Recasts, metalinguistic feedback, anxiety and grammatical development in EFL: A case study with young learners

Evangelia PARASKEVA & Eleni AGATHOPOULOU

This case study investigated the relationship between oral corrective feedback (OCF) and language learning anxiety in the acquisition of the regular past tense morpheme -ed and the subject-verb agreement morpheme –s in EFL. The participants were two Greek L1 eleven-year-old female twins at an A2 level of English language proficiency. A language anxiety test and interview data showed that one of the twins was a low-anxiety learner while the other was a high-anxiety learner. The teaching interventions lasted for two weeks, providing corrective feedback on the target structures during 8 oral story-retelling tasks. Results from pre-tests, immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests (which contained an untimed grammaticality judgment test and an oral imitation test) showed that the low-anxiety learner benefited from metalinguistic feedback whereas the high-anxiety learner benefited from recasts in the acquisition of subject-verb agreement. On the other hand, there was no statistically significant improvement in the acquisition of the past tense morpheme –ed. Our findings comply with previous studies which indicate that implicit OCF (recasts) may be more beneficial to high-anxiety learners, while explicit OCF (metalinguistic) may be more helpful for low-anxiety learners.

Key words: Oral Corrective Feedback, language anxiety, young EFL learners, recasts, metalinguistic feedback, subject-verb agreement, simple past tense

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1. Introduction

Although Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF) on learners' errors in non-native language (L2) teaching has always been a customary teaching practice, research in OCF essentially started in the 1990s (for a recent overview, see Agathopoulou, 2020). Based on recordings from L2 French immersion classes in Canada, Lyster and Ranta (1997) classified OCF into six types, which were verified, enriched and further classified by following studies (e.g. Sheen & Ellis, 2011). The effect of OCF on L2 development investigated through a pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test methodology has shown that whether OCF may boost L2 development or whether particular OCF types are more beneficial than others may depend on multiple factors, among which are the target grammatical language forms and

the learners' L2 developmental readiness (Ammar, 2008), the type of OCF (e.g. implicit/explicit or prompts/reformulations), and language learning anxiety (for an overview, see Ellis, 2017).

The current research is a case study of two twin EFL learners who, as we will show, differed from each other only with respect to levels of language learning anxiety. We explored the role of recasts and metalinguistic feedback in the development of the Subject-Verb agreement morpheme –s and the past tense morpheme –ed, as well as the relationship between OCF and language anxiety.

In the next sections, first we briefly review research in recasts and metalinguistic feedback, as well as in language learning anxiety and then we present our method and results. The final section includes a discussion of our results, the limitations of our study, suggestions for future research and the pedagogical implications of our findings.

2. Recasts and metalinguistic OCF

Recasts, which consist in the correct reformulation of the learners' utterances, seem to be the most frequent OCF type across various language teaching contexts (Sheen, 2004). However, recasts also seem to elicit fewer reactions (uptake) from learners than other types of OCF, such as metalinguistic feedback or elicitation (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Milla & Mayo 2014; Panova & Lyster, 2002). Consider the following examples from Agathopoulou et al.'s (2015) classroom data which involved primary school learners of EFL in Greece, simplified for our purposes here. (T=teacher, L=learner).

(1)
T: I wish …
L: have dog.
T: I wish I could have a dog, ha?
L: Yeah.

(2)
L: Expensiver.
T: Mmm. Yes. Good. I agree with this, we have two things and we compare them, but do you remember what I told you about this long word you had? Difficult. Expensive is as long as this one.
L: More expensive.

In (1) the teacher tries to elicit a sentence containing the structure of the second conditional, the learner offers an ungrammatical answer and the teacher recasts the whole target sentence adding "could". The uptake on the part of the learner consists solely of "Yeah", which is ambiguous as to whether s/he affirms that s/he understood the grammatical correction or that s/he agrees to that s/he wishes she could have a dog. In (2), the teacher offers metalinguistic feedback on an error of the comparative form of long adjectives ("expensiver"), without providing the correct form and the learner's uptake contains the correct form ("more expensive").

Based on observations that learners respond less to recasts than other types of OCF, it has been assumed that recasts may not be salient enough for learners to notice their errors, especially in content-based instruction (Lyster, 1998). It has also been observed that when teachers use recasts, they often do not give learners the time and opportunity for uptake (Sheen, 2004). However, although a learner to whom a recast is addressed may not react to it, other learners in the same classroom respond by privately repeating the correct form (Ohta, 2000, reported in Lightbown &

Spada, 2013).

Recasts can be made more noticeable either by emphasizing the wrong form (e.g. "I wish I COULD have a dog") or by reformulating only the part of the learner's utterance with the target form (e.g. "could have") (cf. (1)). These types of recasts have been termed "didactic recasts" and are distinguished as more explicit OCF than conversational and communicatively-oriented recasts which are considered implicit OCF (Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Llinares & Lyster, 2014; Sheen, 2006).

Unlike recasts, which are considered implicit OCF, metalinguistic comments/clues belong to the explicit category of OCF and they generally elicit uptake (and self-repair) more than recasts (Lyster & Ranta, 1997. The way teachers choose to formulate metalinguistic feedback may vary according to the instructional context (e.g. communicative vs. structure-based language teaching), the learners' age and their knowledge of metalanguage. For instance, in example (2), the context is a class of young learners in a primary school where EFL is taught mostly through a meaning-based approach and without explicit grammar teaching. So the teacher does not employ metalinguistic terms such as "comparative form" but talks about forms that are compared and long words instead. On the other hand, in studies where the participants were adults learning English through a grammar-based approach, metalinguistic feedback contained comments such as "You need past tense" (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006, p. 353) or "You should use the definite article 'the'…" (Sheen, 2010, p. 233).

The brief literature review that follows is limited to three studies which investigated the effects of recasts versus metalinguistic feedback or other types of prompts on the development of the structures investigated in the current study. Ellis et al. (2006) compared the effectiveness of recasts versus metalinguistic feedback on the formation of the regular simple past tense with low intermediate adult EFL learners. In their teaching interventions (where OCF was provided), they employed picture story retelling and oral text reconstruction tasks. The learners' progress was monitored through pre-tests, immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests involving oral imitation and untimed grammaticality judgments. The results showed superiority of metalinguistic feedback in most respects. Yang and Lyster (2010) too used pre-tests, immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests to examine the effect of recasts and prompts on Chinese learners' acquisition of the regular and irregular past tense. The teaching interventions included picture-based oral narratives, a question-and-answer oral activity with cards and a dictogloss activity. Their results showed that prompts, which included metalinguistic feedback, were more effective than recasts in the regular past tense, while recasts were effective too regarding the use of the irregular past tense. Last, Guo and Yang (2018) focused on the treatment of third person –s with Chinese intermediate EFL college learners. What was particularly interesting in their teaching intervention were the two oral tasks: one with questions and answers and a picture description task. Results from pre-, immediate post- and delayed post-tests showed that the learners who had received OCF in the form of prompts had a general advantage over those who had received recasts.

3. Language Learning Anxiety and OCF

Anxiety is an individual factor considered to have an important role in successful language learning (Hardacre & Güvendir, 2020; Horwitz, 2001; Sheen, 2008; Szyszka, 2017). The symptoms of anxiety may vary from simple nervousness (Resnik & Dewaele, 2020), sweat and difficulty in concentration to apprehension, trouble and even fear and dread (Gkonou, 2013; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). The causes of language anxiety may be linked to external or internal factors (Szyszka, 2011). External factors may concern the classroom context, teacher-student relationships (Gkonou, 2014; Szyszka,

2017) as well as the learners' understanding of the classroom input difficulty and fear of negative evaluation (Gkonou, 2013). Some internal factors of language anxiety may be the learners' beliefs about themselves (Szyszka, 2017), their low self-esteem (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2011) and the learners' competitiveness and perfectionism towards their peers (Gkonou, 2014; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

Using the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986), studies have shown that anxiety is debilitative (Horwitz, 2001) and potentially leads to poor linguistic success (Sheen, 2008). High-anxiety learners seem to be those whose experiences are shaped negatively from anxiety and whose general L2 academic progress and development are interrupted and impeded (Ellis, 2001; Gkonou, 2014; Horwitz et al., 1986; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2011; Szyszka, 2011; Liu & Chen, 2013). Let it be noted, however, that anxiety may affect various language skills / aspects of language learning differentially (for a recent review, see Deyuan, 2018).

To our knowledge, there is very little research regarding the relationship between OCF and language learning anxiety. Dekeyser's (1993) study with 35 Dutch senior high school learners of French showed that there is a clear interaction between OCF and anxiety, since low-anxiety learners performed better on written grammar tests than high-anxiety learners after intensive OCF treatment sessions. Sheen (2008) found that after receiving recasts on errors regarding English articles, low-anxiety learners outperformed their high-anxiety peers. Last, Rassaei (2015) explored the effects of oral recasts and oral metalinguistic feedback in the acquisition of L2 English articles by EFL learners in Iran. Results from a pre-test/post-test design which included three tests each, indicated that high-anxiety learners benefited most from recasts while low-anxiety learners improved from both CF types but mostly from metalinguistic feedback.

4. The current study

4.1 The Research Question

Our aim was to answer one basic research question: What is the interaction between recasts (implicit OCF), metalinguistic feedback (explicit OCF) and language learning anxiety in the development of Subject-Verb agreement and regular past tense in young EFL learners?

Assuming that one of our participants would be a low-anxiety learner while the other one would be a high-anxiety learner and based on previous research findings, we hypothesized that metalinguistic feedback, which is a more salient/explicit type of OCF, would be more beneficial than recasts for the low-anxiety learner while the high-anxiety learner would benefit more from recasts, which are implicit and less anxiety-inducing than metalinguistic feedback.

4.2 Methodology

Before proceeding with the current research, the participants and their mother were informed about the aims of the study and were ensured that the data would be anonymous. Also, a written consent was obtained from the twins' mother.

Participants

The participants (called M and E here for purposes of anonymity) were two 11-year-old female twin sisters learning EFL in Greece. At the time of the study, they were in the 6th grade of primary school,

and their English instruction was mainly form-focused with frequent tests and exams targeting grammar and vocabulary. Each participant had had exactly the same amount of previous exposure to English instruction, which was approximately 600 hours.

Observational data indicated that M and E differed from each other in terms of language learning anxiety. For instance, during EFL classes M always seemed relaxed and confident whereas E was anxious about finishing her assignments and seemed less confident than her sister regarding her ability to learn new things. For these reasons, we decided to investigate their language learning anxiety by means described later here (see *Instruments*).

Target Structures and CF types

Our target structures were the suffix –ed for regular past formation and the suffix –s for Subject-Verb (S-V) agreement. We selected these structures because although they are very frequent in English (Guo & Yang, 2018) and are introduced early in EFL teaching, they are difficult to acquire (Ellis, 2006; Krashen, 1982). Other criteria for the selection of the particular structures were that they are both grammatical morphemes of the same language proficiency level (elementary to lower intermediate) (Erlam, 2006) and are both considered more amenable to explicit rather than implicit corrective feedback (Ellis, 2006). Additionally, we decided to include these two grammatical structures rather than one of them in order to check possible effects in this domain, given that the S-V agreement morpheme –s is acquired later than the past tense –ed (Goldschneider & Dekeyser, 2001).

We employed two CF types: (a) metalinguistic feedback, which involved comments on errors using metalanguage and (b) recasts, presented as correct reformulations of only the part of the learner's utterance which contained the error, in the declarative form (Ellis et. al., 2006; Guo & Yang, 2018). As already mentioned, metalinguistic feedback may be more anxiety-inducing due to its explicit nature (Rassaei, 2015), while recasts, which are rather implicit CF, are considered nonthreatening for the learners and may thus cause less anxiety (Sheen, 2008; Rassaei, 2015).

Instruments

A. The Anxiety Questionnaire

This questionnaire was adapted in Greek (see Appendix A) from two other questionnaires mentioned below. The questionnaire consisted of two parts to be completed. Part A included eight questions aimed at obtaining biographical data (age, gender, years of learning the target language, knowledge of other non-native languages). All of these eight questions, as well as the guidelines for the completion of the questionnaire ("Message to the Student") were adapted from Gkonou and Oxford's (2016) questionnaire. Part B focused on language learning anxiety and consisted of 36 closed type questions rated on a five-point Likert scale (1=totally disagree, 5=totally agree). In Part B questions 1-33 were adapted from the questionnaire in Horwitz et al. (1986). Some examples are "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.", "I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.", "I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes." and "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class." The last three questions (34-36) were adapted from scenarios in Gkonou and Oxford's (2016) questionnaire. For example, Scenario 2 in Gkonou and Oxford was "You make a mistake during a classroom oral activity. Your teacher corrects you in front of the class" and it was followed by 9 questions regarding the emotions this incident may cause. The first question asked whether in a situation like the above, the learners experience negative or positive emotions. In our questionnaire

the relevant adapted item was "I feel uncomfortable when the foreign language teacher corrects an error I made in front of the whole class".

B. The interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted both with the two learners and their mother. Most of the prepared questions were adapted in Greek from the scenarios in Gkonou and Oxford (2016). The scenarios employed during the interviews with each of the two girls were: (a) Imagine that you make an error during an oral activity. Your teacher corrects you in front of the class. How would you feel? Have you ever encountered a similar situation?, (b) The teacher asks you a question in class. You do not understand the question and, therefore, you ask the teacher to repeat it. After the repetition, you still don't get the question. How would you feel? Would you ask the teacher to explain the question again? (c) You go to your language class unprepared because something happened and you didn't have time to complete your homework. How would you feel?, (d) A student in your language class always tries to outperform you. This student achieves a score of 100% on a language test, but you achieve only 75%. How would you feel? and (e) Your family is planning a vacation to a location where people speak the language you are studying. How would you feel?

In the interview with the girls' mother, after the first question "How would you describe your daughters' feelings and anxiety about learning English?", she was asked how she thought each of her daughters would feel in the scenarios (a)-(e) above.

C. The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT 2001)

The OQPT is a standardized test including a total of 60 multiple-choice items to be completed in 30 minutes. Scores between 0-15, 16-23 and 24-30 correspond to "Breakthrough", "Elementary" and "Lower Intermediate" respectively, while higher scores correspond to "Intermediate", "Advanced" and "Very Advanced" (for more details, see https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/23127-research-notes-12.pdf).

D. The untimed Grammaticality Judgment Test (GJT)

The GJT was created and used **as a pre-, post- and delayed post-test** to measure the participants' explicit knowledge of the target structures (S-V agreement in simple present tense, and regular past tense). The GJT contained 40 sentences (23 grammatical and 17 ungrammatical) adapted from various English textbooks and the British National Corpus (2007) and was digitized in a young learner friendly design. The participants were required to judge the grammaticality of each sentence by clicking one of the three faces below the sentence, standing for "correct/I don't know/incorrect" (Figure 1). Prior to the actual test, the participants had had practice with 10 sentences targeting other structures. Correct/incorrect responses were coded as 1 and 0 respectively, while "I don't know" responses were not counted in.

We watch a scary film yesterday.

Figure 1. Example of an ungrammatical sentence from the GJT

E. The Elicited Imitation Test (EIT)

The EIT was based on Marinis and Armon-Lotem (2014) and it was used as a pre-, post- and delayed post-test to measure the participants' implicit knowledge of the target structures. It consisted of 30 items extracted from English textbooks as well as from Marinis and Armon-Lotem (2014) and Erlam (2006). All the sentences were grammatical, recorded by native-like speakers of English and incorporated in a Power Point Presentation illustrating a treasure hunt scene, where the goal was for the main character (a monkey) to reach a final destination (the top of a banana tree with a bunch of bananas) (Figure 2). The monkey moved on the pink circles and the participants had to repeat the sentences they heard each time the monkey stepped on a pink circle as well as possible. (Examples from the EIT: "The horse kicked the man in the back." and "My cat climbs on the furniture all the time.")
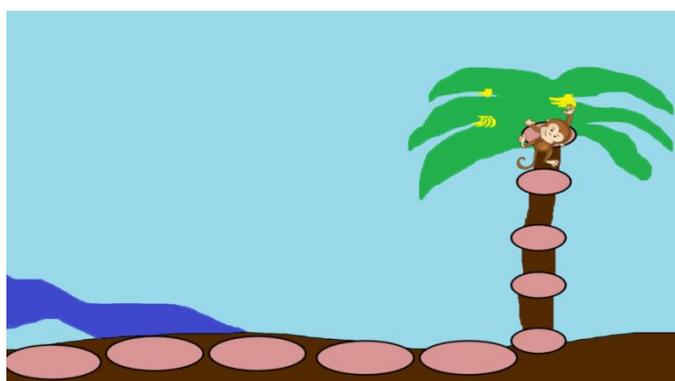

Figure 2. The final location in the elicited imitation test

The immediate and the delayed post-tests contained the same items as those in the pre-tests (both the GJT and the EIT). The immediate post-tests were administered after each intervention week (see Figure 3, Research Design) while the delayed post-tests were administered four weeks after each post-test session.

The Teaching Interventions

The two participants were treated individually. They each undertook eight sessions that lasted for two weeks. These sessions involved the same story re-telling tasks based on Simon's Cat short comic videos (Todfield, 2017). During each session, a short video was first presented to the participants and afterwards they were asked to study a brief written account of the same story for a few minutes. Then the story was removed and they were provided with a list of verbs to use in retelling the story

and thus to create as many obligatory contexts as possible for the target structures. The context for using the simple past tense or the third person –s was also created by providing the participants with some opening words for their narration, for example 'Yesterday, Simon's cat…' or 'Every evening, Simon…' (cf. Ellis, 2006).

During the first week of interventions, the focus was only on S-V agreement and M received metalinguistic feedback whereas E's errors were treated with recasts. During the second week, the focus was on regular past tense (–ed) and CF was applied reversely to the two participants. All the tasks were recorded on an audio tape recorder and then transcribed. Figure 3 illustrates the summary of the research design and (3)-(6) are examples of corrective feedback episodes (CFE) from the teaching interventions, slightly adapted from our recordings. OCF is in italics and T stands for teacher.

(3) Target structure: -s agreement, OCF: metalinguistic
M: In the story, Simon's cleans the kitchen. Eeeem…. Simon's mop the floor…
T: *What kind of ending should you use here?*
M: Mops…the floor!

(4) Target structure: -s agreement, OCF: recast
E: Every afternoon Simon sit the…
T: *sits*
E: sits the sofa

(5) Target structure: past -ed, OCF: recast
M: Yesterday, the Simon's cat go…walk in the living room.
T: *walked in the living room*
M: walked in the living room.

(6) Target structure: past -ed, OCF: metalinguistic
E: Last night Simon decorated the Christmas tree. Emm the Christmas tree. Then, the..the looked and the remember…he remember
T: *This happened last night, so what ending should you put?*
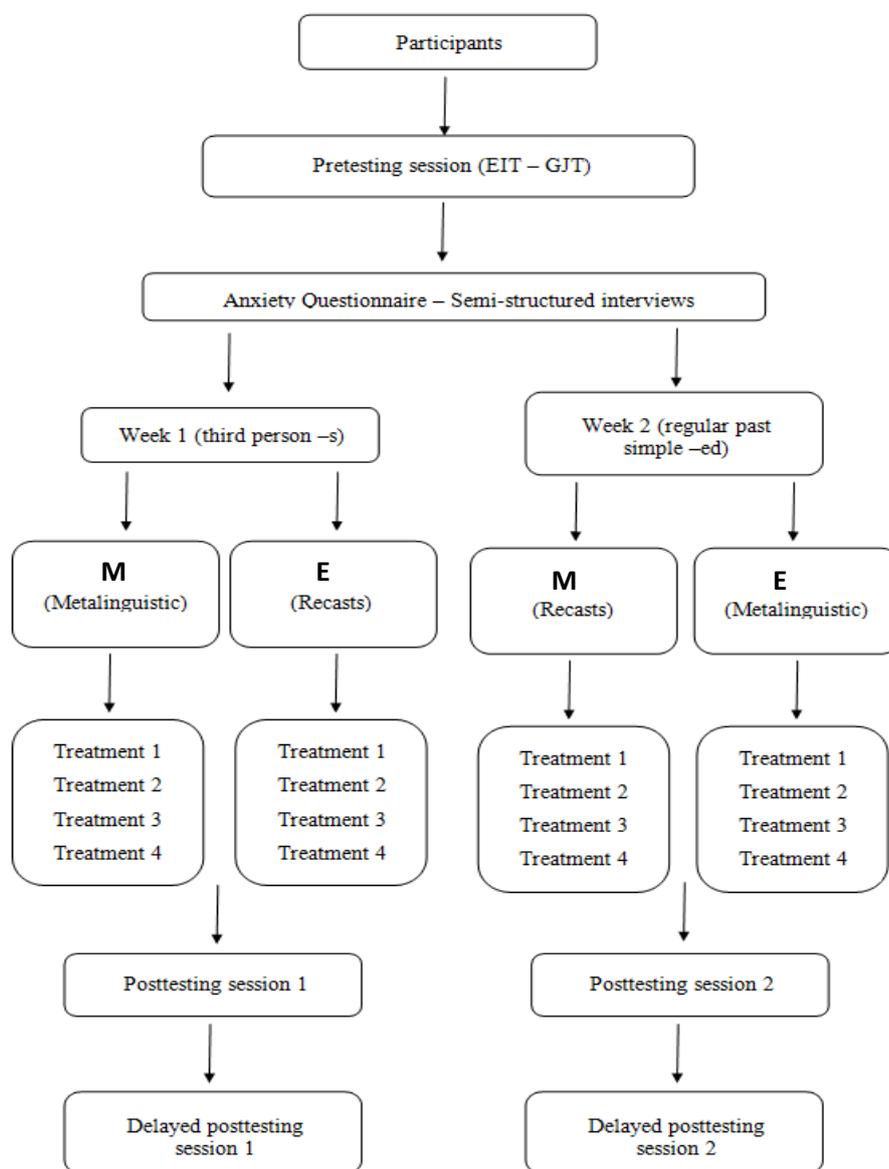**E:** remembered.

Figure 3. The research design, adapted from Sheen (2008, p. 848) and Rassaei (2015, p.102)

5. Results

5.1 The Anxiety Questionnaire

To measure the participants' anxiety level, the results of the piloting group from the anxiety questionnaire were first taken into account and these results were afterwards compared with the participants' scores. Results from the pilot group yielded scores between 1.22 and 4.67. The learners who scored more than the mean score (2.68) plus the standard deviation (1.37) (M=4.05) were classified as high-anxiety learners and those who scored lower than the mean score minus the standard deviation (M=1.31) were characterized as low-anxiety ones. An independent samples T-test showed a significant difference between the two groups (F = 4.842, Sig. = .050) (t (9) = -21.454, p < .001). Turning to the participants of the main study, M's anxiety

score was 1.30, while E's score was 4.53, which categorizes them as a low-anxiety and a high-anxiety learner, respectively.

5.2 The Interviews

The different anxiety profiles of the two learners were further verified in the interviews. Next, first we expose the main points made by the learners and then by the learners' mother.

E's responses to the scenarios (for the scenarios, see 4. Methodology):

(a) She does not want to commit errors when she speaks in the classroom, otherwise she feels ashamed and thus she does not speak in the classroom unless she is sure about her answer. (b) If she didn't understand a teacher's question, she would feel really anxious. She would not be able to ask the teacher to repeat the question because she would freeze in fear of being scolded by the teacher. In one occasion when she was unable to answer a teacher's question, she started to cry. (c) She would never dare go to the language class unprepared because she hates doing so and she wants to be perfect in school. If she had to do something like this, she would definitely lose her sleep the night before and she would ask her mother to accompany her to school in order to explain everything to the teacher. (d) Although she always tries so hard and studies a lot before a test, during the test she forgets everything she studied at home. (e) She would not travel abroad on her own because she would be too nervous if she had to communicate in English; she would worry that she would not be understood and thus she would prefer to travel with her mother and depend on the latter's ability to communicate in English. Alternatively, she would depend on her sister who doesn't have a problem to speak to people in English.

M's responses to the scenarios:

(a) She said she always makes errors but she thinks it's OK since "we learn from our errors". If the teacher corrected her, she would feel relaxed because she thinks the teacher does not correct errors in order to punish learners but because she wants them to become better. (b) If she didn't understand a teacher's question, despite asking the teacher to repeat the question, she would repeat that she didn't understand and would ask the teacher to explain it again, in different words. (c) If, for a good reason, she had to go to class unprepared, she would feel relaxed; she would explain to the teacher why she had not done her homework and promise that she would not do it again. (d) She would not mind if a classmate scored much higher than her on a test and if the classmate was a friend, she would be happy about it. In case the particular classmate was not a friend and was very competitive towards her, she would try to be better in the future. (e) She would be very happy to travel abroad and have the chance to communicate in English because she thinks she speaks English very well and if she did not know some words, she would look them up on the Internet.

The mother's responses in the interview:

The mother said that both girls like learning English and find it useful for their future; M is always relaxed, doesn't care much about making errors, unlike E who feels stressed about it. Also, if, for example, M does not manage to finish her homework on the previous day because she is tired, she will wake up earlier the following morning before she goes to school to finish everything. On the other hand, E would be very anxious about whether she would manage to finish her homework on time. The mother added that unlike with M, E's teachers say that she is highly anxious also during the lessons and if E doesn't understand something she won't ask about it because she is ashamed to ask

a question in front of the whole class. Also, unlike M, E suffers from anxiety regarding learning English as well as learning German. In the mother's opinion one reason for E's anxiety may be because that she competes with her sister, M, who is slightly better than E at school. The mother also verified that M would not really care if a classmate who competed with her, scored higher than her on a test but, on the other hand, such a situation would cause anxiety to E because "E is always concerned about comparing herself to the other students". Last, the mother said that on a trip abroad E would certainly feel insecure to communicate in English, very much unlike what M would do.

5.2 The Quick Oxford Placement Test

The two participants' scores in the QOPT were very similar; M scored 20/60 (33.3%) and E scored 21/60 (35%). These scores placed both participants on the A2 ("elementary") level of English proficiency, according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

5.3 The Untimed GJT

Table 2 presents the participants' scores on the GJT for the two structures. There were no significant differences between the participants' pre-tests for the third person –s (x^2 (32, 1) = 3.463, p =.063) or for the past simple –ed (x^2 (29, 1) =.032, p =.858). A comparison between results in the pre- and the immediate post-test revealed a statistically significant improvement for both M's (x^2 (34, 1) = 7.889, p =.005) and E's scores (x^2 (32, 1) = 5.236, p =.022), for –s agreement, but no significant differences for past –ed (M: x^2 (30, 1) = .475, p = .491; E: x^2 (29) =.318, p =.573). Also, there were no statistically significant differences between scores in the immediate and the delayed post-tests, either for –s (M: (x^2(34, 1) =.064, p =.800), E: (x^2(33, 1) =1.411, p =.235)) or for –ed (M: (x^2(31, 1) =.267, p =.605), E: (x^2(28, 1) =.571, p =.450)).

The above results indicate that M significantly improved from metalinguistic feedback and E from recasts in errors regarding S-V agreement –s and that this improvement was retained four weeks later. On the other hand, M did not significantly improve from recasts and neither did E from metalinguistic feedback on past tense –ed in the short or long term.

	Pre-test		Immediate Post-test		Delayed Post-test	
	-s	-ed	-s	-ed	-s	-ed
M	18.8 (3/16)	50 (7/14)	66.7 (12/18)	62.5 (10/16)	62.5 (10/16)	53.3 (8/15)
E	50 (8/16)	46.7 (7/15)	87.5 (14/16)	57.1 (8/14)	70.6 (12/17)	42.9 (6/14)

Table 2: Results from the Untimed GJT in percentages (–s agreement and –ed past tense)

5.4 The EIT

Table 3 illustrates the participants' overall performance in the EIT. No significant differences were found between the participants' scores in the pre-test (S-V –s: (x^2 (30, 1) =.159, p =.690); past –ed: (x^2 (30, 1) =.144, p =.705). The increase in scores between the pre- to immediate post-test for –s was statistically significant both for M (x^2 (30, 1) = 8.571, p =.003) and for E (x^2 (30, 1) = 4.821, p =.028). However, the apparent improvement in –ed was not significant for neither of the participants (M: x^2

(30, 1) = 3.394, p =.065; E: x^2 (30, 1) = 2.143, p =.143). Last, the decrease in scores from the immediate to the delayed post-test did not yield any statistically significant differences either for M (–s: x^2(30, 1) =.186, *p* =.666; –ed: x^2(30, 1) =.159, *p* =.690) or for E (-s: x^2(30, 1) =.833, *p* =.361).; –ed: x^2(30, 1) =.536, *p* =.464).

The above results are simila to those from the GJT, as they too suggest that M significantly benefitted from metalinguistic feedback (in –s) but not from recasts (in –ed), while E significantly benefitted from recasts (in –s) but not from metalinguistic feedback (in –ed). It may be worth pointing out that E improved even more in –s in the delayed post-test, although, as already mentioned, this improvement was not statistically significant.

	Pre-test		Immediate Post-test		Delayed Post-test	
	-s	-ed	-s	-ed	-s	-ed
M	26.7 (4/15)	40 (6/15)	80 (12/15)	73.3 (11/15)	73.3 (11/15)	66.7 (10/15)
E	33.3 (5/15)	33.3 (5/15)	73.3 (11/15)	60 (9/15)	86.7 (13/15)	46.7 (7/15)

Table 3: *Results from the EIT in percentages (–s agreement and –ed past tense)*

Last, although the participants had generally higher scores in the EITs than in the GJTs, no significant task effect was observed between the two tasks (p > .275 regarding all the tests, and both of the target structures). In other words, there were no statistically significant differences regarding the development of explicit versus implicit knowledge of the target structures as measured by the GJT and the EIT, respectively.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Our findings showed that one of our twin learners had a high anxiety profile while the other one was a low-anxiety learner. The high-anxiety learner mastered the structure treated with recasts (S-V agreement –s), but not the structure to which she had received metalinguistic feedback (past tense –ed) while the reverse was found for the low-anxiety sister. So they both progressed significantly in mastering the S-V agreement –s but neither did so in the past tense –ed. As we have shown, the two learners had similar scores in the target structures in the pre-test, they were of the same English proficiency level, they had had the same amount of exposure to English and they were of exactly the same age. Thus, we may plausibly assume that our results yielded a correlation between the level of language anxiety and the type of OCF.

Further support for our assumption may be sought in previous research (Ellis et al., 2006; Guo & Yang, 2018; Yang & Lyster, 2010) where generally metalinguistic OCF proved more beneficial than recasts, while in our study this effect holds for the low-anxiety learner but not for the high-anxiety one. Also, the S-V agreement –s is acquired later than the past tense –ed in L2 English (Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2001) but both of our learners progressed only in the S-V agreement –s, which is the most difficult structure.

Although, as mentioned, the recasts employed here were more explicit than conversational and communicatively-oriented recasts (see examples (4) and (5)), they were still more implicit than metalinguistic feedback. Thus, we may cautiously suggest that

implicit OCF, even in the form of these more 'didactic' recasts (Ellis & Sheen, 2011), is more suitable than explicit OCF for high-anxiety learners since this type of implicit feedback interrupts the flow of narratives much less than metalinguistic feedback.

The benefits from OCF in our study may also be due to the fact that it was offered individually. Unlike in other studies where OCF was used in classrooms with twenty or more learners and often there was no uptake, especially when recasts were employed (e.g. Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Milla & Mayo, 2014; Agathopoulou et al., 2015), in our study individual OCF resulted in a 100% uptake for the low-anxiety learner and 92% for the high-anxiety one. This result may point to the fact that in private tutoring, OCF becomes more effective for learners. Thus, we think that the effect of other important individual factors relevant to the effect of OCF (such as aspects of working memory) may be irrelevant in our study. Moreover, as previously discussed, a lack of uptake has been linked to the fact that teachers do not give learners the opportunity to react to OCF (Sheen, 2004). On the other hand, in our individual treatments the learners were offered enough waiting time to respond to OCF.

Regarding the pedagogical implications of our study, language teachers should be aware that decisions about how to correct errors may depend on individual learner factors, among which is anxiety. Having an awareness of the role of language anxiety is important since this factor may also negatively affect "willingness to communicate" (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 86) and, consequently, it may affect progress in L2 development. Teachers should acknowledge that anxiety is something their learners should not be ashamed of (Resnik & Dewaele, 2020) and that they should try to reduce it in the EFL classroom (Gkonou, 2014) by creating a friendly environment (Gkonou & Miller, 2017). To this end, teachers may employ affective language teaching strategies which involve joyful activities, for example, puns, songs and humor (Psaltou-Joycey, 2020, p. 181).

As a final note, we are aware that since our study involved only two participants, our results could hardly be generalisable, which is the main limitation of the current research. More data would probably yield different results, for instance, with respect to the development of the explicit/implicit knowledge of the target structures, which we attempted to investigate by means of the two different tasks in our tests, the GJT and the EIT. However, we would like to point out that the twin sisters in our study, who differed only with respect to their language anxiety profile, have offered a rare and rather ideal case of participants to use in exploring the link between implicit/explicit OCF and anxiety.

Acknowledgments

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APPENDIX A

The Anxiety Questionnaire

Μέρος Α: Κάποιες πληροφορίες για σένα

Α. Φύλο: ☐ Αγόρι ☐ Κορίτσι

Β. Πόσων χρονών είσαι; _____

Γ. Ποια είναι η μητρική σου γλώσσα; _____

Δ. Ποια ξένη γλώσσα μαθαίνεις αυτή την περίοδο; (Γράψε την κύρια γλώσσα που μαθαίνεις, αν μαθαίνεις παραπάνω από μια)_____

Ε. Για πόσο καιρό μαθαίνεις αυτή τη γλώσσα;

        α. 1 – 3 χρόνια

        β. περισσότερο από 3 χρόνια

ΣΤ. Γιατί μαθαίνεις αυτή τη γλώσσα; (Κύκλωσε όλους τους λόγους που σου ταιριάζουν)

        α. Με ενδιαφέρει η γλώσσα

        β. Είναι υποχρεωτικό να την μάθω

        γ. Θέλω να μάθω περισσότερα για τον πολιτισμό αυτής της γλώσσας

        δ. Έχω φίλους που μιλάνε αυτή τη γλώσσα

        ε. Την χρειάζομαι για την μελλοντική μου καριέρα

        στ. Την χρειάζομαι για να μπορώ να ταξιδεύω

        ζ. Θέλω να σπουδάσω στο εξωτερικό

        η. Άλλο: _____

Ζ. Πόσες άλλες γλώσσες μιλάς; ___

Η. Πόσο σημαντικό είναι για σένα να μαθαίνεις ξένες γλώσσες;

        α. Πολύ σημαντικό

        β. Λίγο σημαντικό

        γ. Καθόλου σημαντικό

Μέρος Β: Ερωτήσεις

Βάλε ✓ στην στήλη που ταιριάζει καλύτερα στην απάντηση σου.

5 = Συμφωνώ απόλυτα   4 = Συμφωνώ   3 = Ούτε συμφωνώ ούτε διαφωνώ
2 = Διαφωνώ   1 = Διαφωνώ απόλυτα

		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Ποτέ δεν νιώθω σίγουρος/η για τον εαυτό μου όταν μιλάω μέσα στην τάξη της ξένης γλώσσας.					
2.	Δεν ανησυχώ για το αν κάνω λάθη στην ξένη γλώσσα.					
3.	Τρέμω όταν ξέρω πως είναι η σειρά μου να μιλήσω μέσα στην τάξη της ξένης γλώσσας.					
4.	Με τρομάζει όταν δεν καταλαβαίνω τι λέει ο/η δάσκαλος/α μου στην ξένη γλώσσα.					
5.	Δεν θα με πείραζε καθόλου να κάνω περισσότερα μαθήματα ξένης γλώσσας.					

6.	Κατά την διάρκεια του μαθήματος της ξένης γλώσσας, κάποιες φορές σκέφτομαι άλλα πράγματα που δεν έχουν καμία σχέση με το μάθημα.					
7.	Σκέφτομαι συνέχεια ότι οι άλλοι μαθητές είναι καλύτεροι στις ξένες γλώσσες από εμένα.					
8.	Συνήθως νιώθω άνετα όταν γράφω τεστ στην ξένη γλώσσα.					
9.	Με πιάνει πανικός όταν πρέπει να μιλήσω στην ξένη γλώσσα χωρίς να έχω προετοιμαστεί.					
10.	Ανησυχώ για το ποιες θα είναι οι συνέπειες της αποτυχίας μου στο μάθημα της ξένης γλώσσας.					
11.	Δεν καταλαβαίνω γιατί μερικοί άνθρωποι ταράζονται τόσο πολύ σχετικά με την εκμάθηση των ξένων γλωσσών.					
12.	Στην τάξη των ξένων γλωσσών, μπορεί να αγχωθώ τόσο πολύ ώστε να ξεχάσω πράγματα που ξέρω.					
13.	Το να σηκώνω το χέρι μου για να πω μια απάντηση μέσα στην τάξη της ξένης γλώσσας με φέρνει σε αμηχανία.					
14.	Δεν θα αγχωνόμουν να μιλήσω την ξένη γλώσσα με φυσικούς της ομιλητές.					
15.	Αναστατώνομαι όταν δεν καταλαβαίνω τι μου διορθώνει ο/η δάσκαλος/α μου.					
16.	Ακόμα και αν έχω προετοιμαστεί πολύ καλά για το μάθημα, πάλι νιώθω άγχος για αυτό.					
17.	Συχνά νιώθω ότι δεν θέλω να πάω στο μάθημα της ξένης γλώσσας.					
18.	Νιώθω αυτοπεποίθηση όταν μιλάω μέσα στην τάξη της ξένης γλώσσας.					
19.	Φοβάμαι ότι ο/η δάσκαλος/α μου θα μου διορθώσει οποιοδήποτε λάθος και αν κάνω.					
20.	Νιώθω την καρδιά μου να χτυπάει γρήγορα όταν είναι η σειρά μου να μιλήσω μέσα στην τάξη της ξένης γλώσσας.					
21.	Όσο περισσότερο διαβάζω για ένα τεστ, τόσο περισσότερο μπερδεύομαι.					
22.	Δεν νιώθω πίεση για να προετοιμαστώ πολύ καλά για το μάθημα της ξένης γλώσσας.					
23.	Πάντα νιώθω ότι οι άλλοι μαθητές μιλάνε καλύτερα την ξένη γλώσσα από εμένα.					
24.	Νιώθω πολύ άβολα με το να μιλάω στην ξένη γλώσσα μπροστά σε άλλους μαθητές.					
25.	Το μάθημα της ξένης γλώσσας προχωράει τόσο γρήγορα που ανησυχώ ότι δεν θα μπορώ να ακολουθήσω τον ρυθμό του.					
26.	Νιώθω πιο σφιγμένος/η και νευρικός/ή στο μάθημα της ξένης γλώσσας από ότι στα υπόλοιπα μαθήματα.					
27.	Νιώθω νευρικότητα και μπερδεύομαι όταν μιλάω στην ξένη γλώσσα την ώρα του μαθήματος.					

28.	Όταν είμαι στο δρόμο για το μάθημα της ξένης γλώσσας, νιώθω σίγουρος/η και χαλαρός/η.					
29.	Αγχώνομαι όταν δεν καταλαβαίνω όλες τις λέξεις που λέει ο/η δάσκαλος/α μου.					
30.	Νιώθω πνιγμένος/η από τον αριθμό των κανόνων που έχει κανείς να μάθει για να μπορεί να μιλήσει στην ξένη γλώσσα.					
31.	Φοβάμαι ότι οι άλλοι μαθητές θα γελάσουν μαζί μου όταν μιλάω στην ξένη γλώσσα.					
32.	Πιθανότατα θα ένιωθα άνετα να είμαι μαζί με ανθρώπους που έχουν την ξένη γλώσσα ως μητρική τους.					
33.	Νιώθω άγχος όταν ο/η δάσκαλος/α της ξένης γλώσσας μου κάνει ερωτήσεις που δεν έχω προετοιμάσει από πριν.					
34.	Νιώθω άβολα όταν ο/η δάσκαλος/α της ξένης γλώσσας μου διορθώνει ένα λάθος που έκανα μπροστά σε όλη την τάξη.					
35.	Νιώθω άβολα όταν κάποιος συμμαθητής μου μου διορθώνει ένα λάθος που έκανα μπροστά σε όλη την τάξη.					
36.	Πιστεύω πως όσο σκληρά και αν προσπαθήσω, πότε *δεν* θα καταφέρω να τα πάω καλά στην ξένη γλώσσα.					

Πως σου φάνηκε η εμπειρία σου; Έχεις κάτι άλλο να προσθέσεις; Γράψε κάποια σχόλια:

_____

_____

_____

Σε ευχαριστώ πολύ για την συμμετοχή σου στο ερωτηματολόγιο!

Evangelia Paraskeva (evapar13@gmail.com) is an EFL teacher holding an MA in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has been teaching English as a Foreign Language both privately and in Greek private language institutes for 7 years. Her main research interests concern CF, anxiety and classroom technology.

Eleni Agathopoulou (agatho@enl.auth.gr) is Associate Professor at the School of English Language and Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She holds a BA and a PhD from Aristotle University and an M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Reading, U.K. She has published and presented papers on L2 morphology and syntax, learning strategies, focus-on-form instruction and English for Academic Purposes.