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THE EFFECT OF ORAL AND WRITTEN FEEDBACK ON IMPROVING GRAMMAR ABILITY OF EFL LEARNERS

*Shahnoush Bahmanpoor[1], Mojgan Yarahmadi[2] and Mojtaba Maghsoudi[3]
[1]*Department of English Language, Saveh Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Saveh, Iran*
[2]*Department of English Language, Arak Branch, Islamic Azad University, Arak, Iran*
[3]*Farhangian University, Shahid Bahonar Branch, Arak*
*Author for Correspondence

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of feedback on improving grammar ability of EFL learners. This investigation attempted to understand the influence of a written feedback and oral feedback on enhancement of grammar accuracy. Based on the purpose of this study, this research adopted the quantitative method. . Data for the study were collected from 60 intermediate level learners of English as foreign Language in Safir Institute in Roodehen that after proficiency test the numbers of learners decreased to 40 learners. The researcher gathered data through one questionnaire and two tests among 40 EFL learners who were assigned randomly to analyze the data and answer the research hypotheses. The Statistical Package for Social Science software version 16 was used to assist in coding the raw quantitative data. After the analysis of quantitative phase was done, the results revealed that there was significant difference between EFL performance among the pre-test group and post-test across intermediate proficiency levels, so written group were better than oral group in grammar in post-test as well as feedback has significantly effect on learning. The results of this study will enlighten educators, administrators and support staff of the barriers to complete the ESL/EFL program and to propose solutions that will help learners to succeed.

Key Words: Feedback, Oral Feedback, Written Feedback, Grammar Ability

INTRODUCTION

The answer to the question "what is feedback" is not difficult. Feedback means to give your observation to students on their works and to judge their progress or achievement in language learning therefore, any feedback on student's learning can stimulate them to think about their mistakes.

It is important to know that there are different types of feedback, which the present researcher would like to share with you. According to Soori *et al.,* (2011), among the different types of corrective feedback, two types have received attention 'direct' and 'indirect' corrective feedback.

While indirect strategies refer to situations when the teacher indicates that an error has been made but does not provide a correction, thereby, leaving the student to diagnose and correct it, direct or explicit feedback occurs when the teacher identifies an error and provides the correct form. It may include the crossing out of an unnecessary word, the insertion of a missing word, or the provision of the correct linguistic form above or near the linguistic error (Bitchener *et al.,* 2005; Ferris, 2003).

Oral and written feedbacks, as two important types of feedback have been under the spotlight in recent EFL research. Ellis (2004) defines written and oral feedback as there are some obvious differences between written and oral. The former is delayed whereas the latter occurs immediately after an error has been committed.

Written CF imposes less cognitive load on memory than oral CF, which typically demands a cognitive comparison on-line, thus requiring learners to rely heavily on their short-term memory. Both feedback types are believed to be effective in L2 Learning, but the current researcher wants to find which one is more effective.

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Significant and Purpose of the Study

Feedback is a crucial factor for learning (Black and Wiliam, 1997) and the quality of feedback is important. Feedback does not always enhance performance and might cause degradation (Butler, 1998). The effect of the feedback on learners will affect learning process differently, although the same comments are used. Students perceive and use the feedback and then decide its effectiveness on learning. This in turn depends on the quality of feedback. Most of the teachers spend a lot of time in order to give students score or mark. If this is useless in improving students learning, a different form of feedback should be given to students. The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of quality of oral and written feedback on learning. As teachers, we are responsible to ensure our students to learn better. How can we engage them in this learning process, help them understand what they know and need to know and show them how to move forward? We have to help many of our students in understanding that their responsibility for learning is as important as our responsibility. Iranian teachers are responsible for supporting students to cope with their grammatical problems. They might help students to notice their errors and internalize a system to correct them. Hence, a study is needed to shed light on the effectiveness of different types of corrective feedback along with written and oral on student' learning. The purpose of this study is to lead to a better understanding of the impact of quality of feedback on learning.

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of corrective feedback on learner's writing is a matter of controversy (cf. Truscott, 1996, 1999 and Ferris, 2002).Most of the Iranian teachers are worried about student's grammatical points and one of their great aims is to improve students writing. One of the best ways for improving writing is to give feedback; feedback can be oral and written. There is different debate among teachers; this research want to find which kinds of feedback is more useful (oral or written) in learning in order to help teachers and students in improving writing. A great number of researchers view errors as windows to the language acquisition process and as the reflections of the learner's internalized knowledge of language (Mekhlafi, 1997). By studying of different researches with mixed findings, the present researcher decided to conduct a research on the effect of oral and written feedback on improving Iranian learning.

Research Questions

As mention earlier, the purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of oral and written feedback on the improvement of Iranian EFL learner's grammatical ability. Therefore, the following research questions are raised:

1-Is there any significant difference between oral and written feedback in Iranian EFL learner's grammatical ability?

2- Does providing grammar corrective feedback in second language enhance Iranian EFL learner's grammatical ability?

Research Hypotheses

On the basis of above questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: There is significant difference between oral and written feedback in Iranian EFL learner's grammatical ability.

H2: Providing grammar corrective feedback will enhance Iranian EFL learner's grammatical ability.

Review of Literature

It is completely obvious that learning requires feedback and when there isn't any feedback on students or learners cannot be sure the learning has been completed. Furthermore, as stated by Light Bown (1998), if learners focus on form, learning can be more successful while using language for the mean of communication. Psycholinguists have long proved that learners learn and remember thing by checking the context in which they have learned them. So, according to Schmidt (2000), the focused features might be easier to remember for learners who need them in the future similar context when there is enough attention through feed back in the context of communication.

Noticing hypothesis according to Schmidt (1990, 1993 & 1995) is the outcome of developing concern for the role of feedback in language learning. As Schmidt (1990) states that noticing in the form of feedback

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is an essential and satisfactory provision for converting input to intake. There may be some forms of learning without attention because in this situation, noticing is the subjective correlation of what psychologists call attention. In addition, for successful language learning intentionally focused attention can be efficient and essential. He describes noticing as "registering the simple occurrence of some event which is crucially related to the question of what linguistic material is stored in memory "(p.26). Schmidt (1995) also states that noticing is often connected with powerful notion of consciousness raising by Riutherford (1987) or input enhancement by Sharwoodand Smith (1991).

Schmidt (2000) believes that there are two kinds of attention: noticing and understanding. He notes that noticing related to the intention and refers to the occurrence of particular stimulus in the input , on the other hand , he pointed to understanding as the second level of attention , here learners try to discover consciously and recognizing a general code underlying the stimulus in the input.

Schmidt (1995) and Long (2006) emphasize the significance of focused attention to induce attention.

According to Long (2006) focus on form is important, and there should be attention to certain linguistic features in the situation of using language meaningfully, may be needed for learning؛ otherwise , certain items in the input may go unnoticed , un processed and not learned, for example , morphemes and grammatical tense verb that tend to be ignored by learners.

As Koch and Terell (1991) state this matter and make suggestion that the explicit teaching maybe in the form of feedback, cannot only act as an advanced organizer, which provides students with comprehension strategies that emphasize important grammatical element , but also as meaning – form focus that emphasize non – salient and communicatively redundant relation. McWhinney (1997) states that feedback can help learners reduce definite hypotheses and strengthen memory trace of particular items.

According to Robinson (1995) noticing requires to discover then, practice linguistic features in short – term memory before storing it in long – term memory but unattended items would remain for a short time in short – term memory and then vanish. This long – lasting memorization needs a conscious understanding and awareness of input, and it is expected to be available for verbal report as soon as possible or now after the noticing experience happens.

As Kulhary and Stock (1989) note, feedback can be divided in two various categories: 1) verification, 2) elaboration. Verification is just a confirmation of the correct or incorrect response, while elaboration by providing clues to learners, guiding them toward correct choice.

The debate of these two categories are important because, as Sheen (2004) argues most researchers agree that if we want feedback to be effective and helpful in different language features , feedback need to contain both type of information . In other words, learners need to receive information whether their answer is correct or incorrect, and when it is incorrect, learners need to be provided by enough information and guidance in a form of feedback in order to discover the correct answer.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Participant of the Study
The sample size of this study consisted of 60 female language learners that after proficiency test the numbers of learners decreased to 40 learners; the accidental sampling method was employed to choose the classroom and participants in intermediate levels from the specific population. In this research, the participants were EFL learners whose native language is Persian. Their age ranged between 17 to 29 years old and their educational level ranged from high school to master holders. The sample of this study involves language learners who are going to continue English language learning at intermediate proficiency levels in Safir Institute, which is a private English language institute that has a numerous learners from a range of ages, educational levels and knowledge of the English language, and also has a lot of branches in Tehran, the current study was conducted in the Roodehen branch.

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Procedure

During this research one questionnaire and two tests (the PET, and academic grammar test) were administered to 40 participants who were randomly selected from institute in Roodehen city, Iran within second semester of 2013. The data collection process took six weeks to be completed and all the three instruments were administered to every participant in a single testing session. Participants were expected to complete the background questionnaire first and after that the combination set of grammar tests were given to them in order to be completed. A 7-items background questionnaire was used to obtain the necessary information about the participant's backgrounds such as age, gender, language proficiency levels, education levels, field of study, the outside activity and kind of outside activity. Then, all EFL learners are required to take standardized proficiency test (PET) with both multiple choices and open-ended item types for their English proficiency levels at the beginning of the program. Moreover, the students were allowed to answer the test in 60 minutes and there was not any negative point for their wrong answers. Each question has one point. Participants were also administrated a grammar pre-test in order to become sure that they were equal in their grammar knowledge. At the end of instruction period, the grammar performance of two groups were evaluated, the pre-test were repeated as a post-test. Grammar test included 60 multiple-choice items after piloting became 50-items. The students were allowed to answer the test in 60 minutes and there wasn't any negative point for their wrong answers. Each question has two points.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

The purpose of this study, as mention earlier, was to determine the effectiveness of oral and written feedback on the improvement of Iranian EFL learner's grammatical accuracy. The following two research hypotheses, therefore, was answered based on the research results:

H1: there is significant difference between oral and written feedback in Iranian EFL learner's grammatical ability.

H2: Providing grammar corrective feedback will enhance Iranian EFL learner's grammatical ability.

The following table is the scores of participants in oral and written feedback group in post-test that were analyzed to examine is there any significant difference in oral and written or not. Based on the equal variances assumed, there is significant level because ($p=0.176$) is bigger or far greater than ($p>0.05$) and variances are equal. So equal variances are acceptable in t-test because ($t = 2.054$) and significant level is (0.047); because significant level is smaller than ($p = 0.05$) the t-test is meaningful. On the other hand, it can be concluded that there is significant difference between oral and written feedback.

Table 1: The scores in oral and written group in post-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% confidence Interval of Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Differences	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal Variances	2.357	.176	2.054	38	.047	8.900	4.333	.12725	16.672
	Equal Variances not			2.054	30.786	.041	8.900	4.333	.05905	17.740

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The standardized 50-item pre-test was administrated among EFL learners to examine the knowledge of grammatical accuracy before treatment. The mean score of the oral group was 47.700 and written group was 49.500, respectively. It can be concluded, based on the results, that oral written group were in the same level in the grammar pre-test before treatment.

Table2: Descriptive statistic of the grammar pre-test and post-test of two groups

	Feedback	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test	Oral	20	47.7000	15.76505	3.52517
	Written	20	49.5000	9.59989	2.14660
Post-Test	Oral	20	50.5000	16.69384	3.73286
	Written	20	56.4000	9.84298	2.20096

After six weeks treatment, moreover, the same standardized 50-item was once again used as the grammar post-test. The mean score of the oral group were 50.500 (SD=16.693) and written group were 56.400 (SD=9.842), respectively. It can be concluded that written group were better than oral group in grammar in post-test.

Table 3: Correlation of pre-test and post-test

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 pre-test & pot-test	40	.890	.000

In above table, there is correlation among of student's marks in grammar test, in pre-test and post-test.as it was shown (r=0.890) and level of parity of the test is (p=0.000). According to this fact level of parity is smaller than ($p< 0.05$), there is liner relationship between two groups of data and they are acceptable. Consequently, it let us start describing next table that is pair t-test.

According to next table, there is level of significant (p=0.000) because it is smaller than ($p= 0.05$), so the test is meaningful. In other word, there is significant different between the mean score of students before and after receiving feedback. With these clear results it can be concluded that feedback had great effect on improving student's grammar accuracy. Here feedback was considered in general in both types (oral and written). The mean score of both groups in pre-test (before receiving feedback) was 52.100 and in post-test(after receiving feedback) increased to 54.950,their scores in post-test were far greater than pre-test, it can be the answer of second research question, feedback has effect on learning .

Table 4: The scores in oral and written feedback group in pre and post-test

		Mean	Mean Differences	Std. Error Mean	95% confidence Interval of Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre-test & pot-test	2.85000	2.06993	.32728	3.81200	8.708	8.708	39	.000

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The information made by that examine recommended that placing in to exercise common and prepared feedback in institute will help EFL learners to enhance grammatical accuracy. Even though the common party and prepared party acquired, related actions and the problem for equally lessons were the same. Furthermore, the outcomes of provide examine show that the learners who acquired prepared feedback in equate to party who acquired common feedback had larger development inside their syntax accuracy. While, it will perhaps not be dismissed that equally communities had development in syntax reliability, it indicates that feedback generally speaking works well and helpful.

Conclusion

Through the analyses of data, the findings show that there was significant difference between oral and written feedback on grammatical accuracy, written group had significant improvement in their grammatical accuracy. Here the finding related to the first hypotheses of the study is argued in sequence: There is significant difference between oral and written feedback in second language grammar ability. Therefore, it can be concluded that participants by receiving feedback had improvement in their grammatical accuracy, it was shown that written group had greater improvement comparing to oral group. Thus, there is significant difference between oral and written feedback in second language grammar accuracy. This conclusion adds to the validity of other studies such as that of researchers who were favor of written feedback such as (Vanderbeek, 2007; Aliakbari and Toni, 2009; Bitchener *et al.,* 2010; Katia *et al.,* 2011; WenKao, 2013). Deciding on the type of the corrective feedback is an important educational issue since it needs different amounts of time and teaching skill. Oral of error feedback may be less time-consuming for teachers than written one. It is certainly should be considered that when written feedback can be resulted in more improvement teachers are expected to use the best way in their pedagogical instruction. Another finding addresses to second hypotheses: Providing grammar corrective feedback is helpful and useful in second language learning. The findings make it clear that feedback in general has effect on learning and improvement of grammar, as statistic analysis was shown in previous chapter. The mean score of students in post-test was greater than pre-test, it shows that both group (oral and written) improved in grammar over instructional period regardless of the type of correction received and feedback helped for their better learning as (Morra and Inés Asís, 2009; Séror, 2011; Chung and Yuen, 2011) arrived in this result.

When students receive feedback on their work, assignment, writing, speaking and etc, students are preparing themselves for doing better in future, they are well aware of the importance of structural accuracy of their work. In fact, feedback on the structure is usually what they need the teacher to provide. In this way students become interested in receiving feedback because they clearly see improvement in their learning (Lee, 2005; Jeon and Kang, 2005; for more on this issue).

However, beyond facilitating the notching of difficult attributes, it has also been suggested that certain type of corrective feedback may also function to support different degrees of l2 processing (Panova and Lyster, 2002). For example, corrective feedback which contains positive support about the target language (e.g. written feedback) can be useful in the internalization of a new form (Panova and Lyster, 2002) and can allow learners to notice the gap (Schmidt, 2001) through association of mismatches between target language norm and current inter language.

Implication

This study has some theoretical implication fore filed of language teaching. The findings of the study may help teachers and students. The aforementioned findings and discussion have revealed that the EFL learner's degree of grammar learning increases when they learned grammar through receiving feedback regardless the kind of feedback, but teacher should select more appropriate teaching techniques. According to this research, teachers can use written feedback in grammar teaching, in grammar instruction giving feedback is effective, but using written feedback can be much more effective.

Suggestions for Further Study

To obtain more realizable findings in the future, can be recommend that the level of language proficiency which is more suitable for request of written feedback and it will be major key to investigate the effect of

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feedback among EFL learners. Moreover, since the study focused on the role of oral and written feedback on grammatical accuracy of the Iranian female EFL learners, other study are recommended to concentrate on the role of other different kinds of feedback on grammatical accuracy of Iranian male and female EFL learners.

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