

Prompts, uptake, modified output, and repair for L2 learners with foreign language classroom anxiety

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects which prompts had on learners with high and low anxiety. It has been suggested by the research literature that recasts have negatively affected learners with high anxiety. This has been a point of contention in the debate of whether explicit negative oral grammar correction is useful in L2 acquisition. Given that anxiety IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) have become increasingly common, the argument against OCF (Oral Corrective Feedback) warrants attention. It is important to note that there is lack of research investigating the effects of prompts on learners with anxiety disorders. This is an answer to that call. For this study four groups were formed: high anxiety learners given prompts, low anxiety learners given prompts, high anxiety learners given recasts, and low anxiety learners given recasts. The results of the study did confirm that recasts were in fact detrimental to the success of learners with high anxiety. More positively, the current study also showed that learners with high anxiety outperformed all other groups when given prompts as corrective feedback. This could be due to the increased amounts of uptake, modified output and repair. The results also concur with contemporary research that prompts are generally beneficial to all learners.

Keywords: oral corrective feedback; prompts; recasts; anxiety; repair.

Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar o efeito de estímulos corretivos em aprendizes com alto e baixo nível de ansiedade. Tem sido sugerido pelas pesquisas da área que reformulações corretivas afetaram negativamente os aprendizes com alta ansiedade. Este tem sido um ponto de discórdia no debate, se a correção gramatical oral negativa explícita é útil na aquisição de L2. Dado que a ansiedade em Planos Educacionais Individuais (PIE) tornou-se cada vez mais comum, o argumento contra *feedback* na correção oral (FCO) merece atenção. É notória a carência de pesquisas que investiguem os efeitos de negociação da forma relacionada com a ansiedade. Este trabalho se enquadra nessa linha de reformulações corretivas. Para este estudo foram

formados quatro grupos: aprendizes com alta ansiedade, frente a estímulos corretivos; aprendizes com baixa ansiedade no mesmo contexto; aprendizes com alta ansiedade frente a reformulações corretivas, e alunos de baixa ansiedade respectivamente. Os resultados do estudo confirmaram que as reformulações corretivas são de fato prejudiciais para o sucesso de alunos com alta ansiedade. De forma mais positiva, o presente estudo também mostrou que os aprendizes com alta ansiedade superaram todos os outros grupos, quando administrados pelo *feedback* corretivo por meio de estímulos corretivos. Isto pode ser devido às taxas aumentadas de *uptake*, modificações e reparo. Os resultados também concordam com a pesquisa contemporânea de que o *feedback* por meio de estímulos corretivos geralmente é benéfica para a maioria dos aprendizes.

Palavras-chave: *feedback* corretivo oral; estímulos corretivos; reformulações corretivas; ansiedade; reparo.

1. Introduction

The research in this study has grown out of my Master program at The Ohio State University. During the program I was required to complete student teaching and collect data for the purposes of my research. The current paper has been adapted from that work since the completion of the research and that program. It has been suggested by the research literature that it is significant for students to “notice the gap” according to the noticing hypothesis by Schmidt and Frota (1986), which claims that incomprehensible input is the point at which learning can be most critical. Thus, where there exists a gap in the understanding of an utterance there also exists a gap in the learner’s language ability. When a student notices an error, whether unintentionally or by correction, the noticed form results in uptake. It is therefore believed that noticing and uptake during such moments are essential in post-pubescent second language learning. It has also been suggested by the research that oral corrective feedback can be detrimental to students with anxiety disorders. In the past decade or so there has been much research on the different types of corrective feedback. Many researchers have found a clear distinction in prompts and recasts. These two types of feedback differ in the way the correction is elicited. Prompts are used when negotiating meaning (e.g., a teacher may ask a learner to rephrase what he has said or may

ask a question which would prompt a different response thus allowing the learner to negotiate the error in his utterance). Recasts are direct reformulations of the whole or part of an erroneous utterance by the instructor minus the error in the correct form. Much research has also been done on how these different types of feedback can best be put into practice. While the controversy over corrective feedback continues, it must regularly meet another educational issue, learner anxiety. Anxiety disabilities are becoming more and more common in our schools as our society has become more conscious that anxiety disorders exist and that they can interfere with the students' abilities to get the most out of the classroom. The foreign language classroom is a unique atmosphere where anxiety disorders are likely to be augmented. FLCA (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety) is a phenomenon which was coined by Horwitz and Cope (1986). Educators are in the best position to tackle this issue and corrective feedback is one tool of which educators have total control.

This study investigates whether corrective feedback can be used as a tool to lessen the gap between our students with and without anxiety disorders. There has been some research on the effects of recasts on students with anxiety disorders. These studies have shown that while recasts can benefit learners as a whole, learners with anxiety disorders can be negatively impacted. At this time the author of this paper is not aware of any research which investigates the effects of prompts on learners with anxiety disorders. This study will take a special look at prompts as corrective feedback during grammar instruction and how they compare with recasts when anxiety disorders are the focus of the study.

2. Research questions

(a) To what extent does classroom anxiety affect students' awareness of errors or abilities to "notice the gap" when given corrective feedback in the form of prompts versus recasts?

(b) Does the student produce uptake and if so then at what rate is it modified and repaired?

3. Review of the literature

In a review of the literature on oral grammar correction two prominent questions emerged for which foreign language educators need answers. The first is simply whether or not students should be corrected at all. If one believes that errors should be corrected, he must ask himself which type of correction is most useful (i.e., prompts/negotiation of form or recasts). In order to answer these questions one must first understand how language is learned. One learns foreign languages in the same way one learned his first. Rod Ellis (1993) presents us with the learning trajectory model. One learns his second language along the same trajectory as he learned his first. One goes through the exact same stages, just at different paces. If learning a second language is so similar to learning a first language then it must be understood how one acquires a first language.

All language learners, regardless of ability and age, learn a language (L1 or L2) in the same trajectory and in basically the same sequence as exhibited by Ellis. To address whether teachers should correct the grammar of students or not, early behaviorists and empiricists would argue that grammar correction is not necessary. They believed that humans acquire language based on conditioning and repetition. Skinner (1938), like Ellis, reasoned that learning a second language (L2) is little different than learning a first one (L1). Behaviorists similarly advocate the view that the learning of an L2 should be similar to an L1. While much of Skinner's theories may seem outdated, modern empiricists still contend that it would make sense that positive feedback be given to language learners. Many empiricists draw on this perspective to argue that, based on that logic, positive feedback is the only feedback which is necessary. Therefore, negative feedback, regardless of whether it does any harm or not, is simply unnecessary. (KRASHEN 1981; PINKER 1989).

The issue that is often underestimated by this line of research is the fact that post pubescent second language learning is not the same as first language learning. Although they follow similar patterns, it is the issue of success which bears the greatest difference. When asked what it takes to become a successful language learner, answers are different for first and second language learners. For L1 it all happens naturally for most individuals. Given normal conditions, all humans

become successful learners of their L1. Later in life when L2 success is not totally guaranteed, learners require help and support from other more proficient language speakers such as teachers and proficient peers. This can be illustrated by Vygotsky's ZPD or Zone of Proximal Development. Basically the ZPD is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he can do with help. This is where teachers and more capable peers come into play. Because second language learners do not learn in exactly the same way as first language learners, they cannot simply babble their way through class; they must receive corrective feedback. Some structures will easily be learned through trial and error, but the speaker is bound to produce erroneous utterances. If the learner does not receive help from more capable speakers, he will continue to produce erroneous utterances and may not realize where he has made a mistake. Educators are in the position to offer much assistance.

John Truscott takes Pinker's and Krashen's theories a bit further and recommends that foreign language educators should abandon grammar correction altogether (Truscott 1999). Truscott acknowledges that negative feedback could be useful to learners if it is given well and with extreme care. He questions most language teachers' abilities to do this and argues that it is better not to correct student's language at all. Truscott claims that, due to a multitude of factors which complicate error correction, it is next to impossible to do it well. He first explains the process of correcting. He explains that first the teacher needs to be an expert on the language and be sure that the feedback is correct. He believes this assumption has already excluded many "underqualified" language teachers as well as most "more capable peers". Then he argues that the teacher must be an expert on the student. He explains how issues such as learning styles, teacher-student relationships, and anxiety, among other issues, can complicate how a teacher gives, as well as how a student receives feedback. If the student is not fully taking the feedback in then all attempts at providing feedback are made in vain. Truscott also suggests that grammar correction at the very least creates unnecessary interruptions and thus undermines the communicative or content based classrooms goals. In short, Truscott argues that unless the perfect combination of teacher and student interaction are present, oral

grammar correction is simply not useful and would imply that L2 teachers should abandon grammar correction altogether.

Truscott's principal argument is that anxiety is something that is hard to recognize and can easily complicate learning. Given that most language teachers work with a large number of students, it is likely that many will go undiagnosed, and/or misdiagnosed. Learner anxiety has become a bit of a buzzword in the educational world these days. He brings up a valid point and anxiety is certainly present in every classroom. The foreign language classroom is a special place because anxiety issues are often augmented. Horwitz and Cope (1986) coined FLCA or Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. Over the past couple of decades, researchers have become more and more cognizant of anxiety. They explain the unique environment of the foreign language classroom in detail how three main types of classroom anxiety are affected. The three types are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Foreign language anxiety is special because the foreign language classroom uniquely combines content with personal and social issues. All types of anxiety can be greatly enhanced by such a dynamic subject. A subject is taught through various social media. The issues which are most familiar and most personal are used as the content through which grammars are taught. There is open talk about one's age, height, weight, daily routine, friends, hobbies, sports, likes, dislikes, wishes, fears, opinions, and lifestyle among a plethora of other topics. That list could seem nauseating to any teenager with even the mildest case of social anxiety. Apart from the personal nature of the topics which are covered, also the ways in which the subject matter is covered are likely to expound the underlying anxieties of our students. Those who are more apprehensive to speak are left with no option but to confront their fears. People who find it difficult to speak in groups are unlikely to have an easier experience doing so in a foreign language. Our goal in facilitating foreign language learning is to maximize opportunities for output as well as input. Similarly, some will have anxiety when trying to decipher a foreign language. This basic fear of not being able to understand someone is amplified from day one. The only way to get over that fear is to learn the language. This hardly serves as motivation for someone who is nervous listening to their teacher jabber in a way which they cannot understand. Another common term these days is test

anxiety. In an age where every child across our curriculum is tested, testing anxiety has become a common IEP (Individualized Education Plan). Since foreign language is not something which can be seen with our eyes, a multitude of formative and summative assessments must constantly be conducted. In a field where one must teach a very dynamic subject matter, one is blessed with an equally dynamic set of assessment tools. However, as Truscott suggests ... it is unlikely that all types of test anxieties can be avoided as at least some kind of summative assessment is generally required by the curricula of the schools by which teachers are employed. Also many students experience a fear of negative evaluation. This idea is at the heart of Truscott's argument against corrective feedback. How can negative feedback be given to a student who is likely to withdraw more and more from our class when it is given?

Younghee Sheen (2008) did a study on high and low anxiety learners of English use of articles. Specifically he examined how recasts, uptake, and modification affect learners with high anxiety. Sheen used four test groups: students with low anxiety who received recasts, students with high anxiety who received recasts, students with low anxiety who received no feedback, and students with high anxiety who received no feedback. Sheen reported that anxiety can play a major role in language learning. Sheen showed how the low anxiety group outperformed the high anxiety group when given recasts. He also showed that the low anxiety recast group outperformed both control groups as well. However, there was no significant difference between the high anxiety recast group and the two control groups. This evidence supports the claim that recasts can be a beneficial form of feedback when used in a well-controlled environment. It also adds fuel to the claims from the Truscott/Krashen camp that learners with high anxiety are likely to respond less and give less input when asked to modify their responses. The high anxiety recast group responded less frequently when learning English articles and it was found that they were less likely to produce uptake or modified output. Uptake and modified output have been shown to be critical steps in learning grammar based on the "noticing" hypothesis of Schmidt and Frota (1986). Schmidt (1995) better explains that "the noticing hypothesis states that what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning." Schmidt also states that a.) whether a learner deliberately

attends to a linguistic form in the input or it is noticed purely unintentionally, if it is noticed it becomes uptake; and b.) noticing is a necessary condition for L2 acquisition.

If recasts are so selective in the groups which they help or hurt then researchers must find a better way to correct our students' errors if they want to maintain that oral corrective feedback is necessary. It is believed that uptake is a crucial step in language learning. Schmidt and Frota (1986) build on Krashen's theory of $i+1$ (Krashen 1981). In order for a learner to go from i to $i+1$ the learner must realize that an error has been made to correct the error. Krashen himself has argued that 100% positive input can do this; however, as was illustrated by the Active Grammar Construction theory, both positive and negative feedback are necessary for our students to invent new rules. At times the learner must receive help from his tutors, teachers, and more capable peers in order to realize his errors. Then the learner must modify the output showing uptake or "noticing the gap". The noticing theory has been cited extensively throughout the research literature, and learner uptake is often measured and used as evidence of language learning. While it is not possible to accurately measure "learning", uptake can be measured. Sheen's findings are consistent with the ideas that oral corrective feedback is useful, and also with Truscott's claims that anxiety can be a complicating factor.

Truscott and Krashen believe that negative oral grammar correction is not necessary, while Schmidt and Frota believe that it is exactly what is necessary for learners to notice their mistakes. If learners cannot notice their mistakes, then they cannot take the steps necessary to correct them. Schmidt and Frota studied an adult learner of Portuguese during an exchange in Brazil. The learner was often surrounded by positive feedback as a listener living among native speakers of Portuguese. What they found was that the learner improved greatly when he was receiving language tutoring and did not improve greatly when he was not receiving language instruction. According to the case study the improvements were largely attributed to oral corrective feedback which was given during tutored sessions. The learner was only able to "notice" his mistakes when he was made aware of them through negative feedback. The study is used to show what a difference uptake makes in learner development.

The complexities of oral error correction in the foreign language classroom are anything but news to educators. Teachers fight the battle of focusing on form and focusing on content every day. (WALKER, 2000; DUFF, 1995). What remains unclear is when and how error correction should be made. Researchers have been focusing on that question. Long, Inagaki and Ortega (1998) conclude that recasts and other forms of negative feedback are more useful than models (positive feedback demonstrated in the correct form) because the errors are actually realized by the learner and thus more likely to be repaired. Their study uses Japanese and Spanish L2 classrooms to show that implicit negative feedback is taken for exactly what it is by learners and correlates uptake with students' realization of errors. Lyster (1998) explains that prompts create more learner uptake than recasts when dealing with grammatical structure. According to Lyster, recasts are shown to be beneficial for lexical and phonological errors, while prompts are more useful for grammatical errors. This is why some studies have shown recasts to be beneficial within controlled conditions. Foreign language teachers tend to focus their lectures more on grammar and less on lexical and phonological items. Negotiation of form is advantaged by the fact that it requires at or near 100% learner uptake since the student must modify his/her output in compliance with the culture of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. Egi (2010) shows that the quality of the modification of errors is related to learning and to future success with grammatical structures. He studied Japanese learners of English where he interviewed the test subjects while they watched their own recasts. The students confirmed that where there was uptake, there was also realization of errors. Pre-tests and post-tests from this study also suggested that uptake correlated with success.

Grammar correction tends to pose issues in content based learning. Truscott (1999) points out that in addition to his observations about teacher student relations, grammar correction can interrupt the flow of instruction thus making the content harder to follow or possibly ignored all together. He states that "correction, by its nature, interrupts communicative activities" (p. 442). He goes on to explain that they can divert the attention of the learner from the material which actually needs to be learned. Teachers are certainly familiar with the fact that interruptions can distract learners from content. In qualitative

studies in Hungary and insert: the United States carried out by Duff (1995), and Walker & Tedick (2000), immersion teachers expressed that they favored content over form in their lessons. They expressed their needs to keep up with the curriculum. It is hard for teachers to spend time focusing on the language when they only have so much time to teach the subjects which the students will be tested on. While they expressed the need to focus on meaning, they also expressed concerns that the system does the students a disservice by not providing enough form focused instruction (FFI). One teacher in Walker's study said that she believed that the students created interlanguages from so many cooperative group activities. These activities are a key component in immersion schools. It was stated by teachers in this study that there was a need for students to receive some feedback in the L1. Explicit explanation using the L1 could augment their understanding of the L2 form and reduce the tendency to create erroneous forms of the L2.

Farrar (1990, 1992) advocates the use of recasts, arguing that they (a) serve as both positive and negative evidence and (b) maintain a primary focus on meaning while enabling learners to notice errors in their inter-language production. Lyster and Saito (2010) conducted a meta-analysis that focused on 15 classroom-based studies. Recasts, prompts, and explicit correction were all able to positively affect L2 learners' interlanguage development. Learners seemed to benefit even more from the negative evidence available in prompts and from the greater demand they imposed for producing modified output. Lyster (2002) demonstrates that a focus on form does not have to sacrifice meaning. Teachers can use strategies which do not disrupt the flow of discussion by allowing the students to negotiate form via discussion in class. He presents a lesson taught by Rachelle, a francophone who teaches science in a French immersion school in Canada. Throughout the hour long excerpt Rachelle shows how negotiation of form is used without interrupting or creating breakdowns in the conversation. In her science lesson she simply redirects each student to the correct form while keeping them focused on the content at hand. These findings are important because the development of erroneous utterances and interlanguages is a chief concern of content based learning.

The immersion setting is certainly no isolated example. It has been demonstrated that similar results have been found in the

Analytical Classroom as well. (Lochtman 2002). In her study she finds that the same type of cluing which is used in the immersion setting is the preferred form of feedback in the ALC. She found that the more form focused the activity was, the more negotiation of form was present as opposed to recasts. It was stated that the teachers in the study corrected extensively; they corrected 90% of all errors in the database of 10 hours. It should be pointed out that both Lochtman's ALC study as well as Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that when form negotiation strategies were used that uptake was produced nearly 100% of the time, whereas recasts were less consistent and often produced no uptake. This is the advantage which prompts have over recasts. By their very nature they elicit student responses. Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) investigated prompts versus recasts in dyadic interactions with native speakers of French at an English speaking university in Canada. They found that repairs were made 98% of the time when prompts were given as corrective feedback and 4% of the time when recasts were given as feedback. The previous studies mentioned have shown that uptake is a critical step in correcting erroneous utterances. This further supports Lyster's earlier claims that prompts best promote uptake, modification, and repair. It is important to note that similar trends are found which identify uptake as an important part of L2 acquisition across multiple types of studies in different contexts including immersion (e.g., Lyster), ALC (e.g., Lochtman), and tutored instruction (e.g., Schmidt and Frota).

4. Research setting

This study took place in a suburban public high school in the American Midwest. The school district is in a middle class, primarily white neighborhood. A total of 48 students in 3 parallel sections taking an intermediate German class participated in this study. All but one student in the study were monolingual speakers of American English. The exceptional student was a heritage speaker of Spanish who had all of his former schooling in the United States. It is important to note that the 48 students who participated in this study were from an original group of 67. Some students were omitted based on natural and uncontrollable factors. One student indicated that he did not wish for

his image to appear in any footage which was used for the data collection process, 2 students did not bring a permission slip back to school with them, and the remaining 16 were chronically absent and did not take part in surveys, pre-tests, or post-tests.

5. Methodology

In this section the mixed methodology for the study will be explained. By observing, collecting survey and test data, and evaluating responses the researcher was able to triangulate the answer to the research questions. The main research question was: “To what extent does classroom anxiety affect students’ awareness of errors or abilities to “notice the gap” when given corrective feedback in the form of prompts versus recasts?” (b.) “Does the student produce uptake and if so then at what rate is it modified and repaired?”

In order to answer the first question, groups with different levels of anxiety were formed. Similar to Sheen’s study, this yielded four groups of students from which the data were collected: learners with high anxiety given prompts (N = 13); learners with low anxiety given prompts (N = 17); learners with high anxiety given recasts (N = 9), and learners with low-anxiety given recasts (N = 9). In order to measure anxiety a survey instrument was used. For the purpose of this study, the industry standard used by psychologists, The Beck Anxiety Inventory was selected. The BAI is well known within the field of psychology and is ranked as one of the most reliable anxiety inventories on the market. This was meant to present a general and broad anxiety score. The reason for a more general score is that the purpose of this study was not to investigate anxiety types in great detail but rather to investigate how anxiety in general affects learners when given prompts and recasts as corrective feedback.

Prompts and recasts were recorded with field notes taken from observed video footage. All class sessions were videotaped in order to allow the researcher to properly document the corrective feedback types. Detailed field notes were taken and each response was listed as either possessing or lacking four traits: recasts/prompt, uptake, modification, and repair. The data collected from the field video footage also satisfied question b.

The third important data set was collected by pre-test and post-test. The researcher was interested in seeing how the students improved over time within and across the test groups. Pre-test and post-test data can better address to what extent corrective feedback had on the test subjects. The data from these tests were compiled and then analyzed for improvement, mean scores, and standard deviations. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to show that a certain range in scores within similar groups should be expected and to illustrate the significance between groups.

The study was conducted for a total of 10 days where a pretest, 6 days of treatment and a post-test delayed by three days were administered over the course of one grammar unit. The focus of the grammar unit was German dative pronouns when expressing how something was pleasing and to whom. The unit was one element within the context of a broader unit about taking a vacation. This was the first explicit instruction on dative pronouns the students had received. The oral corrective feedback data was collected by video tape and students were asked to have a permission slip signed by their parents, which stated that they could appear in a video that was to be used by the researcher solely to fulfill a requirement for his M. Ed. coursework and educational research. Three weeks prior to the study an anxiety survey was administered.

At the high school, students were placed into parallel sections randomly. Two of the sections were randomly assigned as prompt treatment groups, and the one remaining class was assigned as a recast treatment group. The reason for two prompt groups was in order to get more Ns since prompts are the focus of this experiment and recasts are offered as supportive and contrastive evidence. This created two treatment groups: prompts (N=30) and recasts (N=18). These two treatment groups may be referred to in this paper as “Treatment Group 1” (prompts) and “Treatment Group 2” (recasts). Students were placed into two groups with those distinctions based on an anxiety score: high anxiety (N=22) and low anxiety (N=26). Based on anxiety and treatment type, 4 test groups were created: students with high anxiety receiving prompts (N= 13), students with low anxiety receiving prompts (N=17), students with high anxiety receiving recasts (N=9), and students with low anxiety receiving recasts (N=9). Because the sections were assigned at random the two groups were very similar.

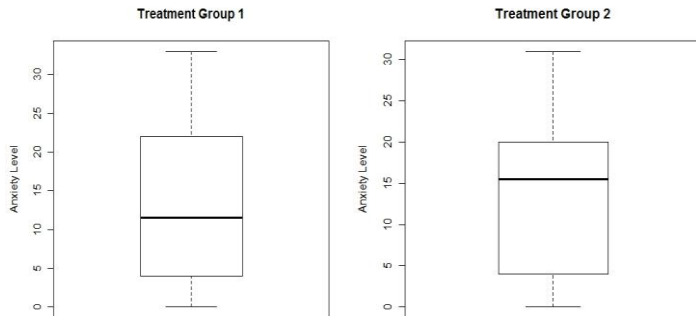
The average student age was 15.56 years old in treatment group 1 and 15.5 years old in treatment group 2 at the time of the study. In treatment group 1 there were 15 males and 15 females. In treatment group 2 there were 14 males and 5 females.

Three weeks before treatment, the students were given a Beck Anxiety Inventory. The Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), created by Dr. Aaron T. Beck, is a 21-question multiple-choice self-report inventory that is used for measuring the severity of an individual's anxiety. The twenty-one questions are about how the subject has been feeling in the previous week, expressed as common symptoms of anxiety (such as numbness, hot and cold sweats, or feelings of dread). Each question has the same set of four possible answer choices, which are arranged in columns and are answered by marking the appropriate one with a cross. These are: not at all; mildly (it did not bother me much); moderately (it was very unpleasant, but i could stand it); severely (i could barely stand it). The BAI has a maximum score of 63. The test is scored as follows: 0-7 (minimal level of anxiety); 8-15 (mild anxiety); 16-25 (moderate anxiety); 26-63 (severe anxiety). The updated BAI (Beck & Steer, 1990) recently has been listed among the six most commonly used self-report measures of anxiety for adolescents and adults, making it a reliable self-reporting assessment. It is important to note one change which was made for the purpose of this study. The one week time frame was changed to the previous three months. The frame of three months was set to avoid a snapshot like result, so as to get a bigger picture of how the student normally feels. A professional consultant who practices psychology with adolescents advised using the longer time frame due to the volatile nature of teen personalities. The groups were significantly similar based on a t-test result where the null hypothesis was that the anxiety levels of the two groups were not significantly different. The null hypothesis did not fail and the t-test result yielded a p-value $>.05$. The mean scores of treatment groups 1 and 2 were 13.06667 and 14.66667 respectively. In figure 1, the two groups are represented in box plots.

The anxiety survey and pretest were taken before treatment began. Treatment lasted for two weeks during 48 minute periods of German for 6 days. Over the 6 days and three sections a total of 864 minutes were taped. When grammar was the focus of the lecture, data was collected. The data consisted of student responses which were

classified as either prompts or recasts. The prompts and recasts were further documented as to whether they produced uptake, modification, and if modified whether the modification was a repair. The Post-test was delayed by 3 days to better illustrate actual retention.

Figure 1. Anxiety levels between test groups



6. Limitations

This study was by no means a definitive work but rather a first attempt to shed some light onto a question which has not been well explored and remains the center of much controversy within the SLA community. One limitation was time. As part of a master's degree program there was only a short window of time to collect data. Similarly, the number of courses was relatively small. With more time and less restrictive conditions the study could be done on a larger scale in multiple classrooms and settings with higher numbers of subjects. In this study only one school and three sections of German 2 were available to the researcher. For the purpose of this study, general anxiety levels based on the BAI were given. It should be noted that the broad interpretation may include anxiety disorders which may not fall under classroom anxiety as it is defined by Horwitz and Cope (1986). The BAI was chosen for its robustness, standardization and wide acceptance by professional psychologists who were consulted by the researcher.

A more specialized look at how different types of anxiety affect students given the condition of oral corrective feedback in the form of prompts and recasts may display a different result. Of course this would require a great deal of work and therefore two issues stand out as research limitations with regard to anxiety. First, it was not feasible in the classroom setting to isolate anxiety as a factor which is brought on by teacher remarks. Secondly, it was not feasible to list all of the things which are included under “classroom anxiety”. For the purpose of this paper the researcher chose to compare high-anxiety learners and low-anxiety learners who received prompts and high-anxiety learners and low-anxiety learners who received recasts. It should also be pointed out that the definition of high anxiety and low anxiety is based on the lower and higher two categories of the four categories established by the BAI.

Also because of the time constraints no true delayed post test was administered. For this reason the researcher chose a semi delayed post-test. The semi delayed post-test should be at least useful in not allowing for “crammed” knowledge to contaminate the test data, but a true delayed post-test would better show retention of the subject material. This document is only the beginning of more studies to come. Oral corrective feedback remains as controversial as what educators are to do with their students who suffer from FLCA disorders. More studies will be needed to solve these issues.

7. Findings

Tables 1 and 2 represent the oral corrective feedback data. Over the course of the 6 days, at least part of the lesson was devoted to explicit grammar instruction. The data appearing in these two tables show how students in each test group responded to the prompts and recasts. The goal was to treat one group exclusively with prompts and the other exclusively with recasts. Aside from very few exceptions this rule was maintained more than 90% of the time in both groups. Figure 1 depicts how treatment group 1 (prompts) responded to the prompts. There are some key points to notice here. First, prompts resulted in 100% uptake. If it is believed that uptake is the first step to noticing the gap, then this strategy is working. The errors were modified and

reformulated 75% of the time. While this may not be the 98% achieved by Lyster and Izquierdo (2009), it is still high. Similar findings appear in Lyster (2001) where repairs were made 61% of the time using prompts for grammatical errors.

Table 1. Treatment group 1 (N= 30)

	Uptake	Modifications	Repair
Prompts N= 72	N= 72 100%	N= 66 91.66%	N= 54 75%
Recasts N= 6	N= 4 66.66%	N= 2 33.33%	N= 2 33.33%

Table 2. Treatment group 2 (N=18)

	Uptake	Modifications	Repair
Prompts N= 1	N= 1 100%	N= 1 100%	N= 1 100%
Recasts N= 22	N= 4 18.18%	N= 4 18.18%	N= 1 4.54%

Table 2 represents the recast data for treatment group 2 (recasts). The number of Ns is smaller, because the recasts subjects were only present in one section, where prompt treatment was conducted in two sections. The recast data contrasts starkly with the prompt data. Rates of uptake, modification, and repair fall significantly when recasts are given as corrective feedback. Uptake and modifications are not expected to occur 2 out of 10 times which implies that more than 8 out of 10 times when the students are corrected they do not acknowledge it aloud in any way. For an educated it is hard to tell what the students are receiving as “take home points” from the lesson. The results also report only a 4.54% repair rate for the recasts in figure 2. Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) reported similar findings at 4%. Also Lyster (2001) reports a repair rate of 5% for recasts correcting grammatical errors.

The importance of these findings is that they are comparable with the findings in the research literature which have been done on prompts versus recasts. Consistently the literature has shown that

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prompts and recasts differ crassly when measuring uptake, modification, and repair. As the findings represented in this study are consistent with findings found in other studies, it can be assumed that the students in this study respond to corrective feedback in a similar way to how other students in other settings have responded to the same feedback types.

Tables 3 and 4 are particularly interesting.

Table 3. Treatment group 1 (N=30)

Anxiety	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
LA	(M) 0.59 (SD) 2.43	(M) 42.94 (SD) 23.12	(M) 42.35 (SD) 21.95
HA	(M) 0.77 (SD) 2.77	(M) 47.69 (SD) 27.43	(M) 46.92 (SD) 27.5

Table 4. Treatment group 2 (N=18)

Anxiety	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
LA	(M) 0 (SD) 0	(M) 43.33 (SD) 32.4	(M) 43.33 (SD) 32.4
HA	(M) 5.56 (SD) 16.67	(M) 40 (SD) 25.5	(M) 34.44 (SD) 26.03

Before discussing the results it is necessary to draw attention to the culture of a suburban high school in the American Midwest. Test results tend to fall along a bell curve because the students are randomly placed within sections and no tracking takes place. Students range greatly in ability level. The standard deviations are given with the figures in order to illustrate the point that results tend to vary and favor mediocre and radical scores. The pre-test was administered before the students had ever had any explicit instruction with German dative pronouns. It was expected that mean scores would be close to 0 on the pretest which turned out to be the case. Only three students from the group of 49 scored above 0. Their scores were 10, 10, and 50. It is possible that these results could have been merely by chance, however, the mean scores were in fact near zero. Post-test scores produced the usual bell curve: in all groups high scores of 90% and above, scores of

0%, as well as scores which fell closer to the mean. This is illustrated by the SD scores of around 20 and 30 percentage points.

It is understood that prompts and recasts differ enormously in uptake, modification, and repair. What has not been represented in the research literature is how anxiety can affect a learner's success in a foreign language. Similar to Sheen (2008) it was found that the lowest scoring group was the high anxiety recast group. This is not a surprising result since the research has consistently described the harmful effects of recasts on learners with high foreign language classroom anxiety. In Sheen's study a negative improvement result was found between pre-test and post-test results for that group. This was the only group in his study to have a negative improvement result and thus was the poorest performer. It can be seen that the mean improvement scores in our study were found to be in the 42-47% range for all three other groups where the high anxiety recast group only improved their scores by a mean score of 34.44%.

The other end of the spectrum is equally interesting. The high anxiety prompt group had the highest performer and showed the most improvement. Unfortunately, there are no other studies to compare these results with because this type of study has not been done before. The results of this study concur with Sheen's findings that low anxiety groups are helped by recasts. What the current study also shows is that prompts and recasts were equally as effective for low anxiety groups. So while prompts do not harm low anxiety learners, they greatly help high anxiety learners when given as feedback on grammar. It is fair to admit that high anxiety learners are greatly disadvantaged in many facets in the foreign language classroom. This study provides encouraging news that at least when giving grammar feedback, prompts can offer some biased success for students with FLCA.

8. Discussion and conclusions

Educators have some decisions to make, such as, should teachers correct their students? Ultimately, each teacher must get to know his/her students and who they are as learners. This is all part of an effective teacher's daily work. Teachers must continue to differentiate their lessons to include all learners as equitably as

possible. Anxiety, of course is just one of the many issues that teachers worry about daily. Truscott's claims about under-qualified teachers are totally unsubstantiated and he provides no evidence for his claim. Any effective teacher should be able to understand his/her students well enough to understand which forms of oral feedback are appropriate. If anxiety issues become a problem, then other steps may be required. Educators are employed to make such judgment calls. Teachers can choose to correct grammar in less confrontational ways, but should not ignore errors completely. The evidence presented in this study shows that prompts can provide a less confrontational option while benefiting all students when covering the intimidating topic of grammar in the classroom. It is true that learners must construct their language both actively and positively, but oral grammar correction is simply necessary for speakers to produce uptake and "notice" the gap in order to take the steps towards actual language learning. In light of the current study, prompts should be recommended as a default for foreign language educators when giving oral corrective feedback on grammar, because it not only allows the student to actively participate in his own language learning, but it also allows for the maximal amount of learner uptake, which correlates with language learning. Lyster and Saito (2010) directly refute the claims posed by Pinker (1989) and Krashen (1981) that negative error correction is not useful for foreign language learners. Their meta-analysis showed that learners greatly benefited from oral corrective feedback and that the benefit was maximized by prompts because of the opportunity to modify output and thus repair their errors. The findings also refute Truscott's (1999) claim that negative error correction is detrimental. While this may be true in some cases for recasts, this broad generalization cannot be applied to prompts when teaching grammar. Negotiation of form can also exist outside of strictly form-focused environments. It is necessary to admit that 100% positive input learning poses many obstacles for the L2 learner. Educators are charged with the duty to teach their students the prescribed content, but they must also carry out their task as language teachers. The development of interlanguages is one of the most obvious criticisms of content-based instruction. This is the area where it falls significantly short of the Analytical Learning Classroom, which implements a strict FFI curriculum. The research shows that educators do not have to sacrifice form for meaning and that negative oral

grammar correction is not only useful but necessary for teachers to implement as it has significant advantages over other forms of correction. Prompts not only bridge the gap for form in content based approaches but also bridge a gap between anxiety levels in learners in all settings.

More research must be done on how specific types of corrective feedback affect FLCA. There also needs to be more research about what types of classroom anxiety are affected and how. Horwitz and Cope explored the types of classroom anxieties, Lyster has explored the difference between prompts and recasts, Sheen has explored how recasts affect anxiety, but a great deal of research must still be done to bring all of these findings together. Similar studies to this one as well as that of Sheen's must be done with greater Ns across various settings and institutions. The research has been very clear that OCF is useful and necessary for L2 learners. Learners who struggle with anxiety are in an especially peculiar position in the foreign language classroom; however, they remain as capable as any other student in the classroom. Educators must meet the challenge to educate all of our students and if they can just slightly change how their students are corrected and it makes a difference, then it is well worth the effort. This study has shown that prompts can be especially effective for learners who struggle with classroom anxiety in general. The results may help point us in the right direction. As this issue continues to be researched, it is to be expected that the knowledge of how prompts affect FLCA learners will improve.

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