



**THE ROLE OF RECAST IN CORRECTING READING ERRORS;
IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT? ¹
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

It is claimed by many interactionists that Corrective Feedback (CF) has an important role in steering learners' attention in L2. Accordingly, attracted considerable attention in SLA, CF was divided into two as explicit and implicit, which embodied 'recast' in implicit feedback type. But, of all implicit feedback types, recasts have emerged to be the issue of intensive theoretical and empirical studies, and possibly seem to be continuing as one of the widespread ones. Although it seems there is a pile of studies in the literature conducted over recast as CF, they are all the same on the basis that regarding recast as only implicit but not explicit. So far, the great majority of the studies have been carried out over 'recast' in contexts where the point was the treatment of grammatical errors of learners. In this respect, the present study is of major importance in determining the efficiency of recast in a context where the focus is 'reading errors' rather than grammatical errors. The present study aimed to investigate whether it was implicit or explicit recast which showed more promise in reducing the number of reading errors. The participants were divided into two random groups and required to read different texts. Meanwhile, They were provided implicit feedback for the implicit feedback group and explicit feedback for the explicit feedback group. The data, collected from pre-, post-, and delayed-post tests, were recorded and analysed through paired sample t-test in order to see whether there was a statistically significant difference between two types of recast in terms of efficiency. The results were of great importance for those who wanted to employ recast for learners.

Key Words: *Implicit, explicit, recast, feedback, English*

1. Introduction

As interactionists claim, corrective feedback has an important role in steering learners' attention into second language (L2) form (e.g., Long, 1996; Mackey & Gass, 2006). Defined broadly, "corrective feedback is an interlocutor's reaction to a learner's non-target-like utterance and is a source of negative evidence for the learner" (Adams, Nuevo, & Egi, 2011, p. 42).

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Accordingly, corrective feedbacks are called as negative feedback, which further divides into two: implicit & explicit. While explicit feedback types (*Metalinguistic information, Elicitation, Direct requests etc.*) are easy to define as direct interfering of the interlocutor to the problematic point, implicit feedback is different from the explicit in that it intervenes to the problematic point obliquely; just like recasts. But, of all implicit negative feedback types (*Clarification requests, repetition etc.*), recasts have emerged to be the issue of intensive theoretical and empirical studies, and possibly seem to be continuing as one of the widespread ones. Two crucial linguistic foci may explain the reason of why recasts should not be taken for granted and merit further research studies. First, recasts are the most frequent type of feedback employed inside and outside of the language classroom (Loewen & Philp; Sheen, 2006) and second, questions remain regarding the effectiveness of recasts for second language learning (Erlam & Loewen, 2010).

A feedback type can be employed in different ways that make it implicit or explicit, and the explicit-implicit distinction may not always easy to make a separation. Although recasts have been subsumed under implicit feedback category, can it not be done explicitly? If so, which application type of recast is going to provide more success for SLA: Implicit or Explicit? In spite of being used widely, types of recast and the influence of the types are not known exactly, and needs to be studied further. The present study arose from that gap.

A great amount of studies has compared explicit and implicit feedback, or implicit feedbacks with one another. However, minimal research attention has been directed toward explicitness of recast, which is in fact an implicit feedback type (for exceptions; Zhuo, 2010; Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Erlam & Loewen, 2010; Loewen & Philp, 2006; Asari, 2012; Mahnegar, Kalanzadeh, Kianfar, & Bakhtiarvand, 2013). Since Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001) made the review on recasts, there have been many recast articles published in main SLA journals. Our understanding of the role of recasts in SLA has improved greatly thanks to these studies. But, there still remain certain problems hovering in minds. One is that whether recast could be applicable for in-class activities such as correcting reading mistakes done by the students, which is a non-existent research topic in the literature. The second is on effectiveness of recast; the common use of recasts is in evidence, however, whether to use recast implicit or explicit to able to get better success is not so pointed. Accordingly, the present study attempts to fill these gaps by examining efficacy of implicit and explicit recasts in reading correction.

In concise, the key question is whether recasts should be viewed dichotomously as implicit or explicit (Sheen, Exploring the relationship between the characteristics of recasts and learner uptake, 2006); if so, which form will provide more successful output in correction reading mistakes of the learners, which might determine whether recasts should be employed more or less explicit/implicit in nature. By examining the key question, we can better understand the efficiency of recast in two forms as implicit and explicit. With this understanding, instructors can better differentiate the two form of recast, which generally have been thought as if they were the same; and also the instructors can easier choose which one to use by regarding the results of the present study.

1.1. Recast types as corrective feedback

On scrutinizing the corrective feedback literature as of the mid-1990s, it will be seen that a great amount of debate has focused on the saliency and efficacy of recasts (Sheen, Exploring the relationship between the characteristics of recasts and learner uptake, 2006); the bond between trigger, recasts and uptake; and as last but not least, what persuades learners to pay attention to the restructuring. But, how a range of recasts can be exactly defined? Three prominent writers associated with recast make definitions of it with subtle differences as shown in the table 1.

Table 1: Definitions of some prominent writers associated with recasts

Reference	Definition
Lyster & Ranta (1997, p. 46)	“Recasts involve the teacher’s reformulation of all or part of a student’s utterance minus the error.”
Sheen (2006, p. 365)	“Recasts are defined as “the teacher’s reformulation of all or part of a student’s utterance that contains at least one error within the context of a communicative activity in the classroom.”
Long M. (2007, p. 77)	“A corrective recast may be defined as a reformulation of all or part of a learner’s immediately preceding utterance in which one or more non-target-like (lexical, grammatical, etc.) items are replaced by the corresponding target language form(s), and where, throughout the exchange, the focus of the interlocutors is on <i>meaning</i> not language as an object.”

If they are to be compiled, recast could be defined as a kind of teacher reformulation of all or a small part of the learners’ errors through input-providing. The interlocutor makes the error/s minus by restructuring the sentence, and provides the learner with target-like reformulations and exemplars. Generally, recast occurs in a row of trigger, recast, and uptake²(1).

- (1) T: How was your night?
 L: Boring! I done nothing. (trigger)
 T: You **did** nothing? (recast)
 L: Ah! Yes, past, umm, I did nothing. (uptake)

2. Literature Review

The term *recast*, at first, came along in FLA literature and has been performed to L2 studies since the mid-1990s (Oliver & Grote, 2010). When the literature is reviewed it will be seen that the widespread aspect on recast is on its implicitness as a negative feedback type.

² The respond of the learner to the recast.

Accordingly, many studies were conducted which put forward the effectiveness or uselessness of recast as implicit feedback. In a study to able to show the effects of recast on self-noticing of the errors done by the learners, Sakai (2010) collected data from total twenty Japanese-speaking English learners. Ten students were provided recast to their erroneous utterances while the rest had no corrective feedback (CF). At the end of his study, Sakai concluded that recasts --which is an implicit feedback type-- helped L2 learners notice the errors they did. But, on contrary to the general view, the recast has both implicit and explicit forms depending on the degree of saliency. That is, recast might be realised as an overt correction based on the correction type.

Accordingly, Loewen and Philp (2006) made a study to show the effectiveness of recast as implicit feedback. They collected data from 12 adult EFL learners in the period of 17 hours interaction. However; the results of the study was very interesting. It showed that parameters like stress and declarative intonation affected the effectiveness of the recast as implicit feedback. At that point, Ellis and Sheen (2006) pointed out that the recast does not have to be always implicit. Here, Sheen (2006) introduced the terms *explicit recast* and *implicit recast*.

Furthermore, in a study (Nicholas, Lightbown, & Spada, Recast as Feedback to Language Learners, 2001), aware of the discussions over the issue, researchers attempted to work out the ambiguous views on effectiveness of implicit recast in FL and SL through observational and experimental studies. At the conclusion of the study, it was resulted in that implicit recast is more effective in contexts where the learners are aware of the correction, which supports the importance of explicit recast where the treatment necessitates the awareness of the learner to the correction.

As concerning the use of explicit and implicit feedback, a study was conducted to see the effects of implicit and explicit recasts in L2 oral French interaction (Erlam & Loewen, 2010). Throughout the study, the data were collected from American university students learning French. The study aimed to show the efficiency of explicit and implicit recast on correction of noun-adjective agreement errors. They applied implicit recast as a single correction of the incorrect utterance while explicit recast was applied as stressed declarative intonations. The results indicated an insignificant difference between the uses of implicit or explicit recast. However; a significant difference was seen for oral interaction.

In a different study Nassaji (Nassaji, 2009) aimed to see the effectiveness of recasts and elicitations on learning linguistic forms. What made his study different was that he further divided both the recast and elicitation into two categories as implicit and explicit. Having collected data from 42 adult ESL learners throughout 2 weeks, he presented the results. According to the results, there was not a significant difference between recast and elicitation for correcting interactional errors. But what was striking in the study was that although the results were not significant in terms of recast or elicitation, the use of corrective feedback whether implicit or explicit changed the results significantly. According to the results, the use of explicit form of recast and elicitation was more effective than the implicit forms.

A very recent study on the effectiveness of implicit or explicit recast by Mahnegar, Kalanzadeh, Kianfar, and Bakhtiarvand (2013) studied with 61 intermediate EFL students to investigate the role of implicit and explicit recast in acquiring of grammatical agreement system. The students were divided into two. The first group were given implicit recast feedback while the second were corrected through explicit recast feedback. Throughout six sessions, the groups were threatened with corrective implicit and explicit recast feedbacks. After the treatment the results showed that the explicit recast was superior and more successful than the implicit recast.

As understood from the literature so far, there have been studies to bring into light whether recast is useful or not. In addition to recast efficiency determining studies, some researchers carried the issue further by examining the recast in two subcategories as implicit and explicit so that recast could be applied in a more efficient way for especially SLA learners. Though we manage to find a good deal of studies on recast as a kind of implicit feedback, it is rather hard to find any study to see the efficiency of recast in explicit feedback state. The existing ones generally focus on correction of form-meaning errors and grammatical errors, but not on pronunciation errors. Thanks to the present study, the researchers and educators will have a chance on seeing the effectiveness of explicit recast on correcting erroneous pronunciations. In accordance, the purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of explicit recast as a corrective feedback in correcting the erroneous pronunciations of university students.

2.1. Research Question

The present study will attempt to answer the question below:

1. Whether the implicit or explicit recast is more efficient as a feedback type for correcting the pronunciation errors of the learners?

3. Methodology

Through the present study it is aimed to reveal whether implicit recast or explicit recast is more efficient in the treatment of pronunciation errors of the learners. To success the aim, the students were assigned to 2 groups as implicit and explicit recast groups, and given some tasks. Implicit and explicit recast division was made through their linguistic features. As Sheen (2006) determined, the explicitness of recasts was processed by stressing or by using intonations to the treatment point.

3.1. Participants

The participants in this present study were 10 adult ESL students. All the participants spoke Turkish as their L1. There were 5 females and 5 males, all of which were over 18 years old. They had been studying prep class in the University of Siirt in Turkey for six months. According to self-reported of the participants, they had not got any English language education before they started the prep class. The participants were those who were not able to pass prep class English proficiency exemption exam at the beginning of the term, so the participants had an average English proficiency level.

The participants were randomly assigned to the implicit recast ($n=5$) and explicit recast groups ($n=5$). The participants in this study were not familiar with the knowledge of implicit recast or explicit recast; in addition, they were not aware of the study.

3.2. Data

The data came from ten reading tasks which existed in their course book. The tasks were used to see the treatment. All ten reading passages were at different lengths (see appendix. A), but at the same difficulty level; intermediate. The pre-test was conducted one day before the treatment. The immediate post-test was conducted one day after the treatment and as last, the delayed post-test one month later after the immediate post-test.

3.3. Procedure

At the very beginning, each reading passage was assigned to each learner. The same reading passage would be used for pre-test, post-test and delayed post test. Five learners in the implicit recast group and five learners in the explicit recast group read the passages without any interfering of the teacher. Then each learner mistakes were noted. Then the same reading passages were required to be read again but this time the teacher gave implicit recast feedback for the implicit recast group, and then explicit feedback for the explicit recast group. Table 2 illustrates the feedback that the learners received. The other day after the treatment, to able to see the post effect of the feedback types, the student read the same passages without any interfering, and again the errors were noted down. As last the researcher wanted students to read the same reading passages after a week to note down the delayed effect of the treatment. Having collected the data, the necessary statistical calculations were calculated. Using SPSS 20, one-way repeated ANOVA was performed to check if there was any statistically significance between the groups.

Table 2: Feedbacks used in the treatment of the pronunciation errors

Groups	Feedback to incorrect target structures
Implicit recast group	"Um, implicit recast, go on please"
Explicit recast group	"Um, explicit recast, go on please"

4. Results

At the very beginning the participants were required to read a reading passage (see Appnx. B for error variance of each student). While they were reading the reading passages, the treatment was provided and wrong-pronounced vocabularies were recorded. The table 1 shows the error mean of implicit and explicit recast groups. As seen from the table 1, the mean error of the both group were close to one another at the time of treatment; 11.80 for implicit recast feedback group and 11.20 for explicit recast feedback group.

Table 3. Group statistics for the scores of implicit and explicit groups on pre-test

	N	Mean	SD
Implicit group	5	11.80	1.789
Explicit group	5	11.20	1.789

After the first treatment provided to the participants, post-test was applied. The post-test result means are shown in table 3.

4.1. Pre&Post test results

Table 4. Group statistics for the scores of implicit and explicit groups on post-test

	N	Mean	SD
Implicit group	5	8.60	1.817
Explicit group	5	6.60	1.140

As seen from the table 4, the error mean was 8.60 for those who got implicit recast feedback, which were 11.80 in the pre-test. Meanwhile, the mean of those who got explicit recast feedback were 6.60, which were 11.20 in the pre-test. So, it is easily understood that both implicit and explicit recast were successful in reducing the number of error. However, we needed further analysis to able to see whether the decrease was significant or not. Table 5 shows the statistical results got from SPSS analysis.

Table 5. Paired sample t-test results of implicit group for pre&post-test scores

	Pre-test			Post-test				
	N	Mean	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Implicit group	5	11.8	1.789	8.60	1.81	16	4	.04
		0			7			

The statistical results obtained from the paired t-test run on the performance of implicit recast group before and after the treatment have been provided in the table 5. As it can be seen, the mean of error before the treatment was 11.80 while after treatment the mean decreased to 8.60. As seen from the table 3, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of implicit recast feedback in order to find out whether implicit feedback recast is helpful in reducing learners' reading errors or not. The findings indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test (M=11.80, SD=1.789) and post-test (M=8.60, SD=1.817) scores with regard to implicit recast feedback ($t(4) = 16, p < .05$). Therefore, it can be said that this type of feedback was found be useful for reducing reading errors of learners in the current study.

Table 6. Paired sample t-test results of explicit group for pre&post-test scores

	Pre-test			Post-test				
	N	Mean	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Explicit group	5	11.20	1.789	6.60	1.140	11.05	4	.03

The statistical results obtained from the paired t-test run on the performance of explicit recast group before and after the treatment have been provided in table 6. As understood from the table, the mean of error before the treatment was 11.20 while after treatment the mean decreased to 6.60. As the table 6 reveals, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of explicit recast feedback in order to find out whether explicit feedback recast is helpful in reducing learners' reading errors or not. The findings indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test (M=11.20, SD=1.140) and post-test (M=6.60, SD=1.140) scores with regard to explicit recast feedback ($t(4) = 11.05, p < .05$). Therefore, it can be said that this type of feedback was found to be useful for reducing reading errors of learners in the present study.

4.2. Post&Delayed post test results

After the second treatment (during post-test) provided to the participants, delayed post-test was applied. The delayed post-test result means are shown in the table 7 below.

Table 7. Group statistics for the scores of implicit and explicit groups on delayed post-test

	N	Mean	SD
Implicit group	5	7.80	1.483
Explicit group	5	5.40	1.140

As can be seen from the table, the error mean was 7.80 for those who got implicit recast feedback, which were 8.60 in the post-test. Again, the mean of those who got explicit recast feedback were 5.40, which were 6.60 in the post-test. It is seen from the mean of both groups that implicit and explicit recast again reduced the error number that the participants did. To be able to see whether the decrease was significant or not, a paired sample t-test was conducted and the results were given in the table 8.

Table 8. Paired sample t-test results of implicit group for post test & delayed post-test scores

	Post-test			Delayed Post-test				
	N	Mean	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Implicit group	5	8.60	1.817	7.80	1.48	2.13	4	.099

The statistical results got from the paired t-test run on the performance of implicit recast group after the post-test treatment have been provided in table 8. As understood from the table, the mean of error in post-test was 8.60 while the mean in the delayed post-test was 7.80, which indicates a short decrease. To reveal whether the decrease is statistically significant or not --as seen from the table 8-- a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of post-test and delayed post-test of implicit recast feedback in order to find out whether implicit feedback recast is useful in reducing learners' reading errors or not. The findings indicated that there is not a statistically significant difference between post-test and delayed post-test scores with regard to implicit recast feedback ($t(4)=2.13, p=.099$). Therefore, it can be said that there were not a significant chance between post-test and delayed post-test in terms of implicit recast feedback.

Table 9. Paired sample t-test results of explicit group for post test & delayed post-test scores

	Post-test			Delayed Post-test				
	N	Mean	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Explicit group	5	6.60	1.140	5.40	1.14	20.	4	
					0	5	.109	

The statistical results got from the paired t-test run on the performance of explicit recast group after the post-test treatment have been provided in table 9. As it is learnt from the table, the mean of error in post-test was 6.60 while the mean in the delayed post-test was 5.40, which means a slight decrease. To reveal whether the decrease is statistically significant or not, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of post-test and delayed post-test of explicit recast feedback in order to find out whether explicit feedback recast is useful in reducing learners' reading errors or not. The findings indicated that there is not a statistically significant difference between post-test and delayed post-test scores with regard to explicit recast feedback ($t(4)=20.5, p=.109$). Consequently, it can be said that there were not a significant chance between post-test and delayed post-test in terms of explicit recast feedback although there was a slight decrease in the error mean from the post-test to delayed post-test.

5. Discussion

The findings of the present study indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the participant with regard to implicit recast feedback. The result showed the same effect for explicit recast feedback when pre-test and post-test scores of the participants were taken into account. Again, with regard to significance level between post-test and delayed post-test, it was seen that there was a statistically significant difference between the tests in terms of both implicit recast feedback and explicit recast feedback. The error mean for implicit recast feedback fell from 11.80 to 7.80 whereas the figures were 11.20 to 5.40 for explicit recast feedback.

The findings indicate that both implicit recast feedback and explicit feedback are effective in reducing the number of pronunciation errors of the learners, explicit recast feedback is a little more effective than the implicit recast feedback, though. The findings bear importance to gain knowledge to the practitioners of recast in that it does not differ whether implicit or explicit form of recast has been employed to correct mispronounced vocabularies of the learners, despite the fact that the explicit type seems a little more successful.

In a study to able to show the effects of recast on self-noticing of the errors done by the learners, Sakai (2010) collected data from total twenty Japanese-speaking English learners, and concluded that recasts --which is an implicit feedback type-- helped L2 learners notice the errors they did. Accordingly, Loewen and Philp (2006) made a study to show the effectiveness of recast as implicit feedback. Their results showed that parameters like stress and declarative intonation affected the effectiveness of the recast as implicit feedback. At that point, Ellis and Sheen (2006) pointed out that the recast does not have to be always implicit, but also explicit. Then, as concerning the use of explicit and implicit feedback, a study was conducted to see the effects of implicit and explicit recasts in L2 oral French interaction (Erlam & Loewen, 2010). The results indicated an insignificant difference between the uses of implicit or explicit recast. In an another study (Nicholas, Lightbown, & Spada, Recast as Feedback to Language Learners, 2001), the findings suggested that implicit recast is more effective in contexts where the learners are aware of the correction, which supports the importance of explicit recast where the treatment necessitates the awareness of the learner to the correction.

On the other hand, in a different study Nassaji (Nassaji, 2009) aimed to see the effectiveness of recasts and elicitations on learning linguistic forms. What made his study different was that he further divided both the recast and elicitation into two categories as implicit and explicit. According to the results, there was not a significant difference between recast and elicitation for correcting interactional errors. But what was striking in the study was that although the results were not significant in terms of recast or elicitation, the use of corrective feedback whether implicit or explicit changed the results significantly. According to the results, the use of explicit form of recast and elicitation was more effective than the implicit forms. A similar study was conducted by Mahnegar, Kalanzadeh, Kianfar, and Bakhtiarvand (2013) to investigate the role of implicit and explicit recast in acquiring of grammatical agreement system. The results of their study showed that the explicit recast was superior and more successful than the implicit recast.

It is seen that while some researchers discovered the efficiency of implicit recast feedback, the others found out that the explicit recast feedback is a bit more successful as well as those which did not discover any significance between the two types. As understood from the mentioned studies that they focused on the treatments of grammatical mistakes of the learners, but nothing with pronunciation.

The present study findings discovered that there was not a difference between implicit and explicit recast types when the aim was to correct mispronounced vocabularies uttered by the learners. That the present study did not find any significance between implicit and explicit types of recasts does not mean both forms of recast have the same effectiveness level on correction learner mistakes. Non-significance may be because the current study conducted on pronunciation errors; the effectiveness levels of implicit and explicit recast feedback may be changeable if they are employed for other types of error such as grammar.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the role of implicit recast and explicit recast in correction of mispronounced vocabularies of learners. To narrow down the scope of the study, the researcher selected pronunciation errors. As related to the research questions of the present study, *whether the implicit or explicit recast is more efficient as a feedback type for correcting the pronunciation errors of the learners?*, the findings indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the use of implicit and explicit recast in terms of pronunciations errors. That is to say, no difference or effectiveness was discovered between the two forms of recast. Not to discover any superiority of explicit recast over implicit recast suggests that as a beneficiary and pedagogical role, the practitioners can use any of them as negative evidence in pronunciation corrections.

The present study has some limitations. First, it studied with a limited number of participants. Second, the difference between the implementation of implicit and explicit recast feedback was regarded as the use of intonation on behalf of explicit recast feedback; however there could be some other implementations of explicit recast which were not studied in the literature so far. It is suggested that further studies take these limitations of the present study into consideration. Also, it is suggested to investigate other characteristics of recast, and its influence on the acquisition of various linguistic structures, not only pronunciation.

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Appendix A - The reading passages and their vocabulary frequencies.

Reading Passage Title	Vocabulary Frequency Assigned	Group
1. Leisure activities in the UK	305	<i>Implicit-</i>
	<i>Student 1</i>	
2. The hobby doctor	264	<i>Implicit-</i>
	<i>Student 2</i>	
3. The history of transportation	160	<i>Implicit-</i>
	<i>Student 3</i>	
4. The Scottish electrical engineer 'John Baird'	126	<i>Implicit-</i>
	<i>Student 4</i>	
5. Alexander Fleming	176	<i>Implicit-</i>

	<i>Student 5</i>	
6. Ex-Olympic chief	224	Explicit-
	Student 1	
7. Save the whale	170	Explicit-
	Student 2	
8. Tiger under threat	157	Explicit-
	Student 3	
9. Will the polar bear disappear?	189	Explicit-
	Student 4	
10. London, England	162	Explicit-
	Student 5	

Appendix B - Error variance of each student

Error Variance of Implicit Group

Group	Pre-test Error Number	Post-test Error Number	Delayed post-test Error Number	Total
Implicit -Student 1	14	11	10	35
Implicit- Student 2	12	8	8	28
Implicit- Student 3	10	7	6	23
Implicit- Student 4	10	7	7	24
Implicit- Student 5	13	10	8	29
Total	59	44	39	142

Error Variance of Explicit Group

Group	Pre-test Error Number	Post-test Error Number	Delayed post-test Error Number	Total
Explicit -Student 1	13	7	7	35
Explicit - Student 2	10	6	4	28
Explicit - Student 3	11	7	6	23
Explicit - Student 4	13	8	5	23
Explicit - Student 5	9	5	5	26
Total	56	32	27	115