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The Impact of Types of Recast on Modified Output of Iranian Basic EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, the role of corrective feedback, especially recast, has become a highly controversial issue in language learning. The study was designed to examine the impact of full recast versus partial recast on the modified output of EFL basic level learners. In doing so, it aims to help teachers to better understand the effectiveness of full recast and partial recast. 32 EFL learners at the elementary level participated in the current research. They were divided in two different groups, one included 18 and the other 14 learners. Regarding data analysis, chi Square was run to analyze the data. The null hypothesis was rejected, leading to the conclusion the superiority of full recast over partial recast in helping learners to produce modified output.

Keywords: corrective feedback, modified output, recast

Introduction

Committing errors is an inevitable part of language learning. Second or foreign language learners make some errors while speaking or writing, and these errors may make their output incomprehensible. Helping students to overcome this obstacle has preoccupied the minds of teachers and researchers for a long time. One way to achieve this objective is to give learners feedback while they are interacting with each other in the class.

Giving feedback during interaction is deemed to play an important role in removing errors from the learners' output. While learners are producing a language, they need a superior source to correct their mistakes or when they are in trouble for producing new language, helps them, and that would be the interactional feedback. In another word, "interactional feedback is an important source of information for learners, it provides them with information about the success of their utterances and gives them additional opportunities to focus on production or comprehension" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 329).

Making errors while interacting with others emanates from lack of competence. While interaction is going on, a learner may have difficulty generating the correct forms. Here, the teacher or peers may give him/her feedback on the erroneous structures

Feedback contributes to noticing linguistics structures. Receiving feedback from the teachers or a peer helps a learner to draw his/her attention to linguistic problems and notice gaps between what they have produced (ill form) and what they should produce (correct form) (Mackey, 2012).

Students receive corrective feedback when they make a mistake in producing language, but what is feedback? Iqbal Ahmed, Saeed, and Salam (2013) argue that feedback is teachers' response to students' performance. They further believe that feedback helps the teacher to know how to respond to students after they demonstrate their knowledge, reasoning, skill, or performance.

Corrective feedback can be categorized into different types, and the improvement of the output of learners in every type of corrective feedback may be different. Two important different types of corrective feedbacks are implicit and explicit corrective feedback, by which we can categorize all types of feedback (Ellis, 2011). He further argues that with regard to the implicit one, there is no overt indicator that an error has been committed, whereas in the explicit one there is an overt indicator. Implicit feedback often takes the form of recasts.

All types of corrective feedback have positive effect on second language learning. However, among all types, recast has proved more outstanding. Trofimovich, Ammar and Gatbonton (2011) assert that recasts are important, and they improve L2 development in the context of meaningful interaction.

Recast is one of the best forms of feedback. Gass and Selinker (2008) assert that “recasts are another form of feedback; though they are less direct and more subtle than other forms of feedback. A recast is a reformulation of an incorrect utterance that maintains the original meaning of the utterance” (p. 334).

Recast is more productive due to two main reasons. Trofimovich, Ammar and Gatbonton (2011) maintain that recast is implicit in the sense that they are conversational, not impeding the flow of the learner’s communication, and second, they are learner centered.

Guided by the above considerations, recast has been regarded as one of the most effective feedbacks over the recent decade. Researchers and scholars have studied various kinds of recasts, especially full and partial recast, and their effects on second language learning development. Recast can be classified into different types. As Gass and Selinker (2008) point out, recasts are complex, because of different types. The teacher may respond to an error by using one type or more.

Another factor to be taken into consideration is the output. Whether a learner modifies his or her output followed by a recast type is an important issue. The output may be unmodified, less modified, and modified.

This output is believed to play an important role in language learning. Swain (2005, as cited in Brown, 2007) has suggested three major functions of output in SLA. The first is the claim that while attempting to produce the target language, learners may notice their erroneous attempts to convey meaning. Also, he further believes that the act of producing language itself can prompt learners to identify their language deficiencies. Here, learners become self-informed through their own output. The second function of output, according to Swain, is that it serves as a means to try out one’s language, to test various hypotheses that are forming. He maintains that the third function fits appropriately in a social constructivist view of SLA: speech and writing can offer a means for the learners to reflect productively on language itself in interaction with peers.

This output can be modified and unmodified. When the output is modified it means that, it does not have any error in grammar, lexicon, etc. Alison Mackey (2012) believes that “Modified output, or the process of reformulating one’s original utterance in response to feedback or self-monitoring, is believed to benefit L2 development in a variety of ways” (p. 17). On the other hand, unmodified output is the kind of product where no change has occurred, and the learner generates the same erroneous form.

When learners receive corrective feedback they try to modify their output, so corrective feedbacks help learners to modify their output. Alison Mackey (2012) points out that “learners are pushed to reformulate their initial utterance in other to facilitate native speakers’ understanding by modifying their linguistic output in a more target like way” (p. 17).

Objectives

Generally, the current research aims to achieve an important objective, which is designed to investigate the impact of full recast versus partial recast on the modified output of EFL basic level learners. Here, the researcher intends to observe whether the output produced by each learner is modified or unmodified.

Research Question

Given the nature of the problem and the purpose already illustrated, the research question of the present study can be stated as follow:

- Q. Do full and partial recast make a statistically significant difference in modified output generated by basic level EFL learners?

Literature Review

The Role of Interaction in SLA

The role of interaction in L2 learning has long been a controversial issue. On the one hand, there are theories such as UG which minimizes the role of interaction and maximizes the learner internal mechanisms in acquisition. The followers of this theory consider interaction as a kind of input to trigger the parameter setting (Cook, 1996). On the other hand, some interactionists believe that interaction is the means through which learners obtain data in the process of second language acquisition (Ellis, 1999).

In addition to what was mentioned above, another dichotomy could be invited to the discussion of interaction; the dichotomy of nature, and nurture. These two, in a controversial manner, have fostered the placement of two different positions in how learning takes place. The former presents that learners develop their first language by the innate knowledge about language, whereas the latter assumes that language development is inspired by the environment as learners are engaging in the interaction (Doughty & Long, 2003). Ellis (1994) defines interaction as when the participants of equal status sharing similar needs, make an effort to understand each other. In case the status and relationship between the interlocutors is asymmetrical, meaning negotiation is inhibited. Yet, as Ellis (1994) asserts, other factors might influence interaction: the nature of the task, characteristics of participants and participant structure are accounted as some of such factors. Nowadays, with the focus on 'process' in the path of language acquisition, it is believed that language is emerged through interaction and negotiation for meaning (Long, 1981).

Theories of Interaction

Interaction eases acquisition. Doughty & Long (2003) have cited Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis as negotiation for meaning triggers interactional adjustments by the NS, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities and output in production ways. Interaction hypothesis emphasizes on the role of negotiated interaction in language development. During negotiation works, the learner's attention is directed to:

- 1) The discrepancy between what s/he knows about L2 and what the L2 really is and
- 2) The areas of L2 which he doesn't have information (Gass & Torrens, 2005). In this case, negotiation is the initial step to learning and it is one part of interaction. Interaction hypothesis that proposed by Long (1983), and Gass (1997), says that interaction is essential condition for SLA, through which speakers modify their

speech and interaction patterns to help learners participate in a conversation (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Ellis (1999) refers to IH as the conversational exchanges that arise when interlocutors seek to prevent a communicative breakdown or to remedy an actual communication stop that has arisen. He believes that acquisition is promoted when the input to which learners are exposed is made comprehensible through the interactional modifications that arise when meaning is negotiated. This definition is the co-extensive with what Long (1983, cited in Ellis 1999) has called 'interactional modification' i.e. changes to the structures of utterances to accommodate problems of understanding.

Corrective Feedback

There are conflicting views on the role and value of providing corrective feedback in the classroom. Krashen (1987) makes the assumption that L2 acquisition is similar to L1 acquisition and that children take little notice of parental corrections led him to suggest that the correction by the teacher is of dubious value. He believes that error correction is a serious mistake. Truscott (1996) also claims that corrective feedback is both inefficient and harmful and, therefore, should be abandoned. However, numerous studies have pinpointed the value and usefulness of corrective feedback in refining understanding and moving to the next stage of interlanguage development.

The value of providing corrective feedback has been recognized by many researchers. Many scholars believe that for successful L2 learning (unlike L1 learning) both positive evidence (examples showing what is correct) and negative evidence (showing learners what is not correct) are required (Ellis, 2005). According to White (1991) negative evidence is essential since the positive evidence in L2 acquisition setting is inadequate. The theoretical support for negative evidence comes from Schmidt's (1990) how argues the importance of noticing and noticing-the-gap in L2 acquisition. According to this view, L2 acquisition is facilitated when the L2 learner notices the differences between what he says and what the native speakers say. Corrective feedback can help learners notice these deviant forms. Further support for corrective feedback is evident in the quotation from Hadley (2003):

The development of accuracy should be encouraged in proficiency-oriented instruction. As learners produce language, various forms of instruction and evaluative feedback can be useful in facilitating the progression of their skills toward more precise and coherent language use. (p. 276).

Recast

Recasts can sometimes be regarded as explicit; however, they are generally categorized as an implicit feedback type since they are not introduced by phrases such as "You mean", "Use this word", "No, not.", "You should say". Farrar (1992) considers corrective and non-corrective recasts differently. Corrective recasts, as shown below, refer to recasts that correct the error:

S: I can swimming well.

T: You can swim well?

Non-corrective recasts render a model instead of correcting the error, as you can see in the following example:

Child: The blue ball.

Mother: Yea, the blue ball is bouncing (Farrar, 1992, p. 92).

One of the most significant and widely used types of implicit negative feedback in L2 teaching is recast that is the teacher's correct restatement of a learner's incorrect response (Mahnegar, Kalanzadeh, Kianfar, & Bakhtiarivand, 2013). Long and Robinson (1998) indicate that the role recast plays is significant as it shows learners how their interlanguage differs from the target language.

Modified Output

Learners after receiving input they try to produce a language, the production of second language learners is named output. Krashen (1985) having proposed Input Hypothesis which holds that acquisition occurs when learners understand input containing structures beyond the students' current level of competence, Swain (1985) suggested Output Hypothesis being one of the basic theoretical claims on which the notions of corrective feedback and uptake have been developed. It stated that comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) alone does not improve learners' language acquisition in terms of syntax, and the production of output in response to input is necessary for further language development.

With regard to learner production, Swain emphasized the importance of the role of modified output, arguing that it is necessary for second language mastery. Swain further suggested that modified output could be the result of ample opportunities for output and the provision of useful and consistent feedback from teachers and peers. Later, she proposed that modified output is the representation of "the leading edge of a learner's interlanguage" (Swain, 1995, p. 131). In the context of teacher-learner interaction, modified output can be manifested in the form of learner uptake, or learner reaction to the teachers' corrective feedback given to learners' error. Corrective feedback, for example, is a pedagogical means of offering modified input to students, which could consequently lead to modified output by the students.

Methodology

Design

According to Gass and Mackey (2005), when a group is involved in a research study and it receives a treatment, the study would be called experimental. It should bear in mind that the two groups participating in the present study are not in fact considered two separate groups. Indeed, only one group of learners participated in the study. Having two groups, the researcher intended to counterbalance the effect of recast types. Therefore, they were chosen from intact groups. It can be concluded that the present research is quasi-experimental. It should be born in mind that this study did not include a long treatment. The independent variable in this study was full vs. partial recast, but the dependent variable was modified output.

Participants

This study was conducted in two private language institutes in Tehran. Two intact groups were chosen. Therefore, the participants were not randomly selected. One group included 14 and the other 18 learners. Indeed, it should be kept in mind that only one group participated in the present study. The above 14 and 18 learners are considered one group, but for the sake of counterbalancing the effect of recast types, full and partial, they were divided into two groups. Using a placement test, the school had already placed them the students in their appropriate proficiency levels. However, to guarantee their homogeneity, the researcher administered an Oxford Placement Test in order to choose only elementary learners. On the basis of the scale recommended by the test bulletin, those whose scores fall between 0 to 14 are considered elementary learners. Therefore, the learners whose scores fell in this range were chosen as the

participants of the current research. The characteristics of the participants can be outlined as follows:

- They were adults between 20 and 40.
- They had either bachelor or master in a field of study.
- Five of them were male and the rest, that is 28, were female.

Data Collection Tool

To fulfill the purposes of this study, the researcher applied the following instruments to collect data.

Oxford placement test. The Oxford Placement Test is a placement test that is constructed by Oxford University Press and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The test contains two parts and there is a time limitation of 30 minutes to answer the items on the answer sheet. There are two parts in this test: the first part (question 1 to 40) includes 40 items, all the students in the two groups were asked to answer the questions.

Audio recording. The learners' output following the full recast and partial recast was recorded. The researcher recorded their voices using a high tech recorder. It should be born in mind that it was hidden somewhere so that the learners would not notice it.

Picture description. The learners in all groups were given a picture to describe it. The learners were given partial and full recast throughout their descriptions and their voices were recorded. The researcher asked all the individual learners to describe the pictures. The purpose of this task was to elicit output from the learners and to give full and partial recast if an utterance was wrong (see Appendix one).

Procedure

The full and partial recast in the present study were applied to a grammar point: the regular past tense. The step-by step procedures taken to complete the experimental part of this research are as follows:

1. All the learners in the two group took the Oxford Placement Test. Two groups of 14 and 18 participated in this study. The scores showed that they were all at the elementary level.
2. All the participants were taught the regular past 'ed' through enhanced short stories in which the regular past tense was underlined. They read the short stories. (see appendix two)
3. The two groups were given a picture description task. Each learner was required to describe it. The researcher asked her/him to describe in a way that s/he would have to use the past 'ed'.
4. The first group was given full recast and the then the partial recast. But the second group was given partial recast and full recast. Their output following the recast was recorded. Example of partial recast is as follows:

Learner: she clean her room yesterday.

Researcher: cleaned

Example of full recast is as follows:

Learner: they listen to music yesterday.

Teacher: they listened to music yesterday.

The whole procedure is shown in the following table:

Table 5.1
Order of Partial and Full Recast Received by the Groups.

	<i>Group one</i>	<i>Group two</i>
<i>Homogeneity test</i>	<i>OPT</i>	<i>OPT</i>
<i>Type of recast received</i>	<i>Partial recast</i>	<i>Full recast</i>
<i>Type of recast received</i>	<i>Full recast</i>	<i>Partial recast</i>
<i>Data collection procedure</i>	<i>Voice recording</i>	<i>Voice recording</i>

Findings

The research question of the present study asked whether full and partial recasts make a statistically significant difference in modified output generated by basic level EFL learners. In order to answer this question, the analysis of crosstabs (two-way Chi-square) was performed. Table 6.1 displays the frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for the false and true answers of the students in the partial and full recast conditions.

Based on the results displayed in Table 6.1, it can be concluded that 0.0 % (0 / 29) of the answers was 'False' in full recast, but 20.0 % (5 / 25) of the answers were 'False' in partial recast. In addition, Table 6.1 reflects that 100.0 % (29 / 29) of the answers were 'True' in full recast; however 80.0 % (20 / 25) of the answers were 'True' in partial recast.

Table 6.1
Frequencies, Percentages and Std. Residuals for the False and True Modified Outputs in the Partial and Full Recasts

		Answer		Total		
		False	True			
Recast type	Full	Count	0	29	29	
		% within Recast type	.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
		Std. Residual	-2.0	.5		
	Partial		Count	5	20	25
			% within Recast type	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
			Std. Residual	2.1	-.6	
Total		Count	5	49	54	
		% within Recast type	9.3%	90.7%	100.0%	

Examining Std. Residuals (see Table 6.1 above) indicates that two of the above mentioned statistics are selected significantly beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals are beyond ± 1.96 . That means the 'False' answers are noticeably different in the two types of recasts. In fact, the 'False' answers in full recast (0.0%, Std. Residual = $-2.0 < -1.96$) is significantly below expectation, but the 'False' answers in partial recast (20.0%, Std. Residual = $2.1 > 1.96$) is considerably above expectation. The results of chi-square that was used to find any significant difference in modified outputs in the partial and full recasts are laid out in Table 4.4 below.

Table 6.2

Chi-Square Test for Comparing the False and True Modified Outputs in the Partial and Full Recasts

	Value	df	Asymp. (2-sided)	Sig. Exact (1-sided)	Sig. (2- Exact sided)	Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.392 ^a	1	.011			
Continuity Correction ^b	4.233	1	.030			
Likelihood Ratio	8.297	1	.004			
Fisher's Exact Test				.017		.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.273	1	.012			
N of Valid Cases	54					

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.31.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The assumption of running Chi square is that the lowest expected frequency in any cell should be 5 or more (at least 80 percent of cells should have expected frequencies of 5 or more). Since 50.0% have expected frequency less than 5 in our data, we have violated this assumption and therefore we should consider using Fisher's Exact Probability test instead.

The results of chi-square in Table 6.2 indicate that the differences observed in Table 6.1 are statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 4.23$, $n = 54$, $p = .01$, $p < .05$) in which the value of Yates' Correction for Continuity is 4.23, and the p value, .01 is lower than the selected significant level for this study, .05. Therefore the null hypothesis of the current study as 'Full and partial recasts do not make a statistically significant difference in modified output generated by basic level EFL learners' was rejected, and therefore we could claim that full and partial recasts make a statistically significant difference in modified output generated by basic level EFL learners. In fact full recast was more effective than partial recast in improving modified output generated by basic level EFL learners.

Figure 6.1 below displays the frequency of the false and true modified outputs in the partial and full recasts as appeared in Table 6.1.

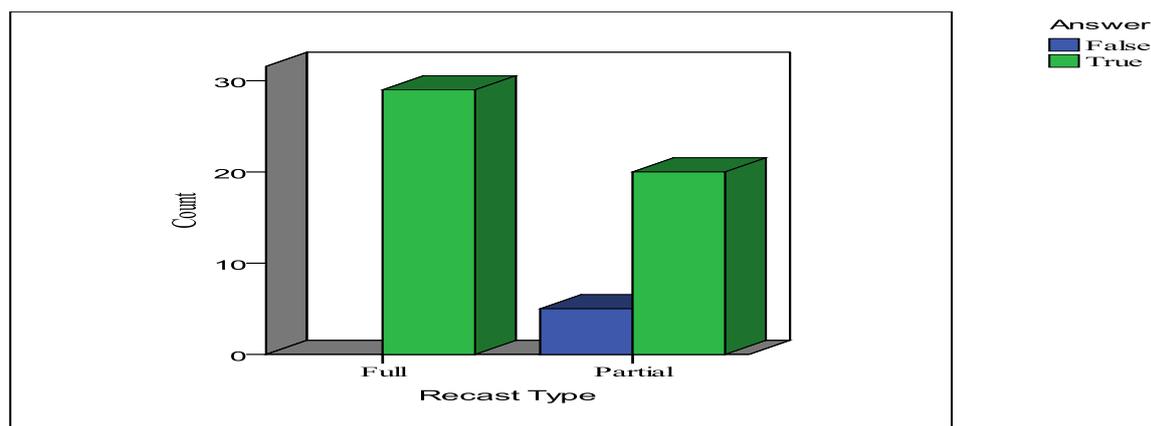


Figure 6.1. False and true modified outputs in the two types of recasts

Discussion

One of the findings of the present research is that full recast is more potent than partial recast in eliciting more modified output from Iranian EFL learners. The finding of this research is in conjunction with the one done by Perdoma (2008), who conducted a study on the effectiveness of oral recasts in the EFL classroom. The results supported the effectiveness of recast over explicit negative feedback. Based on the results, the researcher recommended the use of recasts in college EFL classes. The difference in this study was that the students were divided randomly into two groups, and the grammar points were the right use of the auxiliary verb "to have", and the use of past participles in the present perfect tense. Each group was randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions: recast versus explicit negative feedback. Positive feedback was provided for both groups. Pictures were used to elicit conversation and an oral test was administered to collect the data. In the present research, the difference between full and partial recast was the focus; however, in the study done by Perdoma, the difference between recast and a explicit negative feedback was investigated. Overall, these two studies put a stamp of approval on the effectiveness of recast.

The finding of the present research is not a little in agreement with the finding of the study done by Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006), who compared their learners' performance on tests of explicit and implicit knowledge of regular past tense in English. In the current research, the regular past tense was investigated. The results of the explicit knowledge test (a grammatical judgment task) indicated that the first group (metalinguistic) outperformed the no-feedback group and the recast group only on the delayed post-test. The researchers suggested that metalinguistic information might have been more effective since the learners might have perceived it as an overt correction method. In their study, thirty-four ESL learners in three classes performed two story-narration tasks and a number of tests over a three-week period. One class received metalinguistic information and the opportunity to respond, while the second class received recasts. The third class; however, received no interactional feedback. Although metalinguistic feedback was not investigated in the present research, it is regarded as more powerful than recast in the study done by Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006).

Finally, the study done by Rassai, Moinzadh, and youhannae, (2012) proved that "The result of descriptive statistics for the learners' performance on tailor made post test revealed that the rate of development in recasts episodes which were accompanied by learners' modified output was higher than those recasts episodes with no modified output" (p. 106). The difference

between their study and the present research is that the former concentrated on the effectiveness of modified output rather than the difference between full and partial recast on modified output. The present research demonstrated that full recast can elicit more modified output than partial recast; however, the study done by Rassai, Moinzadh, and Youhannaee, (2012) focused on the rate of development as caused by modified output, which proved to be more beneficial.

Limitations

Like many studies in the realm of applied linguistics, the current study was not without following limitations:

1. The researcher did the study only in one session because the institute supervisor did not allow him to do it in more sessions.
2. The participants were only 32 EFL learners (9 males and 24 females) who had enrolled in English classes. According to the rules and regulations of one of the English institutes where the researcher conducted his research, just female learners are allowed to enroll, so most of the participants of this study were female.
3. The researcher could not randomly select the participants in this study. They were given to him for the research. Therefore, the research had no authority in selecting the participants himself.

Conclusion

Reading Ellis (2011) the researcher found that recast might be viewed as a reaction to content rather than form by learners. Therefore, he paid a closer attention to the function of recast in his own classes, finding that partial recast might draw the learners' attention to erroneous segments much better, so he tried to turn it into an experiment in his article. He, therefore, designed the present study to investigate to see which one, full recast or partial recast, is more productive in generating more modified output. Given the purpose of the current research, the following hypothesis were proposed:

The motive behind this study comes from the researcher's experience. He has already experienced that partial recast might draw the learner's attention to erroneous segments of the learner's utterance better. Because of this, the researcher believes that the learner's output followed by partial recast might be quite modified. One of the controversies around recast is that it is viewed as a reaction to content rather than form. The researcher guesses that partial recast might be better because it focuses only on the erroneous segment rather than the whole utterance.

Ho: Full and partial recast do not make a statistically significant difference in the modified output generated by basic level EFL learners.

To address these hypotheses, the researcher selected two groups of learners. One group included 14 learners and the other group 18 ones. They were selected from intact groups in Aryanpour and Kish Air Language Institutes in Tehran. Having been homogenized by the Oxford Placement Test, the first group received partial recast and the other one full recast. Then, the first group received full recast and the second group partial recast. The learners' voices in response to the full recast and partial recast were recorded. The order of recast type each group received is shown as follows:

Group one: OPT + Partial recast + Full recast + Voice recording

Group two: OPT + Full recast + Partial recast + Voice recording

Regarding the first hypothesis, the results of chi-square indicate that the differences observed are statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 4.23, n = 54, p = .01, p < .05$) in which the value of Yates' Correction for Continuity is 4.23, and the p value, .01 is lower than the selected significant level for this study, .05. Therefore the null hypothesis of the current study reading as 'Full and partial recasts do not make a statistically significant difference in modified output generated by basic level EFL learners' was rejected, and it can be claimed that full and partial recasts make a statistically significant difference in modified output generated by basic level EFL learners. This result is a good indication of the superiority of full recast over partial recast in helping learners to produce modified output.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

What did they do?



Appendix 2

Amanda at home

Amanda stayed at home yesterday, she cleaned her room and she helped her mother, she listened to music and she danced then she watched TV and she talked to her father and after that she played with her brother.