participant K.

3.5.2. Statistical procedures

Visual and statistical analysis of the obtained data for the interpretation of experimental effects was implemented. Analysis addressed three changes in the data pattern (Wolery & Harris, 1982): variability, trend, and level.

Variability and trend for the data were calculated using EXCEL analysis toolpak and GraphPad Software Quick Calcs.

1) To analyse variability of the data, standard deviation (SD) and coefficient of variation (CV) was calculated for the data in each phase. CV was calculated as the ratio of the SD to the mean value. The calculated standard deviation values, coefficient of variation and level values

were included into the tables of scores and then mapped onto the graphs (see Appendix Chart N5 and Chart N6).

Table 1. Total scores of errors with mean values (MV), coefficient of variance (CV) and standard deviation values (SD). Participants J and K.

	baseline						treatment												
	0	1	2	MV	SD	CV	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	T	MV	SD	CV
J	7.7	7.8	8.2	7.9	0.26	0.03	4.4	3.4	4	4.8	2.5	3.9	2.9	3.1	1.9	1.4	3.2	1.09	0.34
K	9	8.6	9.2	8.9	0.30	0.03	5.7	6.3	4.3	5	5.4	3.2	4.3	4.5	3	2.3	4.4	1.27	0.28

Table 2. Item-based and rule-based scores of errors with mean values, coefficient of variance and standard deviation values. Participant J.

	baseline						treatment												
	0	1	2	MV	SD	CV	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	T	MV	SD	CV
IB	2.9	3.7	2.8	3.1	0.49	0.16	2.2	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.2	0.5	1	1	0.6	0.7	1.2	0.58	0.48
RB	4.7	4	5.4	4.7	0.7	0.15	2.2	2	2.4	3	1.2	3.4	1.8	2.1	1.3	0.6	2	0.84	0.42

Table 3. Item-based and rule-based scores of errors with mean values, coefficient of variance and standard deviation values. Participant K.

	baseline						treatment												
	0	1	2	MV	SD	CV	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	T	MV	SD	CV
IB	2.7	3	2.4	2.7	0.3	0.11	1.6	2.2	1.3	2.6	1.7	1	1.5	1.5	1.2	1	1.5	0.51	0.34
RB	6.3	5.9	6.7	6.3	0.52	0.08	4.1	4	4.3	2.4	3.7	2.1	2.8	3	1.8	1.3	2.9	0.94	0.32

The analysis revealed that all the data fell within normal distribution. The coefficient of variance for each set of data fell in the range of low-variance distribution (CV<1). However, for all three data sets of each participant (total scores. IB scores and RB scores) there was observed an increase in CV value from A phase to B phase.

2) Trend lines for each set of data were calculated and mapped onto the graphs in EXCEL analysis toolpak. Then the trends were analysed visually to establish the movement in the data series. Insufficient uptrends were observed in A phase for each data set, and downtrends (with different angle of decrease) in B phase. (See Appendix Charts NN1-4).

3) Level was calculated as a mean for each phase. To analyse whether the difference in levels of A phase and B phase was statistically significant and scientifically relevant, two- tailed unpaired *t* test was run for the total scores (TS), item-based (IB) and rule-based scores (RB) in the phases A and B. The results are shown in table N4 (the first letter before a score type indicates a participant).

Table 4. Level change evaluation

	JTS	KTS	JIB	JRB	KIB	KRB
p-value	p<0.0001	p=0.0001	p=0.0003	p=0.0004	p=0.0041	p=0.0003
Mean of (A-B)	4.7000	4.5000	1.9000	2.7000	1.140	3.350
Confidence interval	95% 3.2625-6.1375	95% 2.8253-6.1747	95% 1.0818-2.7182	95% 1.5172-3.8828	95% 0.446-1.834	95% 1.953-4.747

The results of the *t* test revealed that the drop in the level of errors after the treatment was implemented is statistically significant ($p<0.05$) for all the scores for both participants. Since even the low ends of the confidence interval represent a large enough difference to be considered important, there is a difference between condition means for both total and IBRB scores and the difference is large enough to be scientifically relevant.

3.5.3. Pre-test and post-test scores

To analyse the scores of pre- and post-tests the means of the three scores of the baseline and the scores of the post-test were compared. The results are shown in Table N5.

Table 5.. Pre-test and post-test scores

	JTS	KTS	JIB	JRB	KIB	KRB
Pre-test	7.9	8.9	3.1	4.7	2.7	6.3
Post-test	1.4	2.3	0.7	0.6	1	1.3

The results show that the error scores for the post-test are lower than the mean error score for the pre-test.

3.5.4. Qualitative analysis

Also qualitative analysis of the written texts of one of the participants was undertaken. It consisted of examining the changes (or their absence) of each type of errors through all the thirteen texts with the three texts of the phase "A" taken as one. The purpose of the analysis was to discover a pattern of evolution of non target-like items into target-like items, and also to find out whether there is a difference in reacting to recasts between rule-based errors and item-based errors. The data was organised in two ways:

1) A number of each type of error for every text was entered in the EXCEL spreadsheet,

1) Examples of each coded type of errors were organised in the EXCEL spreadsheet, thus allowing to follow the progress of the erroneous item from text to text providing it was used by the participant after it had been recasted.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the results is structured according to the research questions that guided the study.

4.1. Do Focused Recasts Encourage Learners to Attend to Form and Increase Accuracy?

The analysis of the obtained data showed considerable decrease in the level of errors after the beginning of treatment. It does contradict to the Truscott conclusion about inefficiency of written corrective feedback or even its harmful influence. The error level drops sufficiently after the texts written in A phase were examined by the researcher, returned to the participants containing recasts, and reviewed by the participants.

There are two possible explanations for this phenomenon:

1) Learning occurred after Texts N1-2 with the included recasted erroneous items texts were reviewed by the participants,

2) Or, which is more probable, written feedback increased sufficiently attention of the participants.

Here it feels appropriate to raise the question of errors and mistakes. Although in the study there was no distinction made between the two phenomena, after the results of the baseline and treatment phases were analysed, the question was brought up how errors could be eliminated or decreased with the level of attention raised. It is obvious that attention to a certain language phenomenon can occur only when there is knowledge about the phenomenon. In other words, when a learner is about to use a phenomenon that he knows is a part of the language system, he can retrieve some information about the phenomenon either from his memory or from external sources and use this information for utterance construction. Whereas if there is no knowledge about the phenomenon at all, an increased level of attention cannot possibly help to increase accuracy in constriction an utterance containing this phenomenon.

So it is suggested that the drop of error level immediately after the phase "A" (error here is as it is operationalised in the study, i.e. error=mistake) actually indicated the decrease in a number of mistakes (as opposed to errors) due to the increased attention of the participants to form.

In the phase "B" the direction of the trend lines for all the data sets indicates decline, showing a steady increase in accuracy for both participants for total scores as well as for IB and RB scores. With the increase of accuracy we can also observe a decrease in stability of the performance.

Table 6. Coefficient of variation in the baseline and treatment

	Phase A	Phase B
Participant J	CV=0.03	CV=0.34
Participant K	CV=0.03	CV=0.28

In the treatment the error scores of the participants were not stably reducing from session to session, though the trend lines were generally downtrends.

Several factors can be hold accountable for the increase of variability:

1) A given topic for the assignment can affect the language choice (more complex or more simple language is chosen for a text). Descriptions for example can involve usage of simple tenses and structures, while event accounts usually demand more elaborate tense choice, and in narrations learners may tend to use quite sophisticated structures. Thus the possibility of error is different for different types of text.

Since the participants of the study were not instructed precisely about what they were expected to write, and only general outlines were given to them to define the topic, they felt free to choose any type of text they wished. This was done on purpose to insure that the learner's personal interest in what they wrote about was maintained at a high level during the study.

2) Some learner-oriented variables can be at play, such as tiredness, low concentration, low mood, etc.

The analysis of the pre- and post-test scores revealed a sufficient improvement in accuracy for both participants (see Table N5, Chapter 3.5.3). Total error score for participant J. reduced from the mean 7.9 for the pre-test to 1.4 for the post-test. Total error score for participant K. reduced from the mean 8.9 for the pre-test to 2.4 for the post-test.

On the whole, the obtained results allow for a definite "yes" as the answer to the first research question. As a result of corrective feedback in the form of focused recasts the participants showed significant decrease in the number of errors right after the treatment was implemented, and the decreasing tendency was maintained through the whole treatment phase up to last session (the post-test).

4.2. Are Some Types of Errors More Affected by Focused Recasts Than Others?

Ferris (2002) argues that if a grammatical feature is clearly rule-based, it is more treatable than when a feature is item-based.

To examine this assumption the data were analysed in terms of rule-based and item-based errors.

As it is shown in Table N 4, for both participants the error level of both IB and RB errors drops sufficiently in the phase "B". But the mean of (A-B) IB errors is less than the mean of (A-B) for RB errors (JIB 1.9000, JRB 2.7000; KIB 1.140, KRB 3.350). The conclusion can be drawn that RB errors *are* more treatable than IB errors as Ferris and a few other researchers argue (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005).

Indeed, the numerical data obtained in the present study show how differently IB and RB errors reacted to treatment. As an example let us compare a number of certain errors in the pre-test and in the post-test. The errors taken for example are the same errors that Bitchener et al. (2005) targeted in their study, that confirmed Ferris's conclusion (2002) about treatable RB and untreatable IB errors: prepositions (IB), articles (RB; *zero*, *a* and *the* articles were targeted in the present study) and tense (RB; in the present study all tenses were targeted).

Table 7. Pre-test - post-test number of errors in articles, prepositions and tenses. Participant K.

	Mean number of errors of in the pre-test	Number of errors in the post-test
A	28.6	5
P	9.6	4
T	7.6	1

The fall in the number of errors in articles and tenses is indeed more dramatic than the fall in the number of erroneous prepositions. But there is one question to be considered. While there is no doubt that the five erroneous articles and one erroneous tense in the post-test are the same errors of articles and tenses made in the pre-test (errors that were repeated during the whole study, because there is a limited number of rules that one can violate using tenses or articles), and it is just a number of occurrences of these errors that has actually come down, we cannot be so sure with prepositions. Are the erroneous prepositions in the post-test the same that were in the pre-test? The same question can be asked for other IB errors: wrong words, set phrases, spelling. There are no definite rules to follow with IB features. While we can take an RB feature as a sum of several phenomenon that makes a system (e.g articles = definite article + indefinite article + zero article), there is no system in set phrases or such errors as *wrong word*, and even prepositions are minimally systematic in English. So we cannot take them as a sum of phenomenon; each wrong word, or set phrase or usage of a preposition should be considered separately.

The qualitative analysis of the texts revealed the following:

1) With RB features the smaller the system of the feature is the more treatable the errors are.

Table 8. WS error (RB). Participant K.

Text	Example	
Baseline	There was fresh, calmly. There was fun. There is so sunny in the room.	Non target-like usage
N7	But here is not very cold. In spring there is not much dirtily. In summer there is not stuffy.	Non target-like usage
Test	There it was windy and about 23 degrees. There it was not crowded on the beach. Sometimes it was very hot...	Near target-like usage Target-like usage

As it is shown in the table, the target-like usage of the structure in question appears only in the last session, but it is still accompanied with the two examples of near target-like usage. The shift to the target-like usage is obvious, but it is still not complete. The system of this language feature is not very simple, it consists of the subject *it* as an empty word, dummy, which is necessary to maintain the strict word order of the English language, plus there is a clear interference of the structure *There + to be.* So what we can observe here is a separation of the

two confused structures and building two separate feature systems. Also both present a definite degree of difficulty due to partial overlapping with the L1.

When a feature system is simpler, and there is a direct correlation with the L1, the shift to the target-like usage can take less number of sessions, as it was the case with participles and indefinite pronouns in negative sentences in the study.

Table 9. Present and past participles as adjectives (RB). Participant K.

Text	Example	
Baseline	She and her mother looked like soldiers: no moving, no emotions, white skin, big scaring eyes	Non target-like usage
N5	Birds, some animals walked there. So scared and charmed.	Non target-like usage
N11	She has a very- very **scared** view.	Target-like usage
Test	The most **exciting** thing in my trip was the whole trip from the first day till the last one. But on the other hand I had the most **boring** thing - 3 hours by plane. But on the other hand I was **scared** a little bit. I was not scared at all.	Target-like usage

Also with simple features just one recast sometimes was enough to ensure the correct usage of the feature throughout the study. Indefinite pronouns in negative sentences were used correctly after the first recast. As it can be seen from the table, one recast had quite a long lasting effect on the feature.

Table 10. Indefinite pronouns (RB). Participant K.

Text	Example	
Baseline	She didn't care about her and never told something about her life.	Non target-like usage
N3	To look around and see nobody.	Target-like usage
N5	But I see nobody. I see nothing around.	Target-like usage
N6	I don't say that I understood nothing	Target-like usage
N8	I do nothing and some horrible thoughts ... stop me.	Target-like usage

Whereas articles and tenses for example constitute quite complex systems, and though the number of these types of error decreased sufficiently by the end of the study, the participants still made errors of these types.

2) With RB features a learner adds a new constraint to his hypothesis of the feature system construction after each recast and tests the hypothesis in the subsequent writing, thus building his knowledge of the system, providing the feature is used frequently in a set of subsequent writings.

Table 61. Modal verbs, possibility in the future (RB). Participant K.

Text	Example	
N4	Everyone can do it and I will able to do	Near target-like usage
N5	You are small yet and it will be able to be dangerous enough for you.	Non target-like usage
N6	If you are Russian it **might be** easier to understand your English speech	Target-like usage

3) If a recasted RB feature is not used in the subsequent writing, and the interval between the recast and the next time the feature is used is long, an error can be repeated in the same or slightly modified way, no matter whether the feature is simple or not.

Table 12. Participle clause (RB). Participant K.

Text	Example	
N5	Was walking through the forest the beam saw somebody. Was looking at their both the beam thought: "I'll always listen to my mum."	Non target-like usage
Test	Been walking through the St. Hilarion Castle I tried to imagine their life	Non target-like usage

4) Some features were observed to shift from target-like usage to a non target-like usage (U-shaped learning).

Table 13. Complex object. Participant K.

Text	Example	
N7	I don't want my children be woken up.	Near target-like usage
N8	I just want my big-big family be happy.	Near target-like usage
Test	**I want you to show us** a place in Cyprus where you can leave your guests on the whole day and just relax. I want the weather will be like before.	Target-like usage Non target-like usage

The pattern may be a part of the U-shaped learning, when an incorrect usage can happen with the feature that used to be used correctly.

5) If an RB feature constitutes a very complex system a learner can fail to uptake the recast at all, as it was the case with Conditional III and modal verbs to express past possibilities in the Paricipant K. texts. However, the more complex the system is, the longer it takes to incorporate it in a learner's interlanguage.

When there is no explicit grammar information provided, a learner leans onto his L1 knowledge to construct L2 grammar systems. Such grammatical features as Conditional III or modal verbs to express past possibilities cannot be paralled to the like features in the participants' L1 – Russian, because in Russian they are contextual features, not grammatical. Since there are no special grammatical markers for these features in Russian, it is extremely hard

for Russian-speaking EFL learners to understand their meaning and differ them from other modals and conditionals in the English language.

6) There is no definite pattern with IB errors in the analysed texts. Some IB errors were successfully corrected after they had been recasted, others not. The examples are given below in the tables NN14-15.

Table 14. Examples of corrected IB features. Participant K.

Text	Example	
N11	And policemen are looking for me. **It doesn't care**	Non target-like usage
Test	**I will not care** if I come back home without sunburn.	Target-like usage
Baseline	Our granny **divided** us many years ago.	Non target-like usage
N4	As a joke we **separated** our cats: a girl is my parent's own and a boy is mine (meaning - divided).	Non target-like usage
Test	I have **divided** my money approximately on 3 equal parts.	Target-like usage
Baseline	Before I had **said her**: "Just no tears!"	Non target-like usage
N3	Once one woman **said me:** "I was in Cyprus last year."	Non target-like usage
N8	He will not **say me** what should I do tomorrow.	Non target-like usage
Test	When I come back home I will **say to my family**	Target-like usage

Text	Example	
N10	I stood ahead him	Non target-like usage
N11	Oh, I see a skeleton in front of me.	Target-like usage
N3	You can marry on Cyprus only 3 days after your arrival there	Non target-like usage
Test	I want you to show us a place in Cyprus where you can leave your guests on the whole day and just relax.	Target-like usage
N5	I have flown on the Earth (direction)	Non target-like usage
N7	I go down the stairs to the kitchen	Target-like usage
N10	Almost every morning he goes to his work I went to the market...	Target-like usage
N4	He threw tile out from the window.	Non target-like usage
N7	I look at my big happy family through the window.	Target-like usage
N5	But at that time he wanted the same - to come back at home	Non target-like usage
Test	When I come back home...	Target-like usage

Text	Example	
Baseline	On the one side we liked her for doing nothing. But on the other side I understood that she didn't give us necessary knowledge. On the one hand it's my brother. On the other hand it's his wife (meaning, firstly... And secondly)	Non target-like usage
Test	The most exciting thing in my trip was the whole trip... But on the other hand I had the most boring thing - 3 hours by plane.	Target-like usage

Some IB errors were transferred to the next texts despite the recasts.

Table 15. Examples of IB errors that were used incorrectly in subsequent writings after they had been recasted. Participant K.

Text	Example	
Baseline	So pity!	Non target-like usage
N9	It's very pity	Non target-like usage
N9	But maybe **farther** this math tasks I would understand...	Non target-like usage
N11	I don't know what will be **farther...**	Non target-like usage

Some words that had been used incorrectly (*wrong word* type of error) and then recasted, were not used by the participants in the next texts, so it is impossible to say whether they were affected by the recast or not.

In general, the study clearly showed that both item-based and rule-based errors can be equally responsive to corrective written feedback in the form of recast. The degree of treatability of RB errors depends on the complexity of the system the treated feature makes. The simpler the feature system is, the more treatable the errors of this feature are. Thus, for example, demonstrative pronouns and copular *be* were successfully treated by recasts; articles and tenses, though sufficient improvement was observed through the study, were occasionally used incorrectly up to the end of the study; conditional III and modal verbs expressing possibility in the past were not used correctly after they had been recasted.

Item-based errors, since they are not part of a system, are more an issue of memorising. Once they are noticed by a learner, they are the subject of memorising. Sometimes they are successfully learned after the first recast, in other cases several recasts are needed for a feature to be memorised. Thus it is the frequency of use that can help improve the accuracy of IB features more than anything else.

4.3. How Do Learners Perceive Focused Recasts? What Is Their Attitude to Such Kind of Feedback?

Both participants were required to answer a set of questions to find out in what way they had used recasts and what their opinion about such kind of feedback was.

Participant J. revised her writings after receiving the text with recasts.

Participant K. looked through a text and recasts trying to memorise the recasted variants, then she did it again next day.

In the study both participants showed significant improvement in accuracy, so it was not of a great importance how exactly the participants had dealt with recasts. More probably, an important fact was that each participant was left free to find her own most suitable for her way to benefit from the feedback.

As to their attitude to the recasts, both participants expressed their wish to get explicit explanations alongside with the recasts, so that they could understand why a certain feature was used in a certain way. Such wish was particularly expressed about the rules of the language, i.e rule-based features.

CONCLUSION

The study attempted to investigate the effect of written focused recasts on accuracy of writing. The obtained results indicate the following:

Contrary to Truscott (1996) opinion, written corrective feedback in the form of recasts does help to improve accuracy. The results of the study revealed dramatic improvement in accuracy of both participants, which contradicts Truscott argument about useless or even harmful effect of corrective feedback.

Improvement in accuracy can happen after the first session already due to the simple increase of attention on the part of a learner, which eliminates mistakes made by neglect or carelessness. Sustained treatment can improve accuracy further, eliminating simple errors that are easy to systemise and helping to build knowledge about more complex systems.

Both item-based and rule-based features are treatable by recasts. This finding questions Ferris's classifications of errors as treatable and untreatable based on whether the erroneous features are rule-based or item-based. The qualitative analysis clearly showed the improvement of accuracy for both features. The way recasts affect them is different though. With RB features a learner follows a path of hypothesis testing, where after each recast a new boundary (rule) is added to the system, thus allowing a gradual construction of the system of rules for each RB features. Only too complex features such as Conditional III and modal verbs to express possibility in the past, failed to be effected by recasts in the study. Still we cannot conclude that

these features are untreatable. The difficulty of these features lie in their unique nature that cannot be compared to similar features in the participants' L1. It is not grammatical markers of these features that present difficulties for learners, it is the meaning that they convey (i.e. not HOW to use the features, but WHEN to use them). We suppose that more writing practice with corrective feedback in the form of recasts can help solve this predicament, on condition that the tasks are carefully designed to elicit the usage of the complex systems in question. A further longer study is needed to analyse how recasts could influence the acquisition of such complex feature systems, especially whether recasts are able to help learners single out the meaning that such systems convey.

IB features depend more on a learner's memorising ability, than systemising. Since IB features are usually simple in construction, it is their uniqueness that make them difficult. Recasts provide a necessary input (reactive by the nature of recasts), of what unique IB feature should be used in a definite context. As the study showed some IB errors could be corrected after the first recast, some took longer, some failed to be corrected. But the longer the treatment is, (i.e more reminders as to what is the correct IB item to use in the context are given to a learner) the higher possibility of memorising is. This assumption can be a foundation for a future research on IB features and corrective feedback.

In general attributing to IB and RB errors a different degree of treatability seems wrong. Both types of errors are treatable, but in different way.

Although recasts provide learners with target-like written language, learners can still lack explicit explanations, especially with the RB features, as the study showed. Our assumption is that explicit explanations could be of great value with feature systems construction, thus helping learners to understand a target-like usage of rule-based features, while with item-based features it is frequency of use that is of more importance. Here lies one more suggestion for a future research – to compare written recasts vs. written recasts plus explicit explanation, especially in the process of the acquisition of complex features.

The study has practical implications for teaching and learning processes.

Firstly, corrective feedback is a useful tool in EFL learning/teaching process.

Secondly, corrective written feedback in the form of focused recasts can be used by teachers who give writing instruction not only in internet-mediated learning/teaching

environment, but also in a traditional class setting providing students submit their written works via internet. The process of recasting using modern software is quick, which is an important factor for teachers often overloaded with a time-consuming job of correcting texts manually, and the recasts in the margins are easy for students to work with.

Also the recasts that a teacher leaves in the margin make a history of a learner's success or failure with a certain feature. It is easy to detect by looking through the marginal comments of several subsequent texts of a learner. It is also of help when considering individual conferencing with a learner to discuss his achievements.

Thirdly, contrary to Ferris's (2002) conclusion both IB and RB features are treatable and consequently should be treated by a teacher. There is no point in classifying errors into treatable and untreatable and leaving the latest without a teacher's attention.

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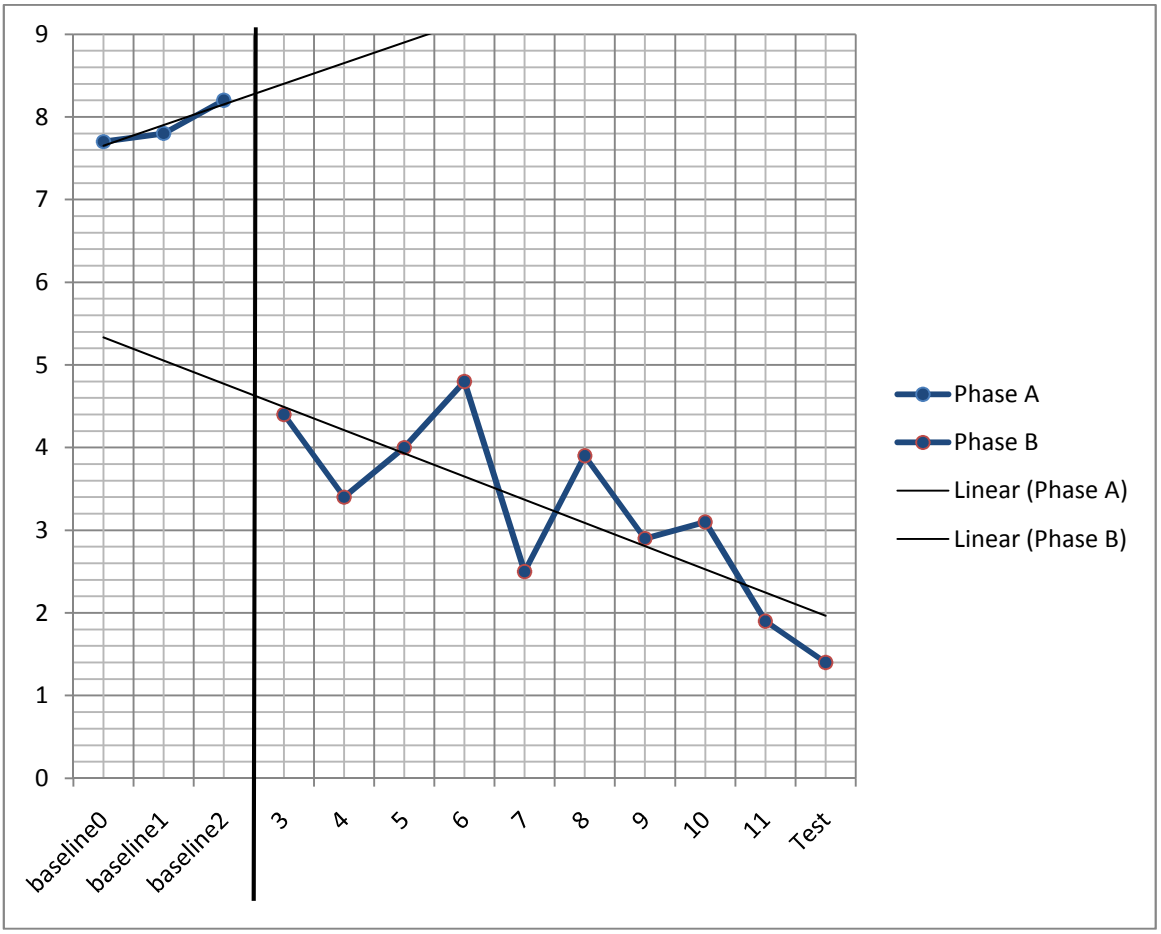
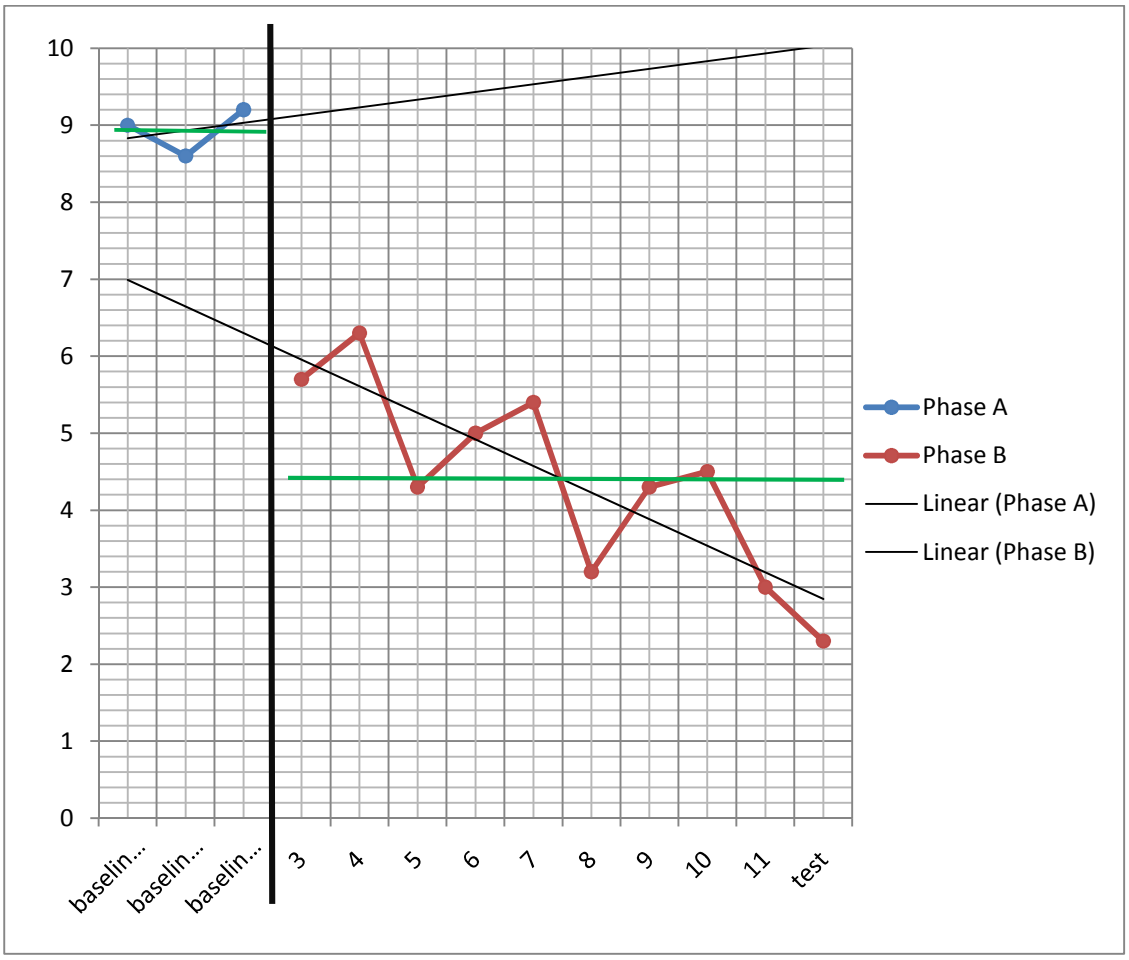
APPENDICES

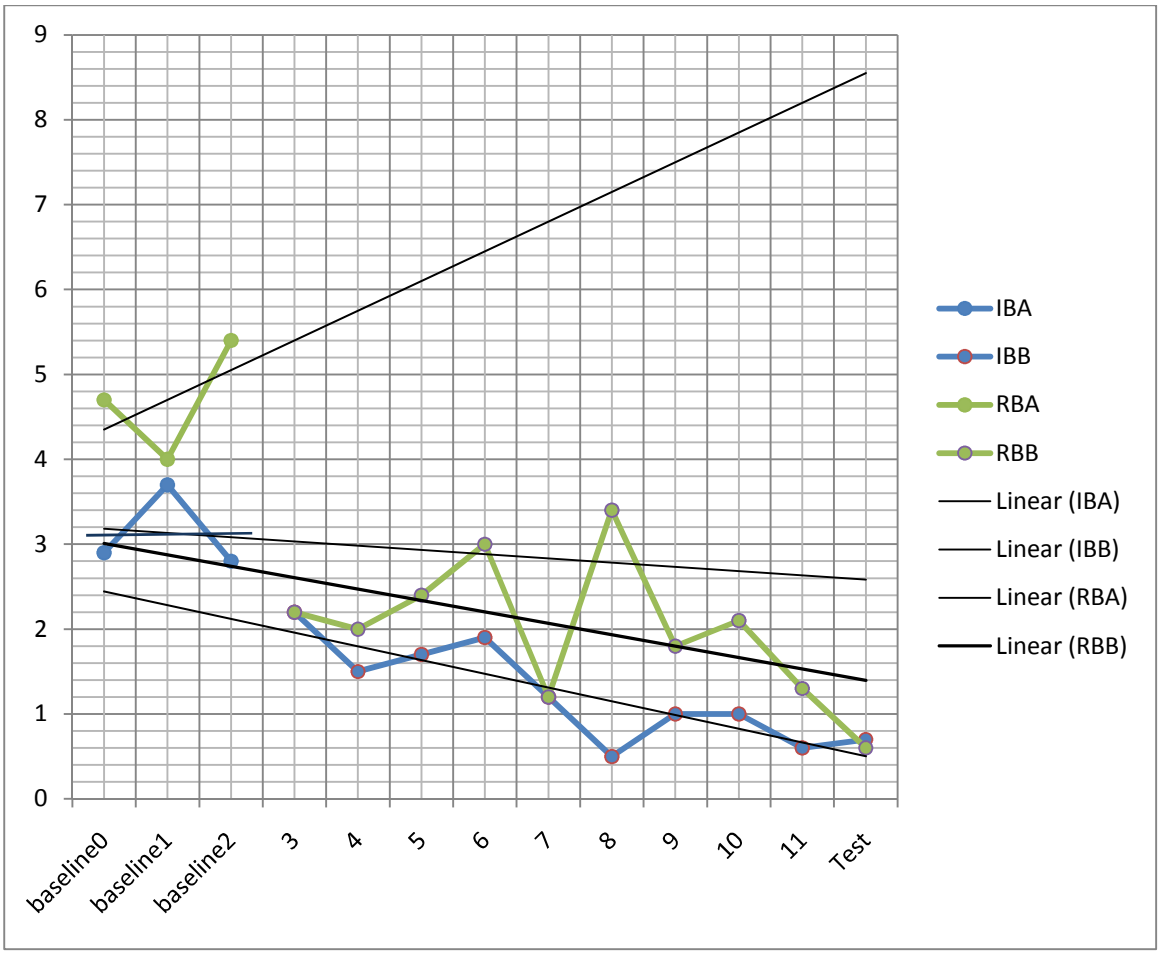
Total scores of errors. Participant J.



Total scores of errors. Participant K.



Item-based and rule-based error scores. Participant J.



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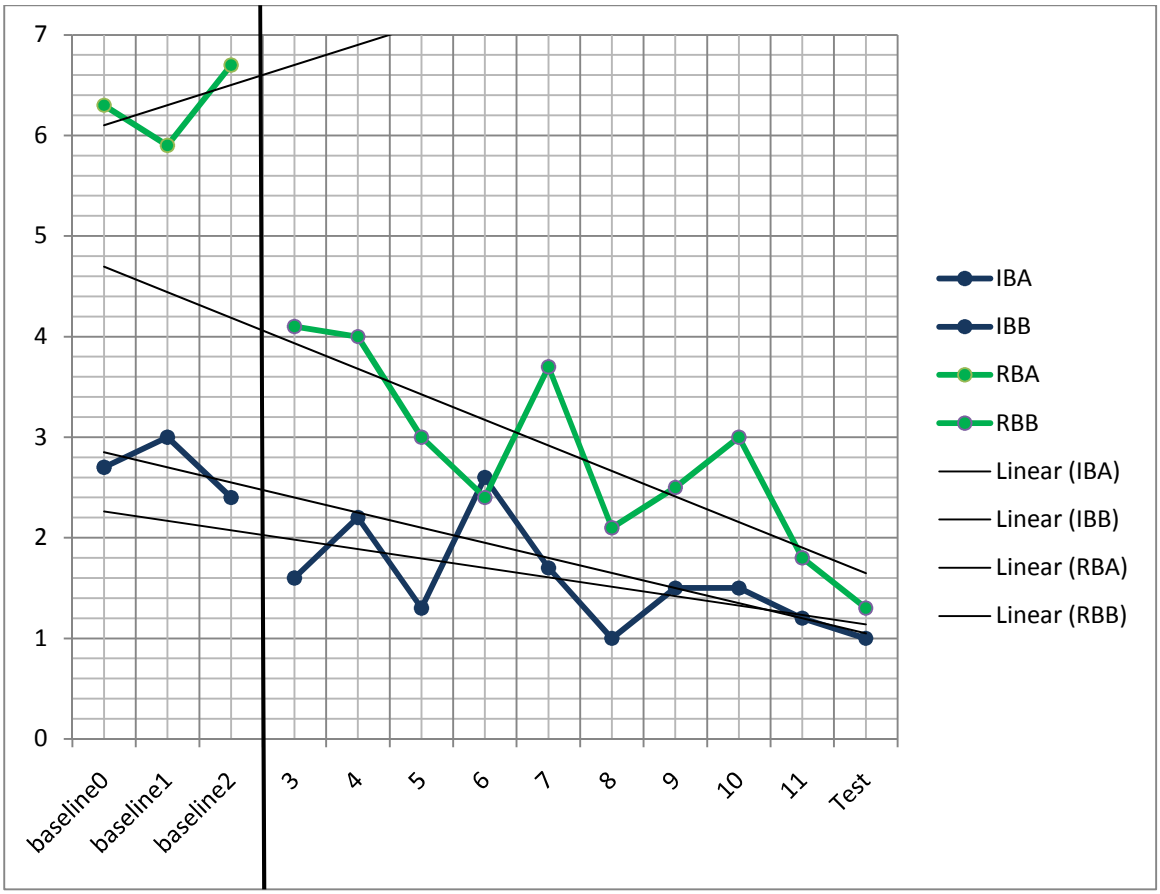
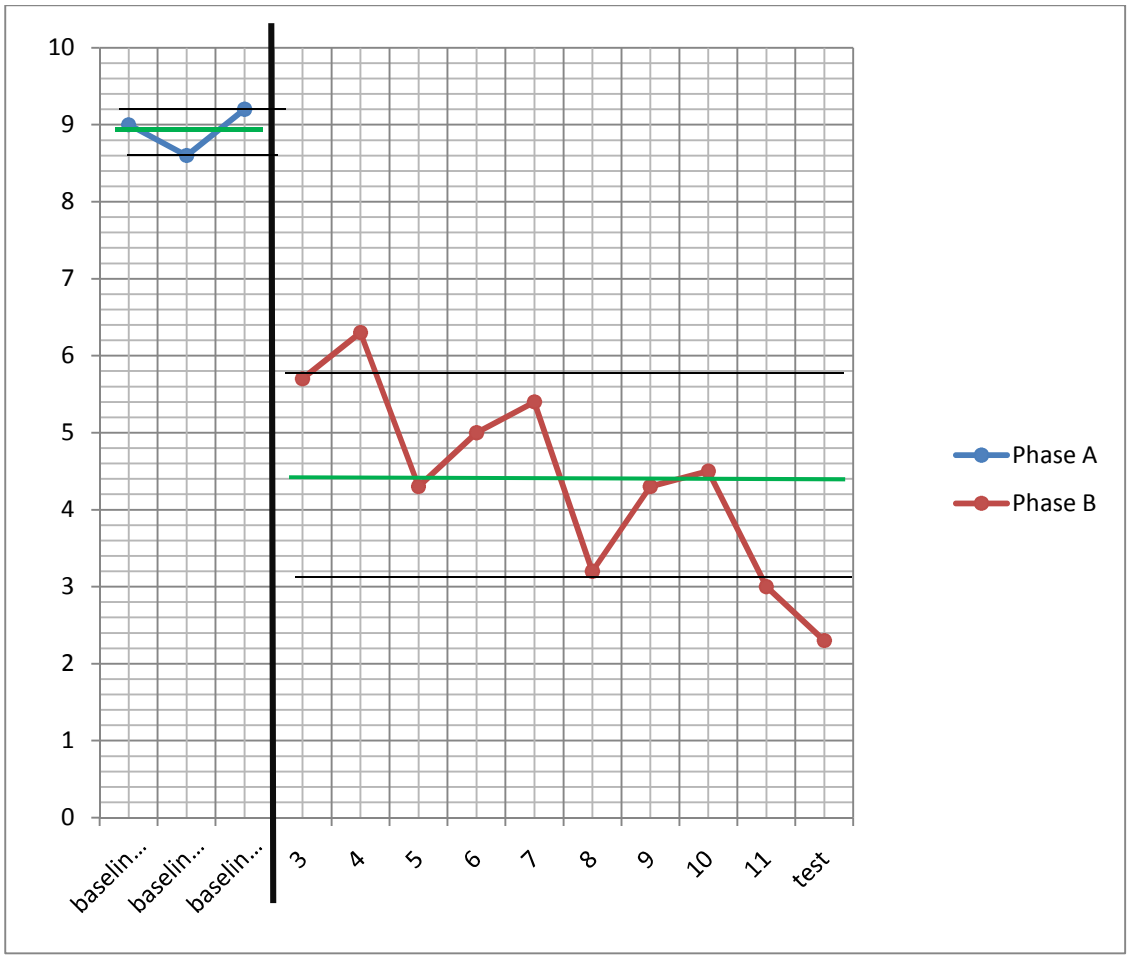


Data distribution. Participant K.



6. Data distribution. Participant J.