

## Recasts and Prompts in Dyadic Interaction: Explicitness of Feedback and Learner Proficiency

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The study investigated the effects of recasts and prompts on learning language forms that arose incidentally in dyadic interaction, focusing on the degree of explicitness of each type of feedback and learner proficiency levels. The data were collected from 64 beginning and upper-intermediate English learners of Korean. Thirty-one beginning learners were randomly assigned to a feedback group and to a control group, and thirty-three upper-intermediate learners were also assigned to a feedback group and to a control group. Each learner was paired with an English speaker and worked on a picture-sequencing task. The learners in the feedback groups received recasts or prompts on their erroneous utterances while the learners in the control groups did not. The effects of feedback were measured by pre-interaction picture descriptions and immediate and delayed post-interaction correction tasks. The study found that both recasts and prompts had some effects on learning the targeted forms, and more explicit forms of each feedback resulted in a higher rate of correction. The beginning learners took more advantages of recasts relative to the upper-intermediate learners, and explicit prompts worked better for the upper-intermediate learners. The effects of prompts sustained longer than recasts in both levels.

**Key words:** interactional feedback, recasts, prompts, explicitness of feedback, learner proficiency

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, interest in the effects of interactional feedback (IF) on second language (L2) learning has increased among L2 researchers (Kang, Sok, & Han, 2018; Loewen & Sato, 2018; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Nassaji, 2016). IF can be defined as feedback meant to resolve any problems occurring in communication. In L2 instruction, problems include not only pure communication breakdowns due to incomprehensibility of meaning

but also learner linguistic errors. The former is referred to as ‘negotiation for meaning,’ while the latter one is called ‘negotiation for form.’ Negotiation for meaning and/or form can be conducted implicitly or explicitly in various forms such as recasts, elicitations, and clarification requests. Various arguments have been made for the effectiveness of IF on L2 learning and many studies have dealt with this issue (Nassaji, 2015, 2016). Meta-analyses generally found IF facilitative in L2 learning (Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010). However, there are also mixed results: IF is valued differently depending on where and how it is offered to whom, and for what. More specifically, its contribution to L2 learning is constrained by contexts, feedback types and focus, learner individual differences, and types of errors (Nassaji, 2015).

The current study focused on how and whom. Past studies have compared the role played by diverse types of feedback in L2 learning such as recasts and prompts. While these studies were conducted to evaluate which type is more effective, the main purpose of the current study is not to compare their effectiveness alone. Rather, the current study investigated each type of feedback in depth in order to examine its effectiveness according to its degree of explicitness. So far, this issue has not been widely examined. In addition, the current study investigated whether or not learners would benefit differently from recasts and prompts according to their proficiency levels. Learner proficiency has been considered a crucial factor that can decide the amount of external linguistic information that learners can process (Li, 2014; Nassaji, 2015). Thus, it could be assumed that learners would take advantages of recasts and prompts differently according to their proficiency levels; furthermore, the degree of explicitness of the feedback would have differential effects on learners of different proficiency levels.

## **2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.1. Recasts and Prompts**

Among the different kinds of IF, recasts have received most attention from L2 researchers (Loewen & Sato, 2018; Mackey & Goo, 2007). A recast is an immediate reformulation of the learner’s erroneous utterance that corrects all or part of the learner’s utterance and is embedded in the ongoing discourse. Recasts are reported to be most frequently used as a corrective feedback (CF) in most instructional contexts, and its popularity may be attributed to the fact that it leads the learner to notice the difference between the incorrect form(s) in her initial utterance and the correct form(s) it delivered while her intended meaning remains. This creates optimal conditions for noticing the gap and form-meaning mapping, which are considered crucial in L2 learning (Long, 2007,

2015). In addition, it does not directly point out that the learner has made an error. It is provided as part of continuous discourse, and this unobtrusive nature well fits in meaning-oriented communication settings. Lyster (2007) also noted that recasts are valuable not only as a CF but also as a scaffolding tool “that enables learners to participate in interaction about subject matter that requires linguistic abilities exceeding their current developmental level” (p. 96). A recast provides not only negative evidence but also positive evidence (i.e., correct form); thus, it is classified as input-providing CF.

Research into recasts shows mixed results regarding their effectiveness on L2 learning. The studies which examined intensive recasts on a single structure in both one-on-one dyadic interaction and classroom interaction found recasts effective (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Egi, 2007; Kim, 2016). In these studies, recasts were provided in a way where they were salient enough to be noticed by learners. For example, in Doughty and Varela’s (1998) classroom-based study, an erroneous utterance was repeated with a rising tone followed by a recast, targeting only to past time reference (i.e., intensive recasts). In contrast, when recasts are provided in a non-salient manner such as targeting multiple errors (i.e., extensive recasts) and putting no emphasis on corrected parts, research found reduced effects or no effects of recasts (Sheen, 2010). In other words, the effectiveness of recasts has a strong association with their salience. This issue will be further discussed in the next section.

Recasts are often compared with output-prompting CF (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Nassaji, 2007; Yang & Lyster, 2010). Output-prompting CF refers to a type of feedback that initiates learner output, and it includes metalinguistic feedback, repetitions, elicitations, and clarification requests. Output-prompting CF does not provide positive evidence, but it gives a learner negative evidence by signaling that what she has said is non-target-like and/or not understood. Furthermore, output-prompting CF provides the learner with the opportunities to restate what she has just said one more time. It is claimed that this opportunity forces the learner to monitor the correctness of her initial utterance and to attempt to make it more accurate and clearer, and this process consequently facilitates L2 learning (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Yang & Lyster, 2010).

Some of the studies which preferred output-prompting CF over recasts claimed that recasts are most frequently used, but they elicit the least amount of learner uptake (i.e., immediate responses following CF) since recasts are often misinterpreted as a confirmation check not as correction (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2012). In addition, it has been argued that even in the case where recasts elicit learner uptake, learner uptake following recasts is different from one following output-prompting CF: learner uptake after recasts could be a mere repetition of the teacher’s recast; however, output-prompting CF requires the learner to construct a better or more accurate utterance on their own and this entails a deeper processing. Furthermore, some experimental studies which compared recasts with output-

prompting CF in terms of their effectiveness on L2 learning showed that learners benefited more from output-prompting CF. For instance, Ammar and Spada (2006) investigated the role of recasts and prompts in French speakers' development on English third-person possessive determiners (i.e., his/her). It was found that recasts and prompts were both effective, but prompts were more beneficial than recasts. A similar finding was reported in Yang and Lyster (2010) that examined Chinese learners' development of regular and irregular English past tense.

Output-prompting CF takes diverse forms and the level of its explicitness differs, and this will be further discussed in the following section. However, previous research did not distinguish between them even though the matter of explicitness of CF has long been an issue of discussion in L2 learning and teaching. In this regard, it is important to probe into whether or not the degree of explicitness of output-prompting CF has an impact on its effectiveness in L2 learning.

## 2.2. Explicitness of CF

The relative effects of implicit and explicit CF on L2 learning have long been discussed (Ellis, 2005, 2009; Schmidt, 2001). Those who argue for explicit CF claim that implicit CF is less effective than explicit CF in drawing learners' attention to their errors and that it often confuses them as to whether or not they are being corrected (Carroll, 2000). By contrast, researchers also agree that explicit CF may interrupt learners' effective form-meaning mapping (Doughty, 2001). Previous research that compared explicit CF and implicit CF found mixed results, but meta-analyses of previous studies summarize the results as follows: both types of CF are facilitative in L2 learning, but explicit CF had a stronger immediate impact than implicit CF while the effectiveness of implicit CF was better maintained than explicit CF (Kang et al., 2018; Li, 2010). Nevertheless, the relative effect of implicit and explicit CF remains a thorny question. Reaching a conclusion is not feasible considering that many variants could affect its effectiveness (Nassaji, 2015). More to the point, it is necessary to reconsider naming CF as either implicit or explicit CF since the degree of explicitness within one type of CF could differ depending on how it is provided. From this point forward, the discussion will be focused on how the level of explicitness of recasts and prompts can vary according to how they are provided.

A recast is generally considered as a type of implicit CF, but the degree of its explicitness varies depending on how it is provided. Consider the following examples from Kim and Han (2007):

### *Example 1*

Student (S): I was not adventurous of food.

Teacher (T): I was not adventurous with food.

Student (S): Adventurous with food.

(Kim & Han, 2007, p. 283)

*Example 2*

S: It means that I am not familiar about the Jazz?

T: No, it does not mean you're not familiar with Jazz. It means you're familiar with Jazz, but you don't like it. You tried that, but you don't like it.

S: Oh, I see

(Kim & Han, 2007, p. 281)

In Example 1, a recast is offered in declarative form without adding any information after the recast. In Example 2, by contrast, the teacher provides additional information by incorporating the correct reformulation of the student's ill-formed utterance. Compared to the recast used in Example 2, the recast in Example 1 is clearer and more explicit because it lets the student know that she made an error. In Example 2, the recast is offered with additional information without giving the student an opportunity to respond to the recast. In this form, the recast can easily go unnoticed as correction and can be taken as a mere response to the meaning. As these two examples show, the explicitness of recasts can be determined by how they are provided, and this can be related to whether or not and to what extent students recognize the difference between their initial ill-formed utterances and correct utterances delivered in recasts.

Prompts also differ in the degree of explicitness. Consider the following examples from the current study:

*Example 3*

S: I have eye ache.

T: Excuse me. What did you say?

S: You know... Pain.

*Example 4*

S: She saw him, and she follow him.

T: The past tense, you need the past tense here.

S: Oh, yes. She followed him.

Example 4 is more explicit since it indicates that the student made an error by providing the information that the verb should be used in the past tense, and the student corrects it after that. In contrast, in Example 3, the teacher uses a simple clarification request, and this

is easily understood as a clarification of meaning not as a correction to forms.

The degree of explicitness of recasts and prompts differs according to how they are offered. However, there is little research that takes this point into account. Nassaji's (2009) study is one of the few studies which differentiates the different degree of explicitness in elicitations and recasts<sup>1</sup>. The study reported that the more explicit forms of each feedback type contributed to the learning of corrected forms, and the effects of explicitness were more noticeable for recasts than elicitations. The current study investigated the same issue Nassaji's (2009) study examined; however, one crucial factor that could influence the effects of CF was added, learner proficiency levels, and it will be discussed in the following section.

### 2.3. Learner Proficiency and CF

One of the issues that needs more investigation in CF research is the selection of the appropriate correction strategy for learners at different L2 levels (Li, 2014; Nassaji, 2015). Some of the studies which examined learners' preferences for CF showed that beginning learners preferred direct/explicit correction while more proficient learners favored more elicitative types of feedback that required self-correction (Kaivanpanah, Alavi, & Sepehrinia, 2015; Yang, 2016).

Some studies investigated the role of recast and prompts according to proficiency levels. For instance, Ammar and Spada (2006) examined the benefits of recasts and prompts for learners of different proficiency level in the development of third-person possessive determiners *his* and *her*. Results showed that both types of feedback were effective; however, high-proficiency learners benefited equally from both prompts and recasts, whereas low-proficiency learners benefited significantly more from prompts than recasts. Li (2014) compared recasts with metalinguistic feedback in the development of low and high proficiency groups. The study focused on learning two Chinese forms, classifiers and the perfective *-le*. Li found that recasts benefited the high-level but not low-level learners in the development of the perfective *-le*. With respect to classifiers, recasts were effective for both proficiency levels. Metalinguistic feedback was more effective for low-level learners, but both recasts and metalinguistic feedback were equally effective for high-level learners.

As the aforementioned studies show, learner proficiency level is an important factor that could affect the effectiveness of implicit and explicit CF. However, in most previous studies, the degree of explicitness of recasts and prompts was not thoroughly distinguished

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<sup>1</sup> Nassaji (2009) uses the terms elicitations as a corresponding term for prompts.

even though it can vary depending on how they are actually provided. In addition, in the studies, CF only targeted one or two preselected language forms. Unlike previous studies, in the current study, the effectiveness of CF for learners with different proficiency levels was explored considering the degree of explicitness of recasts and prompts when they were provided for a range of errors. The following research questions were examined.

1. What are the effects of recasts and prompts on learning the corrected forms during interaction? And, what role does learner proficiency play in learning through recasts and prompts?
2. What are the effects of the degree of explicitness of recasts and prompts on learning the corrected form during interaction? And, what is the relationship between the explicitness of feedback and learner proficiency levels?

The current study examined unplanned and extensive IF: there was no preselected targeted form. This decision was made based on the fact that, in the intact classroom, the teacher's feedback does not target one type of error. Feedback is provided to a range of errors. One of the problems L2 researchers face when a target form is not preselected is that it is difficult to measure the effects of feedback on L2 development. There have been some attempts to resolve this challenge (Nassaji, 2016). Nassaji (2009) employed a written pre-interaction description component and immediate/delayed post-interaction error correction components to measure the effectiveness of incidental feedback. The current study adopted Nassaji's method as a means of measuring the effectiveness of IF, and a more detailed explanation regarding this issue will be discussed in the following section.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The data were collected from an English language program affiliated with a university in Korea. The program uses an in-house language placement test (oral interview test) to group students into proficiency levels (from level 1 to level 6). The program aims to develop communicative skills through practicing every day English. A total of sixty-four learners (39 females and 25 males) enrolled in the program participated in the study. They had various educational backgrounds with different college majors (e.g., economics, chemical engineering, English literature etc.) and four of them had lived in English-speaking countries for short periods of time (2 to 6 months). The students were all adults, ranging in age from 19 to 32 years ( $M = 24.5$ ). Their participation in the current study was voluntary.

Thirty-one learners were from beginning classes (level 2) and thirty-three learners were from upper-intermediate classes (level 4) (see Appendix A). Four native-speaker English teachers also participated in the current study. The participating teachers were three male and one female English teachers. All of them held an MA degree in TESOL or Applied Linguistics and had more than five years of experience teaching English in Korea.

### 3.2. Overall Procedures

The student participants were informed that the current study aimed to investigate the interaction between a native speaker and a non-native speaker in language learning. Thirty-one beginning learners were randomly assigned to a feedback group ( $n = 21$ ) and to a control group ( $n = 10$ ), and thirty-three learners were also randomly assigned to a feedback group ( $n = 22$ ) and to a control group ( $n = 11$ ). Each learner was paired with one of the teachers, and they engaged in a picture-sequencing task (see Appendix B).

Prior to the interaction with the teacher, each learner was given nine separate pictures and each one depicted a particular scene. A learner was asked to sequence the pictures to make a story and to provide a written description of the pictures. There was no time constraint for this task, and it took an average of 14.54 minutes. After the learner completed the written description, the description was collected. Immediately after, the learner participated in a dyadic interaction with a conversational partner who had nine identical pictures with the learner had in addition to two other pictures. The learner was again given the same pictures as the ones she had in the writing stage and was advised to arrange the pictures in the same order and to make oral descriptions as close as possible to her written descriptions. As the learner provided the oral descriptions, her partner arranged the pictures according to the descriptions. In doing so, the partner in the feedback group used IF to communicate with the learner, whereas the partner in the control group responded only by saying "Okay." The teachers were familiar with various types of IF and they received a brief training from the researcher before the study. In the session, they were told that the options for the type of feedback were open, but they were encouraged to use recasts and/or prompts, not direct error correction. They could use whichever recasts or prompts they considered to be appropriate during their interaction. Each dyadic interaction session in the feedback group took 18.75 minutes on average and the interaction in the control group took 11.09 minutes on average. All interactions were recorded and transcribed.

Right after completing the interaction, the learner in the feedback group received the written description she made and was asked to review it and make any changes or corrections possible based on any feedback offered during the interaction. The learner in the control group was also given back her original written description and asked to correct



any possible errors and make any changes in the description. Each learner spent as much time as she needed to complete the correction task. The average time the feedback group took for this was 9.37 minutes and the average time the control group used was 8.63 minutes.

Two weeks later, individual learners from both the feedback and control groups received the original written description they wrote before the interaction. This time, the description was typed. The learner was advised to review it and correct any errors or make any changes. There were no time limits: the average time for the task was 8.46 minutes in the feedback group, and 7.98 minutes in the control group (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1**  
**Overall Procedures**

Session	Step	Feedback Group	Control Group
1	1	Picture-ordering/Writing descriptions	
	2	Dyadic Interaction (+) IF	Dyadic Interaction (-) IF
	3	Review and self-correction	
2 (2 weeks later)	1	Review and self-correction	

### 3.3. Measurement

Following Nassaji (2009), the current study employed a written pre-interaction scenario description component and an immediate/delayed post-interaction error correction component in order to measure the effects of IF on learning the corrected forms during interaction. This method was used in an attempt to obtain pretest-posttest data about the effectiveness of incidental, unplanned, and extensive feedback. A written pre-interaction description served as a pretest: it was intended to provide a measure of the learner's prior use of the forms targeted during interaction. It could also minimize the chances that errors were "random oral production mistakes of known forms" (Nassaji, 2009, p. 427) since the learner was given an opportunity to write the description of the pictures before the oral description. The immediate and delayed post-interaction error correction components were intended to measure the learner's ability to successfully correct the forms that received feedback during interaction, which showed the effectiveness of IF. They served immediate/delayed posttests. In Nassaji (2009), a control group was not included; thus, someone might suggest that the learner's correction after interaction might be partly attributed to task repetition and familiarity since the same pictures and descriptions were used repeatedly. In order to offset this potential problem, the current study included the control groups which carried out the same tasks as the feedback groups without recasts and/or prompts during interaction.

### 3.4. Coding and Analysis

#### 3.4.1. Interaction data

First, the transcriptions of the dyadic interaction were examined for the learners' errors as well as the types of feedback strategies in response to these errors. The types of feedback strategies were first classified into three types: recasts, prompts, and others. Adopting Nassaji's (2007) taxonomy<sup>2</sup>, recasts were categorized into five types and prompts were classified into four types. After coding the type of recasts and prompts, they were further categorized as more explicit or implicit based on whether the corrective intention was easily detected or not.

##### Recasts

*Isolated recasts – emphasis*: The feedback isolated the error and reformulated it without a stress and with a falling intonation.

S: The chair go up, very high.  
T: Goes up.  
S: Goes up.

*Isolated recasts + emphasis*: The feedback isolated the error and reformulated it with a rising intonation and/or added stress.

S: He is shooting the balloons, but he is missing the gun.  
T: **Dropping** the gun?  
S: Yes, dropping the gun.

*Embedded recasts – emphasis*: The feedback reformulated the error with a falling intonation within the context without adding stress on the corrected form.

S: He wants to airplane, but he is poor.  
T: He wants to have an airplane.

*Embedded recasts + emphasis*: The feedback reformulated the error within the context

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<sup>2</sup> Because some types of recasts and prompts defined by Nassaji (2007) were not provided in the current study, the classification of the feedback employed in the current study was a modified version of Nassaji's taxonomy.

with a rising intonation and/or added stress.

S: He is flying, and he can see house and tree.

T: He can see houses and trees below?

S: Yes, beautiful.

*Recasts + expansion:* The feedback reformulated the erroneous utterance but at the same time expanded on it by adding new information.

S: He is too high, and he is afraid.

T: He goes up too high. Are airplanes flying under him?

S: Yes.

Among the five types of recasts, the first two were considered more explicit than the other three because they were provided in an isolated context. Embedded recasts are often interpreted as confirmation checks of the content (Sheen & Ellis 2011), and this tends to obscure the corrective intention of recasts.

### Prompts

*Unmarked elicitation:* The feedback elicited a reformulation without indicating the error or indicating any reference to the error (e.g., simple clarification requests and repetition without stress on the corrected part).

S: He makes many balloons in full.

T: Excuse me? What did you say?

*Repetition:* The feedback elicited a reformulation marking the error by repeating the uncorrected part with a rising intonation.

S: Unfortunately, he dropped the gun, so he cannot shoot balloons any more.

T: He **cannot** shoot?

*Metalinguistic information:* The feedback elicited a response by providing metalinguistic comments and/or information.

S: He flied too high, and he feel afraid.

T: Your verb tense?

*Marked elicitation + metalinguistic comments:* The feedback elicited a reformulation by marking or repeating the error with a rising intonation and with additional more explicit metalinguistic comments that explicitly indicated that the learner made the error.

S: He says “Help, help” but nobody cannot hear him.

T: Nobody cannot? Are you sure? Double negative?

Among the four types of prompts, the first two were considered more implicit than the other two because they could be interpreted as pure confirmation checks or clarification requests. In contrast, metalinguistic comments offered with the other two types of prompts clearly show the corrective intention of prompts.

### 3.4.2. Pre-interaction and post-interaction data

The data from pre/post interaction error corrections were used to measure the effect of CF on learners’ subsequent ability to recognize and correct the targeted forms that were in common between the pre-interaction written description and during-interaction oral description. First, the learners’ pre-interaction descriptions were examined to identify the errors. Then, the errors were compared to the errors occurring during oral interaction to identify errors in common. After the errors in common were identified, the interaction data were reexamined to find out whether the errors in common had been corrected by CF, and if so, what kind of CF had been provided. Thereafter, the learners’ post-interaction error corrections (both immediate and delayed corrections) were examined to find out whether the learners were able to identify and successfully correct the common errors, which occurred before the interaction and also occurred and receive CF during the interaction.

In order to decide the degree of correction in the post-interaction tasks, the learners’ corrections were coded as three types: complete correction, partial correction, and no correction. Complete correction is when the learner identified the error and made a successful correction; partial correction is when the learner identified the error and modified the corrected part without resulting in successful correction; no correction is when the learner did not identify or identified but did not make any modifications. The case where the learner identified and/or modified an error that had not been the target of CF during the interaction was excluded from the data analysis.

#### *Examples of analysis*

##### Learner’s pre-interaction description

“He is shooting, but unfortunately, he is missing the gun” (error: missing/  
error type: lexical)

Learner's during-interaction description

He is shooting the balloons, but he is missing the gun.

Teacher feedback

**Dropping** the gun? (Feedback: Isolated + emphasis)

Learner's post-interaction correction

“He is shooting, but unfortunately, he is ~~missing~~ the gun” (dropping)  
(correction: complete correction)

One-third of the total data were coded by an independent rater. There was an 88% of agreement for the interaction data, and a 93% of agreement for pre/post interaction data.

#### 4. RESULTS

The errors that received recasts or prompts were identified first, and they were compared to the errors the learners had made in the pre-interaction task. Only the errors that occurred in both cases were considered for the study. In the beginning group, among a total of 167 that received CF, 133 cases fit this category, and in the upper-intermediate group, out of 128 errors corrected by CF, 99 instances were suitable. In the beginning control group, the number of errors that occurred in both pre-interaction descriptions and interaction was 79, and in the high-intermediate control group, the number was 52.

The first research question examined the effects of recasts and prompts on the correction of the targeted forms during interaction. To answer this question, the learners' performance on the immediate post-interaction correction task was examined. Table 2 shows the result from the beginning group (BG). Overall, the learners successfully corrected 47 (35.34%) of the nontargetlike forms for which they received either recasts or prompts. Out of these, they corrected 44.19% of the errors that had received recasts (called recast errors henceforth) and 19.15% of errors that had received prompts (called prompt errors henceforth). The learners were more likely to successfully correct the recast errors than prompt errors. In the case of the upper-intermediate group (UIG) (see Table 2), the learners successfully corrected 51 (51.52%) nontargetlike forms for which either recasts or prompts had been provided during interaction. Of these, like the BG, they were more likely to successfully correct recast errors (56.90%) than prompt errors (43.90%).

When the comparison was made between the levels, the UIG showed more successful correction in terms of the rate of successful correction (35.34%: 51.52%). Although both groups more successfully corrected recast errors than prompt errors, the gap between the

correction rate occurring after feedback in each of the two groups differed. The BG made

**TABLE 2**  
**Immediate Post-Interaction Effects of Recasts and Prompts**

	Beginning Group (BG)						Upper-Intermediate Group (UIG)					
	Recasts		Prompts		Total		Recasts		Prompts		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
CC	38	44.19	9	19.15	47	35.34	33	56.90	18	43.90	51	51.52
PC	9	10.46	10	21.28	19	14.29	8	13.79	7	17.07	15	15.15
NC	39	45.35	28	59.57	67	50.37	17	29.31	16	39.03	33	33.33
Total	86	100	47	100	133	100	58	100	41	100	99	100

*Note.* CC = complete correction; PC = partial correction; NC = no correction

far more complete corrections of recast errors than prompt errors (44.19% for recasts; 19.15% for prompts) while the UIG showed relatively less differences between the feedback types (56.90% for recasts; 43.90% for prompts).

Further analyses were conducted to examine whether or not the effects of feedback were sustained over time. Table 3 shows the result from the delayed post-interaction effects of recasts and prompts in the BG. Overall, both recasts and prompts led to 21.80% of complete correction in the delayed correction task. The learners successfully corrected recast errors 25.58% of the time and prompt errors 14.89% of the time. When these correction rates were compared with the ones in the immediate correction task (Table 2), the correction rates decreased in both types of feedback. However, the rate of decrease was higher for recasts than for prompts: the correction rate in recast errors decreased from 44.19% to 25.58% (-18.61%) and the correction rate in prompt errors decreased from 19.15% to 14.89% (-4.26%).

**TABLE 3**  
**Delayed Post-Interaction Effects of Recasts and Prompts**

	Beginning Group (BG)						Upper-Intermediate Group (UIG)					
	Recasts		Prompts		Total		Recasts		Prompts		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
CC	22	25.58	7	14.89	29	21.80	25	43.10	16	39.02	41	41.41
PC	9	10.47	7	14.89	16	12.03	9	15.52	6	14.64	15	15.15
NC	55	63.95	33	70.22	88	66.17	24	41.38	19	46.34	43	43.44
Total	86	100	47	100	133	100	58	100	41	100	99	100

*Note.* CC = complete correction; PC = partial correction; NC = no correction

The UIG led to 41.41% of complete correction as in Table 3. Recast errors were successfully corrected 43.10% of the time and prompt errors were corrected 39.02% of the time. When a comparison was made with the correction rate in the immediate correction task, the correction rate overall decreased and it decreased more in recasts errors than prompt errors, which is congruent with the finding from the BG: the rate decreased from

56.90% to 43.10% (-13.80%) in recast errors and from 43.90% to 39.02% (-4.88%) in prompt errors.

The second research question examined the effects of implicit versus more explicit forms of each feedback type on the learners' correction of the targeted forms after interaction. Table 4 presents the immediate correction data from the BG. In both types of feedback, explicit forms resulted in more complete correction than implicit forms. In the case of recasts, explicit recasts led to 56.90% of successful correction while implicit recasts resulted in 17.86% of complete correction. Explicit prompts resulted in 28.57% of complete correction while implicit prompts led to 11.54% of complete correction. The UIG showed a similar result: explicit forms led to more complete correction. Implicit recasts brought about 40.74% of correction while explicit recasts led to 70.97% of correction (see Table 5). In the case of prompts, implicit prompts resulted in 28.57% of correction while more explicit prompts led to 60% of correction<sup>3</sup>.

**TABLE 4**  
**Immediate Post-Interaction Effects of Implicit/Explicit Forms of Feedback: BG**

Correction	Recasts ( <i>n</i> = 86)				Prompts ( <i>n</i> = 47)			
	Implicit		More explicit		Implicit		More explicit	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
CC	5	17.86	33	56.90	3	11.54	6	28.57
PC	3	10.71	6	10.34	6	23.08	4	19.05
NC	20	71.43	19	32.76	17	65.38	11	52.38
Total	28	100	58	100	26	100	21	100

Note. CC = complete correction; PC = partial correction; NC = no correction

**TABLE 5**  
**Immediate Post-Interaction Effects of Implicit/Explicit Forms of Feedback: UIG**

	Recasts				Prompts			
	Implicit		More explicit		Implicit		More explicit	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
CC	11	40.74	22	70.97	6	28.57	12	60
PC	6	22.22	2	6.45	3	14.29	4	20
NC	10	37.04	7	22.58	12	57.14	4	20
Total	27	100	31	100	21	100	20	100

Note. CC = complete correction; PC = partial correction; NC = no correction

Table 6 shows the comparison between implicit and more explicit forms of recasts and prompts in the delayed post-interaction correction task in the BG. As in the immediate correction, the learners were more successful at correcting errors that had received explicit feedback in both recasts and prompts: the rate of complete correction for explicit recasts was 34.48% whereas the rate of implicit recasts was 7.14%; the complete correction rate

<sup>3</sup> Due to the low frequency of some of the data, the results should be treated cautiously.

for explicit prompts was 23.81% whereas the complete correction rate for implicit prompts was 7.69%. When a comparison was made between the immediate correction task (Table 4) and the delayed correction task (Table 5), the rate of correction dropped in the case of recast errors regardless of the extent of explicitness: the correction rate in implicit recasts dropped from 17.86% to 7.14% (-10.72%) and the correction rate in implicit prompts dropped from 11.54% to 7.69% (-3.85%); the correction rate in explicit recasts decreased from 56.90% to 34.48% (-22.42%) and the correction rate in explicit prompts decreased from 28.67% to 23.81% (-4.86%).

**TABLE 6**  
**Delayed Post-Interaction Effects of Implicit/Explicit Forms of Feedback: BG**

	Recasts				Prompts			
	Implicit		More explicit		Implicit		More explicit	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
CC	2	7.14	20	34.48	2	7.69	5	23.81
PC	3	10.72	6	10.34	3	11.54	4	19.05
NC	23	82.14	32	55.18	21	80.77	12	57.14
Total	28	100	58	100	26	100	21	100

*Note.* CC = complete correction; PC = partial correction; NC = no correction

Table 7 presents the comparison between implicit and more explicit forms of recasts and prompts in the delayed post-interaction correction task in the UIG. As in the beginning group, explicit forms of feedback resulted in more successful correction in both types of feedback: 58.06% of correction for explicit recasts and 25.93% of correction for implicit recasts; 55% of correction for explicit prompts and 23.82% of correction for implicit prompts. The delayed correction task results in implicit and explicit feedback (Table 7) were compared with the immediate correction task (Table 5). The correction rate in implicit recasts dropped from 40.74% to 25.93% (-14.81%) and the rate decreased in explicit recasts from 70.97% to 58.06% (-12.91%). The rate of implicit prompts dropped from 28.57% to 23.82% (-4.75%) and the rate in explicit prompts decreased from 60% to 55% (-5.00%).

**TABLE 7**  
**Delayed Post-Interaction Effects of Implicit/Explicit Forms of Feedback: UIG**

	Recasts				Prompts			
	Implicit		More explicit		Implicit		More explicit	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
CC	7	25.93	18	58.06	5	23.82	11	55
PC	5	18.51	4	12.90	2	9.50	4	20
NC	15	55.56	9	29.04	14	66.68	5	25
Total	27	100	31	100	21	100	20	100

*Note.* CC = complete correction; PC = partial correction; NC = no correction

To conclude, one additional analysis was performed. As noted previously, the current



study had control groups to investigate whether or not the post-interaction correction was influenced by task repetition and familiarity since the same pictures and descriptions were used repeatedly. The errors made in both the pre-interaction description task and the oral description task were first identified. Then, the number of corrections the learners made for the errors they made in both the pre-interaction description task and the oral description task was counted. The BG corrected 7.7% of the error in the immediate correction task and 8.2% in the delayed correction task. The UIG showed 8.34% of correction in the immediate task and 9.89% of correction in the delayed task. The correction rates in both groups were far smaller than the ones found in the feedback group, and this suggests that both types of IF helped the learners notice and correct their errors.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The current study examined the effects of recasts and prompts on L2 learning and the extent to which these effects were mediated by the degree of feedback explicitness and learner proficiency levels. Overall, after receiving either recasts or prompts, the BG corrected their errors 35.34% of the time in the immediate correction task and 21.80% in the delayed correction task. The UIG corrected 51.52% of the time in the immediate task and 41.41% in the delayed correction task. Given that the control groups showed less than 10% of correction rate, both feedback groups benefited from the feedback. When learner proficiency levels were considered, overall, the UIG benefited more than the BG. It was also found that, regardless of proficiency levels and the types of feedback, a more explicit form of feedback results in a higher correction rate. Below the more detailed findings of the current study are discussed in relation to the types of feedback, the degree of explicitness, and learner proficiency levels.

### 5.1. Recasts, Prompts, and Learner Proficiency

The results showed that the BG identified and successfully corrected 44.19% of the time for recast errors and 19.15% for prompt errors in the immediate post-interaction task. This outcome suggests that the BG benefited more from recasts than prompts. A similar finding was observed in the UIG (56.90% for recasts and 43.90% for prompts). This is congruent with Nassaji (2009), which also reported a higher correction rate after recast errors. Recasts offer learners the correct model of the target form. In other words, recasts provide both positive and negative evidence while prompts offer only negative evidence. In this regard, the learners in the current study benefited more from recasts than prompts in their immediate post-interaction correction tasks.

However, the gap of correction rate in the immediate and post-interaction tasks between recasts and prompts was larger in the BG than in the UIG, and this suggests that recasts provided more immediate effects than prompts for the BG. This finding contradicts the results from Ammar and Spada (2006) and Yang and Lyster (2010) which found that prompts were more effective, especially for beginning learners. One possible explanation for the difference lies on the nature of errors the studies examined. In the present study, before the learners were engaged in the oral picture-sequencing task, they had been asked to write the description of the same pictures used for the oral task. And, the errors they made both in the written and in the oral descriptions were examined. By contrast, cited-studies examined the errors occurring during spontaneous oral production. In other words, the errors might have been performance errors (i.e., mistakes); thus, when prompts provided learners with a chance to modify their initial utterances, they might have been able to correct their performance errors. However, the errors examined in the present study might have not been simple performance errors if the learners made them in both tasks; thus, it might have been difficult for them to self-correct even when they were given an opportunity for self-correction because they did not possess the linguistic resources to do so. When learners are not capable of making self-correction, they need positive evidence, models. This explains why the gap of correction rate of recasts and prompts observed in the BG was far larger than the gap in the UIG.

In the comparison of the correction rate of the immediate task with the delayed task, the BG still corrected a higher percentage of recast errors than prompt errors in the delayed task, but the difference between recasts and prompts decreased. This was mainly caused by the greater drop in the correction rate of recasts than prompts (-18.61% for recasts; 4.29% for prompts). In the UIG, the correction rate of recast errors also dropped in more than one of the prompts (-13.8% for recasts; 4.88% for prompts). The self-correction process caused by prompts supposedly helps learners reflect on what has been learned and to reconstruct learner interlanguage. De Bot (1996) argued that learners develop their interlanguage more effectively when they are pushed to “make the right connection on one’s own” (p. 549) than when they hear the correct structure in the input. In contrast, in the case of recasts, correction is made by a feedback provider. Based on the findings of the present study, it can be suggested that if learners manage to self-correct their own errors, they seem more likely to remember the correction than if the correction is made by others. This explains why the correction rate of prompt errors in the delayed tasks dropped far less than the one of recast errors.

## 5.2. Explicitness of Feedback and Learner Proficiency

In the current study, more explicit forms of feedback led to a higher rate of successful

post-interaction correction in both recasts and prompts. This result suggests that the effectiveness of recasts and prompts on L2 learning could differ depending on the degree of their explicitness (Nassaji, 2009).

The finding that the degree of explicitness of recasts could mediate their effects on learner perception of recasts has been pointed out in some previous studies (Kim & Han, 2007; Sheen & Ellis, 2011): Learners are more likely to perceive recasts as correction and respond to recasts when recast are offered in a more explicit form – reducing the erroneous utterance and stressing the corrected parts. The enhanced recasts could prevent learners from being confused about the intent of recasts. In other words, when the didactic function is clear, and recasts are more likely to help learners to notice the corrected form.

The degree of explicitness of recasts and its relationship with L2 learning appeared to be associated to learner proficiency level. In the current study, implicit recasts resulted in far less complete correction rate for the BG compared to the UIG in the immediate task. The number of implicit recasts which were offered to both groups was similar: 28 for the BG and 27 for the UIG. However, there was a significant difference in the correction rate: The BG successfully corrected 5 errors out of 28 (17.86%) while the UIG successfully corrected 11 errors out of 27 (40.74%). This suggests that implicit recasts might be less effective for BG than more advanced learners. Indeed, Ammar and Spada's (2006) study supported this claim. While in their study, the degree of recasts was not clearly identified, the recasts they provided can be classified as implicit recasts when defined using the same classifications as those used in this study. This explains why they found recasts to be less effective for beginning learners. For beginning learners, it can be difficult to identify implicit recasts as language correction because they tend to pay more attention to meaning than form in meaning-oriented interaction (VanPatten, 2004). Advanced learners are more likely to use implicit recasts as corrections for language forms although they also still get more benefits from explicit recasts. Li (2014) also found a similar result in his study which compared the role of recasts and metalinguistic feedback across learner proficiency levels: "compared with the low-proficiency learners, the high-proficiency learners had more cognitive resources at their discretion and so were better able to notice the corrective force of recasts despite their implicit nature" (p. 391).

In the case of prompts, although both groups showed a higher correction rate in explicit form, a big gap between the groups was observed in explicit prompts but not in implicit prompts. A similar number of explicit prompts was given to both groups: 21 for the BG and 20 for the UIG, but the BG only made 6 cases of complete correction (28.67%) while the UIG made 12 cases of complete correction (60%). Explicit prompts included metalinguistic comments, and the comments led the UIG to correct their own errors; however, the comments were not as useful as for the BG. This finding explains the result of Ammar and Spada (2006), which reported that prompts were more useful for the lower

level of learners. In their study, most of the prompts included metalinguistic clues, and they argued that the clues helped low-proficiency learners “identify the nature and locus of error. Their entire attention was, therefore, devoted to think about the PD [possessive determiner] rule (provided in the previous instructional phrase)” (p. 564). In their study, a target form was preselected, and learners only received feedback on the form; in addition, learners received form-focused instruction regarding the targeted form before engaging meaning-based interaction. In other words, in their study, learners were aware of the rule of the target form, and this obviously made it easy for them to self-correct after metalinguistic comments. In contrast, the current study did not have a preselected target form nor did it offer any form-focused instruction; thus, metalinguistic comments dealt with a range of rules, and some of them might go beyond the BG’s ability to use the clues for self-correction. The studies that found metalinguistic feedback to be effective especially for low-proficiency learners investigated preselected items and intensive feedback. This led us to conclude that metalinguistic feedback may only be effective when it targets one particular form about which learners already have at least some degree of knowledge.

As noted previously, although recasts resulted in a higher rate of correction in both proficiency levels, prompts proved to have more lasting effects. This tendency did not change when the degree of explicitness of feedback was considered. In both proficiency groups, the effects of prompts were long lasting regardless of the degree of explicitness of recasts and prompts. Furthermore, while the current study found some evidence that supports that explicit CF has a stronger immediate effect than implicit CF, it did not prove that the effects of implicit CF were sustained for longer compared to explicit CF. The lasting effects of implicit CF have been pointed out as a benefit over explicit CF. However, when the effects of degree of explicitness in the same type of feedback were considered, implicit CF did not prove to have more benefits. This issue needs to be examined in more depth in future studies.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study found that both recasts and prompts had some effects on learning the corrected forms, but that the learners got more benefits from recasts. In addition, overall, more explicit forms of each feedback resulted in a higher rate of correction in both immediate and delayed post-interaction correction tasks. These findings support the claim that IF may facilitate L2 learning, and its effectiveness may be closely related to the degree of explicitness of feedback. When learner proficiency levels were considered, some differences were found: The BG took relatively more advantages of recasts than the UIG, and explicit prompts worked better for the UIG. Regardless of the level of proficiency and

the degree of explicitness of feedback, the effects of prompts were more lasting than those of recasts.

The findings of the current study shed some light on the effects of recasts and prompts on L2 learning according to the degree of explicitness and learner proficiency levels when they targeted a range of errors (i.e., extensive feedback) occurring during meaning-based interaction. The study examined extensive feedback offered in various degrees of explicitness, which resembles how feedback is used in intact L2 classrooms. Therefore, a couple of useful pedagogical suggestions can be made based on the findings. First, the teacher may need to provide implicit recasts less frequently for low-proficiency learners. Since using explicit recasts all the time may create awkward situations and may block the flow of communication, the teacher needs to be judicious in using explicit recasts. Second, when the teacher offers prompts to initiate self-correction, the learner's prior knowledge about the targeted form needs to be considered. When the learner does not have any prior knowledge, even explicit prompts that offer metalinguistic comments may not result in self-correction. Indiscreet use of prompt may only increase learner anxiety level (Sheen, 2009).

To conclude the study, a few limitations of the study need to be pointed out to call for cautious interpretations of the results of the study and to make some suggestions for future research. First and foremost, the current study was based on the limited data collected in a brief period of time; thus, future studies with a larger database and longer feedback sessions are needed for the generalization of the outcomes. Second, because the study examined feedback occurring in one-on-one dyadic interaction outside of classroom contexts, the results may not be fully applicable to the classroom context; thus, the research questions the current study examined needs to be investigated in intact classrooms interaction. Lastly, the current study employed post-interaction correction tasks to measure the effects of feedback the learners received during interaction, and they spent as much time as they wanted. In other words, what was measured through the task was explicit knowledge not implicit knowledge (Ellis, 2005). Their correction of errors in written forms does not guarantee that they produce corrected forms in their oral production. Thus, future research needs to work on measuring both implicit and explicit types of knowledge.

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## APPENDIX A

### Level Descriptions

#### Level 1: Breakthrough or beginner

- Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.
- Can introduce themselves and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where they live, people they know and things they have.
- Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

#### Level 2: Elementary

- Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).
- Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
- Can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

#### Level 3: Threshold or intermediate

- Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.
- Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken.
- Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.
- Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

#### Level 4: Upper intermediate

- Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialization.
- Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.
- Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

#### Level 5: Effective operational proficiency or advanced

- Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer clauses, and recognize implicit meaning.
- Can express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.
- Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes.
- Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

#### Level 6: Mastery or proficiency



- Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read.
- Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation.
- Can express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.

## APPENDIX B

### Picture Sequencing Task



Applicable Levels: Adult EFL learners

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