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The Effectiveness of Interactional Feedback on English Grammar Perception in Oral

Context-Based on Chinese Students

by

Yuman Zhao

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements

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Thesis committee:

John P Madden, Chairperson

Choonkyong Kim

Dr. Hung-Chih Yu

Abstract

Interactional Feedback is one crucial strategy that is widely implemented by language teachers in real classrooms, but there is no agreement about the effectiveness of different types of feedback on students learning. This study compared the different perceptions and different effectiveness of recasts and prompts on acquisition of past tense. Fifteen Chinese English learners and three language teachers were recruited from a university in the Midwest region of the U.S. Each teacher was responsible for helping five participants complete three tasks: the Interaction Task, the Retelling Task, and the Stimulated Recall Task. During the Interactional Task, each participant would complete three picture stories with the teacher under three conditions: recast, prompt and no feedback, respectively. Then, students were asked to retell the story immediately after the interaction with the teacher. Finally, the researcher of the study guided students to complete the Stimulated Recall Task to measure their perceptions of the different feedback conditions. After analyzing the Interactional Task and the Stimulated Recall Task, the results indicated that students were more successful in perceiving the target of recasts than prompts. For the effectiveness of the three conditions, the Friedman Test showed there was not a significant difference among recasts, prompts, and no feedback conditions that promoted participants to a better acquisition of the past tense. The findings of the study suggest the extent of effectiveness of feedback might be affected by variation of students. Therefore, ESL teachers should take students' different backgrounds and learning experiences into account while choosing the personalized or tailored feedback for students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the Institute of International Education (2019), Chinese students are the largest single group of international students in the higher education system of the U.S. Data shows that the number of Chinese students in the U.S. between the academic years of 2018 and 2019 was 369,548. In addition to this, Chinese students make up about 33.7% of the total number of international student enrollment. This percentage has increased by 21.5% within the past five academic years from 2015 to 2019 (Institute of International Education, 2019)

A growing body of empirical studies in second language acquisition has been carried out and has long searched for the most effective approach to facilitate English acquisition. In the past, interaction has been a crucial research topic in the field of Second Language Acquisition. Long (1983, 1985, 1996) proposed *the Interaction Hypothesis* and claimed that learners can benefit from the interaction with interlocutors by negotiating the conversational message.

Based on Interaction Hypothesis, Gass and Mackey (2006b) combined multiple approaches to English acquisition within one study. Those approaches included input, interaction and production. They defined interaction as a process in which learners can recognize the distinction between their interlanguage and the target language. When this occurs, they can modify their innate language structures through conversation. As a result of this interaction, feedback is provided by the interlocutors, and it can assist L2 learners to formulate their utterances.

Feedback Theory is another scope that researchers seek to explore and gain further insight into how it impacts second language acquisition. There are two types of feedback: explicit and implicit feedback (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). The explicit feedback is rarely used in the

classroom or other settings because this approach is regarded as discouraging. Whereas implicit feedback, such as recast and prompt, is an indirect approach to offer feedback and is widely used by language teachers in the classroom context (Gass & Mackey, 2013). Therefore, it is worth gaining a better insight of the effectiveness of implicit feedback given in interactional activities.

From a linguistic perspective, the distance between two languages can also inhibit a learner's language development. One challenge for Chinese students learning English is the variation between the tense forms of English and Mandarin Chinese. This is because Mandarin Chinese does not conjugate verbs to past tense, but instead uses adverbs and time markers for past actions.

Based on personal experience, defining the benefit of feedback from an interlocutor can be controversial. When I communicated with my former roommate, a native speaker of English, she attempted to correct the errors that I committed. However, I failed to acquire certain language features, such as the past tense, until a later time. Occasionally, I noticed my roommate try to reconstruct my incorrect utterance(s) by providing the correct form. However, most of the time I didn't even notice her attempts to correct me. The only type of feedback that my roommate used was recast. This leads me to question, if my roommate had prompted me to self-correct, would there have been a different outcome? I want to understand the process and find out what caused the failed acquisition. This personal experience drives my interest in the impact of recast and prompt in language acquisition, and I long to gain an understanding of the role that different types of feedback have on interaction. This inspired my motivation to pursue the current study.

Even though Chinese students are a critical component of the U.S education system, there are rarely any specific empirical studies that have been done on the large population of Chinese students and the impact of interactional feedback on their L2 perception (Lyster, 2004; Amar & Spada, 2006). Corrective feedback is a salient method and plays a facilitative role in language enhancement (Mackey & Goo, 2007). For this reason, I would like to explore the perception and effectiveness of interactional feedback on spoken grammar based on Chinese students studying English in the U.S.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Long (1983; 1985; 1996) proposed the Interaction Hypothesis and addressed the role of interaction in language acquisition. He asserted that communicating with English speakers or non-English speakers can yield a negotiation outcome. Then interlocutors can accommodate the linguistic level they use to the learner's language capacity. Therefore, the appropriate language level can stimulate language acquisition "because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (Long, 1996, p.451). The hypothesis is in response to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) that claimed that $i+1$ of comprehensive input is sufficient and necessary to prompt L2 development. Gass (2003) indicated that interaction research "takes as its starting point the assumption that language learning is stimulated by communicative pressure and examines the relationship between communication and acquisition and the mechanism (e.g., noticing, attention) that mediate between them" (p. 224). The viewpoint incorporated Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990, 1993) that defined that "subliminal language learning is impossible, and ... notice is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input to intake" (1990, p. 129). On the other hand, Mackey and Polio (2009) interpreted how interaction mediates second language acquisition from the cognitive perspective. She described that learners could notice the differences in both syntax and semantics by interaction so that learners could reconstruct the current interlanguage knowledge and achieve the process of transferring input to intake. In other words, the conversation and interaction in the authentic environment can contribute to learners having a clear understanding

and comprehension of the knowledge that they have previously learned. As a result, that interaction can enhance learners' performance in language.

Grounded on this point, Swain (1995) put forward the *Output Hypothesis* which emphasized the critical effect to produce target language structures or patterns in their discourse because "output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, non-deterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production" (Swain, 1995, p.128). Gass, Behney, and Plonsky (2013) demonstrated that output plays an essential part in the language achievement because the output process can manipulate the existing interlanguage system and it can also create an opportunity to gain corrective feedback from interlocutors to fix their ill-formed utterances. The model of interaction and learning (Gass & Mackey, 2006b) can provide us with a comprehensive insight into the process. According to the Model of Interaction and Learning by Gass and Mackey (2006b), if language learners cannot acquire adequate information in a conversation, they will change the flow of the conversation to negotiate for meaning. Additionally, they can receive feedback on their production. Thereby, they potentially draw attention to the linguistic configurations, which leads them to notice the difference between their erroneous production and the target language configuration. In other words, the interaction can orient learners to develop conversation or communication with native speakers or proficient English speakers. Because of the limited ability to understand conversations, there is a breakdown in communication. Under these circumstances, if learners want to obtain a clear understanding of a conversation or its context, learners need to interrupt the flow of that conversation to negotiate meaning so as to participate in the conversation once more. In the process, learners have more opportunities to

reproduce utterances and receive more feedback. The role of feedback in the process is to assist learners in exposing an interactional environment and noticing the gap between the errors they commit and the correct linguistic forms. What is more, prompts can also contribute to learners' self-repair and stretch their interlanguage system to produce the corrective language structure. As a result of interaction and output, interactional feedback can contribute a salient promotion in their second language development.

Types of Interactional Feedback

Process of acquiring language is dynamic and the quality and quantity of feedback plays a crucial role to assist learners in realizing and repairing their errors throughout said process. Moreover, feedback serves as the information complement function where sufficient and efficient information can scaffold learners to reconstruct their utterances and modify the interlanguage system. In light of Lyster and Ranta's (1997) point, there are two types of feedback manners: explicit feedback and implicit feedback.

Explicit feedback

Explicit feedback is to directly point out what is incorrect within an utterance and then highlight the correct form. In explicit feedback, the teacher or interlocutor provides an explicit correction in a metalinguistic form along with a correct reformulation. The example below shows how the interviewer uses explicit feedback to correct the learner.

Example

R The teacher he are, not interact in, speak, or, with eh eh students.

I He doesn't interact. You should say "he doesn't".

(Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 59)

Implicit feedback

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), the subcategories of implicit feedback include recasts and several kinds of prompts. Explicit feedback refers to a process in which direct forms of feedback are provided to learners to repair the utterance. In other words, capable interlocutors directly point out that the learner's utterance is ill-formed. The implicit feedback, on the other hand, highlights that teachers or instructors do not point out the errors in the utterances, but attempt to guide learners to reproduce the correct utterance(s) through offering recasts and prompts. There is also a difference between a recast and a prompt.

Recast.

Recasts are an immediate corrected utterance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). The flawed utterance is reformulated but doesn't change the original meaning. In a conversation, the interlocutor provides learners with the reformulation without specifically stressing the error. Then, the reconstructed expression still conveys the initial meaning. The example below demonstrates this.

Example

Recast

R The teacher he are, not interact in, speak or, with, eh eh students.

I He doesn't interact.

Prompt.

Prompts, on the other hand, provide an opportunity for learners to recognize and fix their own errors. However, prompts do not offer the corrective forms. There were various subcategories of prompts which consisted of clarification requests, elicitations, metalinguistic

feedback and repetition (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Below are a few examples of these subcategories and examples are from Tarone and Swierzbin's book (2009).

Clarification requests

J Does his head hurt?

I I am sorry, what?

Elicitation

J It was like require in my school...

I Require. How do we say that?

Metalinguistic feedback

R But now, in the fourth, s, s, s, week, is more easy.

I You need –ER on the end of “easy” to make the comparative form.

Repetition

J It was like require in my school...

I It was like require?

(Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 60)

A great number of empirical studies were conducted, but the results of the effect of explicit and implicit feedback on the learning outcome were mixed. Carroll and Swain (1993) investigated the effect of explicit and implicit feedback on the acquisition of English grammar based on 100 adult learners from Spain. They found that learners acquire correct grammar more successfully when teachers use metalinguistic feedback, or prompt, overall the other types of correction feedback. Metalinguistic feedback not only helps learners to repair the existing grammar errors in their discourse, but it also aids in internalizing the linguistics rules for

acquiring language. Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen (2009) also investigated the effectiveness of explicit feedback and implicit feedback (recasts) on learning of grammatical features. In their study, 56 intermediate level Iranian English learners participated and were assigned two passages to read and comprehend. After they completed the reading process, they were asked to retell the text. Teachers provided either implicit or explicit feedback in response to any erroneous utterances. The post-test evaluated the achievement of learners who received different types of feedback. Each had their well-designed test form and the test content that was based on the participants' feedback episodes in the experiment. After analyzing test scores, the results showed that explicit feedback is more beneficial than implicit feedback. Explicit feedback proved to be more successful when learning early developmental features. However, the recasts outperformed the explicit feedback when students were learning late developmental features. In other words, students benefit more from explicit feedback while learning grammatical features that are acquired in the beginning stages of language acquisition. On the other hand, students are more successful when provided with implicit feedback, specifically recasts, while they are learning grammar features associated with the later stages of language acquisition.

Studies Focused on Implicit Interactional Feedback

According to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study on interaction feedback, they demonstrated two types of interactional feedback: recast and prompt. The two manners are implemented to facilitate language learners to realize and repair their errors in a communicative context.

Ammar and Spada (2006) explored the effectiveness of two implicit feedback types (recasts and prompts) of different-proficiency students in Grade six on the third-person possessive determiners. After four weeks of study, the immediate test revealed that both types of

feedback can promote an accurate use in the target form, but prompts make a better contribution than recasts overall. However, it also indicated that the learners with different proficiency levels benefit from recasts and prompts differently. For low-proficiency learners, prompts can lead learners to repair their errors more efficiently in oral and written context. On the other hand, learners with high language proficiency benefit equally from recasts or prompts. Another quasi-experimental study by Ammar (2008) sought to measure the impact of recasts and prompts on a no feedback condition which targeted the acquisition of the English-third-person progressive determiner. Four weeks of experimental treatment were given to prepare participants for the following post-test. After, there was another delayed post-test to compare performances of the learners from different treatment groups. By statistically analyzing the data, the findings revealed that learners could achieve a more satisfied promotion in syntax from prompts rather than recasts. The result, however, is applied more to the less capable learners rather than to the proficient learners. Furthermore, both techniques outperformed the no feedback control group. The conclusion is overlapped with the study of Ammar and Spada (2006). The two studies considered learners' language proficiency and stated that language competency is a critical factor in determining the impact of prompts and recasts.

Lyster (2004) explored the role of form-focused instruction and the different types of feedback on immersion students' writing and oral performance in French. The design of the study is similar to the research from Ammar (2008). There are two experimental groups (prompt and recast) and a control group (no feedback) in the research. The post-tests include two parts: an immediate post-test and a delayed post-test. Participants in the study received a five-week treatment session based on language form and completed two post-tests. The results indicated

that learners' writing was greatly enhanced from the prompt treatment over all of the other groups. Furthermore, prompts also allowed learners to acquire new features that they had not mastered prior to the treatment sessions. Learners were able to acquire new language features consciously because during interactions, learners were required to utilize the newly learned language features. Since learners were required to recall input and connect input with errors that they had made, learners could acquire the language aspects consciously. However, the results are not consistent with oral tasks. In fact, the results show that the learners from both the recast and prompt groups performed equally within the oral tasks. In comparison to the control group though, the prompt group was the only group which exceeded the former on both the written and oral tasks. Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) conducted a research-based study in a laboratory context. Students received two-weeks of instruction on grammatical gender in French. Then, they were randomly assigned into a recast group or a prompt group. The conclusion stated that both groups could equally develop their language ability from either recasts or prompts. However, learners could get significant benefits from recasts since recasts provide learners with the correct configuration of the target language. Prompts, on the other hand, offered learners more opportunities to modify their erroneous discourse. Therefore, both types of feedback reached a similar outcome. To some extent, Lyster and Izquierdo's conclusion echoed the same findings drawn from Ammar (2008)'s research where both recasts and prompts have the same performance in promoting verbal ability.

A classroom-based study by Lyster and Mori (2006) involved two groups (French immersion and Japanese immersion in an elementary level) to investigate the student uptake and repair patterns in relation to feedback types. The instructional environment that the Japanese

immersion learners were exposed to was focused on grammar while the French immersion learners were exposed to a more communicative instructional environment. The study found that the recasts could comprehensively lead Japanese immersion learners to repair their erroneous utterances. French immersion learners, on the other hand, obtained a better performance under the prompt conditions. The factors that caused the distribution might have been the instructional environments that learners were exposed to in the past, which could have made the recast treatment more familiar to them.

By reviewing prior studies, Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001) summarized that the effect of recast varies in different contexts. For example, the laboratory environment that focuses on limited grammatical features can facilitate learners to notice the feedback. Additionally, it facilitates learners to have a conscious awareness of receiving feedback. What is more, the definition of recasts is controversial in different studies. For instance, the definition of recasts in one study includes addressing tone and reformulation of erroneous forms, but other studies just define recasts as providing correct reformulation. Because definitions of recast differ in different studies, results vary. A disputable definition of recast can be regarded as a weakness in the research question when the research seeks to draw attention to the impact of recast. Sheen (2004) investigated how the different instructional settings affect the achievement of recasts on transferring input into uptake. The study explored the effectiveness of recast based on four distinctive learning contexts and concluded that the effect of recast, to some extent, is largely dependent upon how much focus and attention the learning context draws to recast. In other words, if the instructors in one context frequently utilize the recast in their teaching, their

behaviors would lead to a more effective recast in repairing learners' errors. It also indicated that any existing variations in this setting may result in a great difference in the final conclusion.

Another study by Philp (2003) that focuses on the Noticing Hypothesis examined the efficiency of recasts. Researchers asked 34 adult English learners to interact with native speakers. The native speakers reformulated learners' ill-formed configurations by utilizing recasts in the communicative environment. The follow-up stimulated recalls indicated that English learners could perceive 70% to 80% of the given recasts. Nonetheless, if learners can acquire the language features from recasts, it also largely depends on the form of the recasts. To be specific, capable English learners can recognize the long recasts (more than five morphemes), but the learning outcomes of low-level learners is constrained by the length of recasts.

Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000) conducted a study and recruited ten learners who spoke English as a second language along with seven Italian students who studied English as a foreign language. The study explored how learners benefitted from interactional feedback in a task-based communicative context. The language features focused on grammatical formulation, meaning, and the pronunciation of vocabulary words. After analyzing the data, the study revealed learners can recognize the feedback that targets lexical and phonological linguistic features differently. In addition to this, they can accurately use it in their production, whereas the morphosyntactic forms were difficult to master for the learners in the study.

Lorincz (2014) also replicated Mackey, Gass, and McDonough's study and concluded that there was a typical discrepancy between learners' perception and the intended targets of teachers. Most of the time, the participants in her study were able to identify the intention of the lexical feedback, but likely failed to recognize the morphosyntactic feedback and phonological

feedback. It shows that learners inaccurately perceived the interactional feedback that was focused on grammatical forms.

Nonetheless, there is no specific study which solely focuses on the impact of feedback on Chinese learners' performance in spoken grammar, even though they are the most significant source in the enrollment of international students in the United States. Therefore, a further study is essential and should regard the significant group of Chinese students.

Spoken Grammar and Linguistic Target Features

The definition of spoken grammar is the grammatical structures or patterns in the discourse of native speakers or proficient language speakers (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Snow, 2014). According to the numerous corpus from the practical conversation and written tasks, the researchers highlight the different characteristics of grammar units in authentic communicative contexts and written contexts (Biber et al. 1999). Biber et al. (1999)'s study indicated that if learners can accomplish accurate grammar use in their writing, they may not have the same performance in their spoken grammar. Therefore, the current study selects past tense as the target linguistic feature.

Furthermore, Hu (2003)'s study based on English learners in a form-oriented context also supports Biber et al. (1999)'s finding that the acquisition of grammatical features in a writing context does not necessarily transfer to the learners' spoken language. Form-oriented instruction refers to the focus of grammar acquisition inside of a language class but rarely emphasizes the importance of communicative competence. The grammar-translation method is widely applied in a context such as English teaching in China. The method can achieve a satisfying performance in

their written grammar, but the effect of the approach is primarily constrained because students cannot obtain accurate grammatical use in a real communicative context.

In the case of the present study, the participants also received their grammar knowledge through the traditional grammar-translation approach. Therefore, their limited knowledge of spoken grammar would impair the intelligibility of their oral discourse. It is essential to have a better understanding of how to improve their grammatical acquisition when they are in an immersion environment of the target language. The reason why I chose the syntactic structure is explained by the following. On the one hand, Mandarin Chinese, which is the native language of all participants in this study, is a language that doesn't have morphological markers for the past tense. The past tense can be presented from lexicon such as "just now", "yesterday", and "two days ago" (Comrie, 1985). As addressed in Slabakova's (2015) study, one expression has one configuration in the native language, but another configuration in a different language. The difference of one grammatical feature between the two languages can have a negative impact on their perception of that same grammatical feature in the target language. Mandarin Chinese is defined as a distant language in Slabakova (2015)'s study and the past tense forms of English are considered challenging by the students, especially in an interactional context. Interactional feedback is considered an essential part in a conversation-learning context and the feedback can make an important contribution to the error-free utterances.

Numerous studies have been conducted on different occasions, such as classroom-based or laboratory-based, to measure the impact of different types of feedback leading to the uptake of specific grammatical features. For instance, regular and irregular past tense forms were investigated in a previous study by Yang and Lyster (2010). The study indicated that the prompt

treatment overperforms the recast treatment and the control treatment in strengthening the Chinese learners' accuracy in regular or irregular verbs past tense. The environment was based in China where the participants spoke Mandarin Chinese as their native language and English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, none of the studies are based on English learners whose first language is Mandarin Chinese and are in an English immersion environment such as the United States.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the impact of implicit interactional feedback, further studies need to be conducted. For this reason, the current study attempts to explain the following questions:

1. Which type of implicit feedback, recast or prompt, can learners perceive correctly as intended in the interactional environment?
2. As forms of interactional feedback, is there any difference in their effectiveness between prompts and recasts on the acquisition of past tense in the interactional environment?

Chapter 4: Methodology

The methodology of the study includes four sections as follows: Participants, Instruments, Research Design, and Procedures.

Participants

The study recruited 15 Chinese students from a finance program of a university located in the Midwest region of America. In the finance program, students generally begin their two-year study in a college in China. Then, they continue another two-year study in the U.S. in a finance program to obtain their bachelor's degree. The native language for all the participants is Mandarin Chinese. Participants' English proficiency was high enough to be enrolled in the targeted program classes at this university.

In addition to the students, I recruited three different experienced teachers. One was recruited from a university-based intensive English program. The latter two experienced teachers were recruited from an ESL program that facilitates English proficiency for students who have been admitted to that university. These teachers are native English speakers, and at the time, had an average of two years of teaching experience. Before the study, the three teachers received professional individual training on providing interactional feedback. The training consisted of three parts. In the first part, teachers learned about interactional feedback, the difference between recast and prompt along with the subcategories of prompt. Then, teachers practiced implementing recast and prompt in an interaction without interrupting the conversation. In the third part, teachers incorporated the different types of feedback based on the three picture stories with the researcher of the study. The researcher pretended to make errors in the past tense and expected the teachers to correct her past tense errors by using certain feedback. When the

teachers gave incorrect types of feedback, the researcher would state the following to the teacher, “the type of feedback is wrong.” The training would not be complete until the teacher could provide the right type of feedback without mistakes. The ultimate goal of the training was to ensure teachers were able to give the right type of feedback according to the design of the study.

The 15 participants were randomly assigned to three groups as well as the three teachers. That is to say, each group included five participants along with one teacher as shown in Table 1. The five participants in the first group are presented as Group 1. This group includes Subject 1 (S1), Subject 2 (S2), Subject 3 (S3), Subject 4 (S4), and Subject 5 (S5). It also applied to Group 2 and Group 3. The teachers assigned to Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 are defined as Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), Teacher 3 (T3), respectively.

Table 1

Teacher and Subjects for Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Teacher	Teacher 1 (T1)	Teacher 2 (T2)	Teacher 3 (T3)
	Subject 1 (S1)	Subject 6 (S6)	Subject 11 (S11)
	Subject 2 (S2)	Subject 7 (S7)	Subject 12 (S12)
Subjects	Subject 3 (S3)	Subject 8 (S8)	Subject 13 (S13)
	Subject 4 (S4)	Subject 9 (S9)	Subject 14 (S14)
	Subject 5 (S5)	Subject 10 (S10)	Subject 15 (S15)

Instruments

The instruments to support the feedback episodes consisted of three different picture stories. There are four pictures in each picture story. All of the picture stories have the same familiar life activities with which the participants were comfortable. In the present study, the participants interacted with a teacher in order to tell the three picture stories. The sequence of three picture stories was consistent for each group. Based on the sequence of picture stories, the three picture stories were labeled as Picture Story 1, Picture Story 2, and Picture Story 3.

Picture Story 1 and Picture Story 3 were adapted from *Exploring Learner Language* (Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 164). Tarone and Swierzbin(2009) actually developed the picture stories from Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). Tarone and Swierzbin (2009) used Picture Story 1 and Picture Story 3 to do a “picture composition” task. In this task, Tarone and Swierzbin (2009) write that the interviewer gave the following instructions to their participants: “This set of drawings shows a series of events. Look at the drawings and think about what happened. Imagine that you saw the events and I did not. Tell me what happened here.” (p. 18). Picture Story 2, on the other hand, is a newly adapted version of Picture Story 1 and Picture Story 3. The story was created by the researcher and the pictures were drawn by the researcher’s friend after understanding the story. The events in Picture Story 2 were also familiar for participants in the present study.

The target verbs used in telling the picture stories were easy for the participants in the study. Additionally, it was assumed that the participants had already learned the past tense of these verbs in an instructional context. The language which was related to the picture stories was social language and was easily recognized by the participants of the study.

Study Design

Within Subject Design

Since the study aimed to measure the correct use of past tense by using different types of feedback, the study used a within-subject design to eliminate the impact of individual differences.

Three Feedback Treatments

Under within subject design, all participants from three groups were exposed to three treatments. The three treatments consisted of recast, prompt, and no feedback. The no feedback treatment served as a control treatment in the study, so the results from different treatments can be compared with the results from the control treatment. Three picture stories were used to support the implementation of three treatments. Each picture story was under one type of treatment. As a means of overcoming the influence of the order of feedback in practice, counterbalance design was also implemented to minimize carry-over effects. The sequence of picture stories was consistent, but the order of the treatments applied to Picture Story 1, 2 and 3 was rotated for each group.

For example, Teacher 1 interacted with participants in Group 1 in the treatment sequence of prompt, no feedback, and recast to three picture stories. The sequence of treatment for Group 2 was recast, prompt, and no feedback. Group 3 received the treatment in the order of no feedback, recast, and prompt. The sequence of feedback for the three groups is illustrated below in Table 2.

Table 2

The Study Design for Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

	Picture Story 1	Picture Story 2	Picture Story 3
Group 1	Prompt	No feedback	Recast
Group 2	Recast	Prompt	No feedback
Group 3	No feedback	Recast	Prompt

Tasks

Each individual participant was asked to complete three tasks: the Interaction Task, the Retelling Task, the Stimulated Recall Task. The three tasks were recorded on two recording devices, a video camera, which was an HP t200 Digital Camcorder, and a Macbook Air Laptop with a built-in webcam. The details of recording procedures are explained in each task below.

The Interaction Task.

The Interaction Task is the interaction between a student and a teacher to complete one picture story. In the process, the teacher provided feedback or did not provide feedback according to the assigned feedback conditions above. The video camera and the laptop with a built-in webcam recorded the Interaction Task.

The Retelling Task.

The Retelling Task consisted of retelling the entirety of the picture stories. In the task, participants were asked to retell the whole story based on what they had heard from the Interaction Task. The Retelling Task was recorded by both the video camera and the laptop.

The Stimulated Recall Task.

In the Stimulated Recall Task, participants and the researcher of the current study watched the video of the Interaction Task. The researcher encouraged participants to recall their perception of feedback which was provided by teachers. The video of the Interaction Task was played on the screen of the MacBook Air laptop. Meanwhile, the interaction between each participant and researcher during this task was recorded on the HP t200 Digital Camcorder.

The webcam of the laptop was used to record the Interaction Task, but also recorded the Retelling Task to simplify the study procedures. The purpose of the laptop was to record the Interaction Task to facilitate participants to complete The Stimulate Recall Task and as a means to back up data for the study. The video camera is used to record the whole process to collect data for further analysis.

Procedures

The Interaction Task

First, each participant gave consent to participate in the study. Then, each student completed one picture story in the Interaction Task with a teacher. Both teachers and the students had been instructed not to show their pictures to each other during the interaction because it was an information gap task. The teacher received the first and third pictures from the picture story and the student received the second and fourth pictures from the same picture story. However, the teachers also had a sheet with all the pictures to provide students scaffolding if needed. Teachers told learners the following, “We will make a story. I will start by telling the first picture and you will tell the second picture. Then I tell the third picture and you tell the fourth picture.” While explaining instructions, the teacher pointed at the number of pictures. Before a teacher

started telling the first picture, the teacher verified the student's understanding of the procedures for the task. The teacher started by telling the events and told the student what happened in the first picture. Next, the student was asked to tell the events of the second picture. While the student was telling the picture, if needed, the teacher would provide feedback on past tense while the student was telling the story of the picture. The process was repeated for the third and fourth pictures from the story.

The purpose of the Interaction Task was to elicit the feedback episodes and student responses to answer research question one. The purpose of a dynamic interaction in the Interaction Task was to facilitate teachers in providing feedback without conscious interruption (Gass & Mackey, 2007).

The Retelling Task

After completing the Interaction Task, students were asked to retell the entirety of the picture story based on their understanding. During the Retelling Task, the teachers would not give feedback. The Retelling Task served as the post-test to reveal insight on the effectiveness of teacher feedback. This task specifically answers research question two.

Repeated the Interaction Task and the Retelling Task for Picture Story 2 and 3

The Interaction Task and the Retelling Task in Picture Story 1, Picture Story 2 and Picture Story 3 were recorded with the video camera. Students also completed the Interaction Task and the Retelling Task with a teacher by using Picture Story 2 and Picture Story 3, but the treatment for each picture story was different. Therefore, each participant completed the Interaction Task and the Retelling Task three times, but the picture story and treatment in the Interaction Task for each repetition changed every time.

The Stimulated Recall Task

Participants were asked to complete the Stimulated Recall Task with the researcher of the current study when one student finished all picture stories' in the Interaction Task and the Retelling Task. During the Stimulated Recall Task, the researcher watched the recorded video with each participant to reflect on students' perceptions of the target feedback. In this task, while students watched the recording of the Interaction Task, the researcher would periodically pause the video when a teacher provided feedback. Following this, the researcher would ask the student some questions in Mandarin Chinese to recall if they noticed the intention of the teacher's feedback during the Interaction Task. Thus, the Stimulated Recall Task could measure how students perceived the feedback that was provided by a teacher. Since the types of questions were asked by the researcher in Mandarin Chinese, the translation of those questions are provided below.

Example 1

1. 老师为什么说..... ?

(Why did the teacher say?)

2. 你知道老师为什么在这里问你“can you repeat” ?

(Why did the teacher ask you to repeat?)

3. 你知道老师为什么在这里问你“can you say it again” ?

(Why did the teacher ask you to say it again?)

Gass and Mackey (2007) stated that the stimulated recalling can measure the students' thoughts and awareness of feedback by having the students directly report their thoughts of the video clips. Therefore, the Stimulated Recall Task answers the first research question by reporting on the students' perceptions toward different types of feedback. The procedures for participants are presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3

The Procedures for Participants

	Picture Story 1		Picture Story 2		Picture Story 3		Stimulated Recall Task
	Interaction Task	Retelling Task	Interaction Task	Retelling Task	Interaction Task	Retelling Task	
Group 1 (N=5)	Prompt	Retell	No Feedback	Retell	Recast	Retell	Stimulated Recall
Group 2 (N=5)	Recast	Retell	Prompt	Retell	No feedback	Retell	Stimulated Recall
Group 3 (N=5)	No feedback	Retell	Recast	Retell	Prompt	Retell	Stimulated Recall

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

According to different tasks, three sets of data were obtained from the study. Data Set 1 consisted of data from the participants' responses to teacher feedback, which was from the Interaction Task. Data Set 2 was extracted from the Retelling Task and it includes the students' correctly used verbs in the past tense after receiving feedback in the Interaction Task. The last set of data, Data Set 3, consisted of the students' answers to questions in the stimulated recall from the Stimulated Recall Task. The first and third sets of data were aimed at answering research question one. Data Set 2 aided in answering research question two. Table 4 below displays the elicited data sets from different tasks and explains the relationship between the different data sets and two research questions.

Table 4

The Relationship among Tasks, Data Sets and Research Questions

Tasks	Interaction Task	Retelling Task	Stimulated Recall Task
Data Set	Data Set 1	Data Set 2	Data Set 3
Research Question 1	√		√
Research Question 2		√	

Data Set 1: Analysis of Students' Response to Target Words in the Interaction Task

The first set of data was elicited according to participants' immediate response to the target words in teacher's feedback in the Interaction Task. Target words refer to the verbs in the Interaction Task to which teachers provided feedback when correcting the verb tense. The two

types of feedback included recast or prompt. The feedback was aimed at correcting the past tense of those target verbs.

The coding process employed various categories from Lyster and Ranta (1997) 's study. In the study, Lyster and Ranta (1997) distinguished different types of responses to target words such as *repetition, acknowledgement, hesitation and same error*. Some categories used in the present study were developed based on the categories from Lyster and Ranta (1997) 's study but were also modified. The new categories relied on the responses of participants in the study to target words in the teachers' feedback. The categories of responses are varied on different types of feedback since the different manners of feedback, such as prompt and recast, would lead to a different response by a learner. To be specific, recast provides learners with the correct reformulation and prompt encourages students to self-repair. These categories are dependent upon different types of feedback. The response to recast consists of five different categories: repetition, acknowledgment, hesitation, reformulation, and no repair. A response to a prompt, on the other hand, can fall into one of the two areas: repair and no repair. According to different responses to feedback, we can interpret if participants noticed they were corrected on past tense and can then answer research question one.

Student Response to Target Words in Recast

The participants' reactions to target words in recast were classified into five different categories. Those categories include repetition, acknowledgment, hesitation, reformulation, and no repair. Of these categories, repetition and reformulation shows the evidence for recognizing the intention of feedback. In other words, students physically show an awareness of the target words repaired by the teacher when they responded in those ways. Acknowledgement, hesitation

and no repair, on the other hand, are considered to be lacking any evidence showing student awareness of teacher feedback. Although learners responded to the teacher's feedback by saying "yes", it is controversial to assume that the students perceived the target of feedback. Example seven is presented under the no repair category where the participant didn't repair the erroneous past tense but stated "yes" in his response. The reaction to the target verb in recast can somehow support the statement.

The first category is dedicated to repetition. Repetition refers to a learner who immediately adopts the correction in the teacher's feedback by repeating the target word. Two examples are provided below to demonstrate these types of responses.

Example 2

S1 *When he arrive at bus station, the bus go.*

T1 *Went away.*

S1 *Went away.*

Example 2 presents that S1 repeated *went away* which T1 said in his feedback.

Example 3

S11 *She is hungry.*

T3 *Was hungry.*

S11 *Was hungry.*

Example 3 displays S1 and S11 just repeated the target words.

The second category of student responses is acknowledgement. Responses were classified in this category if students said words such as "yes", "oh", or "嗯嗯" (嗯嗯 means "yes" in Chinese). Examples of these scenarios are provided below.

Example 4

S3 *His friend pick him up and they are ready to go.*

T1 *Picked him up.*

S3 *Yes.*

Example 4 illustrates that S3 used the incorrect verb tense in *pick up*. Following, T1 provided the correct form of *pick up*. S3 said *Yes* to target verb in the feedback.

Example 5

S9 *They talk to each other.*

T2 *They decided to talk to each other.*

S9 *Yea.*

T2 *Sounds great! while they were communicating, the little girl decided to grasp something from the shelf.*

As Example 5 showed, the S3 and S9 said *yea* to indicate their acknowledgment.

Hesitation is a third category of student responses. For a response to be classified as a hesitation, the student needed to have paused without saying anything for at least three seconds.

An example of this is presented below.

Example 6

S6 *See another lady and they talk with each other.*

T2 *Saw another lady and they started to talk to each other.*

S6: *.....*

T2 *Another lady daughter grasped a wine bottle.*

Example 6 indicates that S6 didn't say anything to the target words in the feedback.

Reformulation is the fourth category of student responses. To be classified here, students need to repair their erroneous tense in output by producing a new word(s) different from the teacher recast. The following example can explain this type of response.

Example 7

S11 *When he finish order, he back home.*

T3 *Went back.*

S11 *Came back.*

As Example 7 has demonstrated, T3 said *went back*, however, the student's response to the teacher's feedback was uttered as *came back*.

The fifth and final category is no repair. The same error category means that students did not reformulate their error in the target word and maintained the same error in the subsequent response. The following is an example demonstrating this response type.

Example 8

S13 *He think where should he start.*

T3 *He thought where he should start.*

S13 *Yes, he think where he should start.*

In Example 8, Student 13 had an error in past tense where he uttered *think* and used the same word *think* for a second time after hearing the teacher's recast feedback.

Students Response to Target Words in Prompt

The data showed the students' responses to the target words in prompt also varied on an individual basis. Based on participants' reformulation in the past tense, the immediate responses were categorized into two groups: *repair*, *no repair*. The response such as repair was seen as a

positive reaction to a prompt where students were able to correct their past tense error(s).

However, no repair is considered as a negative response since students misunderstood the teacher's intention of feedback.

Repair is the first group, and it refers to learners who can reconstruct the ill-formed past tense form of a target word. There is an example below to illustrate this case.

Example 9

Group 1-T1

S3 *She take a bottle and put in bag.*

T1 *Say it again.*

S3 *She took a bottle and put in bag.*

In the provided Example 9, S3 reformulated the verb *take* and used the correct tense *took*.

The second category is no repair, and it refers to students' responses that deviate from the purpose of the prompt. An example is presented below.

Example 10

Group 1-T1

S1 *She want to get something.*

T1 *What did she want?*

S1 *She want a milk.*

In Example 10, S1 responded to T1's feedback by answering the question instead of repairing the erroneous form in the past tense.

Data Set 2: Analysis of Independently Retelling Stories in the Retelling Task

The Retelling Task intended to test the effectiveness of different treatments and Data Set 2 from the Retelling Task addressed the second research question. The recordings of the Retelling Task were transcribed and coded by the accuracy of verb past tense. The score is a fraction of the number of correctly used verbs over the number of verbs in the context where past tense is required in one picture story by using obligatory context analysis (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 80). This fraction was presented as a percentage. The scores show students' different performances in the Retelling Task; therefore, the result can reveal the differential effects of the three treatments.

Data Set 3: Analysis of Stimulated Recall from the Stimulated Recall Task

The Stimulated Recall Task addresses the first research question which investigates the students' awareness of the purpose of teacher feedback by analyzing students' answers to interview questions. The data set, Data Set 3, was elicited from the Stimulated Recall Task and reflected whether the participants perceived the purpose of the feedback provided by teachers. Students' perception was analyzed through their answers to the questions asked by the researcher of the current study. These questions were originally asked in Mandarin Chinese but are translated below but are not only limited to the three questions. In some cases, when students could not clearly reflect their thoughts, the researcher in the current study would continue to ask similar questions in a different way until the point where the researcher could identify if the learner perceived the corrective purpose of feedback as past tense or not. The same translations can be expected in the subsequent questions and answers as well.

Example 11

1. 老师为什么说..... ?

(Why did the teacher say?)

2. 你知道老师为什么在这里问你“can you repeat”?

(Why did the teacher ask you to repeat?)

3. 你知道老师为什么在这里问你“can you say it again”?

(Why did the teacher ask you to say it again?)

Students' answers indicated their level of perception which was categorized as one of the following: perceived or not perceived. For some feedback episodes, students could directly state that the teacher's intention was to correct the past tense grammar feature. If this was the case, the feedback episode was identified as perceived. An example of this type of perception is illustrated below.

Example 12

YZ¹ 老师为什么说“went away”?

(Why did the teacher say “went away”?)

S2 老师在改正我的过去式。

(The teacher was correcting my past tense.)

In Example 12, S2 directly indicated T1's intention to correct the past tense feature.

¹ In the stimulated recall transcription, YZ stands for the researcher's initials and was the person asking the students questions.

Other occurrences of feedback were classified as *not perceived* if students didn't know what the teacher's intention was or if students assumed that teachers were simply repeating or clarifying what the student had already said. The example below provides a scenario where a feedback episode is classified as *not perceived*.

Example 13

YZ 你知道老师为什么在这里问你“can you repeat”?

(Why did the teacher ask you to repeat?)

S1 老师没有听清楚,让我重复一次。

(The teacher didn't hear me and asked me to repeat.)

In Example 13, S1 was off target of T1's intention and interpreted the feedback as clarification.

Chapter 6: Results

Data Set 1: Results of Immediate Response following Feedback in the Interaction Task

The analysis of the immediate response after feedback can indicate how learners perceive the target in feedback. This data addresses research question one.

The Interaction Task consisted of 50 feedback episodes in total. Among those 50 feedback episodes, 27 were categorized as recast and 23 were categorized as prompt as displayed in Table 5.

Table 5*The Episodes of Recast and Prompt in the Interaction Task*

Subject	Recast	Prompt
S1	1	2
S2	2	1
S3	1	2
S4	1	1
S5	1	2
S6	2	1
S7	3	0
S8	1	2
S9	1	1
S10	2	2
S11	4	2
S12	3	1
S13	3	2
S14	1	1
S15	1	3
Total Number	27	23

In response to the provided feedback, students had distinctive reactions to the target word in the feedback. However, the number of target words was not always paralleled with the number

of feedback episodes. The reason for this is because one feedback episode may have been aiming at correcting two verbs at the same time. To be specific, there were 28 target words under the recast treatment. However, the recast feedback occurred only 27 times. Therefore, since a teacher focused on two different target words during one feedback episode, there was a result of 28 target words with only 27 feedback episodes. Similarly, under the prompt treatment there were a total of 24 target words, but this type of feedback only occurred 23 times. The example below illustrates this situation.

Example 14

Recast Treatment-Target words-*find and be*

S13 *He came back and find his room is in mess.*

T3 *Found his room was in mess.*

S13 *Found his room is in mess.*

In Example 14, it demonstrates that the teacher corrected two verbs, *find* and *be* in one instance of feedback.

Example 15

Prompt Treatment-Target words-*open and find*

S9 *He open the door and find there is a bag.*

T2 *Can you repeat it?*

S9 *He open the door and found there is a bag.*

In Example 15, it shows that teacher was attempting to correct two verbs, *open* and *find*.

The statistics decoded from the students' reaction to the target words in feedback are displayed in Table 6 and Table 7 below. Table 6 reveals the various types of reactions that each student had during the Interaction Task and the percentage of each reaction.

Table 6

The Response following Recast

Response Type	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Repetition	10	35.71%
Acknowledgment	9	32.14%
Hesitation	5	17.86%
Reformulation	1	3.57%
No Repair	3	10.71%
Total	28	100%

Out of 28 reactions to the 28 target words in recasts, 35.71% of the reactions were labeled as repetition. In other words, the students successfully repeated the correct grammatical form constructed by the teacher. Nine student reactions to the target words in recast consisted of students saying some form of acknowledgement such as “yes”, “嗯嗯” , or “oh” to the teachers. Hesitation consisted of students’ not verbalizing a response in reply to the feedback episode. This occurred five times. Reformulation, when students repaired the erroneous past tense feature in different manner, occurred only once in all responses. No repair to the target words in recast

occurred three times during this task, where students ignored the modification of the teacher and continued to make the same error.

The data above highlights the extent to which participants in the study reacted to recasts. The most common response was repetition. This one category contains 35.71% of the reactions to the teacher feedback. Unlike other participants, only one participant reformulated an erroneous utterance and produced a new phrase using the correct tense. If we recall, each of these two categories contain the evidence that shows the perception of feedback. The total percent then of a positive response from all students was 39.28%.

Students' responses to a prompt were categorized into two classifications: repair and no repair. Table 7 presents the students' immediate responses to target words in the prompt.

Table 7

The Response Following Prompt

Response Type	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Repair	7	29.17%
No Repair	17	70.83%
Total	24	100%

Responses are classified here when a teacher provides a prompt which encourages the learner to self-repair their errors. Self-repair after hearing a prompt is called repair and this occurred seven times. The second category is no repair. For a response to be classified as a no repair, the following type of situations transpire. After receiving a prompt, the participant did not

notice their incorrect utterance. They misinterpreted the intention of feedback and did not reformulate the flawed grammar feature. This type of reaction occurred 17 times in total. The combination of each positive response (repair) occurred only a total of seven times (29.17%) out of the 24 responses. That leaves the remaining 70.83% of the student responses which were classified as no repair. This suggests that those students were unable to perceive the target of feedback. As illustrated from Table 6 and Table 7, the students perceived the target of feedback differently according to feedback types.

Data Set 2: Results of Independently Retelling Stories in the Retelling Task

The data from this task addresses the second research question. In the Retelling Task, participants were evaluated on their accuracy of the past tense. Data Set 2 highlighted the extent to which the effectiveness of recast outperforms prompt in promoting the mastery of the past tense. Table 8 below illustrates the accuracy score of past tense under three treatments.

Table 8*The Past Tense Percentage Scores in the Retelling Task*

Subject	Recast (%)	Prompt (%)	Control Treatment (%)
S1	16.67	28.57	50.00
S2	100.00	75.00	66.67
S3	30.00	75.00	37.50
S4	37.50	71.43	66.67
S5	54.55	60.00	63.64
S6	40.00	20.00	0.00
S7	33.33	62.50	55.56
S8	18.18	20.00	12.50
S9	16.67	30.00	37.50
S10	28.57	72.73	10.00
S11	27.27	57.14	55.56
S12	16.67	33.33	0.00
S13	66.67	70.00	22.22
S14	70.00	66.67	66.67
S15	81.82	62.50	50.00
Mean	42.53	53.66	39.63
Std. Deviation	26.22	20.88	24.73

Table 8 reveals the different past tense accuracy scores under the recast, prompt, and control treatment. The mean percentage scores for the recast treatment, prompt treatment, and

control treatment are 42.53%, 53.66%, and 39.63, respectively. The SD of the score for the recast treatment is 26.22, for the prompt treatment it is 20.88, and for the control treatment it is 24.73. The result demonstrates that the scores on the recast and control treatment are spread similarly, but the prompt treatment is less spread than the other two treatments. In other words, the prompt treatment is more beneficial than the recast or the control treatment. However, it should also be noted that the recast and the control treatment had a similar effect on learners' past tense acquisition.

Since the number of participants in the current study was 15 and the size of samples was comparatively small, the statistical analysis such as a nonparametric test is more fitting for the study which has a small sample size such as this, so the Friedman Test was used for the statistics analysis. The table below shows the ranking of data in Table 9.

Table 9*Rank of the Past Tense Percentage Scores in the Retelling Task*

Subject	Recast Rank	Prompt Rank	Control Treatment Rank
S1	1	2	3
S2	3	2	1
S3	1	3	2
S4	1	3	2
S5	1	2	3
S6	3	2	1
S7	1	3	2
S8	2	3	1
S9	1	2	3
S10	2	3	1
S11	1	3	2
S12	2	3	1
S13	2	3	1
S14	3	1.5	1.5
S15	3	2	1
Mean of Rank	1.8	2.5	1.7

Table 10

Result of Friedman Test

<i>N</i>	15
<i>Chi-Square</i>	5.7
<i>df</i>	2
<i>p-value</i>	0.058

As shown in Table 10, the Friedman test indicated that there was not significant difference among the three treatments ($\chi^2(2) = 5.7, p = 0.058$). Since the *p*-value is larger than 0.05, this reveals no difference between the effectiveness of the recast, prompt, and no feedback treatment. In addition, compared to the Critical Value of 5.9, Chi-Square $\chi^2(2) = 5.7$ is smaller. Therefore, it further shows there is no significant difference among recast treatment, prompt treatment and no feedback treatment.

Data Set 3: Results from the Stimulated Recall Task

The first research question inquired which type of feedback helps learners better recognize the target of the feedback. This question is addressed in this section.

In the Stimulated Recall Task, the researcher watched the recorded videos of the Interaction Task and the Retelling Task with students. Students were asked to explain their perceptions of the different types of feedback. The data in Table 11 shows the number of times when students were able to correctly report the intention of the given feedback.

Table 11*Perceptions of Prompt and Recast*

Feedback Types	Feedback Episode	Perception	Percentage of Correct Perception	Percentage of Failed Perception
Recast	27	16	59.25%	40.75%
Prompt	23	4	17.39%	82.61%

The data demonstrates that participants in the recast treatment could recognize nearly 59.25% of the intention of the recast episodes. The participants were not able to recognize the rest of recast instances (40.75%) because they misinterpreted the teachers' recast as repetition where teachers simply confirmed what learners said or the misinterpretation was taken as a signal to ask students to continue the conversation.

For the prompt treatment, learners were able to identify the feedback intention only 17.39% of the time. The majority of the provided prompts (82.61%) failed to draw participants' attention to past tense corrections. The reason is due to the fact that they identified the prompts as negotiating for meaning, communicating for content, or simply asking participants to repeat what they just said.

Chapter 7: Discussion

The purpose of the study was twofold: first, to compare the perception of recast and prompt by learners as stated in research question one and, second, to answer research question two which focuses on the effectiveness of the two types of interactional feedback, prompt and recast.

Research Question 1: The Perception of Recast and Prompt

To compare the perception of recast and prompt, students could perceive recast better than prompt. The first research question is answered by data from Data Set 1 where students responded to feedback and Data Set 3 where students reflected on the intentions of feedback.

The results of Data Set 1 indicated that students were able to perceive the target of recast more accurately than prompt. Of all the response types for recast, the response with noticing evidence occurred the most (39.28%) which means recast was better perceived in comparison to prompt which only accrued 29.17% (Table 6 and Table 7). In other words, learners had more of a chance to recognize the intention of a recast over a prompt in the Interaction Task. The prompt feedback aimed at providing learners with the opportunity to correct past tense errors. However, most of the attempts did not lead learners to recognize the purpose of the feedback. Moreover, the prompt type of feedback was more likely to confuse the learners rather than help them. Students, more often than not, were confused about the intention of the prompt with a request of repetition or clarification. In fact, some participants in the current study tended to respond to a prompt by repeating a word and/or phrase or by simply clarifying themselves, rather than correcting their ill-formed target word(s). It should be borne in mind that even though students

showed evidence of recognizing the intention of feedback, it is uncertain as to whether the students actually perceived the intention of feedback.

Data Set 3, which was elicited from the Stimulated Recall Task, was analyzed as a means of compensating for the shortcoming for the aforementioned data set and analysis. The findings here only strengthen the previous finding which was that students are more likely to perceive the intention of a recast over a prompt. This data, similar to Data Set 1 concludes that students more accurately perceive the intent of recast over prompts.

Most of the existing studies about the perception of feedback (Mackey et al., 2000; Lorincz, 2014; Philp, 2003) measure how learners perceive feedback but don't compare the variable accuracy of perception between different types of feedback, namely recast and prompt. The possible reason for more accurate perception in recast may have been the primary instruction in prior learning experiences. The participants in the current study were immersed in a form-oriented instruction context where the focus was on learning grammatical features and exclusive exposure to the grammar translation method to learn English in China. According to Hu (2003), Chinese English language learners consistently receive the form-oriented instruction from teachers and teachers in the classroom setting also prevalently use recast to repair learners' grammatical errors. Therefore, the primary means of feedback in their previous learning experiences would cultivate the sensitivity to recast. In the interaction with the teachers, learners in the current study might effortlessly recognize the target of recast. As a result, the distinctive attachment with form-oriented instruction would contribute to the saliency of recasts. Thus, learners who participated in the study could more accurately recognize the corrective purpose of recasts rather than prompts. Moreover, Philp (2003) addressed the recast length by stipulating

that the number of changes made in recasts has an impact on the awareness of feedback provided during the interaction. Notably, one teacher (T3) attempted to correct two past tense errors in one recast episode. That specific learner (S13) failed to completely repair the two errors but did in fact repair the first verb. This finding supports Philp (2003)'s conclusion. In addition, this finding also suggests that the shorter recasts may be more effective in facilitating a learner's ability to clearly perceive the target of feedback. Example 16 below is the same as Example 14 to explain the situation.

Example 16

Recast Treatment-Target words-*find and be*

S13 *He came back and find his room is in mess*

T3 *Found his room was in mess.*

S13 *Found his room is in mess.*

In Example 16, the teacher interacted with the participant and provided the recast treatment to correct the participant's incorrect use of the verbs *find* and *be*. In the following utterance, the participant only repaired the first verb *find* but skipped or did not notice the correction of the second verb *be*.

Additionally, learners were incapable of identifying the target of recast 40.75% of the time while prompt was unnoticed up to 82.61% of the time (Table 11). It generally reveals the gap between the target of feedback on past tense and student interpretation in the intention of teacher feedback. The study of Mackey et al. (2000) focused on several aspects in one research and exerted an effort to compare the perception of feedback of different language features in such areas as phonology, semantics, and the lexicon. They concluded there is a strong

disconnection presented between the morphosyntactic or syntactic feedback and the perception of feedback. In other words, it is more difficult for learners to perceive the target feedback in a morphosyntactic form as well as the syntactic form in comparison to others. Mackey et al. (2000) suggested that the difficulty learners have in identifying the target of feedback is affected by the communicative nature of the interaction. For the learners in a communication context, all their attention would focus on the understanding of meaning in order to keep the flow of conversation. There are more opportunities for learners to perceive the lexical or phonological feedback because this type of feedback provides the necessary information to maintain the flow of conversation. In the light of the study by Mackey et al. (2000), Lorincz (2014) replicated the study and pointed out that learners may perceive feedback that is focused on lexicon, but generally misidentify feedback that is intended to correct errors in morphosyntax, syntax, and phonology. These studies (Mackey et al. 2000; Lorincz, 2014) can explain why 40.75% (recast) to 82.61% (prompt) of the feedback episodes as shown in Table 11 were not recognized by the learners. The results revealed by this data can be explained by the focus of interaction that mainly is to convey meaning instead of correcting forms, so learners focus on the communication and understanding of the content more than anything. Therefore, learners may focus the majority of their attention on the information that is delivered through the conversation while easily ignoring the form(s) of language.

Example 17

Recast

S13 *He think where should he start.*

T3 *He thought where he should start.*

S13 *Yes, he think where he should start.*

Prompt

T1 *What did they talk about?*

S1 *Maybe how is the weather*

.....

S1 *She want to get something.*

T1 *What did she want?*

S1 *She want a milk.*

In Example 17, S1 and S13 did not recognize the purpose of teacher's feedback, but they were more focused on the communication with the teachers to ensure the conversation continued.

Overall, to answer research question one, the combined data sets thus far approve that recast outperforms other treatments in helping students to recognize the target of feedback. On the other hand, participants tend to misidentify the purpose of prompt as a means of negotiating for meaning.

Research Question 2: The Effectiveness of Recast and Prompt

The significance of the study is mainly focused on the comparative effect of recast and prompt in developing learner's syntactic accuracy of past tense, namely, research question two. Data Set 2, elicited from the Retelling Task, was aimed at answering the second research question but the result is not statistically significant. After analyzing the Data Set 2 in Table 8, the results indicated that the prompt treatment may have a greater success rate than the recast and no feedback treatments in promoting past tense. However, it is noteworthy to state that the Friedman Test failed to show any significant difference among the three treatments. So, a further

explanation is needed for the non-significant results where several factors are taken into consideration.

The factor of methodology

The weakness of methodology is regarded as the primary factor that leads to the non-significant results.

The implement of treatment sessions.

The length of time for the Interaction Task was limited and only lasted an average of eight minutes for each learner. The feedback episodes provided in the Interaction Task only occurred between two to six times in total for each participant (Table 5). However, the treatment sessions in the studies (Yang & Lyster, 2010; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ammar, 2008; Ammar & Spada, 2006) spread out over a period of three weeks or even longer. In the implementation of the treatment process, sufficient time and dedicated application of treatment might enhance the efficacy of the treatment. As a result, the current study is not able to yield a significant difference among the treatments' effect.

Absence of pre-test.

In addition, the study didn't conduct a pretest to evaluate participants' prior knowledge of the past tense. Instead, all participants took the study as a whole group and were not divided into different groups based on their language proficiency. However, the variance of their language proficiency may have marked the benefits of prompts. As Ammar and Spada (2006)'s research suggested, the extent to which learners benefited from different types of feedback largely depended on their language proficiency. To be specific, Ammar and Spada found prompt and recast could equally enhance high-proficiency learners' performance but the low-proficiency

learners can benefit more from prompts over recasts. In another study by Ammar (2008), the researcher also found the same pattern for low-proficiency learners. For example, the low-level learners could develop an advanced mastery in the third person possessive determiners from prompts rather than recasts. Thus, language proficiency plays a crucial role in the impact of prompt and recast. In the current study, the English proficiency of the participants wasn't evaluated. The participants' English proficiency was high enough to be enrolled in a major program, but their language proficiency is hard to determine without a pre-test. The only known language proficiency data came from knowledge of the finance program admission requirements. The language requirement for admission to the finance program at the university stipulated that students must attain a score of 5.5 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or a score of 61 on the internet-based TOEFL (iBT). However, the scores of the two tests correspond to different language proficiency in CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The IELTS score of 5.5 corresponds to B1, which means language proficiency is around an intermediate low level. The admission score of 61 on TOEFL (iBT) maps to B2 and suggests an intermediate-high level of language proficiency (Compare TOEFL Scores, 2019).

Moreover, the language proficiency of some participants in the current study may be higher than the language admission requirements. The scores of participants who had developed a higher proficiency of language could undermine the influence of other participants' scores in the current study. Therefore, the variability in their actual proficiency would lead to a different result. These two factors show the need for an explicit evaluation of language proficiency prior to the study.

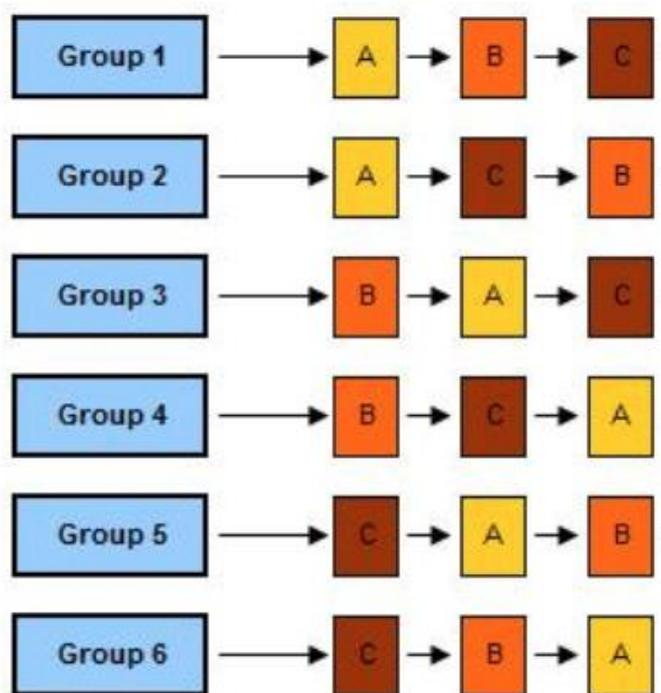
The order effects.

Lastly, the order effects might also have affected the different tasks, because the study is within-subject design and all participants received three treatments in rotation. Even though the study utilized a counter-balance design to eliminate the order effects, it only partially gets rid of the order effects as shown in Table 2. In order to completely eliminate the order effects, the study needs to recruit more students and separate them into six groups to implement different sequences of treatments. However, the study only had three groups and the order effects still existed to some extent. The previous treatments that learners received in one picture story might play a role in the next picture story in the Interaction Task or the Retelling Task.

Figure 1 below illustrates the counterbalanced design for the three treatments which includes six groups, such as ABC, ACB, BAC, BCA, CAB, CBA. In an ideal experimental study, six groups of participants are required to receive the different order of three treatments, in order to completely eliminate the order effects of three treatments.

Figure 1

Counterbalanced Measures Design for Three Conditions (Shuttleworth, 2009)



The factor of second language acquisition

In spite of the defect of the methodology of the present study, the non-significant results may, to some extent, be explained by the widely accepted theories or models in second language acquisition studies.

The acculturation model.

The participants in the study had been studying in the finance program for one year at the time when the study was conducted. Their language proficiency was high enough for them to be enrolled in a major program. However, the result from the Retelling Task showed that some of

the learners did not acquire a high degree of development in the past tense grammatical feature. The Friedman Test also reveals that there was no difference in the effectiveness of different feedback. The acculturation model was considered as a possible explanation to the non-significant results. The acculturation model from Schumann (1978b) explains how immigration learners' acculturation level affects their second language acquisition. It indicates that the extent of students' acculturation is associated with social and psychological factors. For example, if the second language learners feel close to the group who speak the language and the learners are willing to integrate with the target culture, these factors will prompt learner language acquisition. Moreover, the learner's psychological factors like motivation, language shock and culture shock also will yield varying effects for learners' acculturation. The study did not directly evaluate participants' degree of acculturation, but the acculturation still can be predicted to some degree. The participants in our study came to the U.S as a collective group who had been studying in one class for two years in China. Therefore, the interaction setting in the university in the U.S., for most of them, was still with their Chinese classmates and friends from the same group. The limited interaction setting to the target group would inhibit their language learning. This may explain why most students in the study did not present a great gain from the feedback treatments. Schumann's study of a Costa Rican man named Alberto (Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2013) also supports this finding. In Schumann's (as cited in Gass, Behney & Plonsky, 2013) study, Alberto had limited access to the target group and the target language. As a result, there was no improvement presented in his language development, but oppositely his English knowledge became so limited that he could not make a complete sentence.

However, it is not reasonable to generalize that all participants in the current study were lacking acculturation. Some participants might have been highly motivated and acculturated to the target group more quickly. Schmidt (1983) conducted a case study based on a Japanese artist, Wes. Wes had a high degree of acculturation to the target culture and language. He was very motivated and immensely integrated into the local community. However, he did not achieve high levels of grammar as he said, “I know I am speaking funny English” to indicate his limited grammatical knowledge. The acculturation model may affect second language acquisition from social psychological factors, but it is difficult to determine the exact relationship between acculturation and the language learning outcome. The non-significant difference between recast and prompt exists in the current study, but the reason that caused the non-significant result is hard to be concluded and the acculturation may play a role in the result.

Fossilization.

Furthermore, there is a typical pattern of using past tense markers where regardless of which feedback learners received, they did not correct any verbs, but consistently used the wrong tense in the following discourses.

Example 18

Recast Treatment

S6 See another lady and they talk with each other.

T2 Saw another lady and they started to talk to each other.

S6:

T2 Another lady’s daughter grasped wine bottle

S6 Her girl give it to old lady.

T2 The girl gave it to the old lady.

Prompt Treatment

S6 And when he open the door, he look around his house.

T2 He look around his house?

S6 When he move to his room, he look around his house

T2 He decided to go to fast food restaurant to grasp something to eat.

S6 He bring his meal and back to his room.

In Example 18, it demonstrated the S6 did not demonstrate any uptake, neither recast nor prompt.

The fossilization might be able to explain this pattern. The term fossilization was proposed by Selinker (1972) to interpret the failure of adult learners to acquire some language features. As Flexner (1987) defined, fossilization refers to learners ceasing syntactic learning regardless of the continual exposure in the language environment. The non-significant effect of feedback might be accounted for by the fossilization of the past tense feature in the participants' interlanguage system in the current study.

Lardiere (2007) conducted a case study and investigated the discrepancy between the ultimate attainment of second language learners and the language level with native speakers. The case study investigated the researcher's friend Patty who is Chinese-American and immigrated to America at 21 years old. She had massive exposure to the target language in her previous learning experience in a university, at her workplace, and in daily communication with her family at home. All of the people she interacted with were exclusively English speakers, at least for the most part. Despite the massive interaction with the target group and great degree of

assimilation, the ultimate attainment of Patty is not equivalent to native speakers of English in some respects, particularly grammar knowledge. Her incomplete knowledge of the past tense feature is most closely associated with this present study. In the data of Patty's utterances, the flawed structures in the past tense is obvious and represents her fairly weak knowledge of past tense with "less than 35% overall in obligatory contexts over an approximately 9-year period of data collection" (p. 94). In the written context and speaking context, there are also different performances in the past tense feature. The study also collected email samples over a six year period as written data and found "in contrast to Patty's spoken data, her overall rate of past tense marking in the email data is at least twice as high -at about 78% suppliance in obligatory contexts" (p. 110). Since the present study is based on speaking data and did not require students to write, there is no written test to measure students' past tense attainment in writing and compare the effectiveness of prompt and recast based on written tests.

Form-oriented instruction context and simultaneous attending to form and content.

What is more, the participants in the current study were immersed in a form-oriented instruction context for a long period. As Sheen (2004) suggested, the extent of effectiveness may be dependent upon their learning experience and communicative environment which influences the effect of interactional feedback. Therefore, the learners from the form-focused environment were more likely to utilize the past tense knowledge in the academic context. The participants in the study interacted with the teacher in a communication context, but the focus for them was to interpret the meaning and follow the conversation flow in the interaction. As a result, they were not able to really benefit from feedback or modify their ill-formed utterance(s) in past tense, accordingly. In addition, the study (VanPatten, 1990) suggested that learners cannot attend and

comprehend both meaning and form at the same time. He also stated that learners may be able to acquire form in certain circumstances when the content knowledge could be obtained effortlessly. The low achievement in past tense of the participants in the current study can be entailed by nonnative speakers' low process mechanism of language.

Pedagogical Implications

The research revealed that learners seemed to more clearly perceive the intent of recast rather than that of prompt. It should be noted, however, ESL or EFL teachers should attentively choose the manner of feedback based on the group of students. In real language classrooms, teachers should consider students' learning experiences and backgrounds when it comes to selecting the type of feedback to use on learners. For Chinese learners of English, it seems recast can be more explicitly perceived than prompt.

Furthermore, the learners from China were educated in a form-oriented learning environment. They receive ample input on past tense and memorized the past tense form of regular or irregular verbs. However, teachers in the environment encouraged students to use the correct past tense form on paper-based tests, but teachers did not emphasize the accurate use in the communicative context. Therefore, the grammar learning experience in an English class in China is more focused on passing a standardized test rather than on enhancing their communicative ability. Since Chinese English learners had limited access to apply the knowledge in an authentic English environment, ESL teachers probably have to consider how to initially retrieve their grammar knowledge from written tasks and transfer the competence to communicative tasks. For example, teachers can encourage students to write first, then share or communicate with their partners without the written texts. When the grammar knowledge

becomes more accessible for students, teachers can gradually start communication tasks and skip the writing process. In addition, the explicit feedback is defined as a technique by pointing out the error directly and providing correct reformulations (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). For the participants in the current study, their unique English learning experience in China may highlight the effectiveness of explicit feedback because students expected their teachers would correct their grammar more directly. Compared to implicit feedback, the explicit feedback may be the relatively better strategy to provide feedback on grammar features for English learners from China.

On the other hand, ESL teachers should have the awareness of the negative impact of fossilization on students' second language acquisition. In the teaching process, the continuous reinforcement of some challenging language features might be a crucial intervention in preventing fossilization. For example, the target language feature of past tense in this study might be a burdensome grammatical feature for Chinese learners to master. Therefore, teachers could ensure this content has been taught within an adequate amount of time and intentionally they should provide learners with the environment to practice the past tense in oral contexts. Furthermore, assessment is also a vital strategy to check whether learning has taken place successfully and increases correct knowledge retention before fossilization. In this way, students are provided multiple chances to shape their interlanguage system while interrupting fossilization. Consequently, students could achieve higher accuracy in retrieving the learned language features in the communicative context.

Limitation

The limitation of the study is the small set of samples, and thus it is not adequate to make a generalized conclusion. Though the research demonstrated that there were more accurate perceptions of recast in the correction of past tense, the finding should be treated critically and cautiously in terms of integration into practical teaching or being applied to different styles of learners. Additionally, there are three teachers who participated in the study and each student completed two tasks with the same teacher throughout the Interaction Task and the Retelling Task. Considering that particular teachers' teaching styles or the levels of engagement to the study are different, the distinction of teachers might lead to various students' performance and furthermore affects the final outcome.

As Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990, 1993) revealed, the feedback in interactions provides an opportunity for learners to notice the gap between their nonnative-like language with native-like language. If learners successfully notice and perceive the target of feedback, they can integrate the current interlanguage system and achieve the process of input into the intake. The provided feedback in the current study is not sufficient to facilitate learners in acquiring the past tense. It has also raised another question: How much feedback is required to adequately move learners to mastery? The time of feedback may also vary based on the type of errors and the personality or learning attitude of learners among other variables. It is a valuable question to ask in any future studies. Furthermore, the way that teachers in the study provided prompts could be interpreted differently. Teachers did not always clearly offer a prompt intended to give feedback on the verb tense. This may be a reason why students in the study could not perceive prompt as well as recast.

Example 19

Group 2-T1

S8 *Then he go back to home.*

T2 *Can you say it again?*

S8 *The young man go back to his home.*

In Example 19, the T2 interacted with the S8 and encouraged the learner to reformulate his tense error in verb *go* by asking *Can you say it again?* The student responded *The young man go back to his home* with the same meaning as what he had just said. It shows that the learner misinterpreted the teacher's intention as repetition. From the student's perspective, it is a confusing circumstance where the teacher just simply asks for repetition in language class, so the teacher did not clearly provide a prompt in this case.

What is more, the participants were from the same program and the same college in China. It is difficult to define how these findings from the current study can be generalized to other groups of English learners because of the makeup of this particular group. Therefore, further studies clearly need to be conducted so we can find out if other groups of learners maintain the same pattern in the different types of feedback, namely prompt and recast.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The research revealed the disconnect between teacher intention and student perception in feedback. Overall, compared to prompt, more learners identified the initial goal of recast. However, the study did not find a comparative effect of prompt and recast because the statistical test was not significant.

A possible study that I could do in the future is to investigate the effectiveness of feedback for Mandarin Chinese learners in an immersion school in the U.S. I am currently working at a Chinese immersion school and teach students Mandarin Chinese as a second language. The focus in my school is on teaching communicative language but does not attach much significance to language forms. I notice some students in my school also make grammar errors in the tense markers in Mandarin Chinese. Even though Mandarin Chinese is a language without morphological tense markers, the tense in Mandarin Chinese still can be interpreted from discourse context or the tense marker “le”. The big divergence between the two languages also prohibits Chinese learners in the U.S. from acquiring a higher proficiency level of the language. If the study were to be conducted, the result could reveal which type of feedback is more beneficial than another. The Mandarin Chinese language teachers could widely utilize the feedback in their daily teaching and facilitate their students to achieve a higher language proficiency in Mandarin Chinese.

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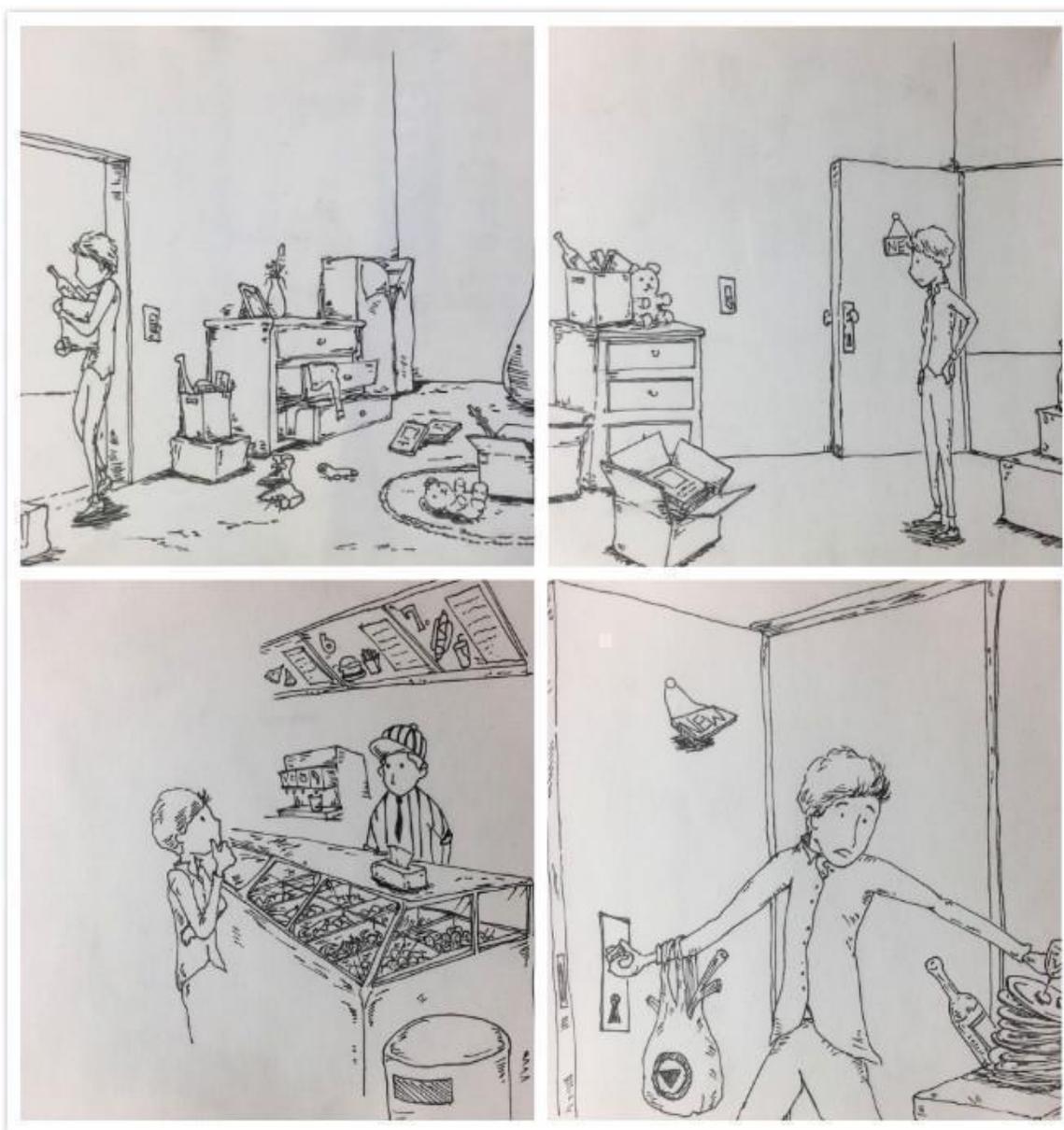
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Appendix A: Picture Story

The first and last picture story each includes 4 pictures in total and the picture story is adopted from Tarone and Swierzbin in Exploring Learner Language book (2009, p. 163) and the tasks is adjusted from Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 33). The picture below is one picture story for example.



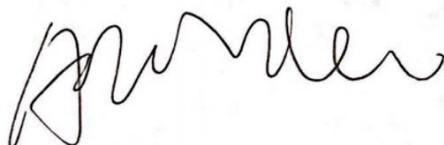
Appendix B. Permission Letter

July, 26 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

I authorized Yuman Zhao to use the picture that I draw to conduct her study. If you have any questions, please contact me at 612-512- ****

Albert Lee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Albert Lee', written in a cursive style.

7/26/2020