Impact of Metalinguistic vs. Clarification Request Feedback on the Speaking Anxiety of Iranian Students in IELTS Preparatory Classes

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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest challenges IELTS candidates face in the speaking test session is speaking anxiety. To explore techniques to reduce this anxiety among those learners preparing to sit for the above test, the present study was carried out to compare the effect of metalinguistic and clarification request feedback on the aforesaid anxiety. To this end, 58 male and female learners who had been selected through their performance on a sample language proficiency test, were assigned to one control (N = 18) and two experimental groups (N = 20, each). The control group received different types of corrective feedback, the metalinguistic group received metalinguistic clues on the errors they made, and the clarification request group was asked to clarify their intended meaning whenever they made a mistake. Both types of corrective feedback showed a significant decrease in the speaking anxiety level of the participants in comparison to the control group. However, the metalinguistic group was found to have less anxiety after the treatment. This proves that in IELTS preparatory classes where mistakes on the part of the learners could be corrected as far as their accuracy is concerned, providing learners with metalinguistic clues seems to be more beneficial compared to the clarification request corrective feedback.

Keywords: Clarification request; Feedback; Speaking Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

For all those who take the IELTS test for the first time, it is very frustrating and psychologically demanding to prepare themselves for the test. There is no doubt that one of the biggest challenges faced by learners at the test session is anxiety. Therefore, experiments should be conducted to find whether appropriate corrective feedback by teachers could have any effect on students' anxiety in speaking.

Comparing the effects of clarification request versus metalinguistic feedback on the anxiety in speaking performance of Iranian participants of IELTS is new in language education studies. Three important key terms in this study are speaking anxiety, clarification request feedback, and metalinguistic feedback. Belonging to affective factors, anxiety has been found to be related to the second language learning process. Anxiety has been claimed to have both positive and negative effects on language learning (Ellis, 2008).

Corrective feedback is purported to be the conveyance of corrective information on some sort of process, event, or action (London &

Sessa, 2006). According to Ammar (2008), metalinguistic feedback is a type of feedback from among numerous feedback types that provides the learners of the foreign or the second language with the metalinguistic information about the error after repeating it. This information can pertain to the agreement between subject and verb, tense, choice of words, and so on. In the same vein, Yilmaz (2016) defines metalinguistic corrective feedback as "metalinguistic comments and information about the accuracy of learners' utterance" (p. 68).

Surprisingly, to researchers' knowledge, no study has investigated the difference between the effects of the two mentioned feedback types on anxiety in speaking in an Iranian context. In the language learning domain, although some studies have explored the effect of teachers' corrective feedback on English as a foreign language speaking task complexity (Zhai and Gao, 2018), they have not paid direct request feedback on speaking anxiety level. The novelty of the present study lies in this very fact. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to measure the anxiety of the learners in their oral production and investigate the possible effect of the two mentioned corrective feedback types on the anxiety in the speaking performance of Iranian participants of IELTS.

Admittedly, speaking can be considered to be a productive skill that needs the practice to be improved. In today's language classrooms, as Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) assert, students take on different ways to improve this productive skill, such as orally performing before a group or having oral presentations and group discussions. Moreover, they are often required by their teachers to retell stories in a target language. The mentioned activities may affect the learners and bring about nervousness while trying to start speaking English in classrooms. Hence, students in language classrooms often consider speaking in a foreign language the most anxiety-producing experience they might face (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). One factor which may cause students to feel anxious could be related to the way teachers correct their students while speaking. Hence, a question can be raised whether

corrective feedback on the part of teachers has any effect on student anxiety in speaking performance during class teaching or not.

Besides speaking in the class context, learners' speaking ability when they sit at tests is always coupled with anxiety. This is especially a challenging issue with ELT scholars and practitioners. One way to have better oral performance is to reduce the anxiety on the part of the learner (Chen, 2015). It is often heard that teachers' friendly manner with students in teaching can be of some help. However, psychological factors are not always the determining factors; instead, some techniques in teaching special skills should be used as alternatives. One major problem with IELTS candidates (under investigation in the current study) is the existence of anxiety in their oral test performance. This has continued to play a crucial role for them in reaching their required band score for the speaking skill. Therefore, finding a proper way to tackle this issue could be highly promising. Accordingly, the present research was an attempt to provide answers to the following research questions addressing such issues:

RQ1. Does metalinguistic corrective feedback have any statistically significant impact on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance?

RQ2. Does clarification request have any statistically significant impact on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance?

RQ3. Is there any statistically significant difference between the effect of metalinguistic and clarification request feedback on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance?

For the above research questions, the following three null hypotheses were formulated:

H01. Metalinguistic corrective feedback has no statistically significant effect on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance.

H02. Clarification request does not have any statistically significant effect on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking.

H03. There is no statistically significant difference between the effect of metalinguistic and clarification request feedback on EFL

learners' anxiety in speaking performance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Corrective Feedback

Feedback is information provided for learners pertaining to some dimensions of what they have done on a task (Brandt, 2008). He contends that this information can be given to students by the educator and friends. He further indicates that there should exist an equilibrium in the credibility of feedback provided for students. However, he adds that the progression of feedback from the educator and companions causes the student to feel awkward, consequently adding to students accepting the convenience of corrective feedback to diminish as the course proceeds.

In an investigation of instructor-learner communication, Tsang (2004) contends that pushing the students towards altering the output than giving them feedback is useful to them in fostering their interlanguage. According to El Tatawy (2002), in the fields of language acquisition, language teaching, and cognitive psychology, the three areas of negative evidence, negative feedback, and corrective feedback are used. The feedback can be either explicit, like a grammatical explanation and explicit correction of an error, or implicit, like silence, ask for repetition, recast, clarification request, and facial (El Tatawy, 2002). Interest in the effect of corrective feedback on foreign language acquisition regarding both teachers and learners has ignited a significant number of research studies recently done on the association between corrective feedback and L2 development.

Harlen and Winter (2004) discussed the positive contribution of feedback to learning. As they maintained, feedback influences learners in two ways: "their apparent achievement or disappointment in examination with others in past tasks like the one they are currently confronted with, and the sort of feedback they get from their educator" (p. 400). Both of these are dependent upon how educators respond to students' work, regardless of whether being in written or oral form. According to Ellis (2005), the corrective feedback which is provided by the teacher or,

to a lower degree, by students is research-worthy in as much as there is the claim that learning a second language entails negative as well as positive evidence. Corrective feedback may help language learners linguistic forms that might be ignored and identify the deviant linguistic productions (Ellis, 2005a, 2005). As Ellis (2005a) adds, corrective feedbacks ten hypothesized to have a significant contribution in developing accuracy in the second language.

Types of Corrective Feedback

Lyster and Ranta (1997, as cited in Lyster, Saito, and Sato, 2013) identified six kinds of feedback which are classified into two main categories of reformulation and prompt. Reformulations comprise explicit correction and recast, as these moves provide students with "target reformulations of their non-target output" (p. 3). Prompts, on the other hand, include such signals as metalinguistic clues, elicitation, clarification request, and repetition pushing language learners towards self-repair. Corrective feedback is also classified as implicit and explicit regarding the directness of the correction made by the teacher.

Furthermore, Ellis and Sheen (2006, cited in Lyster et al., 2013) have their own vein of classification of corrective feedback. They distinguish between explicit corrective feedback, which gives students the right form of what they have linguistically produced, such as what is done in didactic recasts and explicit correction, and the explicit correction where the correct form is withheld, such as what is done in elicitation and metalinguistic clues.

Yilmaz (2016) also has his own vein of division. He presents the term 'feedback exposure condition,' which refers to the directness or indirectness of a learner's exposure to corrective feedback. He considers the direct type to be the feedback that a language learner is provided with on his or her incorrect utterance and the indirect corrective feedback as the corrective feedback provided for other learners and he or she is allowed to listen to.

Anxiety

Anxiety, as one of the affective factors which

have been known to impact on language acquisition, can be both facilitating and debilitating as to whether it has a positive or negative effect on language learning (Ellis, 2008). Several investigators (Aida, 1994; Chang, 1996) have carried out research considering the impacts of foreign language anxiety on the speaking performance in different language classrooms. Ganschow et al. (1994), for example, conducted a study and found that learners differed significantly in their English written and oral attainments as to the amount of foreign language anxiety they were involved in. In addition, Young's (1990) study showed that speaking in a foreign language was not entirely the cause of learner anxiety, yet being forced to speak before the class was (cited in Cheng, 2005). The association between writing apprehension and learners' performance in language classes has been investigated by some practitioners (Y. s. Cheng, 2002; Y. s. Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Daly & Wilson, 1983). Saito and Samimy (1996), as an instance, revealed that motivation and attitude, in conjunction with anxiety, were key factors influencing student act over the learning process.

Researchers have identified several types of anxiety. Dornyei (2005), for instance, distinguishes two kinds of anxiety: a) debilitating and facilitating, and b) state and trait anxiety. While facilitating anxiety can be beneficial, while debilitating anxiety is harmful and hinders individuals' accomplishments. Trait anxiety happens in special situations and is taken as an intrinsic feature of individuals, whereas state anxiety is detrimental to learners. Lately, Cassady (2010) presented the term 'academic anxiety' as a number of anxieties unified together that students experience while in classrooms. MacIntyre and Charos (1996) state that students experience anxiety while utilizing/learning a foreign language. Many research studies have indicated that language learners usually have some degree of anxiety, specifically speaking anxiety (Azizifar, Faryadian, & Gowhary, 2014). Speaking has been identified as the most anxiety-causing skill compared to other skills. The students who feel anxious think that if they make mistakes

while speaking in public, other people might make fun of them. "It is not a surprising reaction since most of us are used to becoming less talkative in new situations where we feel insecure" (Basic, 2011). According to Abdullah and Abdul Rahman (2010), students who believe that one should say nothing in English till it can be said accurately may never speak. In addition, Young (1990) acknowledges that speaking anxiety is connected to social anxiety and self-esteem.

Empirical Studies

Fahim and Montazeri (2013) investigated the impact of metalinguistic corrective feedback on students' grammatical range and accuracy as well as lexical resource considering their speaking proficiency. The participants of the study included thirty Iranian EFL students who were studying 'New Interchange 3' and 'Passages 1' books; they were divided into two groups of fifteen members: one experimental and one control, with the lower-intermediate level of oral language proficiency. The control group, during the instruction, received no corrective feedback, while the experimental group received metalinguistic corrective feedback. Following the results of the posttest, it was seen that the experimental group, receiving metalinguistic feedback, worked significantly better than the control group in terms of lexical resource and accuracy in oral performance.

Zhai and Gao (2018), in a study to investigate the impact of teachers' corrective feedback on the oral production of learners with tasks at different complexity levels, found that corrective feedback was positively related to the oral production of the EFL learners. Moreover, clarification quest, metalinguistic feedback, recast, repetition, and confirmation check had the highest to lowest impact.

Lightbown (cited in Selinker and Gass, 2008) compared corrective feedback provided by teachers immediately after an error's taking place in a communicative activity versus feedback on audio-lingual drills or pure practice activities. She found that in both cases, students were able to do self-correction, but only in the first case was the self-correction

incorporated into the systems of their second language.

In another study, Sauro (2009) explored the effect of computer-assisted corrective feedback on the attainment of language learners' second language knowledge. Working on the difference between the recast and metalinguistic feedback, he found no meaningful primacy for the two types of feedback, whereas the metalinguistic group, in general, depicted significant immediate improvements compared with the control group. Corbalan, Kester, and van Merriënboer (2009), in another research, investigated the impacts of the correct response control and feedback over choosing the learning tasks. The researchers established that presence of knowledge correct response feedback was associated with higher learner motivation.

Shin and Dickson (2010) worked on the impact of graphical feedback and learners' performance considering academic performance and motivation in an online course. They established that learners became more performance goal-oriented after getting peer feedback, and, secondly, they displayed much more interest in their lessons after receiving self-referenced feedback.

Regarding the learners' anxiety in speaking, many research studies have been conducted. Huang (2004), for instance, found that EFL non-English university students underwent a high speaking anxiety level. Liu and Jackson (2008) came to the conclusion that learners had anxiety in speaking and that language anxiety was a significant predictor for their lack of willingness to communicate. Furthermore, Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009), in a study on third-grade Greek learners, concluded that six students showed speaking anxiety because of the fear of negative assessment on the part of their peers.

Dalkılıç (2001), while working on the relationship between learners' foreign language anxiety and their speaking performance, concluded that there was a meaningful association between their anxiety and progress in speaking courses. AY (2010) also established that learners showed anxiety when they were asked to perform orally without being prepared in advance. Balemir (2009), in a study on the association between foreign language speaking anxiety and proficiency level, indicated that Turkish EFL university students showed speaking anxiety in their foreign language classes, though at a moderate level. Saltan (2003) conducted a study to explore the speaking anxiety in English classes in terms of both teachers' and students' perspectives. The author concluded that learners undergo a definite level of EFL, yet it is not at a disturbing level.

In a comparative study on recasts and prompts, Jang (2011) conducted a study to find if language anxiety had any role in the second language learning process. In Jang's study, where students' anxiety was assessed according to their answers to a language anxiety questionnaire, it was found that language learning anxiety did not have any effect on the efficacy of prompts but showed some impact on the efficacy of recasts. It was also concluded that the influence of language anxiety was strictly associated with the degree of anxiety stimulated by the method the activities and tasks were applied. Mufidah (2017) explored the role of oral corrective feedback in language anxiety among learners at low English language proficiency by focusing on different oral corrective feedback at different levels of language learning. The results indicated that learners at levels of language anxiety asserted oral corrective feedback was beneficial to them, both in terms of motivation and finding their mistakes.

METHOD
Participants

The initial sample of the study were 88 EFL learners. The participants were chosen from Afarinesh Language School, where IELTS preparation courses are held. The participants were both from male and female language learners, all native speakers of Persian. Their age ranged from 18 to 45, and the participants were selected through convenience sampling. After administering the language proficiency test, the remaining participants of this study were assigned to one control (N = 18) and two experimental groups (N = 20, each) based on

simple random sampling. It should also be mentioned that the target population is all Iranian EFL learners studying for the IELTS exam.

Instruments

The instruments applied in this study are as follows:

Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

For measuring the participants' level of English language proficiency, The OPT was used. This test is often used by ELT researchers as a language proficiency test; a student's level is determined by a score guideline. This test has been reported to be highly reliable by ELT researchers. As an example, Hamidi (2015) reported its reliability to be .82 using the KR-21 formula. The OPT, which has 60 items, needs 30 minutes to be completed.

Anxiety in Speaking Performance Questionnaire

The second instrument which was utilized in this study was a speaking anxiety questionnaire developed by Chowdhury (2014). This questionnaire is a 25-item Likert-scale instrument in which each item is scored on a 5 points scale where 1=Entirely disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not sure, 4=Agree, and 5=Entirely agree. The participants ought to choose a suitable number based on their opinion for each item. The reliability index of the questionnaire was found to be .78, using Chronbach's Alpha.

Procedure

First of all, the researcher administered the OPT to the IELTS learners at Afarinesh Language Institute. The level of the IELTS learners was determined through the guideline of the OPT, focusing on the lower-intermediate learners. Then, the selected participants were assigned to three groups: one control (N= 18) and two experimental groups (N = 20). This was done through simple random sampling. As to the anxiety in speaking performance, Chowdhury's (2014) questionnaire was given once as the pre-administration and once as the post-administration to the participants. The questionnaire was distributed to the learners once before the start of the treatment and once after

the treatment sessions were over. Overall, there were ten sessions of treatment for each of the experimental group, but the control group did not receive any special type of feedback during the class.

In the control group, the researcher did not correct the mistakes of the students whenever they made a mistake. For example, when she encountered a grammatical or collocational mistake on the part of the students, she did not provide them with the correct format of the utterance. She did ask the students to ponder over their mistakes or correct them using any clues.

In the clarification request corrective feedback group, the teacher asked for a clarification of the meaning when she encountered any mistakes or misunderstandings. For example, if a student said, "I reading a book," the teacher replied, "I did not understand. Can you tell me more exactly?" By using phrases like "Excuse me?" or "I don't understand," the teacher indicated that the message had not been understood or that the student's utterance contained some kind of mistake and that a repetition or a reformulation was required. The students were required to pay attention to the signal of the teacher and try to correct their wrong performances.

In the metalinguistic corrective feedback group, the teacher explained the problems using grammatical or other linguistics terminology. For example, if a student said, "I reading a book," the teacher replied, "in the present continuous, you need the verb 'be' before the –ing form of the verb." Without providing the correct form, the teacher posed questions or provided comments or information related to the formation of the student's utterance (for example, "Do we say it like that?" "That's not how you say it in the present form." Here too, the students were required to pay attention to the explanation of the teacher and try to correct their wrong performances.

RESULTS

The results of the test of language proficiency and other related tests for the mean comparison are presented in this section in order to find answers to the posed research questions.

Result of the Language Proficiency Test

In order to have homogenized participants in terms of their general English language proficiency, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered. The descriptive statistics for the OPT is displayed in the following table.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Oxford Placement Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
OPT	88	22.00	41.00	30.69	4.39	19.27
Valid N (listwise)	88					

Table 1 above shows the descriptive statistics of the OPT test. As it can be seen in Table 1 above, the mean and the standard deviation of the participants were 30.69 and 4.39, respectively. Figure 1 below shows the histogram with a normal curve for the OPT proficiency test.
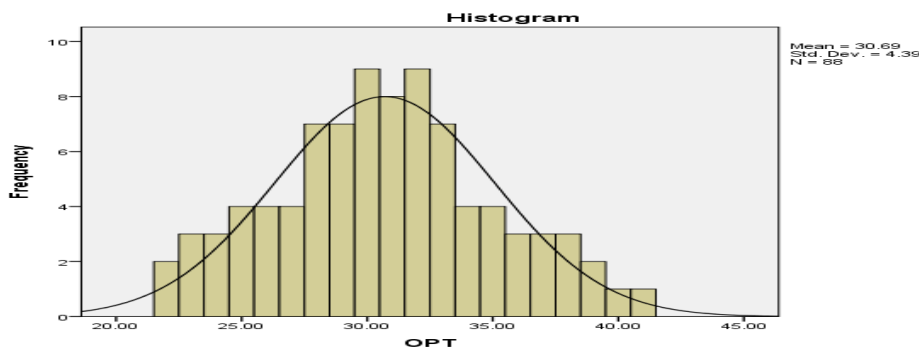

Figure 1

Histogram of the OPT Scores

After administering the language proficiency test, out of 88 participants, 58 were considered homogenous members based on their scores of OPT ranging from 28 to 36 (lower-intermediate level). The next table shows the descriptive statistics of the homogenized participants.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Scores Prior to the Treatment

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Homogenized	58	28.00	36.00	31.37	2.30	5.32
Valid N (listwise)	58					

As it can be seen in Table 2 above, the mean and the standard deviation of the homogenized participants were 31.37 and 2.3, respectively. Figure 2 below shows the histogram with normal curve for the homogenized participants.
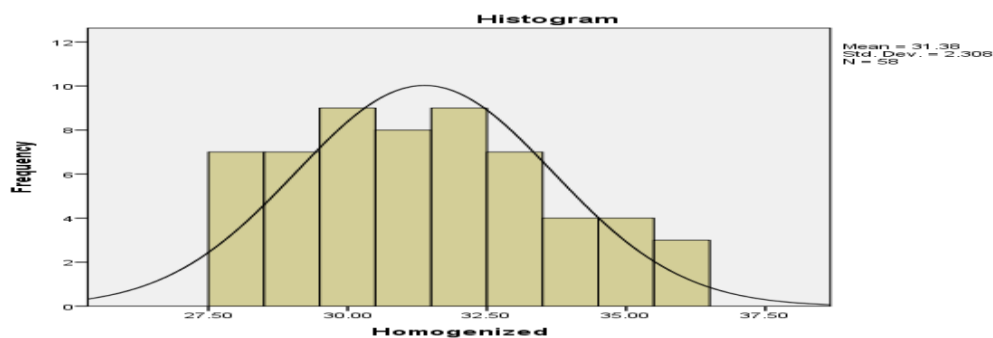

Figure 2

Histogram of the Participants' Scores Prior to the Treatment

Answering the First Research Question

The first question of this study investigated whether metalinguistic corrective feedback could have any statistically significant impact on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance.

In order to answer the first research question, the researcher ran the ANCOVA test between the control and the metalinguistic groups. The following table shows the descriptive statistics for the speaking anxiety scores of the two groups.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Speaking Anxiety Scores of the Two Groups

Group1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
control	68.3333	1.08465	18
Metalinguistic	61.3500	2.05900	20
Total	64.6579	3.89925	38

As it can be seen in Table 3 above, the mean for the control and metalinguistic groups related to their speaking anxiety scores are 68.33 and 61.35, respectively. Table 4 below shows the result of the ANCOVA test.

Table 4

Result of the ANCOVA for the Comparison of the Speaking Anxiety Scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	545.596[a]	2	272.798	563.090	.000	.970
Intercept	5.522	1	5.522	11.399	.002	.246
Pre_scores	83.594	1	83.594	172.548	.000	.831
Group	**247.636**	**1**	**247.636**	**511.152**	**.000**	**.936**
Error	16.956	35	.484			
Total	159427.000	38				
Corrected Total	562.553	37				

As Table 4 shows, there was a statistically significant difference between the control and the experimental groups regarding their speaking anxiety scores, $F(1,35) = 511.15$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .93$. Therefore, the first null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that metalinguistic corrective feedback had a statistically significant impact on reducing EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance.

Answering the Second Research Question

The second research question of this study investigated whether clarification requests could have any statistically significant impact on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance.

In order to answer the second research question, the researcher ran the ANCOVA test. The following table shows the descriptive statistics for the speaking scores of the two groups.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for the Speaking Anxiety Scores of the Two Groups

Group2	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
control	68.3333	1.08465	18
Clarification-Request	64.7000	1.59275	20
Total	66.4211	2.28546	38

As it can be seen in Table 5 above, the mean for the control and clarification request groups regarding their speaking anxiety scores are 68.33 and 64.70, respectively. Table 6 below shows the result of the ANCOVA test.

Table 6

Result of the ANCOVA for the Comparison of the Speaking Anxiety Scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	185.677[a]	2	92.839	428.352	.000	.961
Intercept	18.637	1	18.637	85.992	.000	.711
Pre_2	60.614	1	60.614	279.671	.000	.889
Group2	**72.549**	**1**	**72.549**	**334.735**	**.000**	**.905**
Error	7.586	35	.217			
Total	167840.000	38				
Corrected Total	193.263	37				

As Table 6 shows, there was a statistically significant difference between the control and the clarification groups regarding their speaking anxiety scores, $F(1,35) = 334.73$, $\rho < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .90$. Therefore, the second null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that clarification requests had a statistically significant impact on reducing EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance.

Answering the Third Research Question

The third research question of this study investigated whether there was any statistically significant difference between the effects of metalinguistic and clarification request feedback on EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance.

In order to answer the third research question, the researcher ran the ANCOVA test. The following table shows the descriptive statistics for the speaking scores of the two groups.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for the Speaking Anxiety Scores of the Metalinguistic and Clarification Request Groups

Group3	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Metalinguistic	61.3500	2.05900	20
Clarification-Request	64.7000	1.59275	20
Total	63.0250	2.48573	40

As it can be seen in Table 7 above, the mean for the metalinguistic and clarification request groups regarding their speaking anxiety scores are 61.35 and 64.70, respectively. This, primarily, indicates that the speaking anxiety level of the metalinguistic feedback group is lower than that of the clarification request group. Table 8 below shows the result of the ANCOVA test.

Table 8

Result of the ANCOVA for the Comparison of the Speaking Anxiety Scores of the Metalinguistic and Clarification Request Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	226.942[a]	2	113.471	299.187	.000	.942
Intercept	1.423	1	1.423	3.751	.060	.092
Pre_3	114.717	1	114.717	302.473	.000	.891
Group3	**79.215**	**1**	**79.215**	**208.865**	**.000**	**.850**
Error	14.033	37	.379			
Total	159127.000	40				
Corrected Total	240.975	39				

As Table 8 above shows, there was a statistically significant difference between the metalinguistic and clarification request groups regarding their speaking anxiety scores, $F(1,37) = 208.86$, $\rho < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .85$. Hence, the third null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that the metalinguistic feedback had a statistically significant difference in its impact on reducing EFL learners' anxiety in speaking performance compared to the clarification request type.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present research can be interpreted based on the findings of other similar research studies. The findings here are in line with those of Dalkılıç (2001), where students' speaking was found to be correlated with their foreign language anxiety levels. That is, the less anxious they are, the more willing they are to engage in verbal communication. Of course, it should be mentioned that the focus of the present study was only on speaking anxiety, not speaking skills in general. The findings of the study also support Zhai and Gao's (2018) research in that both metalinguistic and clarification request feedback proved to be effective in reducing the speaking anxiety of the learners and helping them with their speaking skills. In line with the present research, Fahim and Montazeri (2013) showed that metalinguistic corrective feedback was effective in learners' levels of lexical resource and grammatical range and accuracy, two key factors contributing to a better score in the speaking section of the IELTS. In slight contrast to this research, Mufidah (2017) found that although students from various levels of language anxiety groups claimed oral corrective feedback helped them to know their mistakes easily and motivate them to study harder, it did not help them to increase their speaking performance. A reason for this could be the way they had been corrected by their instructor since in reducing the anxiety in speaking, in addition to the correction itself, the attitude of the instructor plays a key role. Findings of Montazeri and Salimi (2019) also support the result of the present study since they came to the conclusion that metalinguistic

corrective feedback has a positive effect on both willingness to communicate and motivation to speak. It seems that the less anxiety a learner experiences in speaking, the more he/she is prepared to have oral performance. A justification for this finding is that metalinguistic corrective feedback, which uses a less direct path to the correction of learners' erroneous production while speaking, is mentally more relaxing for learners to test the linguistic hypotheses they have made up in their interlanguage and the transfers they make from their first language. The last finding of the study indicated the superiority of the metalinguistic corrective feedback over the clarification request type. This result accounts for the fact that as Ur (2012) describes, in metalinguistic feedback, the teacher explains the problem using grammatical or other linguistic terminology, but in the clarification request type, the teacher asks for a clarification of the meaning. Since, in the former type, learners receive more explanation and step-by-step linguistic clues on the part of the teacher, they tend to demonstrate more willingness and less anxiety to participate in oral communication.

CONCLUSION

The present study was carried out to find the effect of metalinguistic vs. clarification request feedback on the anxiety in speaking performance of Iranian students taking IELTS preparatory classes. Both types of corrective feedback showed a significant decrease in the speaking anxiety level of the participants in comparison to the control group. Thus, it can be concluded that in language classes where learners are expected to express themselves orally, applying either type of the mentioned feedback types would be fruitful in encouraging the students to engage in oral communication. Accordingly, IELTS instructors are advised to seriously take into account the mentioned feedback types in their speaking courses. However, as far as the comparison of the two types of feedback is concerned, the metalinguistic group was found to have less anxiety after the treatment compared to the clarification request group. This proves that, in

IELTS preparatory classes, where mistakes on the part of the learners should be corrected as far as their accuracy is concerned, giving a chance through metalinguistic clues seems to be more beneficial. Hence, IELTS teachers should be cautious to choose appropriate corrective feedback types based on the needs of their learners. In this particular study, the metalinguistic corrective feedback was purported to be more fruitful in preparing the IELTS candidates for the interview section of the exam. The mentioned conclusions were drawn from this experimental study; however, it is worth mentioning that there have been some specific limitations and delimitations in the present research as well. Firstly, the sample size was not large enough. The sample was 18 for the control group and 20 for each of the experimental groups. Increasing the sample size can be a determining factor in strengthening the validity and reliability of experimental research studies. Secondly, only two types of feedback were taken into consideration in this research. Other feedback types such as recast and elicitation can be good subjects to be examined, not only on speaking anxiety but also on speaking accuracy and fluency. It is also worth mentioning that the researcher did not compare the scores of males with that of females, although gender has been proved to be a moderating factor in psychological studies. There is no doubt that students continue to show anxiety in advanced levels, especially in productive skills; nevertheless, it is hoped that the findings and discussions of this research will shed more light on the use of corrective feedback types in improving the speaking skill of the IELTS candidates.

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