

## Comparing the Effects of Recast vs. Direct Feedback on EFL Students' Pronunciation Accuracy

Marziyeh Abedi <sup>1</sup>, Lotfollah Karimi <sup>1\*</sup>, Ali Gholami Mehrdad <sup>1</sup>

---

1. Department of English, Hamedan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Hamedan, Iran.

\* Corresponding Author's Email: karimi.lotfollah@gmail.com

---

**Abstract** – In the current study, attempts were made to compare the effects of teacher's recast and direct feedback on EFL learners' pronunciation. To this end, forty female students were systematically selected from a population of 200 EFL learners. They were third graders in two Junior High Schools in Lalejin, Hamadan, Iran. The participants were randomly assigned into two equal experimental groups. Then a researcher-made pre-test was administered to the groups. Based on "English 900" book series and "Drills and Exercises in English Pronunciation" by Macmillan (1976, 1973), aspects of pronunciation were taught to both groups. One of the groups was given feedback via recast, while the other group received direct feedback. After the treatment, a researcher-made post-test was administered to the groups. Finally, the data collected were analyzed running Mann-Whitney U Test. The results showed that recast had a significant effect on the students' scores. Therefore, the group who had received recast outperformed the group who had received the direct feedback.

**Keywords:** recast, direct feedback, pronunciation, language accuracy.

---

### I. INTRODUCTION

The usefulness of teacher feedback on students' incorrect pronunciation is a subject of heated discussion and debate. In some cases the students cannot understand the aims of teacher's feedback as it is indirect. But as speaking languages is a source of communication, Lazarson (1994) mentioned that for most people, the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language, since speech is the most basic means of human communication. Shannaved (2011) also declared that as English is an international language, with good understanding and communication, we can travel around the world, get assistance, and help other people.

For most learners, a more appropriate and reasonable goal is to achieve an English pronunciation which is usually understandable in international communication. Miremadi (2004) expressed that a person's pronunciation contributes significantly to the impression of their identity when they speak English. According to Ur (1996), the aim of pronunciation improvement is not to achieve a perfect imitation of native accent, but simply to get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other speakers. Therefore, Pennington (1989) concluded that pronunciation is described as conveying many different types of messages to a hearer related to the information structure of

a discourse, the speaker's attitude and mood, and other social and psychological features of the speakers or of the relationship between the speaker and hearer.

EFL students' pronunciation accuracy is one of the important issues that English teachers and learners should pay attention to. There are various reasons why Iranian English learners' pronunciation is not satisfactory; one of them goes back to the way they are taught by their teachers (Hayati, 2008). Dealing with the errors, especially those of pronunciation, requires specific techniques. Brown (2000) declared that one of the major issues involved in carrying out English as a foreign language, is the manner in which teachers deal with students' errors. Should errors be treated? How should they be treated? When? With the view of language learning as a creative construction process comes the view that error is an inevitable and positive part of that process. Bio's (2011) research also concluded that correcting student errors is necessary in order to help students improve their skills, and teachers should be familiar with the students' personality in order to gauge what kind of error correction should be used. Some students are very form-focused and really want explicit correction; some students are less form-focused and will feel criticized by too much correction.

Loewen and Philp (2006) suggested that in the context of teaching and learning, feedback can be any form of response by a teacher to a students' performance, attitude or behavior, at least where attitude or behavior has effect upon performance; it is also important to realize that feedback is not only an outcome of student performance but an essential part of the learning process. Negotiation exchanges are accomplished by means of a variety of strategies; they can be implicit or explicit. Ellis (2008) classified implicit strategies such as request for clarification, recast, and confirmation checks which are only covertly corrective (i.e. they don't directly signal that a correction of a learner form is being undertaken). In contrast, explicit strategies such as elicitation or direct correction make it clear to learners that they are being corrected. Therefore, the teacher's proper feedback on students' pronunciation errors is one of the most important factors in learning foreign language pronunciation.

Pronunciation is the first and most important thing native speakers notice during a conversation. Fraser (1999) mentioned that many non-natives speakers have studied grammar for many years but are unable to speak like native speakers due to their inability to pronounce the sounds of words properly. Ellis (2008) also stated that as our students gain communicative skill, they also need to gain confidence in their ability to speak and be understood and this will be achieved by learning pronunciation accuracy. As Miremadi (2004) mentioned that if sounds are uttered incorrectly, they are not understood and when the listener cannot understand what the speaker says, communication will interrupt. Chu (2011) suggested, however, when students speak a second language, they will also make various errors, and if these errors are not corrected, they will be mistaken for correct form and the learners internalize them to their inter language system. Therefore, the oral English will be easy to fossilize if teachers do not provide corrective feedback.

Corrective feedback is necessary, because it can match the learners' utterance with its corresponding version in the target language and draw the learners' attention to structures

that have not been mastered (White, 1991). Lyster and Ranta (1997) stated that recasts involve the teacher's implicit provision of a correct reformulation of all or part of a students' ill-formed utterance; while as Lee (2004) mentioned direct feedback is when the teacher responds to students' errors by directly indicating that an error has been made.

Many studies have shown the advantages of teachers' recast. Doughty and Varela (1998) mentioned that indirect corrective strategies are to be preferred to direct corrective strategies in the process of raising students' awareness. Sheen (2006) also noticed in her study that recasts were most beneficial for anxious students to avoid the embarrassment that may come with having their mistakes pointed out to them. Doughty and Varela (1998) investigated corrective recast in an ESL content-based classroom. The results indicated that the experimental group was able to retain the linguistic gains exhibited on the post-test. Similarly, Price (2011) found that recasts can be an effective form of corrective feedback. Baleghizadeh and Dadashi (2011) studied about the effect of direct and indirect feedback on students spelling learning. The results obtained revealed that indirect feedback was more effective than direct feedback in rectifying students' spelling errors. Braid (2002) in a laboratory study of native speaker and non-native speaker reported that up to 45 percent of the native speakers responses to erroneous utterances were recasts and that indirect error feedback was more helpful for students' development than direct error feedback. Lalande (1982) also compared two groups, one with direct feedback and the other with indirect feedback using correction codes over a semester. It was found that the group which had received indirect coded error feedback had more accuracy by the end of the semester. Lyster and Ranta (1997) presented a study of classroom interaction and classified various types of corrective feedback used by teachers in response to learner errors. The percentage distribution of the some feedback types was: recasts 55%; elicitation 14%; clarification requests 11%; explicit correction 7%; repetition of error 5%. They also made observations in content-based classroom. Their results showed that recasts accounted for more than half of the total feedback provided in classes. As demonstrated by contemporary studies, recast is effective in the English classes. Terrell (1985) studied about teacher's direct feedback and gave three reasons for not correcting students' error directly:

- It does not lead to more correct language usage in the future,
- It may result in negative affective feelings that interfere with learning,
- It will probably cause students to focus their attention on language rather than meaning.

On the other hand, some researchers have accepted the benefits of direct feedback. In terms of measured effect sizes, direct or explicit instruction are more effective in promoting student achievement than problem-based learning, inductive teaching, inquiry based teaching, and the like (Dinham & Rowe, 2007). Direct feedback makes the corrective force clear to the learner, gives clues as to the exact location of the error, and might help learners to carry out of the cognitive comparison between their error and the target form, but implicit feedback that consists of simply indicating that a problem exists does not appear to be helpful (Nguyen, 2012). Ellis (2008) examined the relative effectiveness between direct and indirect corrective feedback. While indirect corrective feedback only consists of an indication of an

error (i.e. by underlining the error or providing an error code), direct error correction identifies both the error and the target form. Ferris's (1995) studies about teacher's direct feedback showed that whereas indirect correction proved to be most effective in improving student's speaking accuracy, students who received direct feedback made the most accurate revisions.

Some researchers studied about the effect of teacher's feedback on students' pronunciation learning. According to Otlowski (2003), the teacher should act as a 'speech coach', rather than as a mere checker of pronunciation and the feedback given to the student can in itself encourage learners to improve their pronunciation. Dekeyser (1994) examined the effect of teacher's feedback on phonological errors. He studied teacher's feedback on phonological errors of 18 students who were studying in junior high school in Hong Kong. He found that teacher's feedback was more appropriate for phonological errors since the students clearly hear the correct forms from their teacher. Similarly, Noruzi Azar's (2012) study investigated whether teacher's feedback is effective in promoting students' oral performance. The performance of sixty students within two groups from intermediate level was examined in this research. She found that in L2 instruction through which there were feedback on learners' problematic utterance by the teacher, there were success in promoting learners' oral performance. The statistical results revealed that teacher's feedback led to the mastery of oral performance, and had positive effect on learners' oral performance. Ferris's (1995) studies about teacher's feedback on learners' speaking accuracy showed that students who received feedback made the most accurate revisions.

In line with studies of the type above, the present study was designed to examine the effect of teacher's recast and direct feedback on EFL learners' pronunciation accuracy.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **A. Research Question and Hypothesis**

**Question:** Does recast affect EFL students' pronunciation accuracy more positively than direct feedback does?

**Hypothesis:** Recast affects EFL students' pronunciation accuracy more positively than direct feedback does.

### **B. Participants**

The sample of the study included 40 students studying in the third grade of two junior high schools. They were selected through systematic random sampling out of 200 female students in Lalejin, Hamadan, Iran. Their age was about thirteen years old.

### C. Instruments

One of the instruments used in present research was a pronunciation researcher-made test administered before the treatment as a pre-test to both groups. It contained 20 multiple-choice items used to evaluate stress, intonation, phonetic symbols, and pauses. Since this test was teacher-made, first it was needed to be piloted with another group. Its reliability was estimated through Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula as 0.75.

Another instrument was a twenty multiple-choice researcher-made test used as the post-test. Its reliability was also estimated via Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula as 0.54.

### D. Design

In the current study a true experimental method, with a pretest and posttest experimental group design, schematically shown below, was used:

R	EG <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>1</sub> (direct feedback)	T <sub>2</sub>
R	EG <sub>2</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub> (recast)	T <sub>2</sub>

### E. Procedure

After selecting the participants, in the way mentioned, they were randomly assigned to two equal experimental groups. A researcher-made test as pre-test was administered to both groups before starting the process of treatment. In the second stage, the teacher would take a new text from "English 900" books series by Macmillan (1976), and "Drills and Exercises in English Pronunciation" books series by Macmillan (1973), to students. Every student had three minutes to read. The teacher assessed their reading in terms of correct pronunciation, stress, intonation, pause, and phonetic symbols. In direct feedback group the teacher corrected the students' errors immediately and directly and was indicating that an error has been made. The same texts were given to the recast group. Their errors, however, were corrected via recast and their mispronunciations were reformulated by the teacher through repeating the correct utterances. Finally, the post-test, which was parallel to the pre-test administered to both groups.

### E. Data analysis

As the study included both a pre-test and a post-test, to remove the effects of the pre-test as a covariate, ANCOVA was run. Since the requirements of ANCOVA were not fulfilled, the gain scores of the groups were calculated to run independent t-test. As the distribution of the groups' gain scores were not distributed normally the researchers used non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test, the results of which are presented below.

**Table 1: The homogeneity of Slope of Regression Lines**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	460.165 <sup>a</sup>	3	153.388	182.633	.000
Intercept	317.720	1	317.720	378.297	.000
group	78.927	1	78.927	93.975	.000
pretest	329.533	1	329.533	392.363	.000
<b>group * pretest</b>	<b>19.088</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19.088</b>	<b>22.727</b>	<b>.000</b>
Error	30.235	36	.840		
Total	8108.000	40			
Corrected Total	490.400	39			

a. R Squared = .938 (Adjusted R Squared = .933)

As it is evident in above Table, the slope of regression lines has not been homogeneous for all groups [ $F_{(1, 36)} = 22.727$ ,  $P = .000$ ,  $P < .001$ ]. This violation caused the researchers to stop running ANCOVA. Then, the researchers subtracted the groups' scores on the pre-test from their scores on the post-test and ran independent samples *t*-test, the results of which are shown in the following Tables.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Showing the Groups' Mean and the Standard Deviation**

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
df (A) D.	20	1.8000	.95145	.21275
(B) R.	20	5.9000	2.53190	.56615

Descriptively, table 3 shows that the mean score and standard deviation of group (A)/(D.) are 1.80 and .95, respectively, while those of group (B)/(R.) are 5.90 and 2.53, respectively.

**Table 3: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (Independent Samples Test)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
		F	Sig.
df	Equal variances assumed	14.536	.000
	Equal variances not assumed		

As this table shows, the results of Levene's Test have been significant implying that the variances of the groups have not been equal ( $P < .001$ ). Of course, if the number of the participants in the groups is equal,  $t$ -test can be robust against the inequality of variances. So, the results of  $t$ -test are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: T-Test for Equality of Means (Independent Samples Test)**

		T-test for Equality of Means			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
df	Equal variances assumed	-6.779	38	.000	-4.10000
	<b>Equal variances not assumed</b>	<b>-6.779</b>	<b>24.261</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-4.10000</b>

The results of  $t$ -test in table 4 show that the effect of the treatment has been significant [ $F_{(38)} = 14.536$ ,  $P = .000$ ,  $P < .001$ ]. This result implies that the group who had received recast outperformed the group who had received the direct feedback. The results also imply the verification of the hypothesis and a positive answer to the research question. However, due to the inequality of the variances of the groups, the researchers wanted to be cautious and ran Mann-Whitney U Test, the results of which are as follows:

**Table 5: Mann-Whitney Test (Rank)**

group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
df (A) D.	20	11.90	238.00
(B) R.	20	29.10	582.00
Total	40		

The Table 5 indicates that the average rank given to pronunciation accuracy for the group (A) is 11.90 and the average rank given to the group (B) concerning the same dependent variable is 29.10. This means that the scores for group (B) tend to be larger than those for group (A).

**Table 6: Mann-Whitney Test (Test Statistics<sup>b</sup>)**

	df
Mann-Whitney U	28.000
Wilcoxon W	238.000
<b>Z</b>	<b>-4.763</b>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
<b>Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]</b>	<b>.000<sup>a</sup></b>

a. Not corrected for ties.

b. Grouping Variable: group

The basic Mann-Whitney statistic, the U value, is 28.000 which is statistically significant at .001 level. Z value of -4.763 is also significant at .001 level. This is the value of Mann-Whitney test when a correlation for tied ranks has been done. Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test found that pronunciation accuracy scores of group (B), i.e., the group who had received recast were significantly higher than those of group (A), who received direct feedback [ $U = 28.000$ ,  $N_1 = 20$ ,  $N_2 = 20$ , two tailed  $P = .000$ ,  $P < .001$ ]. As a final word, the research hypothesis was verified.

### **III. DISCUSSION**

The hypothesis of this study “recast affects EFL students' pronunciation accuracy more positively than direct feedback” was verified [ $U = 28.000$ ,  $N_1 = 20$ ,  $N_2 = 20$ , two tailed  $P = .000$ ,  $P < .001$ ]. One explanation for this finding may be that the technique of recast may have mildly attracted the learners' attention toward learning and stimulated their curiosity. This finding is consistent with the findings of some other studies. For example, Dekeyser (1994) examined the effect of teacher's recast on students' phonological errors. He studied teacher's recast on phonological errors of 18 students who were studying in different levels of a junior high school in Hong Kong. He found that, recast was effective in students' learning, especially in phonetic learning. Similarly, Price (2011) examined the effect of different types of teacher's feedback on students' pronunciation, and found that recast can be an effective form of corrective feedback. Moreover, Baleghizadeh and Dadashi (2011) examined the effect of direct and indirect feedback on students' spelling. They studied two classes of male students in high school for six weeks. They found that indirect feedback is more effective than direct feedback in rectifying students' spelling errors. The finding also verifies that found by Noruzi Azar (2012). She investigated whether teachers' recasts are effective in promoting students' oral performance. The performance of sixty Iranian students within two groups from intermediate level was examined in this research. The statistical results had revealed that recasting led to the mastery of oral performance, and teacher's recasts had a positive effect on learners' oral performance.

However, the findings of the present study are different from the findings of some previous ones. For example, Havranek (2002) studied 207 EFL learners across different levels that received direct feedback and recast from their teachers. After the observation period, she administered class-specific tests that elicited the learners' knowledge of the linguistic forms that had been targeted in the feedback. She found that feedback that highlighted the correction provoked learners to direct their attention to the error and make correction. In this sense, recast was not effective. Moreover, the findings of present study are also different from the findings of Lyster and Ranta (1997). They collected data from different grades of French students. They were primarily concerned with the reaction by the student immediately following a recast. They found that recast did not have an impact on subsequent production. Therefore, the results showed that most teachers liked recast, but it led to the lowest rate of uptake including the lowest rate of repair.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Many factors have effect on students' learning procedure. An influencing factor is the role of the teachers in dealing with the students' errors. In rectifying the students' pronunciation errors two methods of recast and direct feedback can be used.

With regard to research question, the present study showed that teacher's feedback has significant effect on students' pronunciation learning. Therefore, the related answer to the question is that, students' pronunciation learning is influenced by the teacher's recast.

Two aspects of this study verified the positive effect of teacher's recast on students' pronunciation learning. The first aspect is the previous findings of some scholars such as Dekeyser (1994), and Price (2011). The second aspect is the results of data analysis which showed the significant effect of teachers' recast. Consequently, the use of corrective feedback is necessary to promote learners' performance and make them progress. Therefore, based on the results of the present study, recast may be considered as a more powerful feedback than direct correction.

##### **A. Pedagogical implications**

With regard to the results of this study, some pedagogical implications can be provided which may be useful for English teachers, students, educational designers, textbooks designers, and managers of schools:

At first, teachers should be familiar with the correct pronunciation of English words in terms of American and British accent. Moreover, they should inform the students of the important role of correct pronunciation in their communications. On the other hand, they should pay more attention to the students' performance in the classroom, since the students' performance shows teacher's performance. Therefore, they should be aware of different types of feedbacks and use the suitable method according to the instructional context and each student's personality. Since recast can be effective when used in suitable context, but it can be non-beneficial when rob the student of a voice or over-used. Similarly, direct feedback is a beneficial tool for students' correction, but it is not useful for students who feel ashamed and lose their confidence.

Second, students need to be made aware to pay more attention to teachers' feedback in order to learn the correct forms of pronunciation in the classroom.

Third, educational designers can provide some in-service classes for the teachers to gain theoretical and practical knowledge about dealing with students' error correction.

Fourth, the English textbooks suffer from shortcoming in pronunciation exercises. It is necessary the committee of material designer pay more attention to this part in designing the textbooks.

Finally, the managers of schools should confine the number of students in every class in terms of the related times for teaching in order for the teachers to have enough time to deal with students' errors.

The statistical outcomes of the present study would be regarded as a proof for teachers, students, educational, syllables designers, textbooks designers, and managers of schools pay attention to students' pronunciation learning. Therefore, regarding the important role of teachers in students' learning, especially in learning the pronunciation of foreign language words, it is highly suggested that English teachers pay attention to students' errors and have corrective feedbacks.

## REFERENCES

- Baleghizadeh, S., & Dadashi, M. (2011). The effect of direct and indirect correction feedback on students spelling errors. Retrieved March 4, 2013, from [http:// www. Revistas. Unal. Edu](http://www.Revistas.Unal.Edu).
- Bio, B. (2011). Error correction: Where, when, and how? Retrieved May 22, 2013, from <http://www.carla.Umn.edu/immersion/ACIE/voll/May 1998.pdf>.
- Braidi, S. M. (2002). Reexamine the role of recasts in native-speaker/non-native speaker interactions. *Language Learning Journal*, 52, 1- 42.
- Brown, D. H. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Cambridge University Press.
- Chu, R. (2011). Effects of teacher's corrective feedback on accuracy in the oral English of E-Majors College students. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies Journal*, 1 (5), 454-459.
- Dekeyser, R. (1994). How implicit can adult second language learning be? *AILA Review*, 11, 83-96.
- Dinham, S., & Rowe, K. (2007). Teaching and learning, students' success and school renewal, *Australian Journal of Education*. 51 (3), 263-275.
- Doughty, C., & Varela, E. (1998). Communicative focus on form. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (eds.) *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp.114-138). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of second language acquisition* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ferris, D. (1995). *The effect of direct and indirect corrective feedback on L2 learner's written accuracy*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.
- Fraser, H. (1999). ESL Pronunciation Teaching: Could it be More Effective? Retrieved March 18, 2013, from [http:// www.une.edu.au/ arts/ ALS/ als.htm](http://www.une.edu.au/arts/ALS/als.htm).
- Havranek, G. (2002). When is corrective feedback most likely to successes? *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 255-270.
- Hayati, A. M. (2008). Teaching English pronunciation to Iranian students: Problems and suggestions. *ESL Journal*. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from [http:// www.TeachingEnglish games.com](http://www.TeachingEnglish games.com).

- Lalande, M. (1982). *The effect of direct and indirect corrective feedback on L2 learners' written accuracy*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Lazarton, A. (1994). Teaching oral skills. In M. Celle-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 103-115). United State: Van Hoffmann Graphics.
- Lee, N. (2004). The neurobiology of procedural memory in J. Chumann et al. (ed.): *The neurobiology of learning: Perspectives from second language acquisition*. Mahwah, N.J: *Language studies*. Georgetown University, Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press.
- Loewen, S., & Philp, J. (2006). Recasts in adult English L2 classroom: Characteristics, explicitness, and effectiveness. *The Modern English Journal*, 90, 536-556.
- Lyster, R., & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classroom. *A Journal of Studies In Second Language Acquisition*, 19, 37-66.
- Miremadi, S. A. (2004). *A text book on teaching proper pronunciation*. Tehran: Mahdavi Publication.
- Nguyan. A. (2012). *Corrective feedback on pronunciation errors*. How effective it is in learning L2 oral communication. Retrieved March 7, 2013, from <http://www.dlu.edu.vn>.
- Noruzi Azar, N. (2012). The effects of teacher's recasts on improving students' oral performance. *International Journal of Management and Humanity Sciences*. 1 (2). Retrieved April 20, 2013, from <http://www.ijmsjornal.com>.
- Otlowski, M. (2003). Pronunciation: What is the expectation? *The Internal TESL Journal*. 1 (1), 10-17.
- Pennington, M.C. (1989). Teaching pronunciation from the top down. *RELC Journal*, 20, 21-38. Retrieved April 18, 2013, from <http://rel.sagepub.com>.
- Price, N. (2011). Recasting and corrective feedback: *The use and adaptation of recasting in the ESL classroom*. Arizona: Northern Arizona University Press.
- Shannaved, Z. (2011). The importance of learning English in world today. Retrieved March 12, 2013, from <http://www.hubpages.com>.
- Sheen, Y. (2006). Exploring the relationship between characteristics of recasts and learner uptake. *A Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 58 (4), 835-874.
- Terrell, T.D. (1985). A natural approach to second language acquisition and learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 61, 325-337.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.
- White, L. (1991). Adverb placement in second language acquisition: Some effects of positive and negative evidence in the classroom. *Second Language Research Journal*, 7, 133- 161.