Teachers' Formative and Summative Feedback to Enhance Iranian EFL Learners' Speaking Performance: A Case Study

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Abstract

The goal of the present research is to investigate about the effects of formative and summative feedback on the quality of performance of EFL learners in Iran. This study is applied and it deals with the administration of formative and summative feedback among 80 girl and boy students in an institute in Tabriz called Dehkade-e-Jahani during the school year 2018 and 2019 using a quasi-experimental method. Since we have used a pre-test and post-test method among two groups of girl students and boy students, to investigate about the results of the feedbacks created through formative and summative feedback methods, we have used an independent t-test and a double test method to analyze the amount of effectiveness of each of the feedback methods under investigations and also a one-way variance analysis has been administered using SPSS22 software. Results of this study showed that both formative and summative feedback have been effective in improving the performance quality of speaking among EFL students in Iran. The comparison of results of variance analysis also showed that the formative feedback in post-test has had a more considerable positive effect on improving the quality of the speaking performance of Iranian EFL students. Considering the results of the present research, it can be suggested that the formative and summative feedback methods can complement each other during English learning.

Key Words: Speaking, Oral Communication, Formative Feedback, Summative Feedback, Learner, Education System.

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Introduction

Speaking can simply be defined as conveying messages verbally from one to another(Jack Croft Richards, 2008). Unlike writing and reading, speaking involves "verbal and non-verbal signals" to which the listener needs to pay attention to understand what the speaker is saying(Chaney & Burk, 1998; Kayi, 2012). Most people consider the ability to speak in a second language synonymous as knowing the language because speaking is the most principal communication tool among human beings(Folse, 2006; Ur, 1996).

In oral communications, the hearer not only receives what the speaker tells, but also can show a feedback or response against what heard. Speech is an activity involving many features beyond the language such as eye contact, facial movements, face mode, stops, changes in voice quality, and variety in voice tone which affect the conversation flow(Thornbury, 1999). Speaking is the most difficult learning skill compared with writing, reading, and listening(Oradee, 2012). Unlike many difficulties, the language learners appropriate most of their efforts to listen the foreign language carefully because they believe that gaining knowledge and skill in speaking means to dominate all learning skills in a second language(Sihem, 2013).

One of the most principal problems in learning a second language is lack of exposure to the target language. The language learner does not have enough opportunity to practice and improve speaking skill out of the classroom. Therefore, in order to improve speaking skill, teachers should supply different opportunities in the classroom to help students enhance their speaking skill. One of the techniques that teachers can use is reforming feedback. If there are not such feedbacks in classrooms, there would not be effective teaching(Hesami, 2013).

Regarding the importance of teachers' feedback on learners' learning, the present study aims at investigating the effect of teacher feedback (formative feedback and summative feedback) on improving the quality of speaking of the language learners, besides recognizing the most effective feedback (formative feedback and summative feedback) as an important tool to improve speaking skills of the learners. Speaking is known as an important aspect of learning in learning a second language and success in learning a language is measured through speaking performance(Kazemi & Abbasian, 2019). Bailey and Savage (1994) believe that speaking a second a foreign language is often the most challenging skill from among the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)(Bailey & Savage, 1994). Therefore, gaining skill in fluent speaking is considered to be more important(Jack C Richards & Renandya, 2002). Hinkel (2005) stated that the teacher has a critical

role in helping students to achieve higher levels of success and knowledge gain in using English. The teacher can help learners to improve their learning through feedback. The feedbacks utilized by teachers in teaching English language can be formative and summative(Hinkel, 2005).

Formative assessment is a systematic process to administer and utilize aiding materials in teaching in order to collect those data that can be beneficial in reforming education systems. Formative feedback can happen when materials are being formed and emerged(Gijbels, Dochy, Van den Bossche, & Segers, 2005; Mehrens & Irvin, 1973; Thorndike & Thorndike-Christ, 2010; Good & Lavigne, 2017). Mehrens and Ervin (1973) consider assessment as data collection while learning and pose that its goal is to increase learning experiences of the students(Mehrens & Irvin, 1973). Formative assessment results in gaining information about the type and quality of learning. In this type of assessment through information gained we can deal with presenting appropriate feedback related to the proposed activity in order to reform and improve the behaviors of the learners before learning is finished. Having all this in mind, the present study aimed at investigating the effect of teacher feedback (both formative and summative) on the improvement of speaking quality. This is in fact the inspiring idea which gave birth to this work that aims at enhancing

the student's speaking skill. Likewise, to detect the most effective feedback types that is used to improve the oral proficiency. In addition, to elicit the attitudes of EFL teachers towards the use of formative and summative feedback as important tools to promote their students' speaking skill, the present research was carried out in an English institute in Tabriz called Dehkade-e-Jahani during the year 2019.

Concepts and research literature
Formative feedback and summative feedback

Feedback refers to the information received from the teacher or other students regarding the learning process of the language learners. The formative feedback represents data sent to the language learner aiming at reforming the thought or behavior in order to enhance learning. The information in feedback can represent the delicacy in responding a problem or skill or to reveal certain mistakes in it (Azevedo & Bernard, 1995; Kulhavy, 1977; Birenbaum & Tatsuoka, 1987; Cheng, Lin, Chen, & Heh, 2005; Sleeman, Kelly, Martinak, Ward, & Moore, 1989). To make formative feedback effective, we should be able to study the real performance of individuals considering approved standards (Johnson & Johnson, 1993). We can infer the formative feedback as a multiple dimensional concept, unrelated to assessment, supportive, learner-centered, in

time, specific, valid, non-repetitive, congruent, and original (Brophy, 1981). The major goal of formative feedback is to increase knowledge, skill, and understanding of language learner in some areas or as an overall skill. Formative feedback can reform thought or behavior of the learners basically aiming at better learning. Since formative feedback affects the individual's thoughts and behavior, the amount of motivation to use it is high(White, 1999). Formative feedback is related to assessing the success of learners in learning a skill or gaining high scores in a skill (White, 1999). Formative feedback is the result of assessment showing the amount of learning and to what extent a learner knows(Gardner, 2010). Formative feedback uses the data to measure the amount of learning at the end of a teaching period(Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Formative feedback can prepare information through which we can revise inappropriate skill strategies, stage mistakes, or lack of understanding the concepts(Mason & Bruning, 2001).

The important issue is that although there are differences between formative and summative feedback, the complement each other. Formative and summative feedback serve the related goals. Formative feedback should be utilized during the educational period to help the learner learn the material during the process of learning. And summative feedback can be utilized at the end of a period or at the end of each unit(Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Using these two types of feedback can help teachers to improve the process and educational activities and can help them to practice guidelines to maximize learning of the students(Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Shepard, 2006; Stiggins, 1994).

Research literature

Behavior psychologists are among the very first group of scholars to believe in feedback power as a stimulating effect(Black & Wiliam, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1997). Williams believes that any reaction about an action someone does is a type of feedback. Therefore, feedback can be carried out through encouragement, opinion proposal, or even silence. Lyster and Ranta (1997) consider feedback as the reaction of the speaker towards language learner errors(Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Ur (1996) has introduced feedback as the information given to the learner regarding the performance in a learning process usually aiming at performance enhancement(Ur, 1996).

During some recent decades, language teachers and linguists have tried to discover success factors in learning the target language. Krashen (1985) has introduced the entrance of the target language or the positive evidences of it as a prerequisite for success in language learning(S. D. Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979).

On the contrary to Krashen's ides, Long (1990) stated that being exposed to the proper forms of language is not enough to learn a language because language learners do not necessarily notice to what is correct (Gass, 2017; S. Krashen, 1982; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014).

In educational systems, teachers help students through feedback to get prepared for the future tasks and to have proper performances in future. These feedbacks result in changing the opportunity for the learners. Some effective factors in feedback efficiency are the type of feedback, and feedback time(Hesami, 2013). The amount of feedback is very important in attracting the students' attention. Lots of feedback about an error can have a negative effect on motivation. Therefore, the teacher should be very careful regarding the learners and their reactions(Williams & Burden, 1997). Another important issue is the type of feedback. The type of positive or negative feedback received by the learners from the peers and the teacher can affect development, motivation, and self-sufficiency of the learners. Spada (2006) believes that rapid reaction towards errors may make some learners embarrassed and they may avoid speaking at all. In other cases, this sudden reform is exactly the same thing that can happen when the person notices an error(Shepard, 2006). From among some learning structures, we can mention assessment based

feedback of language tests which are proposed in the form of formative feedback methods. The formative feedback is permanent and process oriented and they have a different function, although not completely distinct from summative feedback(Kazemi & Abbasian, 2019).

Many studies have compared formative feedback with summative feedback(Bloom & others, 1971; Gezer, Sunkur, & Sahin, 2014; Yaghoobi & Mashhadi, 2013; Abdullayeva, 2016; Özdemir & Özkan, 2017). Results of these studies show a direct and almost high correlation between these two types of feedback. Also results of some research(Fuchs, Hamlett, & Stecker, 1991; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, & Germann, 1993; Stecker, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005; Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2018)show that formative feedback receivers have had a better performance in learning a target language compared to those who have not received any formative feedback.

Research questions

Regarding the research goals, the research questions were posed as follows:

Q$_1$: Does formative feedback affect speaking performance of language learners considerably?

Q$_2$: Does summative feedback affect speaking performance of language learners considerably?

Q$_3$: Which of formative feedback or summative feedback affect

speaking performance of language learners in Iran more?

Methodology

The present study is applied. Due to lack of possibility of random selection of students and interferences in independent research variables (formative feedback and summative feedback), we have dealt with investigating the feedback resulted from speaking performance of language learners using a quasi-experimental method. The population for this study included boy students and girl students in an English institute called Dehkade-e-Jahani in Tabriz during the year 2019. 80 language learners (whose language proficiency performance in PET was average to high and were ready to cooperate with the researchers) formed the statistical population of the present research. During the pre-test and the posttest activities the students' scores were measured by using a speaking rubric which was adapted from Brown (2000). The elements of speaking which were measured were fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and comprehensibility. In order to produce a credible and reliable research finding, one researcher and a partner evaluated the speaking performance of each student. Each evaluator gave each

student a score based on Brown's rubric for speaking. Cohen's Kappa statistical measurement was used to measure the inter-rater reliability, which generally ranged from - 0.1 to +1.0. There were three stages in analyzing the data. In the first stage, there were two steps. First, the researchers did a normality test. This was done using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test in order to find out how normal the distribution of data was. The second step of the first stage was the homogeneity test, which was done to determine the variance in the data. In the second stage, the researchers calculated the average score or the mean. The pre-test and post-test results from both experimental groups were analyzed to get the mean score from each test. The last stage was testing the hypotheses by using a t-test. All the processing and data analysis used SPSS.

Findings
Studying the normality of data distribution

To study the normality of the distribution of the data collected from both groups of formative and summative feedback in both pre-test and pot-test we have used the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results are presented in Table1.

Table 1. The Shapiro-Wilk tests for speaking performance of FFG and SFG

Variable	Groups	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Speaking Pretest	Formative Feedback Group	0.96	40	0.16
	Summative Feedback Group	0.90	40	0.09
Speaking Posttest	Formative Feedback Group	0.98	40	0.19
	Summative Feedback Group	1.12	40	0.26

As can be seen in Table 1, the results of Shapiro-Wilk tests showed that the data collected from the FFG and SFG's participants from the phases of pretest and posttest were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$).

Answering Research Questions

The first research question was about examining the effect of EFL teachers' feedback (formative or summative) on EFL learners' speaking performance. A within- group analysis was separately run independently and using the t-test, and then the speaking performances of learners in this group were compared in pre-test and post-test.

Table 2. The descriptive statistics for of FFG

Variables		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Speaking Performance	Pretest	148.18	40	5.82	0.92
	Posttest	156.00	40	3.31	0.52
Vocabulary	Pretest	2.85	40	1.23	0.19
	Posttest	4.00	40	0.87	0.13
Fluency	Pretest	2.78	40	1.02	0.16
	Posttest	3.85	40	0.80	0.12
Grammar	Pretest	2.38	40	1.21	0.19
	Posttest	4.10	40	0.84	0.13
Pronunciation	Pretest	2.73	40	1.08	0.17
	Posttest	3.85	40	0.73	0.11
Comprehension	Pretest	2.65	40	1.12	0.17
	Posttest	3.90	40	0.98	0.15

The descriptive statistics of the speaking performance of FFG participants are shown in Table2. As can be seen, the speaking performance of FFG members, with all its aspects including vocabulary, fluency, grammar, pronunciation and comprehension, has increased from the pretest to the posttest. To see whether these increases in scores are statistically significant, the t-tests were run (Table3).

Table3. The results of paired-samples t-test for FFG

Variables	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Speaking Pretest-Posttest	-7.82	4.60	0.72	-10.74	39	0.00
Vocabulary	-1.15	1.18	0.18	-6.11	39	0.00
Fluency	-1.07	1.40	0.22	-4.84	39	0.00
Grammar	-1.72	1.56	0.24	-6.95	39	0.00
Pronunciation	-1.12	1.20	0.19	-5.91	39	0.00
Comprehension	-1.25	1.00	0.15	-7.85	39	0.00

As Table 3 shows, FFG learners' speaking performance, with all its aspects of vocabulary, fluency, grammar, pronunciation and comprehension, has significantly improved ($p < .05$). In other words, giving formative feedback by EFL teachers significantly affected and improved EFL learners' speaking performance with all its aspects.

Regarding the second research question, "Does summative feedback affect speaking performance of language learners considerably?" a within-group analysis was separately run independently and using the t-test, and then the speaking performances of learners in this group were compared in pre-test and post-test, as shown in table 4.

Table 4. The descriptive statistics for of SFG

Variables		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Speaking Performance	Pretest	149.35	40	6.53	1.03
	Posttest	152.18	40	5.07	0.80
Vocabulary	Pretest	2.68	40	1.32	0.21
	Posttest	3.38	40	0.89	0.14
Fluency	Pretest	2.63	40	1.03	0.16
	Posttest	3.08	40	0.76	0.12
Grammar	Pretest	2.60	40	1.17	0.18
	Posttest	3.23	40	0.86	0.13
Pronunciation	Pretest	2.75	40	1.17	0.18
	Posttest	3.18	40	0.87	0.13
Comprehension	Pretest	2.45	40	1.06	0.16
	Posttest	3.05	40	1.17	0.18

In Table 4, the descriptive statistics of the speaking performance of SFG participants are shown. Their speaking performance, with all its aspects, indicated an increase from the pretest to the posttest. To see whether such an increase is significant statistically, the paired-samples t-test was used (Table5).

Table 5. The results of paired-samples t-test for SFG

Variables	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Speaking Pretest-Posttest	-2.82	4.40	0.69	-4.05	39	0.000
Vocabulary	-.70	1.28	0.20	-3.44	39	0.001
Fluency	-.45	.71	0.11	-3.98	39	0.000
Grammar	-.62	.89	0.14	-4.40	39	0.000
Pronunciation	-.42	1.05	0.16	-2.53	39	0.015
Comprehension	-.60	1.29	0.20	-2.92	39	0.006

Findings in Table5 show that SFG members' speaking performance, with all its aspects, showed a significant improvement ($p < .05$). That is, giving summative feedback by EFL teachers significantly developed EFL learners' speaking performance.

To answer the third research question: "which of formative feedback or summative feedback affect speaking performance of language learners in Iran more?" a one-way ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) was run, controlling for any possible intervening effect of the pretest. The results of Levene's test, as an assumption of ANCOVA besides normality of distribution, showed that error variances for learners' speaking performance posttest as the dependent variable were equal ($p > .05$). The related descriptive statistics can be seen below (table6).

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of ANCOVA

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Formative Feedback G.	156.00	3.31	40
Summative Feedback G.	152.18	5.07	40
Total	154.09	4.67	80

As shown in Table 6, the FFG's mean score was found to be 156.00±3.31, and that of SFG was 152.18±5.07, indicating FFG gained a higher speaking score than to its counterpart. To see whether this difference in speaking performance was significant, an ANCOVA was run (Table 7).

Table7. The results of ANCOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Speaking Pretest	673.70	1	673.70	68.25	.00	0.47
Treatment	380.70	1	380.70	38.56	.00	0.33
Error	760.06	77	9.87			
Total	1901163.00	80				

According to Table7, there is a significant difference between FFG and SFG with regard to speaking performance.

Table 8. Results of covariance analysis between formative feedback and summative feedback groups regarding the isolated 5 speaking performance dimensions.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Vocabulary Pretest	9.51	1	9.51	14.12	0.00	0.155
Treatment	6.63	1	6.63	9.84	0.02	0.113
Error	51.86	77	0.674			
Total	1157	80				
Fluency Pretest	3.41	1	3.41	5.91	0.017	0.017
Treatment	11.02	1	11.02	19.09	0.00	0.199
Error	44.45	77	0.577			
Total	1157	80				
Grammar Pretest	3.64	1	3.64	5.29	0.024	0.064
Treatment	16.62	1	16.62	24.17	0.239	
Error	52.93	77	.687			
Total	1145	80				
Pronunciation Pretest	6.33	1	6.33	10.94	0.001	0.124
Treatment	9.28	1	9.28	16.04	0.000	0.172
Error	44.54	77	0.578			
Total	1047	80				
Comprehension Pretest	16.94	1	16.94	17.50	0.000	0.185
Treatment	11.59	1	11.59	11.97	0.001	0.135
Error	74.55	77	0.968			
Total	1072	80				

The data in table 8 represent results of covariance tests between formative feedback and summative feedback groups regarding vocabulary, fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension. Results showed that in all aspects mentioned, the formative feedback has had a more meaningful effect than summative feedback.

Discussion and conclusion

The present study has dealt with investigating the effect of one of the most important responsibilities of English teachers, i.e. feedback using formative or summative methods. This responsibility of English teachers refers to identifying the mistakes of language learners, presenting criticisms, directions, and suggestions to enhance language learners' speaking. Therefore, an English teacher is responsible to use the target language and proper way of speaking in it regarding the elements of speaking through appropriate feedback (formative and summative) to make sure of the improvement in the process of learning and stimulate language learners to establish communications with others. In this way, the English teacher can help learners in resolving speaking problems and revising the mistakes in the target language.

Good feedback practice is anything that might strengthen the student's capacity to self-regulate their own performance(Nico & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Results of the present study can be helpful for teachers working in the field of EFL, researchers of foreign language teaching, teacher training colleges' lecturers, and teachers who teach English in institutes. Also proper understanding of factors that halt the progress in speaking performance of EFL learners, regarding the results gained in the present study, can help language learners and EFL teachers to resolve their problems related to speaking in English and step forwards to succeed in learning English.

The results showed there was a significant positive difference between the use of formative feedback compared to the use of summative feedback for teaching-learning speaking skills. This suggests that even though the implementation of formative feedback or summative feedback could help students improve their speaking skills, the use of formative feedback by the teachers is better than the use of summative feedback since all the aspects of speaking measured improved to a higher degree. It is suggested that teachers of speaking in English should use the combination of feedback (formative as well as summative), as a supportive learning facilitator.

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