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The Effectiveness of Recasts in Improving the Understanding of English Possessive Pronouns

Malalai Popal

California State University, Monterey Bay

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THE EFFECTNESS OF RECASTS ON ESL STUDENTS LEARNING

The Effectiveness of Recasts in Improving the Understanding of English Possessive Pronouns

Malalai Popal

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education

California State University, Monterey Bay

May 2018

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Malalai Popal

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Kerrie Lemons Chitwood, Ph.D.
Advisor and Program Coordinator, Master of Arts in Education

Erin Ramirez, Ph.D.
Advisor, Master of Arts in Education

Kris Roney, Ph.D. Associate Vice President
Academic Programs and Dean of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies

THE EFFECTNESS OF RECASTS ON ESL STUDENTS LEARNING

Abstract

In recent years, English as second language (ESL) curricula are improving and are more geared toward the student's need to become an effective learner of ESL. The purpose of this study was to improve ESL students' understanding of pronouns facilitated by using a recast technique, which enhances second language acquisition (SLA), particularly among ESL learners. Recast refers to corrective feedback (CF) teaching techniques. A quasi-experimental quantitative research design was used to determine the impact of recast technique in the ESL classroom on the students' learning performance. Participants consisted of ESL students at an adult school in central California aged 18 and older ($n = 25$). In order to assess the learning performance of ESL students a questionnaire was used to measure their acquisition of English possessive pronouns of the first level ESL students. Independent and paired samples t-tests were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the means of both groups. Data analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores on the post-tests between the two groups (i.e., treatment and control). Results revealed that the students in treatment group demonstrated greater understanding of possessive pronouns and improved upon their learning performance more than the students who did not receive the recast of possessive pronouns. Implications for future research is discussed.

Keywords: recast, English possessive pronouns, ESL, students' learning, students' academic performance

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The Effectiveness of Recasts in Improving the Understanding of English Possessive Pronouns

Literature Review

Current research on the feedback technique of recasting has yielded varying results creating an area of debate within the language-teaching community about whether the recast technique actually enhances second language acquisition (SLA); particularly among English as a second language (ESL) learners (Long, 2016; Lyster, 1998; Mackey & Philp, 1998; Schmidt, 1990, 1992). Within the language-teaching context, recast refers to Corrective Feedback (CF) teaching techniques—where an instructor corrects the learner’s error in a way that does not hinder communication (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). To recast an error through CF means that a speaker will repeat the error back to the learner in its corrected form, but still maintain the intended meaning in communication (Long, 2016). For example, if a student says, “The toy is her,” then the teacher immediately responds saying, “The toy is hers.” In this context, the recast performs two functions: acknowledges content in the first sentence, and attempts to sustain positive affect in the second (Nicholas, Lightbown, & Spada, 2001). Positive affect refers to the student’s attitude towards their learning environment and it is critical because positive affect can have a direct impact on motivation of adult language learners (Bley-Vroman, 1989). While CF has been a popular topic among education researchers, it is imperative to note the difficulties that adult ESL learners face in their acquisition of a second language.

Difficulties with SLA

Many myths exist with respect to ESL learners, including the idea that they can quickly learn English by simply being exposed to the language and to native speakers (Robinson, Keogh, & Kusuma-Powell, 2004). Thus, this myth minimizes the difficulties present in acquiring a second language. It is common and understandable for ESL students to experience difficulties in

the process of acquiring a second language. Further, the challenges experienced by students can differ greatly from student to student (Ehrman, 1996). Many factors can affect the acquisition of a learning a second language, including characteristics of the learner and/or their personal traits (i.e., learning style, attitude), situational as well as environmental factors (i.e., exposure to English, classroom setting), and current competence and prior language development (i.e., development of home language; Robinson, et. al., 2004). These are important to note because they influence the success of students in their acquisition of a learning and retaining a new language.

Adult SLA Difficulties

Adult second language learners face entirely different challenges than the child second language learner. For instance, adult ESL students have their native language already ingrained in their learning process (Deng & Zou, 2016). Thus, they extend knowledge of the primary language to the development of the second language; this process may limit a student's ability to fully comprehend the structure of a new language. Other issues adult learners face in acquiring a second language include, but are not limited to, the *Critical Period Hypothesis*, affective factors, and situational factors.

Critical Period Hypothesis. According to some researchers (Harley, 1986; Lenneberg, 1967), the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) is one of the main reasons why it is difficult for adult learners to acquire a second language. Penfield and Roberts (2014) claim that individuals who start language learning before 10 years of age are more successful at second language retention because their brains are more equipped to retain information. This theory suggests that SLA is harder for adults because they are outside the opportune age range for successful language acquisition, but no definitive results have proved this hypothesis. Krashen (1975)

believed that adults struggle with SLA because they have already formed a way to think about language and their learning process. Consequently, this preconceived knowledge could in fact weaken an adult's ability to acquire a second language. Therefore, an effective intervention will help the students to overcome the preconceived notions about learning the second language.

Recasts may be beneficial in this case because it is not aimed to impede current understanding of language and the learning process. Instead, it is meant as a corrective measure that will improve language comprehension. As such, it is important to consider other factors that may impede on the learning abilities of adult ESL learners.

Affective factors. Additionally, Harley (1986) touches on the affective issues that adult learners commonly face. Affective factors are the feelings people have regarding their environment and themselves (Harley, 1986). For example, Bandura (1986) claims that adults are aware of what they do not know and this awareness may influence adult ESL students' motivation, increasing achievement and persistency in their learning despite failure. Therefore, it is important to ensure that adult learners receive positive affective feedback while acquiring a second language. Therefore, this approach can be incorporated into the recast technique. These affective factors can also stem from the situations adult ESL students often are managing simultaneously to learning a second language.

Situational factors. Many adult learners face situational factors that make acquiring a second language difficult. Griffiths (2008), defines situational factors as external factors in which the learner has no control (i.e., learning environment, etc.). For example, when compared to children, adults do not have allocated time to dedicate to their learning or second language acquisition. Instead, adults must make time outside of work, family, and other obligations to learn. Griffiths (2008) suggests that the ability to time manage is stressful and tiresome for adult

learners because it impedes on the time spent doing things that pertain to their home and work life. Alternatively, adult learners only have time to study after all the other important factors in their life have been taken care of (Griffiths, 2008). As a result, adult learners face many issues in the process of SLA that drastically differ from the classroom environment that is set up for children to prosper in. Recast may serve as an effective tool to counterbalance the difficulties with adult ESL learning by creating an environment where the adult ESL learner has routine and repetitive guidance with SLA.

English as a Second Language

English may be challenging to learn as a second language for many reasons. Berent (1985) argues that some grammatical components of English can be easy to write and speak, but hard to understand. An example of this are real conditionals such as, “If I had time yesterday, I called her” and past unreal conditionals such as, “If I had time, I would have called her”. Collins, Trofimovich, White, Cardoso and Horst (2009) believe that rules learned earlier are easy to grasp, while rules learned later in the education process are much harder to grasp. English progressives learned earlier are therefore easier to comprehend, but English simple past tense (-*ed*) is harder to understand because it is acquired later in the learning process. Acquisition later in one’s life inhibits the learning process due to pre-notion of their culture and learning style of their previous learning in their language. ESL learners also struggle with past tense –ed (Ellis, 2007; McDonough, 2007), English articles (DeKeyser 2005; Master, 1994), and possessive determiners (Ammar, 2008; Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009; White, 1998).

Possessive pronouns. In particular, the use of English pronouns is a difficult area for ESL students (Qian & Li, 2014). ESL students struggle with pronouns for many reasons. Subject and object pronouns are extremely similar in form as are possessive adjectives and possessive

pronouns (Decapua, 2008). English pronouns also differentiate gender when the pronoun refers to a female or male subject. For example, in the sentence “Christina found her dog,” “her” refers to Christina. In the English language, gender is associated with the subject, but in some languages like French, nouns have genders and these possessive adjectives and pronouns change with the gender of the noun being modified, not with the subject (Decapua, 2008). These similarities can make learning pronouns extremely confusing for ESL student learners. Thus, it is important for students to understand and use possessive pronouns correctly. Possessive pronouns indicate ownership and without proper knowledge of gender and subject, students could say “Christina found his dog.” This is problematic for further English development if a student cannot differentiate between the possessive pronouns and their gender.

Part of solving this problem is for teachers to use the most effective techniques and approaches to maximize the learning capabilities of each individual student (Ehrman, 1996). Thus, a body of literature reviewed specifically focuses upon applying recasting techniques and the extent to which it helps improve SLA.

Advantages of the Recast Technique

Research supports the facilitative role of applying recasts in different learning environments, and approaches to learning, in both laboratory and classroom settings (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Han, 2002; Loewen & Nabei, 2007; Long, 2007; Mackey & Goo, 2013; Mackey & Philp, 1998; McDonough & Mackey, 2006; Nassaji, 2009). Many of these studies demonstrating the effectiveness of recasts have been done in laboratory settings, but there are classroom-based studies that have also shown the advantages of recasts (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Loewen & Nabei, 2007).

Han (2002) tested whether the recast technique would help eight upper-intermediate ESL students in maintaining consistent tense. She used a pretest/post-test/delayed post-test model consisting of oral and written narratives as a basis for her study. She found that recasts were successful in promoting test consistency as presented in both the oral and written exams. The post-tests revealed that the treatment group who received recasts used the correct tense more than the control group who received no recast treatment. Although her results proved that recasts are effective, she warns that her study cannot draw accurate conclusions because the class size was small. Similarly, Mackey and Philp (1998) conducted a laboratory experiment with adult ESL learners comparing the treatment group that received recasts to the control group that received no feedback. Results revealed that recasts were in fact beneficial for second language development. Furthermore, Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000) found that recasts focusing on phonology increased the benefit of recasts on second language learners. This aligns with Saito and Lyster's (2012) finding that recasts alongside form focused instruction increased Japanese ESL student's pronunciation of English, but no evidence was found showing improvement for form focus only students.

Like Han's (2002) study, Doughty and Varela's (1998) classroom based study tested the effects of recasts on past tense consistency involving middle school students in an ESL science classroom. Results indicated that students began self-correcting before the teacher had the opportunity to recast; they even went as far as correcting each other through recasting as the teacher had done for them. This study also showed that recasts were an effective CF strategy, because it did not obstruct the learning ability of the student as the teacher was correcting him or her. Furthermore, using a grammatical judgement test, Loewen and Nabei (2007) found evidence supporting recasts as the recast group outperformed the control group that received no recasts in

English question formation. These studies provide evidence for the benefits of using recasts to provide second language learners CF.

Additionally, Ono and Witzel (2002) came to similar conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the recast technique. They used a pretest/post-test control group design to test the prominence of the development of four target structures (plural *-s*, past tense *-ed*, progressive *-ing* and third person possessive pronouns) in a young adult classroom in Honolulu, Hawaii. The post-test results found that those in the recast condition performed better than those in the control group and achieved superior performance to those in the production-only condition; although this latter difference was not statistically significant. These results are suggestive that recast techniques can be an effective means to provide students with CF. Mackey and Goo (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of interaction studies from 1990-2006 and found considerable evidence for the benefits of the recast technique on second language development.

Collectively, many empirical studies have shown the positive effects of the recast technique on second language development in a variety of contexts and environments. Arguments against the effectiveness of the recast technique began with Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study that suggested that recasts were not beneficial to second language development.

Disadvantages of the Recast Technique

Lyster and Ranta (1997) indicated that although recasts were recurrent in the classroom environment, they produced little uptake—an immediate response from the student after the recast (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Lyster and Ranta also acknowledged that teachers rely heavily on recasts despite its ineffectiveness to prompt students to self-correct (1997); these findings contrast sharply with Doughty and Varela's (1998) study. Lyster (1998) also argued that the empirical research in the classroom has not yet offered concrete evidence that recasts are overtly

effective due to the lack of immediate student response (see also Panova & Lyster, 2002). In his 1998 research, Lyster studied 27 different lessons of four French teachers in primary English courses. Lyster (1998) concluded that recasts are likely to go unnoticed by students as negative evidence and that it is extremely difficult for students to differentiate recasts from teacher echoes—basing this argument on uptake. To counter arguments made by these results, it is important to consider that the researchers based the effectiveness of recasts solely on learner uptake, which has been called into question by several studies (Doughty & Long, 2003; Gass, 2003; Long, 2007; Mackey & Philp, 1998).

Counter Arguments to Disadvantages of the Recast Technique

Contrary to research claiming the ineffectiveness of recasts based on limited uptake (Lyster, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002), some studies have shown that recasts do lead to uptake (Ohta, 2000; Oliver, 1995; Oliver & Mackey, 2003; Sheen, 2004). Doughty and Long (2003) claim that Lyster and Ranta (1997) deemed recasts futile too quickly and as a result, did not notice that other modes of discourse within the classroom could have been the reason for lower repair and uptake rates. Sheen's (2004) study adds to this argument because in her study, 70% of recasts accounted for more than half of retention rates; this is vastly different from Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study with only an 18% retention rate. Similarly, Mackey and Philp (1998) argue that uptake is not an appropriate measure of the recast technique; instead, the researchers see the pretest/post-test design to be a more effective measure of recasts. Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) allowed for further insight into recasts when they compared it with prompts. Although immediate uptake was allowed for the prompt group and not for the recast group, recasts proved to be just as effective. Thus, suggesting that recasts can still be useful in L2 development even without the presence of uptake.

Purpose of Current Study

There is tension between theoretical and empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of recasts in ESL learning. Whereas the theoretical arguments put forth by Ammar and Spada (2006) suggest that recasts through CF is an effective teaching technique because it does not interfere with the student's learning, other researchers including Lyster (1997) argue that the empirical research in the classroom has not yet offered concrete evidence that it is effective. Additionally, researchers argue that most studies related to the acquisitional benefits of recasts have been conducted in laboratory settings (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Han, 2002; Ishida, 2004, Mackey & Philp, 1998). Although there have been numerous studies conducted on the effects of recast, there is still a lack of research in the following areas: recasts in a diverse classroom setting and the effect of recasts on possessive pronouns. An aim of this present study was to help clarify these discordant results, and to fill this currently existing gap in the literature by further exploring this area of study within a sample of diverse adult ESL students ranging from 18-55 years old.

Methods

The objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of recasts as a language teaching technique in enhancing understanding of the English possessive pronouns among adult ESL learners.

Research Question

This study sought to address the question: Do recasts in the classroom help adult ESL students improve their understanding of English possessive pronouns?

Hypothesis

Based off research (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Doughty & Varela, 1998; Han, 2002) the hypothesis for this study was that recasts would enhance the ESL students' understanding of English possessive pronouns and improve their English language learning.

Research Design

A quantitative non-equivalent group quasi-experimental pretest-post-test design was used in this study to determine the impact of the recast technique on ESL students' learning performance. There was one control group and one treatment group. The control group was comprised of ESL students whose classroom did not receive any intervention. The treatment group was comprised of a separate, but similar ESL classroom of students; these students participated in a three-week recasting intervention facilitated by the researcher during the regular school day. Both the treatment and control groups' students took a pretest (Appendix A), which consisted of questions regarding possessive pronouns. After the completion of the three weeks of treatment, the same test was administered as a post-test (Appendix B) to both the control and the treatment groups to measure student progress in understanding possessive pronouns.

Independent variable. The independent variable for this study was a three-week recast technique implemented by the researcher. Implementing the recast technique enhances SLA, particularly among ESL learners (Long, 1996; Schmidt, 1990, 1992). Within the language-teaching context, recast refers to CF teaching techniques. The focus for this study was on CF, where a researcher corrects the learner's error in a way that does not hinder communication. An example would be if a student says, "The toy is her," then the researcher will immediately respond by correcting the student, saying, "The toy is hers" (Long, 1996).

Dependent variable. The dependent variable for this study was students' score on the possessive pronouns test. This can also be described as the students' academic performance as measured by the pretest/post-test model (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). This test measured students' understanding of the use of English possessive pronouns (Ammar & Spada, 2006). English possessive pronouns indicate possession using words such as mine, theirs, yours, ours. An example of this is "This toy is hers." The test was administered to the students before and after the three-week intervention. The students' learning of possessive pronouns was evaluated through the written test (Appendices A & B). The test was adapted from a current curriculum in a Los Angeles Mission College communications course consisting of 20 questions.

The test was assessed using the answer key (Appendix C) as provided by Los Angeles Missions College.

Setting and Participants

Research was conducted at an adult ESL school on the Central Coast of California. The school has a large international community with approximately 300 ESL students, 10 ESL classes and 10 teachers. A placement test was given to determine the language proficiency of students to assign them to a class from level one through level three. Level one is considered Literacy/Beginning Low ESL, level two is beginning High /Intermediate Low ESL, and level three is Intermediate High/Advanced ESL. Each level has morning and evening classes. There were five morning and five evening classes. The morning ESL classes were from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm and met Monday through Thursday with each class lasting four hours. The evening classes were held from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm and met Monday through Thursday. The duration of evening classes were 2.5 hours.

Convenience sampling was used in this study, as the participants were accessible to the researcher. Two classrooms were purposefully selected as a sample to ensure that students were in the same level one beginning ESL course. There were 50 participants in total, with 25 in each class. The age-range of the participants in both the experiment and control groups was between 18 and 55 years.

Treatment group. In the treatment group, there were 25 ESL students ranging in age from 18 to 55. The majority of the ESL students spoke and understood basic English. The demographics of the students in this group included 15 females and 10 males. They were international students from 28 countries. In the treatment group, there were 12 students from Hispanic countries, three from Pakistan, six from African countries, three from European countries and one from an Arab country. The students took the class from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm from Monday through Thursday and the curriculum consisted of writing, listening, reading, and speaking.

Control group. The control group consisted of 25 ESL students from the same ESL level, their ages ranging from 18 to 55. There were nine students from African countries, six from Pakistan, eight from South and Central America, and two from Arab countries. The students in the control group were composed of 18 females and 7 males. The students took the class from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm from Monday through Thursday and the curriculum of everyday class consisted of writing, reading, listening, and speaking.

Measures

A 20-question fill-in-the-blank possessive pronouns test (Appendix B) was adapted from a current curriculum from Los Angeles Missions College to be used in this study. This curriculum came from a Developmental Communications class which focuses on introductory

grammar as it relates to communication. The measure was used as both the pretest and the post-test; however, the post-test had items rearranged so participants could not memorize answers. The measure took approximately 20 minutes for participants to complete and results were examined to determine the intervention's effectiveness.

Validity. The measure was from a published curriculum that was intended to test certain aspects of grammar and in this case, possessive pronouns. This test was designed to measure students' understanding of possessive pronouns, which fit the context of this study. Additionally, content validity as well as face validity appear to be present with respect to the twenty fill in the blank questions (Polk, n.d.).

Reliability. The measure has been used by various grade level teachers with similar results as a way to measure student's understanding of possessive pronouns; thus, it is considered reliable. Moreover, an answer key was provided for both the pretest and post-test to ensure consistency in scoring (Polk, n.d.).

Intervention

For this study, the students in the treatment group participated in the recasts technique intervention. The recasts technique helped ESL students in acquiring the knowledge of possessive pronouns according to Ammar and Spada (2006). Throughout the three weeks, the students from the treatment group received 30 minutes of recast exercises (Appendices D & E) where the researcher called on students to identify the correct possessive pronoun from questions/statements that the researcher read aloud. The researcher ran the intervention session for three weeks only with the ESL treatment group, while the control group followed the regular class schedule.

Procedures

On the first day of week one, both the control and treatment group were given the pretest (Appendix A). This test contained 20 questions that asked students to identify the possessive pronouns. After the pretest, the control group had normal instruction, while the treatment group moved into intervention. During the second week, the researcher gave two sheets of possessive pronouns to the students to work on and fill in the blanks for the 15 questions. One on the first day (Appendix D) and another on the third day of the second week (Appendix E). Then the researcher orally called on individual students to identify the correct possessive pronoun from the given sheet. The researcher in the treatment group immediately orally corrected each student through recasts, whereas the teacher in the control group did not. The list of possessive pronouns in Appendix F were provided to the treatment group that was accompanied by a list of corresponding subjects.

In the third week, the researcher gave the combination of questions (see Appendices D and E) to the students asking them to fill in the blanks and circle the correct answer; then each student read his/her question aloud while the researcher in the treatment group immediately corrected the students through recast. On the last day of the third week, the post-test (Appendix B) was administered to the treatment and control group and the test was collected.

Fidelity. To ensure the intervention fidelity, the researcher was the only facilitator of the classroom reflection/instruction component of the recasts. The classroom teacher and other teachers were instructed not to discuss or share their opinions about the recasts' intervention with anyone. The participants in this study, in both the control and treatment groups, were not informed of the purpose of the study regarding the recasting. Time allotments were honored and classroom intervention did not take more than 30 minutes of each class. The classroom teacher

was the only observer in all interventions to ensure 100% fidelity. The classroom teacher made sure that the recast intervention was implemented as intended (see Appendix G).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns were carefully considered by the researcher in order to ensure that no harm could come to participants. The participants attended the regular class hour with no extra class work, since the intervention was incorporated in the regular classroom assignments. For those students who needed extra support in utilizing the recast to work on their understanding of possessive pronouns, the researcher was available either after class or by appointment.

The intervention was not harmful to any person /student involved because there was no perceived harm of physical injury expected in the intervention process, since the study will take place on the ESL campus. Students were not required to travel to any other location that could present any danger or lack of security. In addition, students did not sacrifice time outside of the regular school day since the study did not require extra class time for student participation to complete the recast possessive pronouns assignments. Moreover, confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the duration of the study.

Validity threats. Several steps were taken to reduce threats to the validity of this study. Although convenience sampling was used, sampling bias was avoided since entire classes of students for each group were chosen rather than specific individuals. It was ensured that the control and treatment groups matched one another generally in characteristics of demographics, age, and overall academic skill level. Both groups were of the same size and level. The control group was in the morning and the treatment group was in the evening. Therefore, there was no threat of transferring the information to the control group because the classes were 5.5 hours

apart and limited information transfer amongst the students. This helped to prevent the possibility of researcher bias.

Data Analyses

All data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences® (SPSS®) for Windows, version 24.0.0 (SPSS, 2016). No names or identifying information was included in the data analysis. Before analyses were conducted, all data was cleaned to ensure no outliers were present (Dimitrov, 2012). After cleaning the data, the final sample size of 25 participants for the treatment group and 25 participants for the control group. Independent (control and treatment groups) and paired (pre-test and post-test) sample t-test were conducted to determine if there was a significant effect for group membership on the change in scores from pre-test to post-test means on the 20-item fill-in-the-blank test included in Appendix A. Further, before interpreting the analytical output, Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was examined to see if the assumption of equivalence had been violated (Levene, 1960). If Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated (i.e., the variances were equal across groups), data were interpreted for the assumption of equivalence; however, if the variances were not equal across groups, the corrected output was used for interpretation.

Results

Two independent samples t-tests were conducted on the whole sample ($n = 50$) for both the pre and post assessment scores. Results for the pre-test were calculated to find the mean for the treatment group ($M = 3.24$) and standard deviation ($SD = 1.54$) and mean for the control group ($M = 3.08$) and standard deviation ($SD = 1.50$). Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated ($p > .05$), meaning the variance between groups was not statistically different and no correction was needed, and the t-test showed non-significant differences between the mean

scores on the pre-tests between the two groups $t(48) = -.37, p > .05$. Meaning that both groups had similar understanding for the possessive pronouns usage in the classroom before they were exposed to the intervention, and the two groups could be compared (see Table 1). Results for the post-test were calculated to find the mean for the treatment group ($M = 4.12$) and standard deviation ($SD = 1.67$) and mean for the control group ($M = 3.16$) and standard deviation ($SD = 1.07$). Levene's Homogeneity of Variance was not violated ($p > .05$), meaning the variance between groups was not statistically different and no correction was needed, and the t-test showed significant differences between the mean scores on the post-tests between the two groups $t(48) = -2.43, p < .05$. The statistic demonstrates that the scores on the post-test were significantly different between the control and the treatment groups; providing evidence that the intervention was successful. Further, the negative t value indicates an increase in scores and provides further evidence that the intervention impacted the treatment group's scores (see Table 1). This finding confirmed the hypothesis that students exposed to the recast method would increase their understanding of possessive pronouns as students in the treatment group scored significantly higher on the post-test than did the control group.

Table 1

Results of Independent Samples T-Tests

	Mean	SD
Pre-Test		
Treatment	3.24	1.54
Control	3.08	1.50
Post Test*		
Treatment	4.12	1.67
Control	3.16	1.07

Note. SD = Standard Deviation. * = $p < .05$.

After determining the differences between pre and post assessment scores between groups, two paired t-tests were run for both groups (i.e., treatment and control) to determine if participants mean scores from pre to post were significantly different within each group. Results for each group were as follows: treatment group, $t(24) = -2.50, p < .05$; control group, $t(24) = -.37, p > .05$. The negative t-value for each group indicates an increase in scores from pre to post assessment. Additionally, the results show a significant change from pre-test to post-test in the treatment group (increase of .88 points) but not in the control group (increase of .08 points). Therefore, the treatment group scored statistically significantly higher from pre to post-test; however, the control group did not (see Table 2). This indicates that the treatment group demonstrated a higher increase in participant average scores than the control group. Meaning that the intervention of recast method for possessive pronouns was shown to be more effective than traditional classroom instruction for ESL students. These results confirm the researcher's hypothesis that students understanding of recasts would improve student understanding of possessive pronouns.

Table 2

Results of Paired T-Tests

	Mean	SD
Treatment Group*		
Pre	3.24	1.54
Post	4.12	1.67
Control Group		
Pre	3.08	1.50
Post	3.16	1.07

Note. SD = Standard Deviation. * = $p < .05$.

Discussion

Many adult English language learners encounter obstacles to learning possessive pronouns. Not being able to learn possessive pronouns may inhibit the student's ability to communicate and learn new concepts in English. Research has demonstrated that the use of recasts for second language learners may be beneficial in learning possessive pronouns in a laboratory setting (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Han, 2002; Ishida, 2004, Mackey & Philp, 1998), but the use of recasts in an adult classroom has not been explored. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify if the recast technique improved the ESL students' understanding of possessive pronouns. This study included 25 ESL students who received recasts regarding possessive pronouns intervention and 25 ESL students who received traditional classroom instruction. Based on previous findings, it was hypothesized that students exposed to the recast technique involving possessive pronouns in class (i.e., treatment group) would understand possessive pronouns better and improve upon their learning performance than those in the control group (Han, 2002).

The results of this study indicated that the use of recasts increased students' understanding of possessive pronouns as compared to the control class who did not receive recasts. The results of the post-test showed that students who received the recasting method of possessive pronouns had higher scores than students who received traditional classroom instruction. The result of the post-test when compared to the pretest of the treatment group indicated an increase of .88 points on the paired t-tests calculation. Therefore, the result of this research supports the effectiveness of the recast method of possessive pronouns that are tied to the previous studies. Han (2002) is the only researcher mentioned that has conducted research regarding recasts and possessive pronouns. While her study only consisted of eight students, the

current study focused on 25 and still corroborated Han's (2002) initial findings. Therefore, students could understand possessive pronouns better through the use of the recast technique.

As mentioned by Han (2002), the use of a recasting method as an educational tool for teaching possessive pronouns generally enhanced student understanding of possessive pronouns. During the three-week intervention, the students in the treatment group were involved in their learning of possessive pronouns. As compared to the students in the class with traditional instruction only, the students in the treatment group were engaged in learning the possessive pronouns and they began correcting each other how to correctly say sentences and use possessive pronouns. These findings were similar to that of Doughty and Varela (1998).

Incorporating the recasting method for possessive pronouns in the classroom creates a different learning environment for students which allows them to take what they have learned from the recast technique and apply it to their educational learning as they did when they corrected each other (Doughty & Varela, 1998). In this study, the students in the treatment class expressed to the researcher that the recast method was beneficial to their learning of possessive pronouns. By effectively incorporating the recast method for possessive pronouns in educationally relevant ways, it may lead to a positive effect on student learning (Doughty & Varela, 1998). Although this study had positive findings that supported the researcher's hypothesis, there were some limitations that should be noted.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation in this study was time. Due to time constraints, the study was conducted over the course of three weeks. The time constraint may have impacted student growth as they only received the intervention for three weeks. A longer duration for the intervention would provide richer data for more accurate results. Another limitation in this study was that this

research was conducted with a small group in a level one beginning ESL course in an adult school. Future studies should involve more participants and include participants from different grade levels, as this would provide more information that might yield better or more transferable findings. Additionally, some ESL students were not exposed to the recast method of possessive pronouns previously, which limited participation for these students considerably, compared with their classmates who were familiar with the possessive pronouns in their first language. This may have impacted the learning that was demonstrated in this research. Many of the students in this study had little to no experience with English and as a result, findings may be different depending on the level of understanding. Thus, future research should provide a longer pre-intervention period where participants can become familiar with recast method of possessive pronouns before beginning the formal intervention. It would be worthwhile to conduct a study using the recast method not only for possessive pronouns, but with other forms of grammar to improve students' language learning. Therefore, future research needs to be conducted testing the effects of the recast technique involving different forms of English grammar.

During a three-week intervention, this study provided support for the usefulness of the recast method for possessive pronouns in an educational setting; particularly for adult ESL students in the treatment group. Students enjoyed sharing their knowledge with their peers by correcting each other orally as the researcher had done to convey new knowledge they gained from the class. The use of recasts to teach possessive pronouns in the classroom provided opportunities for the students to be more self-directed and independent in their learning; thus, motivating students to continue to acquire English as a second language.

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Appendix A

Pre-Test Assessment

Please fill in the blanks with the appropriate possessive pronoun.

1. Mr. Lee sent _____ mother a get-well card.
2. Some students left _____ books at home yesterday.
3. Each of the customers wanted _____ refund.
4. None of the women could find _____ keys.
5. Mrs. Jones and her husband took _____ children to the Bahamas.
6. Either Kate or her sister can bring _____ guitar to the club
7. Several of the boys broke _____ toys accidentally.
8. Neither of the clerks remembered _____ password.
9. Bob or Samuel will present _____ article to the publisher.
10. One of the police officers can introduce _____ partner
11. Jessica mailed _____ mortgage payment to the bank.
12. The insurance agents sent _____ clients a free calendar.
13. Not one of the attorneys could find _____ legal brief.
14. Either Pedro or his brother can drive _____ car to the conference.
15. Olivia and her husband took _____ children to Disneyland.
16. All of the children brought _____ bicycles to the park.
17. Each of the winners thanked _____ families.
18. Both of the new apartment owners gave _____ tenants free rent.
19. Neither Jeff nor Kevin can remember _____ password.
20. Not one of the members is delivering _____ application

Appendix B

Post-test Assessment

Please fill in the blanks with the appropriate possessive pronoun.

1. Mrs. Jones and her husband took _____ children to the Bahamas.
2. Mr. Lee sent _____ mother a get-well card.
3. Not one of the members is delivering _____ application
4. Either Kate or her sister can bring _____ guitar to the club.
5. Neither of the clerks remembered _____ password.
6. Not one of the attorneys could find _____ legal brief.
7. One of the police officers can introduce _____ partner
8. Some students left _____ books at home yesterday.
9. Jessica mailed _____ mortgage payment to the bank.
10. Each of the customers wanted _____ refund.
11. Olivia and her husband took _____ children to Disneyland.
12. Several of the boys broke _____ toys accidentally.
13. Each of the winners thanked _____ families.
14. Bob or Samuel will present _____ article to the publisher.
15. Neither Jeff nor Kevin can remember _____ password.
16. None of the women could find _____ keys.
17. All of the children brought _____ bicycles to the park.
18. The insurance agents sent _____ clients a free calendar.
19. Both of the new apartment owners gave _____ tenants free rent.
20. Either Pedro or his brother can drive _____ car to the conference

Appendix C

Answer Sheet for Pretest and Post-test Assessment

1. Mr. Lee sent **his** mother a get-well card.
2. Some students left **their** books at home yesterday.
3. Each of the customers wanted **his or her** refund.
4. Either Karen or her sister can bring **her** guitar to the club.
5. Mrs. Jones and her husband took **their** children to the Bahamas.
6. Not one of the attorneys could find **his or her** legal brief.
7. Several of the boys broke **their** toys accidentally.
8. Neither of the clerks remembered **his or her** password.
9. Bob or Samuel will present **his** article to the publisher.
10. One of the police officers can introduce **his or her** partner.
11. Jessica mailed **her** mortgage payment to the bank.
12. The insurance agents sent **their** clients a free calendar.
13. Each of the winners thanked **his or her** family.
14. Either Pedro or his brother can drive **his** car to the conference.
15. Olivia and her husband took **their** children to Disneyland.
16. None of the women could find **her** keys.
17. All of the children brought **their** bicycles to the park.
18. Both of the new apartment owners gave **their** tenants free rent.
19. Neither Jeff nor Kevin can remember **his** password.
20. Not one of the members is delivering **his or her** application.

Appendix D

Possessive Pronoun Exercise

Write the correct possessive pronoun for each sentence:**EX: That car belongs to me. That car is mine.**

1. *That book belongs to those kids. That book is _____ .*
2. *This bicycle belongs to my neighbor Bill. This bicycle is _____ .*
3. *This scarf belongs to my aunt Tina. This scarf is _____ .*
4. *This toy belongs to you. This toy is _____ .*
5. *This apartment belongs to my cousin and me. This apartment is _____ .*
6. *These mittens belong to my mother. These mittens are _____ .*
7. *Those cookies belong to my sister's friends. Those cookies are _____ .*
8. *These suitcases belong to you and your wife. These suitcases are _____ .*
9. *That pillow belongs to me. That pillow is _____ .*
10. *That lamp belongs to my aunt and uncle. That lamp is _____ .*
11. *That book belongs to them. That book is _____ .*
12. *That pen belongs to me. That pen is _____ .*
13. *This dog belongs to us. This dog is _____ .*
14. *This car belongs to him. This car is _____ .*
15. *This house belongs to my brother and me. This house is _____ .*

Appendix E

Possessive Pronoun Exercise

Find the correct answer.

1. Mary likes to wash _____ face.

- A) His
- B) Her
- C) The
- D) Your

2. This is Sarah Brown. _____ is a doctor.

- A) They
- B) It
- C) She
- D) Her

3. The old man is happy to see _____.

- A) You
- B) His
- C) She
- D) Her

4. The boy has to do _____ homework before dinner.

- A) His
- B) Her
- C) Your
- D) Their

5. Tim and _____ sister are twins. They have the same birthday.

- A) His
- B) Her
- C) Your
- D) Their

6. George's mother asked _____ to play with the baby.

- A) Her
- B) He
- C) Him
- D) His

7. Bill loves animals. This is _____ bird.

- A) Him
- B) Her
- C) His

D) Your

8. Mary's family went to the zoo. _____ brother didn't like the giraffes.

- A) Her
- B) Your
- C) She
- D) His

9. This is Paul White. _____ is a policeman.

- A) She
- B) Him
- C) It
- D) He

10) John and Lisa like _____ house.

- A) Her
- B) Him
- C) Their
- D) Theirs

11) That bike is _____.

- A) My
- 2) Her
- 3) His
- 4) Mine

12) Sarah washes _____ clothing.

- A) His
- B) Her
- C) Him
- D) Hers

13) Is this _____ or mine?

- A) Her
- B) Your
- C) I
- D) Yours

14) Please don't touch the plants. They are _____.

- A) My
- B) Him
- C) Me
- D) Mine

15) We didn't like his story. We liked _____.

- A) His

- B) Mine
- C) Ours
- D) Their

Appendix F

List of Pronouns Given to Treatment Group

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Possessive Pronoun</i>
It	Its
I	My, Mine
You	Your
She	Her, Hers
He	His
We	Our, Ours
They	Their, Theirs
You (plural)	Yours

