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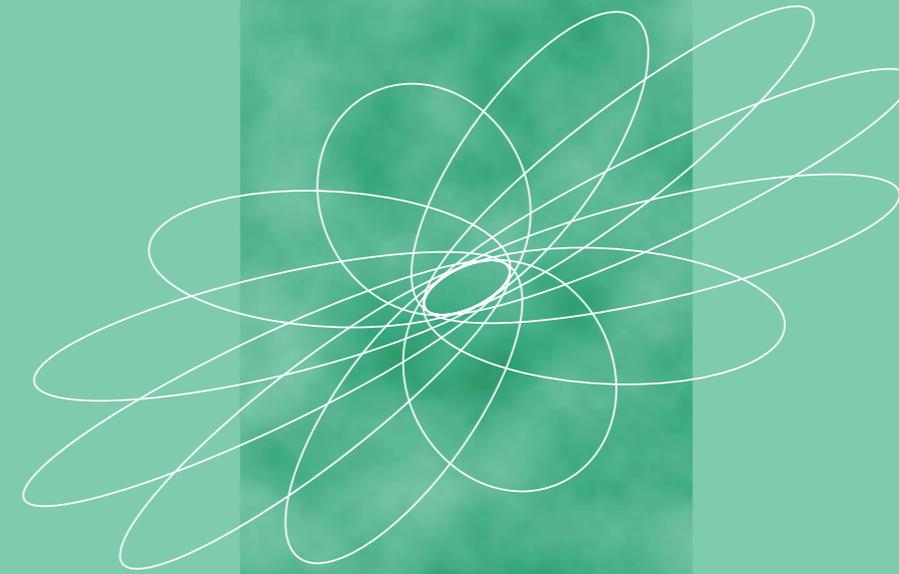
RECASTS IN
A JAPANESE EFL CLASSROOM

Toshiyo Nabei

Kansai University Press

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Preface

This book is a revised version of my doctoral thesis completed in 2002, in which I investigated the nature, roles and effects of a native speaker teacher's recasts in relation to adult learners' second language (L2) learning. The recast's role as linguistic corrective feedback is controversial in second language acquisition (SLA) research: although experimental studies found recasts effective for facilitating L2 learning (e.g., Mackey & Philp, 1998), classroom-based SLA studies suggested that the learner did not react to the teacher recasts (e.g., Lyster, 1998b). This small-scale study investigated the recast in the interaction occurring in a theme-based communicative EFL classroom, focusing on the NS teacher's intentions when providing, and the Japanese college students' attention to recasts.

The data are composed of videotaped classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews, the students' uptake claim surveys, results of customized grammaticality judgment tests based on the classroom discourse, and two stimulated recall interviews with the teacher. Recast episodes identified in the classroom discourse were then related to the students' recalls of their attention and to their grammaticality judgment test results. The teacher's recalls were also coded in relation to the types of recast episodes.

The data analyses were conducted and reported in two different theoretical frameworks: cognitive-interactionist and sociocultural. In contrast to the findings from other recast studies, the teacher in this study provided feedback less frequently. The students were found to be more attentive to the recasts in group than in teacher-fronted contexts. The effect of recasts for L2 learning in the cognitive-interactionist SLA framework was mixed. However, in the sociocultural approach to examining the relationships among the feedback types, the students'

attention, and their test results, the teacher's and students' agency in their L2 teaching and learning manifested itself. It was not the linguistic input (i.e., recasts) that facilitated L2 learning; it was rather the interaction between the teacher and learners using mediational means that was important. This thesis raises problems with the cognitive-interactionist approach to SLA focusing exclusively on the linguistic environment in contrast to the sociocultural approach focusing on human agency using language. Further, the importance of deliberate provision of feedback in response to the learner's needs is suggested as one of the pedagogical implications of this research.

Two years after the completion of the thesis, in the course of revising my work, I reviewed more than ten new studies on recasts published in the past two years. This indicates that more SLA researchers are interested in this form of feedback. I have also experienced different type of EFL classrooms in Japan since I completed the thesis. There are, for example, college EFL classrooms with more than 40 students of mixed proficiency levels. Having learned about EFL teaching activities in such classrooms, I had to think more about the relationship between the teacher's feedback and students' EFL learning, and this relationship is considered in the final chapter. I view this book as the beginning of further inquiry into the dynamics of teacher-student interaction in EFL classroom. I now see the importance of students' agency in EFL learning even more than when I started the doctoral research. Trying to understand the L2 learning process from the learner's perspectives is essential.

October, 2005.

Toshiyo Nabei

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