

The utilization and efficacy of the use of recasts in a children's English language classroom

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is the product of an exploration applying Action Research in a classroom for children learning English as a Foreign Language, focusing on the use and efficiency of one type of corrective feedback called “recasts.” The institutional context is the researcher’s private school in Japan (Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu), which offers practice in conversational English language. An examination of the constraints of Eikaiwa (such as limited contact time and students’ frequent lack of intrinsic motivation) forms the basis of the study, and the starting-point lies in questions of how the use of recasts can be beneficial. As action research, the study takes the example of recasts in this question and follows through teacher-researcher cycles of reflection, revision and renewed technical application, seeking an understanding of the practical dynamics involved with each aspect of decision-making. Action research appears to hold strong potential as a research tool for the teacher operating independently within a children’s Eikaiwa setting, where strictly experimental models of inquiry often fail to find robust sample-sizes, and teachers may struggle to see their efforts in reflexive perspective.

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Though the role of error correction is of practical importance, it is also considered to be a controversial issue in second or foreign language acquisition, where it is often categorized under the more general term “negative evidence” and can be defined as corrective or negative feedback (Ellis, 2008: 251). Researchers such as Beck and Eubank (1991), Pinker (1989), Schwartz (1993; with Gubala-Ryzak, 1992) argue that negative evidence delivered through error correction is either irrelevant or only useful for developing metalinguistic knowledge that cannot be transferred into more usable implicit knowledge. Other researchers (such as Bohannon, MacWhinney, and Snow, 1990; Nelson, 1987; Tomasello and Herron, 1988) claim that error correction helps to develop a greater understanding of the target language’s lexical and grammatical facets. To this day, research on this topic has not been conclusive, making the efficiency of corrective feedback widely debated.

This paper looks at one type of error correction that is of common use in communicative language classrooms, called “recasting”. It is a type of implicit corrective feedback commonly used in my own classroom. The first aim of this paper is to focus on the use and effectiveness of recasting and, applying methods appropriate for action research, to determine if Young English Language Learners (YELLs) in my language school are able to learn and produce two new question formulations and provide grammatically correct answers to them. As action research, this dissertation examines the role, applications and complications of recasting in my classroom, and will demonstrate a way of assessing its effectiveness through attention to this technique and its reception within a one month period. It is also hoped that through the research presented by this paper, other teachers may employ this technique and observe feedback in their own classrooms, which would be in keeping with one of the ideas behind action research, namely, the transmission of information between professionals in similar teaching circumstances.

The intent of this study may be summarized in three initial and interrelated

research themes. The first theme is the relationship between recast features and the learners' noticing of the provided recasts. This study intends to make observations about the nature of the recasts given in my/one classroom and the children's reception to them. A second theme is an examination of the relationship between recast features and learners' uptake of the recasts. Observations will be made regarding the YELLs' reactions and responses to the recasts made after making incorrect utterances. Lastly, though the scope of this study is limited, an attempt will be made to gauge the effectiveness of the use of recasts and whether or not the children can acquire the language target through this form of error correction. In the form of research questions, these themes can be understood as:

1. What is the relationship between recast features and learners' noticing of recasts?
2. What is the relationship between recast features and learners' uptake of recasts?
3. Can YELLs effectively learn through only the use of recasting?

1.1 Site and Institutional Context: Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu

The popularity of learning English in Japan has been expedited by its occurrence in various aspects of daily life from TV to radio, movies, and the Internet (Tanaka, 1995). In 2002, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) placed English as one of the top three subjects, emphasized along with Japanese and mathematics. Proof of this can be seen by the introduction of Foreign Language Activities in elementary schools, whereas previously, most Japanese nationals did not begin learning English until junior high school, starting at approximately 12 years old (grade 7). The new emphasis on learning English (most often taken as the Foreign Language of relevance) at a younger age reinforced the parents' impetus to send young children to an Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu in order to enhance their performance at school.

Though parents may hope that this greater exposure to English will increase their children's English proficiency, the children themselves are not intrinsically aware of what is required of them in learning a second foreign language. It is important to bear in mind that Eikaiwa schools are private

enterprises that run without direct, explicit or set patterns of input from the Japanese education system. This fact can often create complications between the Eikaiwa's role as an educational facility and that of a customer service. At times, it can contain the construct that customer's satisfaction overrides any other concern. (MacDonald, 2010: 91). Though many parents have high expectations regarding teaching quality and effectiveness, there is an undercurrent of thought whereby the children need to be entertained and that the parents have a right as a customer to complain if the lessons are deemed too difficult or boring by the children. To further complicate matters, the children come to these English conversation schools with varying levels of motivation and ability. Thus, it is of the utmost importance that Eikaiwa schools need to be not only effective but also need to provide lessons in an easily understood if not fun manner.

Since young learners are still developing their conscious and explicit knowledge of Japanese and they may lack the "cognitive maturity" and "meta-linguistic awareness" that adult learners possess (Lightbown and Spada, 2006:3), it is difficult for them to discern how a new language functions by the clues presented to them within the new language discourse. Whereas adults are able to understand more abstract ideas, children need more concrete vocabulary that is connected with objects they can touch and see (Cameron, 2001: 81). Attempting to explain such abstract concepts as categories for parts of speech to YELLs would divorce these linguistic forms from the meanings they were meant to convey (Howatt, 1991: 293). Though children may not benefit from explicit grammar instruction, they have the need for an access to rich vocabulary and comprehensible input, as Brown (2007: 47) states: "children react consistently to the deep structure and the communicative function of language and do not react overtly to grammatical corrections". In this manner of thinking, Recasts are an ideal way to provide error correction while avoiding metalinguistic explanations that would be unintelligible for children. Once they produce an incorrect utterance, the teacher would recast their production in the correct form while they are still concretely aware of the meaning and are able to "notice" the difference. In this manner attention to form and meaning could be consistently maintained, assuming that the intended meaning of each student's individual utterance is unambiguously intelligible to the teacher (and ideally to all of the other

students as well). This would also be in keeping with the avoidance of the use of the L1 and would not take up too much valuable class time with teacher talk.

1.2 Object of Evaluation: Recasts

This paper research focus is on recasts because of they would be an excellent teaching technique for a children's Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu. Recasts have been defined (Long, Inagaki, Ortega, 1998), as reformulations of "all or part of a learner's utterance so as to provide relevant morphosyntactic information that was required but was either missing or wrongly supplied in the learner's utterance" (p. 358). Recasts first came to the attention of L1 acquisition researchers (Bohannon, Stanowicz, 1988), who noticed that adults corrected children's spoken errors by recasting speech into the corrected form void of the child's morphosyntactic or semantic errors. Since recasts are also used in second language acquisition classrooms where a necessary emphasis falls on the use of the L2, research has focused on whether or not it enhances L2 development. According to this research, effective recasts involve situations where a student realizes that an error has been committed through a teacher's corrective feedback. In these situations, the student's action in the moment of insight is called an instance of "noticing". The research also identifies situations where the learner reacts to the feedback, expressing what Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 52) refer to as "uptake".

Since the metalinguistic awareness children need in order to process grammatical explanations is still developing, teaching them new language targets in a second language is challenging. Moreover, due to the differences between English and Japanese, there is even more difficulties for children to learn how to produce grammatically correct utterances. The use of recasts not only avoids the difficulty of explaining and getting children to understand new grammar points, it also remains consistent with the use of the target language which is characteristic of orthodox native-speaker-teacher approaches in Eikaiwa.

This paper examines how children in a specific context (one Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu) react to and learn from the use of recasts without the use of

(Japanese) L1 or metalinguistic explanations. However, conducting experimental-model interventions on children presents a myriad of problems such as time constraints, the children's intermittent attendance as well as their small population and widely divergent and individual understanding of what is required from them in a language classroom. This is why using action research would be the most effective tool for this research.

1.3 Framework and Method for Evaluation: Action Research

Due to methodological and practical restraints inherent within a children's Eikaiwa classroom, a quick and effective way for error correction is at premium. Moreover, examining children's levels of noticing or uptake through simulated recalls or a series of pre- and post- tests would not only take up too much classroom time, it would also pose undue difficulties for the children. A form of empirical study that suits this situation may be found in action research (AR). AR may use any of the same methods and techniques as cross-sectional, longitudinal or experimental research, but it has the benefit of making the best possible use of these tools within the constraints of the workplace (Miles, Huberman, 1984; Strauss, Corbin, 1990). The central aspect of AR is the simultaneous focus on action and research. The action component involves participants in a process of planned intervention, where concrete strategies, processes or activities are developed within the research context.

There are also professional benefits to conducting action research. Through AR teachers can develop skills in thinking systematically about their classrooms. This enables them to create a greater awareness of possible problems and to make improvements in their specific teaching environments. Using AR they can critically and practically monitor and evaluate innovations intended to improve their teaching environment, and the publication of such evaluation in turn helps other teaching professionals in similar situations. By making improvements through action and reflection teachers are able to research "the real, complex and often confusing circumstances and constraints of the modern school" (Kemmis, McTaggart: 1982: 2-5). Processes of change are integrated with the development of a greater understanding regarding the unintended consequences of habitual or routinized behavior. The nature of any change, and the strategies for

bringing it about, are under the scrutiny and control of the practitioner as part of a process that Elliott calls “the realization of educational values in a teacher’s interactions with students” (1991: 107). Since a major aim of action research is to develop the practical wisdom or situational understanding of the practitioner researcher, it constitutes a powerful means of professional development. It is hoped that through this study, a greater understanding of the methods of conducting classroom research will not only improve the quality of my teaching but will also empower me to become more critical about my customary teaching methods and gain new insights from the point of view of a researcher. These goals have also been sought after by language researchers such as Belleli (1993), Crookes and Chandler (2001), Freeman (1998), Nunan (1993) and van Lier (1994).

The research context in this study can reveal how children in an Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu react to the use of recasts. The action aspect may be undertaken with the introduction and monitoring of these recasts in relation to the introduction of new language target items. For an ideal fit to the already known existing curriculum structure of this school, these new language target items were just two in number. The introduction of two new conversational items appeared unobtrusive and suitable to the developing capabilities of the children. As the teacher in the classroom, I planned to introduce the new content, provide the recasting during students’ practice and manipulation of the content, and then explicitly recording the number of recasts per child, class by class, in a flexible format that would not take up class time, thus creating for myself an expression of the kind of data by which my judgments, assessments and decisions are guided during each class. This is congruous with traditional approaches in action research, whereby “teacher-initiated action enables teachers to adopt a research orientation to their own classroom” (Nunan, 1989a: 17). Employing such framework and so exploring stages of planned and spontaneous classroom activity, this study could not only examine the extent to which YELLs are able to acquire a new language target and possibly demonstrate the effectiveness of recasts in an ESL classroom, it could also do so without disrupting the usual classroom dynamic, thus guaranteeing a maximally naturalistic account of the classroom context which existed before and after the study itself was carried out. By maintaining as closely as possible the

established pattern of classroom interaction, neither adding nor subtracting any elements of action, the study also gave free reign to the students' interactions, only recording observations of interaction independent of ethical concerns which could have arisen if the students themselves were the specific subjects of the research. Now that the background of this study has been introduced, an in-depth review of the theoretical underpinnings of recasts, uptake, noticing and action research will be undertaken.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Recasts have been investigated in both classroom and laboratory settings. The underpinning theory behind them is that once implicit negative feedback is given through a recast, it is the start of an interaction process whereby the learner will notice that a mistake has been made and then try to correct the error. Definitions and applications of recasts call for careful outlining, and theoretical aspects of “interaction” and “noticing” can also be accounted for. An examination of research on “uptake” and the effectiveness of recasts rounds out this review.

2.1 Recasts: Definitions and Applications

Recasts are, according to Long (1996), “utterances which rephrase a child’s utterance by changing one or more sentence components (subject, verb or object) while still referring to its central meanings” (p. 434). Long’s definition notes four properties of recasts: (a) they are a reformulation of the ill-formed utterance, (b) they expand the utterance in some way, (c) the central meaning of the utterance is retained, and (d) the recast follows the ill-formed utterance (see also Farrar, 1992; Oliver, 1995). Lyster and Ranta (1997) also include translations in response to a learner’s L1 usage as a type of recast because the translations function in the same manner as error correction, despite the fact that “error” can only be assessed with respect to L1 insofar as it differs from the target language.

Empirical studies of recasts (Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada, 2001; Long 2006; Ellis and Sheen 2006; Mackey, 2007) have included cross-sectional studies documenting the use of recasts in different settings, and under different participatory structures (Braidı 2002; Iwashita 2003; Leeman 2003; Mackey, Oliver and Leeman 2003; Mackey and Philp 1998; Panova and Lyster 2002; Philp 2003; Sheen 2004). Longitudinal studies of recasts (Han 2002; Ishida 2004; Nabei and Swain 2002) have also been conducted. There are also experimental studies designed to investigate the relative effectiveness of recasts as opposed to other strategies in acquisition (Ayoun 2004; Long et al. 1998; Lyster 2004). Overall, there is an abundance of quantitative studies accounting for the merits and pitfalls of using recasts in

the L2 classroom.

The interest in recasts can be attributed to the frequency with which they are used by teachers in language learning classrooms. Sheen (2004) compared the frequency of recasts in immersion, communicative ESL and EFL contexts found that, on average, 60 percent of all the feedback moves involved recasts (p.228). The prevailing view is that recasts constitute an implicit form of negative feedback. Lyster (1998) referred to their “function of implicitly providing reformulation” (p.59) while Long (2006) asserts unequivocally that “a recast is a discourse move that is by definition implicit.” In other words, recasts can lie at various points on a continuum of linguistic implicitness and explicitness depending on their linguistic and discursive features.

The psycholinguistic idea behind recasts is that learners make an immediate cognitive comparison between their own erroneous utterance and the target language, recast by the discourse partner (Doughty, Varela, 1998; Long et al., 1998; Mackey, Philp, 1998; Saxon, 1997). In order to elicit this comparison, interaction between teacher and learner is required. Long’s Interaction hypothesis (1996) provides a theoretical basis for situating the importance of recasts.

2.2 The Interaction Hypothesis

According to Long, recasts provide an opportunity for “cognitive comparison” (1996:169) where his interaction hypothesis proposes that feedback obtained during conversational interaction promotes interlanguage (IL) development because interaction “connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways” (Long, 1996, pp. 451–452). Gass (1997) and Pica (1994) have made similar arguments for the efficacy of interactional feedback, leading to descriptions of different types of interactional modifications that tend to take place and seeking empirical evidence for the impact of interaction on comprehension (Loschky, 1994; Pica et al., 1987), production (Gass, Varonis, 1994; Swain, Lapkin, 1998) and L2 development (Ellis et al., 1994; Mackey, 1999, Polio, Gass, 1998). There is also a move in current interactionist research to explore the specific nature and contribution of different interactional features on L2 learning (Mackey

et al., 2000). Recasting is an excellent way to solicit this interaction, to provide cognitive comparison and to promote acquirement of the correct language target. Ellis (1991) provides support with his claim that the acquisition process includes the procedures of noticing, comparing, and integrating.

In trying to understand the process of interaction, researchers have suggested that if interaction is to impact on learners' IL, learners may need to notice the gap between their IL form and the L2 alternative (Gass, 1990; Gass, Varonis, 1994; Schmidt, 1990, 1994; Schmidt, Frota, 1986). Gass (1990) points out that "nothing in the target language is available for intake into a language learner's existing system unless it is consciously noticed" (p. 136). Recasts are an excellent way of promoting "noticing" because the attention is directed towards the error just as the error is being made by the student. This attention to form is the basis of the Noticing Hypothesis..

2.3 The Noticing Hypothesis

According to Schmidt's (1990) "noticing hypothesis", in order to learn anything that is new (including grammatical forms in a second language), noticing is essential. For this reason, the degree of explicitness of Corrective Feedback (CF) that is necessary to promote noticing, without detracting from the communicative focus of instruction, is a core theme in current research on CF (Lyster, 1998a, 1998b). Noticing of a form is a precursor to the learning of the form; however, only that part of the input that the learner becomes consciously aware of holds the potential for learning. In particular, learners' noticing of the gap between their IL form and the target form is argued to push learning forward (Gass, 1997; Schmidt, Frota, 1986). As Schmidt (1995: 20) puts it, "what learners notice in input becomes intake for learning". Ellis (2008: 967) defines intake as "that portion of the input that learners notice and therefore take into temporary memory". It has been proposed that foreign language students should "notice the gap" between their erroneous output and the target language (Lightbown, Spada, 2001; Schmidt, Frota, 1986; Swain, 1998) in order to convert the target language input to intake. This attention and awareness in particular have been identified as two cognitive processes that mediate input and L2 development through interaction (Gass, Varonis 1994; Robinson 1995, 2001, 2003; Long

1996; Gass 1997, Mackey et al. 2000; Philp 2003). Negotiated interaction is claimed to be particularly useful in this regard, as the interactional feedback can help direct the learner's attention towards a mismatch between the target input and the learner's own IL form (Schmidt, Frota 1986), while at the same time providing learners with opportunities to produce modified output (Swain 1995, 1998, 2005). Resting on this premise, a number of studies have examined L2 learners' noticing of feedback to uncover the processes of interaction-driven learning. This line of research has commonly employed uptake (Ellis et al., 2001; Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Sheen, 2004) and introspective protocols (Adams, 2003; Egi, 2007a, 2010; Leow, 1997; Mackey, 2006; Mackey et al., 2000; Swain, Lapkin, 2002) to measure learners' noticing.

2.4 Uptake and Repair

Uptake refers to learners' immediate response to feedback that constitutes a reaction to the feedback (Lyster, Ranta. 1997). When uptake is used to measure learners' noticing of recasts, several issues require careful consideration. First, recasts generally do not require responses from learners. Second, the occurrence of uptake is subject to several discourse constraints; for instance, uptake may not occur simply because there is no opportunity, or because responding to the feedback is contextually awkward (Mackey et al., 2000; Oliver, 1995, 1998). Also, because uptake is performance data, its interpretation requires researchers' inferences and is not always straightforward or reliable in the context of quantitative studies which lack measures of validity for subjective assessments. This is particularly true when uptake is unsuccessful, for instance, when it is a simple acknowledgment like 'yes,' whose underlying intention can be ambiguous between an acknowledgment of the feedback or a semantic response to the content (Egi, 2010).

In observational studies of 4th- and 5th-grade L2 learners of French in classroom contexts, Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Lyster (1998 a,b) found that recasts were the most widely used form of feedback provided by teachers to children. In their research, they made a distinction between correct or successful uptake, referred to as "repair", and incorrect or otherwise unsuccessful uptake, referred to as "needs-repair". When there is no learner

uptake, there is either topic continuation or the teacher might use a type of corrective feedback once more to have the students repeat the correct answer or to have them correct themselves. When learners repeat the teacher's correction or when they correct themselves, there is a fairly high possibility that they have noticed the oral corrective feedback.

Examining whether or not recasts can lead to students' uptake or repair, Lyster and Ranta (1997) suggested that recasts led to few student-generated forms of repair. Lyster (1998b) focused on the discourse context in which recasts occurred, concluding that recasts serve more than one discourse function and they tend to occur in a similar context to non-corrective repetition in the interactions between teachers and students. Ellis et al. (2001) also examined the rate of uptake in a similar classroom situation, adopting a different operationalization of uptake. Ellis et al. (2001) concluded that uptake occurred in 73.9% of the focus on form episodes where it was possible, noting that amounts were higher and more successful in student-initiated focus on form episodes.

A laboratory study by Egi (2010) investigated the relationship between uptake and noticing by analyzing stimulated recall comments by learners of Japanese in relation to uptake they produced during communicative activities. Learners, who demonstrated uptake after the recast, were significantly more likely to report having perceived the recasts as corrective. This was particularly true when the uptake was target-like (i.e., repair). However, Egi (2010) cautiously notes that the presence of uptake does not always indicate learners' noticing, as there were repair cases for which learners did not report noticing recasts, and vice versa. Also, learners' noticing of a recast may not be the only factor that motivates them to respond to the recast.

It is possible that learners produce output exhibiting uptake because they became aware of their errors in the process of initial output production. It is also possible that they repeat the teachers' feedback in a parrot-like fashion without true understanding of its corrective meaning (Egi, 2010; Gass, 2003). Indeed, interpretation of uptake requires much care, particularly when uptake still requires repair. However, earlier research that employed uptake

as a noticing measure generally treated both repair and needs-repair cases as evidence of learner noticing (Doughty, 1994; Lyster, 1998a, 1998b; Panova, Lyster, 2002; Sheen, 2004, 2006).

2.5 Recasts: Effectiveness

Research has suggested that the linguistic target of recasts also affects learners' perceptions. Studies have generally found that phonological and/or lexical recasts were more noticeable compared to grammatical recasts (Carpenter et al., 2006; Kim and Han, 2007; Lyster, 1998b; Mackey et al., 2000; Roberts, 1995; Sheen, 2006; Trofimovich et al., 2007). For instance, classroom studies by Lyster (1998b) and Sheen (2006) found higher rates of learner repair following phonological recasts than following grammatical recasts.

As for the number of changes a recast made to the learner's original utterance, previous research has generally found that learners were more likely to notice recasts when they involved fewer changes (Egi, 2007b; Doughty, 1994; Kim and Han, 2007; Philp, 2003; Sheen, 2006). French ESL classroom studies by Doughty (1994) and Sheen (2006) found that learners were more likely to produce uptake following recasts that involved only one change. Lyster (1998a) and Sheen (2006) found that learners were more likely to produce uptake following recasts that were shorter than learners' erroneous utterances in classroom contexts. Also in a classroom context, Roberts' (1995) introspective study reported higher noticeability of partial recasts where the teacher modeled a segment of the learner's error. An introspective study by Egi (2007b) found that in a laboratory context, learners were more likely to understand recasts as corrective when they were shorter (seven or fewer morphemes). In general, research has shown a consensus that shorter or reduced recasts were more likely to be noticed by learners regardless of the noticing measure (Egi, 2007b; Lyster, 1998a; Philp, 2003; Roberts, 1995; Sheen, 2006). In summary, the perceptual salience of recasts may largely depend on their characteristics.

Previous research has shown that recasts with shorter length and fewer changes, on phonological and lexical errors, with declarative intonation, and provided directly to the addressee may more likely be noticed by learners.

Research has shown that recasts with the following features may be more salient: recasts that are short or that segment the error (Egi, 2007b; Lyster, 1998b; Philp, 2003; Roberts, 1995; Sheen, 2006), those involving a small number of changes (Doughty, 1994; Egi, 2007b; Kim and Han, 2007; Philp, 2003; Sheen, 2006), those targeting phonological or lexical errors (Carpenter et al., 2006; Kim, Han, 2007; Lyster, 1998b; Mackey et al., 2000; Roberts, 1995; Sheen, 2006; Trofimovich et al., 2007), those ending with a falling intonation (Kim, Han, 2007; Lyster, 1998b; Sheen, 2006), and those addressed directly to the learner who made the error (Kim, Han, 2007; Ohta, 2000).

2.6 Recasts as Focus on Form

As Gass (1990) points out, “nothing in the target language is available for intake into a language learner’s existing system unless it is consciously noticed” (p. 136). Noticing or attention to form is crucial for both understanding and proficiency in the target language. Focus on form has been defined by Ellis as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (Ellis 2001: 1–2). It can be argued that recasts provide learners with the correct target forms, and that they do so in a context that establishes form-meaning connections, and that they are relatively non-intrusive with respect to the flow of communication.

Observational studies conducted in communicatively oriented classrooms have shown that an over-reliance on meaning-based interaction created teaching environments lacking in attention to form. Moreover, complete reliance on learners’ meaning-based interaction can expose L2 learners to low-quality input (Harley, 1993; Lightbown, 1991). The study by Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993) point out that one possible benefit learners receive from interaction focused on form is that they become increasingly competent at using forms already fully or partially acquired. When analyzing the nature of communicative classroom discourse, many researchers have pointed to the need to draw classroom learners’ attention to form by making certain language features more salient in the input (Harley, 1993, 1994; Spada, Lightbown, 1993; Swain, 1988). Providing learners with signals such as recasting, students’ attention to target/non-target mismatches is increased

more effectively than merely supplying target forms in the interactional input. Accordingly, other L2 acquisition research has suggested not only that L2 instruction can integrate a focus on form with a focus on meaning (Doughty, Varela. 1998; Long, 1981, 1983, 1996), but also that “accuracy, fluency, and overall communicative skills are best developed through instruction that is primarily meaning based but in which guidance is provided through timely form-focus activities and correction in context” (Lightbown, Spada, 1990: 443). This is why studies in corrective feedback have increasingly investigated focused as opposed to unfocused correction and have plenty of evidence of its efficacy (Han, 2001; Lyster, 2004; Bitchener, Young, Cameron, 2005).

Since this paper’s research setting will be in a communicative based classroom, there will be a primary focus on teacher-student interaction. As previous researchers have pointed out, to promote the children’s interlanguage, their attention must be guided towards the differences between their IL form and the correct L2 language target being presented (Gass, 1990; Gass, Varonis, 1994; Schmidt, 1990, 1994; Schmidt, Frota, 1986). Therefore, the recast feedback I present as the teacher were planned to contain only one change at a time and to be more phonologically orientated than grammatical. For example, recasts should be broken down into parts such as “what”, “do you”, “want”, “for”, and “Christmas” so that any error in place of each morpheme could be easily noticed by the student hearing the recast. In this manner, it is hoped that a greater chance of repair and uptake can occur, as modeled in the research done by Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Lyster (1998a). Moreover, the recasts were planned to be provided as soon as a student made an incorrect utterance, in order to keep the focus on meaning while simultaneously drawing attention to correct form.

Chapter 3 ACTION RESEARCH

AR has a long history and has become prominent in ESL literature. Its popularity stems from the fact that the roles of teacher and researcher can be combined to create a qualitative study of the dynamics in a classroom. Though there have been some criticisms of its reliability and generalizability, this paper will outline why it is a useful tool when researching a children's second language classroom like mine.

3.1 Historical Overview

AR originated in the work of Kurt Lewin, who saw AR as a spiral of steps, "each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (Lewin, 1948: 206). It has emerged in English-language teaching literature since the late 1980s. The action component in many of these studies may be experimental, calling for an educator to initiate a controlled change into the existing (and duly described) situation, in response to a question or problem perceived in the first examination of the situation. The research element of AR tends to involve the systematic collection of data as planned changes are enacted, followed by analysis of what is revealed with the data, and reflection on the implications of the findings for further observation and action. AR is characterized by a spiral of cycles involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, which are applied according to the needs of the research environment and the personal and professional backgrounds of the researchers (Somekh, 1993), as well as limitations existing as part of the research site's contextual details, or as a function of time or other available resources.

Its history is now recognized as part of "a quiet methodological revolution" towards qualitative research approaches (Denzin, Lincoln, 1998: vii) that impacted social sciences in the latter half of the 20th century. The move towards participative, "naturalistic" enquiry, with its exploratory-interpretive underpinnings (Grotjahn, 1987: 59), is influenced by philosophical developments in humanistic psychology (Rogers, 1961), liberationist education (Freire, 1970), social phenomenology (Schutz, 1967), social constructionism (Berger, Luckman, 1966; Cicourel, Kitsuse, 1963),

critical theory (Foucault, 1970; Habermas, 1972), cultural studies (Frow, Morris, 2003), and feminist studies (Lichtenstein, 1988).

The idea of language teachers becoming involved in the investigation of goings-on in their classrooms gave rise to an image of the teacher as reflective, research-oriented, self-directed professional. This led to a growing interest in classroom-based research (Allwright, 1988; Chaudron, 1988, Day, 1990, Long, 1983; van Lier, 1988) and learner-centered curriculum development (Nunan, 1988; R. K. Johnson, 1989). The trend continued throughout the 1990s with a number of other notable publications (A. Burns, 1999; Edge, Richards, 1993; Freeman, 1998; Gebhard, 1996; Nunan, Lamb, 1996; Richards, Lockhart, 1996; Wallace, 1991, 1998). These publications created the emergence of a post-method era in curriculum and pedagogy (Kumarivadivelu, 1994; Prabhu, 1992; Richards, 1990) and recast the role of the teacher as that of a thinking professional rather than as a passive recipient of teacher-proof methods.

While orthodox social researchers may admit that AR is useful, some have argued that AR findings are either anecdotal or that they are based on telling stories rather than on doing science, or that AR is just a set of moral statements or a “philosophy” (Sorensen, 1992). In the language teaching field, Jarvis (1981) echoed one of the major arguments that had dogged AR from its inception—that research was an activity best left to academic specialists with high degrees of training and capacity, and that AR lacked academic prestige if it was to be carried out by mere schoolteachers. In defense of AR, it can be argued that it is situated in a methodological framework, and it offers genuine research methods, bridging the divide between research and practice. This appears to have been demonstrated to the full satisfaction of academic communities, especially during the past 10 years, such that AR is no longer counted amongst the more “controversial” of qualitative research methods.

3.2 Application of Action Research

AR avoids the use of a two-tier imaginary in which research is first carried out by theorist-specialists and knowledge generated from the research can only then be applied by practitioner-technicians. Instead, the two processes

of research and action are integrated. This is one reason why AR is a suitable model for addressing this paper's research interest. Because of the intensified scheduling necessitated by the performative business model in Eikaiwa, and also because of ethical concerns which would be justified in this context, testing students during or outside of classroom time is not possible in an Eikaiwa setting. Moreover, by examining the reactions and results within the proposed inquiry can provide a better understanding of the use of recasts in a real classroom with its complexities and variables. It can be said that action research confronts rather than minimizes the variables present in the research context and attempts to seek explanations inclusive of those real-life variables. Through the use of action research, this paper is able to unobtrusively observe the students' actions and reactions within the classroom and to report empirically on the efficiency of recasts. Thus, the aim of selecting this methodological stance is to provide a description and propose practical solutions that might have resonance for other practitioners in comparable situations. In this manner, an important aspect of action research is achieved through the development of research themes or issues which are acted upon within a declared framework and in relation to a specific context, and which provide the motivation for the research (Holwell, 2004).

AR in educational contexts is motivated by a number of different purposes, such as curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programmes, and systems planning and policy development. (Educational Research and Development Council, 1981, n.p.) This study's purpose is to examine the twofold innovation of implementing AR simultaneously with a simple example of technique which, duly theorized, is readily subject to scrutiny. In this way, I plan to gauge the effectiveness not only of my assessment of an addition to the current teaching methodology, but also the potential of AR itself for support through future innovations. By applying action research, I can carefully monitor the use of recasts without disturbing the normal flow of the classroom, thus capturing what I believe will be as close as possible to a naturalistic interpretation of what would happen in my classroom with or without the scrutiny I'm applying. The observations provided by a teacher-researcher while applying the innovation can, meanwhile, help provide better insights regarding how the students

react to the progressive and reflected use of recasts.

An important part of AR is that it accounts for the specific insights which the action researcher uses as the basis for each practical action step in order to bring about improvements in the situation s/he is researching. In this manner, the current study intends to explore the outcomes of the use of recasts in an effort to improve effective teaching. The validity of action research is tested by evaluating the impact of these action steps in a continuous process of data collection, reflection and analysis, interpretation, action and evaluation (Altrichter, Posch, 1989: 27-30). This cycle of reflection and action make the research process less predictable than in other research approaches, and thus it is more flexible and capable of change to accommodate the many variables in the present teaching environment (McNiff, 1988). An important aspect of AR is the development of research themes or issues which are acted upon within a declared framework and in relation to a specific context, and which provide the motivation for the research (Holwell, 2004).

Such themes as addressing and finding solutions to particular problems in a specific teaching or learning situation have been explored by other leading language researchers through AR (Edge, 2001; Hadley, 2003; Wallace, 1998). In the present study I am examining the specific problem of how to correct students' performances of language targets when metalanguage explanations are incomprehensible. This study is also an attempt to investigate an innovation and to understand the processes that occur as part of its introduction such as the studies conducted by A. Burns and Hood (1995), Lotherington (2002), Mathew (1997) and Thaine (2004). It is hoped that this paper can be seen as a resource to reduce the gaps between academic research findings and practical applications in the classroom which other researchers have conducted in similar studies (Crookes, 1993; Dufficy, 2004; Macleod, 2003; Sayer, 2005).

Action Research was chosen as a research tool because it is characterized by a spiral of cycles involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, which can be applied according to the needs of the research environment and the professional backgrounds of the researchers (Somekh, 1993). In an Eikaiwa

no kyoushitsu for young learners it is impractical to have the children complete questionnaires due to their low levels of self-awareness and understandings of what is required from them in a learning environment. Also, short class times and intermittent absences do not allow for a series of tests, thus AR seems to be an excellent method in which to determine the effectiveness of recasts. Action research can be conducted during lessons and it is flexible enough to accommodate the changing dynamics within the classroom. Since there is an existing format of a questions and answers period at the start of every class, children's reactions and responses to the use of recasts can be unobtrusively monitored while maintaining the quality of the learning environment. The plan is to introduce a new language target and carefully monitor the use and uptake regarding recasts. The teacher/researcher can record their observations, then later reflect on the innovation and act upon the results by making changes.

Chapter 4 RESEARCH DATA

Action research reports are nearly always written in the first person because the researcher is examining his or her own role, behavior and relationships in a particular social situation as part of the investigation. Furthermore, at the core of action research is the process of reflection in which research data is used to develop a better understanding of the complex dynamics which are inherent within the research environment. Action research reports need to document some aspects, at least, of the researcher's reflection in order to establish the validity of the research. In all forms of qualitative research, interpretations, judgments and decisions are made by the researcher through a process which Strauss and Corbin (1990: 41-47) call "theoretical sensitivity". In action research the involvement of the self as a participant in the research adds to the integrity of this process. The self is a research instrument and the practitioner-researcher must demonstrate reflexive awareness of the many factors which may have influenced his/her interpretations, judgments and decisions. The following sections will describe in the class room setting and weekly observations and reflections made by the researcher and will be followed by a discussion of what themes arose during this study

4.1 Research Setting

The research was conducted in a small, privately owned children's English Conversation School (Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu) in Sendai, Japan. The lessons are 50 minutes long and consist of a 10-minute question-and-answer period at the start, 20 minutes' vocabulary practice and 10 minutes of task-based activities, after which the final 10 minutes are dedicated to worksheets that are level appropriate to each class. The students have one class a week, four times a month. The classes are divided roughly by age (4-6, 7-9, 10-12 and 13-15) but children with higher abilities are allowed to join classes with older members. All the children in this study have been learning English at the school for a minimum of 10 months. I have been continuously involved with teaching children for 15 years in Japan, though my school is not that old and I haven't spent the entire 15 years in the same city. I am the sole owner/operator of my school and have designed both curriculum and

materials myself. Since I teach every class myself, I am very familiar with the learning needs and personality traits of my students. I believe that this will be an advantage when conducting action research. Through my teaching experience and understanding of both students and my teaching methodologies, I can better observe and assess the interactions which occur in my classroom. Richards supports this assertion when he states that teachers are natural researchers because they are used to working out the needs of students, evaluating the effects of approaches, can spot things that work or don't work and then adjust their teaching accordingly. (2003:232)

My classes are communication-based with a monthly theme, and it was entirely in keeping with familiar patterns of interaction that I introduced two questions during the question-and-answer period in relation the current theme of Christmas. The two questions were: "What do you want for Christmas?" and "What did you get for Christmas last year?" I avoided the use of Japanese language and modeled the questions and possible answers as a means of explaining the framework and meaning. In this manner, I also avoided the use of a metalinguistic explanation.

4.2 Participants

The children are all native Japanese with little or no exposure to foreign countries. There are 13 classes in this study with 12 girls and 21 boys. The age range is from 4 years old to 14 years old. The children's English level varies according to age but all have a functional understanding of asking and answering questions in English.

4.3 Procedure

In order to introduce the new target language, I asked question #1 of the first student (in each class—there were thirteen different classes but I maintained the same planned approach in each class for Day 1) and corrected him or her only through the use of recasts. I chose this first student in each class by the simple criterion of sitting closest to me. This first child was then required to ask the next student the same question, while I stood by to correct the question by recasting, calling for reformulation until the question was correctly formed. It was then the second child's turn to turn to the third child (if present, depending on the class size) and ask the same

question. I recorded the number of recasts needed by each student as well as any other observations that seemed relevant to the research. However, in this first round, I focused exclusively on the children's production of the question, and collected no data regarding their performance in terms of offering an answer to the question. I repeated the process for all students in the same way for question #1 in each class, and then introduced question #2 in the same manner, beginning with the same child and following the same sequence that I'd followed in monitoring their reception of question #1. I would also be sure to record any changes in mood or frame of mind for both myself and students during the day, and will monitor if and when the classes reactions were perceived to be different in nature. These questions will be asked and monitored for one month.

Question #1 acted as an example question because the children were already familiar with the patterns of "What do you want...?" and "...for Christmas?" Question #2 was more challenging for the students due to the novelty within my curriculum of the question structure, as well as the use of the irregular verb forms of get and got, although as long as I only concentrated on the question's presentation and performance, "got" (used only in answering the question) can only be assumed to raise their anxiety peripherally in phrasing the question correctly.

I kept score of the students' individual performances, grouped by class-time and based on the number of recasts that were needed on the part of each student until he or she could correctly ask and answer the question. I also kept track of the turn-taking sequence, shared amongst the children in each class, in which the questions were asked, week by week.

An example of the table produced according to these rules for data collection follows (note that the names provided are not real names of children in any of my classes):

Date	Week 1		Week 1		Week 2		Week 2		Week 3		Week 3		Week 4		Week 4	
	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R
Hiro (6)	T2	1	T1	3	T2	2	T1	3	T1	3	T2	3	T2	1	T1	2
Hana (5)	T1	4	T2	2	T1	3	T2	3	T2	2	T1	1	T1	1	T2	2
Average	2.5		2.5		2.5		3		2.5		2		1		2	

The value for “T” indicates the turn number. “R” indicates the number of recasts the child needed.

4.4 Stages of Collection and Reflection

In following with the cyclic patterns of acting, observing and reflecting required in Action research, the following sections will outline how the recasts were given, how they were acted upon, their effectiveness and my observations and reflections. The sections divided by weeks are representative of the start of each new research cycle. The intent of the following sections is to provide a description of my observation and reflection process. In order to preserve the narrative, I will summarize the data collected during that week into the average per question divided into classes and age groups. In the appendixes the actual recorded number of recasts required by class (appendix I) and by age (appendix II) is provided for greater scrutiny.

4.4.1 Week 1

The two questions were introduced after the usual warm up questions (e.g., “What’s your name?” and “How old are you?”) were finished. First, I pointed to the various Christmas decorations that were in the classroom and said “Christmas” until I felt the children understood the topic. I then gestured with my open hands and asked “What”; then, pointing at the students, I continued with, “do you” and then made the gesture of pulling my hands toward myself as I said “want”, and finally pointed back to the Christmas decorations and said “...for Christmas?” The children were already familiar with these hand gestures and question format because we had practiced (how many) weeks previously by talking about food and mealtimes (e.g. “What do you want for lunch?”).

I repeated the first question with the same gestures until the children gave the correct translation in Japanese. I then told them they were correct and next gave them a model answer. Using the same gestures, I said “I” pointing to myself, “want” bringing hands close to myself, and gave a slight pause before saying “Nintendo Wii”. I chose to say Nintendo Wii because I was sure every child knew what it was. Next I modeled the question and answer repeatedly while using gestures until the children provided an appropriate

translation in Japanese. The children were encouraged to translate the question's meaning and answer into Japanese because it demonstrated their understanding of the language target. I avoided the use of Japanese language except with the 6-year-old and younger classes, where judicious use of Japanese is sometimes necessary.

Next, I pointed to the student sitting closest to me and asked, "What do you want for Christmas?" Once the child provided a grammatically correct answer, I gestured for them to ask the same question of the child sitting next to them. I helped guide their utterance with gestures and only corrected them through the use of recasts. As the children asked and answered the first question, I wrote down how many recasts were needed by each child for both question and answer.

I repeated the same process for the second question. Using the same hand gestures I asked "What did you get for Christmas" but for the tail end of the question I used my thumb to point behind me as I said "last year?" By pointing behind me, I had hoped that the children could conceptualize a past event. This proved harder than I thought, and I had to elaborate by pointing downwards and say "this year", point forwards and say "next year" and finally point behind me and say "last year". This sequence of finger pointing is also known to the children because I use it to make the distinctions between "today / this month" (finger pointing downwards), "tomorrow / next month" (finger pointing forwards), and "yesterday / last month" (finger pointing behind me). The 4- to 6-year-old class eventually needed some Japanese to understand the difference from the first question and the second one. The other classes were able to understand after some repetition. Though the formulation of question #2 was not so difficult for the students, answering the question was. The students would take a longer time to produce and answer and when pressed, they would tell me in Japanese that they had forgotten what they had received the year before and despite encouragement to say anything at random they were unwilling to provide a factually incorrect answer.

In reflection, I found that I did in fact, monitor the answers to the questions for proper grammar structure, although I haven't reported when I began

monitoring. When the children produced their answers, I corrected their utterances for count/ non-count nouns as well as pluralization whenever possible. Also with the older classes, I would encourage them to attempt a translation of the merchandise they wanted, often producing some very comical translations. Many of the artifacts named in this activity wouldn't have English-language names or translations, so specific were the branded desires and imaginations of children at every age level. Aware that this problem may arise I determined that the names of the presents children reported having received or wanted would only need to be translated into English when it was actually possible. By making it a simultaneous presentation and practice of both question and answer forms, beginning (for each child in turn) and by answering the question; I found that there was a great deal of attention paid to both attention to form and meaning.

4.4.2 Week 2

The following week, I was concerned that I might overuse repetition and gestures when posing the questions and model answers, so I tried to reduce their occurrence as much as possible. It was discovered that for the classes aged 10 and up, repetition could be reduced to two or less times, but for the younger classes the children still required at least three repetitions before the first student was ready to produce an utterance. Surprisingly, this week's number of recasts required for both questions in each class increased from that of the first week, perhaps because of my reduced use of gestures and my own feeling that less time should be spent on presentation compared to the previous week: I approached the questions with a sense of reviewing familiar material. The average number of recasts given per class was 1.99 times for question #1 and 2.08 times for question #2. The average recasts given per age were 2.5 (4-6-year-olds), 2.0 (7-9-year-olds), 2.1 (10-12-year-olds) and 0.8 for 13- and 14-year-olds for question #1; 2.8 (4-6-year-olds), 2.0 (7-9-year-olds), 2.0 (10-12-year-olds) and 0.8 (13- and 14-year-olds) for question #2.

The cause of the drop in performance by the students was not clear to me during the lessons. In fact I didn't notice it until I was analyzing the data. One possibility is that the reduction in the use of repetition and gestures affected the student's accuracy in production. It appears that all classes still

required them as visual clues to proper syntax. Another possibility is that the novelty of the questions and answers had worn off and thus the students were not as careful when producing the questions and answers. According to the research done by Brock, Crookes, Day, and Long (1986), recasts may not elicit an immediate response from the learner, but they may have an effect in the long term. I hoped that because it is still early in the study, the absence of effects in the short term may not necessarily mean that effects over time would not exist.

4.4.3 Week 3

While reviewing both Week 1 and Week 2's data, I noticed the pattern where the first student's production needed more recasts than that of the second student and the third student would require even less recasts. In order to confirm whether it was the amount of repetitions or the student's aptitude, I decided that the student who had required the fewest recasts the previous week would take the first this week. Then they would ask the student who had the second-fewest recasts, and so on. As per the method for the second week, gestures and repetitions were used when only when necessary. I found that only question #2 still required some visual clues to produce the questions and answers correctly. The amount of recasts needed for all classes decreased and the students often helped coach each other. The average number of recasts declined from that of both the first and second weeks in regards to each class as well as age group. Recasts given per class averaged 1.41 times for question #1 and 1.22 times for question #2. The average of recasts given per age were 1.8 (4-6-year-olds), 1.4 (7-9-year-olds), 1.5 (10-12-year-olds) and 0.6 for 13- and 14-year-olds for question #1; 2.1 (4-6-year-olds), 0.8 (7-9-year-olds), 1.4 (10-12-year-olds) and 0.6 (13- and 14-year-olds) for question #2.

It can be claimed that the amount of accurate repetition within the class improves the students' uptake. Perhaps, indeed, the teacher is not the only member of class who is eligible to claim responsibility for recasting. Moreover, it may be that hearing a pattern uttered correctly, by any other member of the class, provides a form of recast which has not yet been identified in the context of error correction, working on the level of internal dialogue and self-correction in rehearsal prior to speaking. Perhaps even

automaticity can be traced as beginning in these situations of group rehearsal. By changing the order of turn taking, the weaker students were able to correctly produce the target speech items when they followed after the stronger students. Also, after a two week cycle, the students were better able to recognize and produce the target speech items as demonstrated by their willingness to lend support to their fellow classmates. Due to the reduction in recasts, I was hopeful that the students were acquiring and internalizing the target speech item.

4.4.4 Week 4

The last week of questions required the fewest recasts. I also avoided using repetition by modeling the questions only once. For the 10- to 12-year-old and 13- to 14-year-old classes no modeling was required. They were able to ask and answer the questions with very little prompting, and I will describe what prompts I used without modeling either the question or the answer. The use of gestures was also unnecessary in all classes but the 4- to 6-year-olds: they still needed it in order to correctly ask and answer question #2.

Interestingly, without the use of prompts, a new grammatical error arose in the 10-12 year olds and 13-14 year old classes. With their newly formed fluency, they began to ask and answer the questions more quickly than that of the previous weeks. This led to the mistaken inclusion of “to” after saying “I want...” when asking and answering the first question. Four times the question was mistakenly phrased as “What do you want ‘to’ for Christmas?” and five times the incorrect answer formulation of “I want to (name of present) for Christmas” was given. I assume that this erroneous language construction stems from the students original familiarization of the “I want...” pattern when they learned how to express the “I want to...” + “verb” form. It would seem that their lack of attention to form dredged up fossilized language patterns. The reoccurrences of this type of error is in accordance with Van Patten’s study (1990), which discerned that early-stage second language learners found it difficult to attend to form while attending to meaning, suggesting that when the focal attention is on meaning, voluntary attention to form is highly limited.

Again this week, I took care to ask the stronger students first, so as to allow for greater accuracy in repetition within the class before the weaker students' turns. My criteria for "strong" and "weak" were based on the students' number of recasts from the previous week. The student who needed the fewest recasts for the question at hand was considered "stronger" than that of another student who needed more support. The average recasts given per class were 0.93 times for question #1 and 0.95 times for question #2. The average of recasts given per age were 1.1 (4-6-year-olds), 1.0 (7-9-year-olds), 1.0 (10-12-year-olds) and 0.4 for 13- and 14-year-olds for question #1; 2.0 (4-6-year-olds), 0.4 (7-9-year-olds), 0.9 (10-12-year-olds) and 0.4 (13- and 14-year-olds) for question #2.

It appeared, going by the decrease in the number of recasts, that all classes had acquired proficiency in regards to the target language structure. Though the 4- to 6-year-olds required an average of 1.1 recast for the first question and an average of 2.0 recasts for the second question, it is an improvement from the preceding weeks. Notably, a semantic problem arose with the classes above 6 years old. Since the fourth week was after Christmas, the students were confused on how to address the question of what they "want for Christmas" because they had already received their presents and were not sure if they should provide answers entailing things they still wanted or of things they had wanted before Christmas. This would indicate that they were becoming aware of the grammatical intricacies of verb tense.

4.5 Discussion

During the four weeks of this study, the children needed fewer recasts in order to produce the language target. At first they seemed to rely on repetition and non-verbal clues such as gesturing, as well as the recasts, but eventually the need for these also decreased. It seems that the students' uptake was improved as the accuracy of the student productions also improved. With the absence of any metalinguistic explanations the students could develop an understanding of the target language and its meaning, all the while keeping attention on form through recasting. In this way, the corrective feedback had helped each (OR the average—but it would be a nice claim if each and every student had improved to some extent, comparing weeks 1 and 3 for example) learner to construct a form-meaning map

(Doughty, 2001), essential for true acquisition.

In answer to whether children can learn a new language target based solely on recasts, the outcome of this research has demonstrated its efficacy to my satisfaction, according to the following criteria. Firstly, the average number of recasts needed diminished as the weeks progressed, suggesting that through the decline for the need of support, the children had acquired the new language target to a degree. Secondly, despite the avoidance of metalinguistic explanations and the use of the L1, the children demonstrated a complex understanding of meaning as evidenced by their confusion regarding how to answer the questions after Christmas has passed. Lastly, the gradual proficiency in which the children were able to produce both the questions and answers are testimonial to the effectiveness of recasts. As the weeks progressed, they were able to develop both the speed and accuracy that suggests that they have truly acquired the new language target.

In regards to the question of the amount of uptake students can derive from recasts, the evidence is still not clear. In combination with the recasts given, the use of gestures appeared to improve the students' attention to form. Initially, they were unable to construct the questions and answers without the visual clues presented by the gestures despite clear and concise corrections presented in the recasts. Later, the youngest students depended on the gestures to remember the semantic differences between the two questions, which suggested that for this age-group the recasts alone were not enough to promote understanding of the differences between their IL and the language target being presented. In regards to the 10-12-year-olds and 13 to 14-year-olds, though they managed to acquire the language target with a relative amount of fluency, they still made errors when trying to ask and answer the questions without the teachers support. As. Lightbown and Spada (1999) have cautioned: "allowing learners too much 'freedom' without correction and explicit instruction will lead to early fossilization of errors" (p. 119). The occurrence of errors in the fourth week would suggest that there is a need for the continued use of recasts in order to keep their attention to form.

The question of learners noticing the recasts was easily identifiable in this

study. Students immediately made repairs once I gave the recast. In the last two weeks, students also did some self- and peer-repairs as well. This would indicate that the students' uptake was occurring. Since the children would quickly repeat my recast until their utterance was correct, I was assured of their attention to form. This is congruent with research conducted on parent-child corrective feedback, where it was found that children's sensitivity to negative feedback is evident in their tendency to imitate all or part of corrective recasts between two and four times more frequently than other kinds of parental responses (Bohannon, Stanowicz, 1988; Farrar, 1990).

The avoidance of using metalinguistic explanations proved to have some drawbacks. Though all of the children could eventually use and understand the questions, some of them had troubles using the irregular form of "get". However, this could be connected with the learn-ability of the structure. As Pienemann (1989) has claimed "the learn-ability of a structure is dependent on the readiness of the learner to acquire it." This means learners need to be at the correct developmental level to have the processing constraints required for acquiring the structure. This can be evidenced by the fact that the older students eventually perfected their use of "get / got" but the younger students still made frequent mistakes.

Chapter 5 CONCLUSION

Through the use of action research, this paper has examined the utilization and efficacy of recasts in a private children's Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu in Japan. The data and observations presented have shown that there is an impact on the students' interlanguage through the use on negative corrective feedback as evidenced by other empirical studies (Ellis et al., 1994; Gass, Varonis, 1994; Mackey, 1995, 1997a), and they support Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996). Through the use of intensive recasts this research suggests there may be an association between noticing and learning in regards to the development of question forms and answers. This promotes the idea that interactional feedback is associated with L2 learning, with the caveat that that the relationship is mediated by a learner's noticing of L2 form. In regards to developing a greater understanding of classroom research, action research has proven to be an effective way to observe and analyze the effects of an innovation without interfering with the duties of teaching. It provided an ideal opportunity to examine through reflection and practitioner research a specific aspect of teaching practices and, in so doing, contributed to a general understanding of how recasts affected the dynamics in one Eikaiwa no kyoushitsu.

The scope of this paper is limited to its specific setting, but it raises the question of at what level of learner development are recasts most effective. Is it possible to challenge Pienemann's assertion of "learn-ability" and teach a language target which, for the learner has no mental image or contextual understanding? Also the issue of which errors and when can most effectively be corrected lies beyond the scope of this paper, which focused on just one kind of example. On the pedagogical level, recasts represent a response to the need to integrate form-related activities into meaning-based instruction. In this study however, it is not clear whether the children are simply parroting their teacher's recast—or are they truly developing a greater understanding of the meaning and usage of the language target? In conclusion, though the use of recasts have proven to have an effect on the student's acquisition and proficiency of a target language structure, further research into the conditions in which they can be most effectively applied is

called for.

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APPENDIX I

Research Data by Class

Date	Week 1		Week 1		Week 2		Week 2		Week 3		Week 3		Week 4		Week 4	
	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R
Jun (6)	T2	1	T1	3	T2	2	T1	3	T1	3	T2	3	T2	1	T1	2
Saki (5)	T1	4	T2	2	T1	3	T2	3	T2	2	T1	1	T1	1	T2	2
Average	2.5		2.5		2.5		3		2.5		2		1		2	
Chiaki (11)	T3	2	T1	3	T3	2	T1	3	T2	0	T2	2	T1	1	T3	1
Maina (10)	T2	1	T2	1	T2	2	T2	3	T1	2	T3	1	T2	1	T1	1
Yuichiro(11)	T1	3	T3	1	T1	3	T3	2	T3	3	T1	3	T3	2	T2	2
Average	2		1.6		2.3		2.6		1.6		2		1.3		1.3	
Kanato (5)	T1	2	T3	3	T3	2	T1	4	T1	2	T1	4	T1	1	T1	3
Hideto (5)	T2	2	T2	2	T2	2	T2	2	T2	2	T2	1	T2	1	T2	2
Hayate (4)	T3	2	T1	3	T1	3	T3	1	T3	1	T3	2	T3	2	T3	1
Average	2		2.6		2.3		2.3		1.6		2.3		1.3		2	
Chisato (14)	T1	1	T2	1	T1	1	T2	2	T1	1	T2	0	T2	0	T1	1
Yudai (13)	T2	1	T1	2	T2	1	T1	1	T2	0	T1	1	T1	0	T2	0
Average	1		1.5		1		1.5		0.5		0.5		0		0.5	
Akari (9)	T1	2	T4	1	T4	2	T1	3	T4	1	T1	1	T1	0	T4	0
Hiroyuki (9)	T2	2	T3	1	T1	2	T4	2	T3	1	T2	1	T2	0	T3	0
Takaharu (9)	T3	1	T2	2	T3	1	T2	2	T2	2	T3	0	T3	1	T2	1
Miru (7)	T4	2	T1	1	T2	3	T3	2	T1	3	T4	1	T4	1	T1	0
Average	1.75		1.25		2		2.25		1.75		0.75		0.5		0.25	
Masanori(12)	T1	2	T2	1	T2	3	T1	2	T2	2	T1	1	T1	1	T2	1
Kenta (12)	T2	2	T1	2	T1	2	T2	2	T1	2	T2	3	T2	2	T1	2
Average	2		1.5		2.5		2		2		2		1.5		1.5	
Ryohei (9)	T3	1	T1	3	T2	3	T3	2	T3	1	T3	0	T3	1	T1	1
Yuuto (10)	T2	1	T2	1	T3	2	T1	2	T2	3	T1	2	T2	2	T2	1
Masato (9)	T1	1	T3	1	T1	3	T2	2	T1	2	T2	0	T1	0	T3	0
Average	1		1.6		2.6		2		2		0.6		1		0.6	
Megumi (13)	T1	1	T2	1	T1	0	T2	1	T1	1	T2	0	T1	1	T2	0
Average	1		1		0		1		1		0		1		0	
Yuuto (14)	T3	0	T1	1	T2	0	T1	0	T1	0	T1	1	T1	0	T1	0

Haruka (14)	T2	1	T2	1	T1	2	T3	0	T3	1	T2	1	T3	1	T3	1
Sayaka (12)	T1	1	T3	1	T3	0	T2	1	T2	1	T3	1	T2	0	T2	0
Average	0.6		1		0.6		0.3		0.6		1		0.3		0.3	
Tadamichi(6)	T2	1	T1	2	T2	3	T1	4	T2	1	T1	2	T2	1	T1	2
Average	1		2		3		4		1		2		1		2	
Takuma (8)	T1	1	T5	2	T2	3	T4	2	T3	1	T3	0	T2	1	T2	0
Minami (7)	T2	1	T4	2	T4	3	T2	2	T2	1	T2	1	T4	1	T4	1
Mayu (8)	T3	1	T3	1	T3	0	T3	0	T1	2	T1	1	T1	2	T3	0
Natsuki (8)	T4	1	T2	2	T5	0	T1	1	T4	1	T4	2	T3	2	T1	1
Yuri (7)	T5	2	T1	2	T1	3	T5	4	T5	1	T5	2	T5	2	T5	1
Average	1.2		1.8		1.8		1.8		1.2		1.2		1.6		0.6	
Sota (10)	T1	2	T2	2	T1	3	T2	3	T1	2	T2	1	T2	1	T1	1
Average	2		2		3		3		2		1		1		1	
Yuuki (12)	T2	1	T2	1	T3	0	T1	2	T1	1	T3	1	T2	0	T1	0
Akari (12)	T1	2	T3	1	T1	4	T3	0	T2	1	T2	1	T3	1	T3	1
Haruka (12)	T3	1	T1	2	T2	3	T2	2	T3	0	T1	0	T1	1	T2	0
Average	1.3		1.3		2.3		1.3		0.6		0.6		0.6		0.3	

APPENDIX II

Research Data by Age

Date	Week 1		Week 1		Week 2		Week 2		Week 3		Week 3		Week 4		Week 4	
	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R	Q1	R	Q2	R
Jun (6)	T2	1	T1	3	T2	2	T1	3	T1	3	T2	3	T2	1	T1	2
Saki (5)	T1	4	T2	2	T1	3	T2	3	T2	2	T1	1	T1	1	T2	2
Kanato (5)	T1	2	T3	3	T3	2	T1	4	T1	2	T1	4	T1	1	T1	3
Hideto (5)	T2	2	T2	2	T2	2	T2	2	T2	2	T2	1	T2	1	T2	2
Hayate (4)	T3	2	T1	3	T1	3	T3	1	T3	1	T3	2	T3	2	T3	1
Tadamichi(6)	T2	1	T1	2	T2	3	T1	4	T2	1	T1	2	T2	1	T1	2
Average	2		2.5		2.5		2.8		1.8		2.1		1.1		2.0	
Takuma (8)	T1	1	T5	2	T2	3	T4	2	T3	1	T3	0	T2	1	T2	0
Minami (7)	T2	1	T4	2	T4	3	T2	2	T2	1	T2	1	T4	1	T4	1
Mayu (8)	T3	1	T3	1	T3	0	T3	0	T1	2	T1	1	T1	2	T3	0
Natsuki (8)	T4	1	T2	2	T5	0	T1	1	T4	1	T4	2	T3	2	T1	1
Yuri (7)	T5	2	T1	2	T1	3	T5	4	T5	1	T5	2	T5	2	T5	1
Akari (9)	T1	2	T4	1	T4	2	T1	3	T4	1	T1	1	T1	0	T4	0
Hiroyuki (9)	T2	2	T3	1	T1	2	T4	2	T3	1	T2	1	T2	0	T3	0
Takaharu (9)	T3	1	T2	2	T3	1	T2	2	T2	2	T3	0	T3	1	T2	1
Miru (7)	T4	2	T1	1	T2	3	T3	2	T1	3	T4	1	T4	1	T1	0
Ryohei (9)	T3	1	T1	3	T2	3	T3	2	T3	1	T3	0	T3	1	T1	1
Masato (9)	T1	1	T3	1	T1	3	T2	2	T1	2	T2	0	T1	0	T3	0
Average	1.3		1.6		2.0		2.0		1.4		0.8		1.0		0.4	
Yuuto (10)	T2	1	T2	1	T3	2	T1	2	T2	3	T1	2	T2	2	T2	1
Sota (10)	T1	2	T2	2	T1	3	T2	3	T1	2	T2	1	T2	1	T1	1
Chiaki (11)	T3	2	T1	3	T3	2	T1	3	T2	0	T2	2	T1	1	T3	1
Maina (10)	T2	1	T2	1	T2	2	T2	3	T1	2	T3	1	T2	1	T1	1
Yuichiro (11)	T1	3	T3	1	T1	3	T3	2	T3	3	T1	3	T3	2	T2	2
Masanori(12)	T1	2	T2	1	T2	3	T1	2	T2	2	T1	1	T1	1	T2	1
Kenta (12)	T2	2	T1	2	T1	2	T2	2	T1	2	T2	3	T2	2	T1	2
Sayaka (12)	T1	1	T3	1	T3	0	T2	1	T2	1	T3	1	T2	0	T2	0

Yuuki (12)	T2	1	T2	1	T3	0	T1	2	T1	1	T3	1	T2	0	T1	0
Akari (12)	T1	2	T3	1	T1	4	T3	0	T2	1	T2	1	T3	1	T3	1
Haruka (12)	T3	1	T1	2	T2	3	T2	2	T3	0	T1	0	T1	1	T2	0
Average		1.6		1.4		2.1		2.0		1.5		1.4		1.0		0.9
Yudai (13)	T2	1	T1	2	T2	1	T1	1	T2	0	T1	1	T1	0	T2	0
Megumi (13)	T1	1	T2	1	T1	0	T2	1	T1	1	T2	0	T1	1	T2	0
Yuuto (14)	T3	0	T1	1	T2	0	T1	0	T1	0	T1	1	T1	0	T1	0
Haruka (14)	T2	1	T2	1	T1	2	T3	0	T3	1	T2	1	T3	1	T3	1
Chisato (14)	T1	1	T2	1	T1	1	T2	2	T1	1	T2	0	T2	0	T1	1
Average		0.8		1.2		0.8		0.8		0.6		0.6		0.4		0.4