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Research Article

THE EFFECT OF PRACTICING FORMULAIC SEQUENCES ON SPEAKING FLUENCY OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

***Hossein Afzali**
Department of English Language, Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas, Iran
**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT
The present study intends to investigate the effects of practicing formulaic sequences on Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency. To achieve this purpose, Nelson English language proficiency test was administered to 80 language learners who were studying English conversation course at the intermediate level. Ultimately, 34 students including male and female were selected and randomly divided into two groups namely control and experimental each 17 students based on stratified random selection. The design of the study was quasi-experimental. An IELTS speaking test was administered as the pretest and the result of both groups were recorded. Both experimental and control group worked on the same textbook. The participants of the experimental group were also presented with some formulaic expressions as the treatment throughout the course. The treatment took the whole semester. The result of the posttest showed that formulaic expressions were not influential on Iranian EFL learners' speech fluency and the treatment had no significant impact on experimental group. Also, this study has some applications for students to feel more comfortable and self-confidence if they have sufficient knowledge of formulaic expressions and use them automatically and native-like while they are in communication.

Keywords: *Formulaic Expression, Speech Fluency, Speaking Skill*

INTRODUCTION
In recent years more attention has been drawn to the area of formulaic language, or "multi word lexical strings or frames which are processed mentally as if single word, (Schmitt, 2010), that appear to occur to a certain degree in the language that we use. Formulaic sequences serve a wide variety of uses and functions in discourse, and are a generally agreed upon means of expressing concepts and relationships which facilitate efficient and effective communication, and particularly fluent speech. Fluency is generally accepted as being a function of temporal variables of speech such as rate of speaking and the number of words or syllables uttered between hesitations. Oral communication is a very creative and free flowing form of language use, but does not consist of wholly unique and independently creative utterances. The glue that connects these unique and independent utterances is the formulaic sequence. This is why formulaic sequences are an integral part of fluent oral communication, because they help solve many of the problems identified as non-fluency. Formulaic sequences can increase the rate of speech, reduce false starts and reformulations and limit self-repetitions and frequent pauses for language learners by providing the fixed chucks of language that begin, continue and conclude effective oral communication. Without these fully formed phrasal sequences at the ready of the language user, communication can become slow, disconnected and awkward. Wood (2010) proposes that by utilizing formulaic language, a learner can come across as sounding more native-like as well as take advantage of the other benefits that formulaic phrases provide for the speaker. The present study is an investigation into the effects of practicing formulaic language on speaking skill of Iranian EFL learners.
Some scholars such as Wray (2009) and Peters (2009) believe that learning and acquiring language starts from whole and then moves to breaking down this whole into its comprising components. They contend that learner start from mapping the biggest received pattern and then they establish their rules from what they conceive in these perceived wholes. David (2010) defines formulaic sequences as "fixed strings or chunks of words that have a range of functions and uses in speech production and communication and seem to be cognitively stored and retrieved by speakers as if they were single words" (p.14). A definition

that differs slightly from Wood's in that it encompasses both single and multiword units is Wray's **morpheme equivalent unit** (MEU).

According to Wilkins (1972) "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing at all can be conveyed". In addition, Jackendoff (1995) stated that the number of formulaic sequences is equal to or even greater than the number of individual words. Therefore, it seems clear that learners need to know a considerable number of formulaic sequences in addition to individual words. Oral fluency can be taught and the indivisible multiword language chunks, known as formulaic sequences, are one way to accomplish this goal. In the English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, the focus is often on teaching reading, writing and grammar skills while little time is spent teaching speaking skills. This becomes a problem when students need to use English to speak. This demotivates many EFL learners as why after years of studying English they are not still capable of producing natural language or to grasp the language being spoken by native speakers either do not sound native like. Unfortunately, many L2 learners grapple with the effects of inadequate fluency long after completing basic L2 study. According to Nattinger and Decarcio (1992), if learners memorized a large amount of bundles and retrieve them, they can gain a native like fluency and increase the length of the speech between pauses. If formulaic sequences are so important to language use and are so widespread in discourse, it follows that proficient speakers must have knowledge and mastery of them at same level. Therefore, this study, aims to implement a complementary learning aid to solve the learners' fluency problems. In spite of the fact that the formulaic sequences have received considerable attention from phraseologists and TEFL researchers during the last decades, however, so far to the best knowledge of the researcher, very limited research has been undertaken to examine the link between the use of formulaic sequences in speech and effectiveness of oral fluency.

Moreover, there is a serious lack of research on the issue of formulaic sequences in the Iranian language teaching and learning context. In an attempt to fill in some the gaps that currently exist in the literature, the researcher aimed to examine The Effect of Practicing Formulaic Sequences on Speaking Skill of Iranian EFL Learners. The current study is significant because it can shed more light on the effect of Practicing Formulaic Sequences on Speaking Skill, in general, and formulaic sequences in speech fluency of learners in particular.

Moreover, the findings of this study help EFL teachers, EFL learners, syllabus designers, educational managers, English institutes and colleges.

The following research questions are going to be answered in this study:

1. Does teaching formulaic expressions have any significant impact on Iranian EFL learners' fluency?
2. What are the most and least frequent formulaic expressions used by Iranian EFL learners?
3. Is there any difference between gender and the use of formulaic expressions in the experimental group?

Review of Related Literature

Definition of Formulaic Sequence (FS)

FSs are named differently and defined in various ways in the literature. Before there can be any discussion on the introduction and use of formulaic language as an aid to L2 fluency in the English language classroom, it is necessary to clarify what is exactly meant by Formulaic sequence. One of the widely accepted and most cited definitions is presented by Wray and Perkins (2000) Which define formulaic sequences as "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar". This type of definition is common in the literature.

Formulaic sequences can be long (you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make home drink) or short (oh no!), or anything in between. Also, they can be categorized according to the purpose for which the language is being used, such as for transact specific information in a precise and understandable way (wind 28 at 7= in aviation language this formula is used to state that the wind is 7 knots per hour from 280 degrees), functional (I'm just looking thanks= declining an offer of assistance from a shopkeeper), or

social solidarity (I know what you mean = agreeing with an interlocutor) and to express a message a or idea (the early bird gets the worm= do not procrastinate). Others have categorized formulaic language in terms of transparency of meaning: core idioms ("by and large"; "touch and go") displaying no clear meaning to the uninitiated; figurative ("when the cat's away"; "play second fiddle") where the meaning can be both figurative and literal; and literals ("I know the way"; "Once in a while") which show compositionality in that they can be broken down and analyzed in their composite parts (Grant & Bauer 2004). Further to this, according to Schmitt and Carter (2004), "these sequences [of formulaic language] can be totally fixed or can have a number of slots which can be filled with appropriate words or strings of words" (p. 3).

The Importance of Formulaic Language

Formulaic sequences are widespread in language use. A number of studies have shown that a large amount of discourse is made up of different kinds of these sequences. Typically, the percentages range from 20% (Sorhus, 1977) to 50% (Erman & Warren, 2000).

Formulaic language can improve the overall impression of L2 learners' language production.

Boers *et al.,* (2006) show that L2 speakers were judged as more proficient when they used formulaic sequences. The same applies for written discourse (Lewis, 2008; Ohlrogge, 2009). These reasons show that learners must master formulaic language to reach a proficient level of mastery.

The use of formulaic language helps proficient speakers be fluent. Pawley and Syder (1983) suggest native-speakers have cognitive limitations in how quickly they can process language, but they are also able to produce language seemingly beyond these limitations. They look at the psycholinguistic literature and conclude that native speakers are unable to process a clause of more than 8-10 words at a time. When speaking, they will speed up and become fluent during these clauses, but will then slow down or even pause at the end of these clauses.

Presumably these pauses permit the speaker to formulate the next clause. Speakers seldom pause in the middle of a clause. Together, this evidence suggests that speakers are unable to compose more than about 8-10 words at a time. The use of formulaic language helps their users to manage their time efficiently. This cognitive temporal is an element which provides an opportunity to express what they intend to do while they have to think and speak at the same time (Iwasaki, 2009).

Peters (1983) proposed six tasks that learners must perform in learning a language:

1. Extracting and remembering chunks from inputs they receive
2. Comparing those recently learned chunks with those which had been learnt previously.
3. Connecting them with familiar and similar chunks in various ways including pragmatic connection, semantic connection, phonological connection, and syntactic connection.
4. Unpacking the chunks into some known subparts.
5. Storing some of those encountered chunks in the lexicon repertoire and discarding those which may seem less useful.
6. Trying and revising them in later stages.

Definition of Fluency

Brumfit (1984) defined fluency as the maximum efficient and active language operation and use at any level of proficiency, using the language system acquired by students. Use of appropriate formulaic sequences can add fluency, accuracy and apropriacy to written English and one important place these sequences occur are as sentence such as "needless to say" or "at the same time". Formulaic sequences are some of those chunks of language that will help students avoid awkward or misplaced pauses and mentally stored and retrieved as single words.

Empirical research focusing on fluency has generally involved the elicitation of a speech corpus and analysis of its temporal and qualitative aspects. Some studies have attempted to link clusters of performance variables with rater assessments of fluency (Lennon, 1990b; Riggenbach, 1991; Freed, 1995); others have compared first and second language speech performance (Deschamps, 1980; Raupach, 1980), or conducted longitudinal examinations of the development of aspects of second language spoken fluency (Dechert, 1980; Towell, 1987; Lennon, 1990a; Hansen *et al.*, 1998). Across all of the studies of

spoken fluency and its development, there has been a remarkable degree of agreement on the types of temporal variables to be tracked.

Indeed, Boers *et al.,* (2006) put forward three distinct reasons why a command of formulaic language is so beneficial to learners of an L2. In a study Paul-Dickinson (2009) investigated teaching formulaic sequences to a group of students on an English language course at a Japanese university with the aim of improving their academic starters.

For almost all of the learners, regardless of their English proficiency. The results also revealed that learners who used formulaic sequences accurately and appropriately improved not only the quality of their presentations, but also their speech fluency. In a study conducted in Iran, Shamsaee and Hashem (2015) provided evidence for the effectiveness of teaching mode and L1 phraseological background on learner formulaic sequences. For this purpose 68 target formulaic sequences were divided in half and were taught in explicit vs. implicit modes to 10 leaners over one year. During the next year, each learner produced 10 essays within two-fortnight intervals.

The 31984-word corpus was then explored to identify and tag the target sequences for their L1 background. The results revealed that explicit teaching of formulaic sequences was more efficient that the implicit, and that the existence of an L1 counterpart did not have any meaningful effect on the use of L2 sequences. However, teaching mode and L1 background do interact significantly. Also, the results showed that overused and absent sequences in the learner corpus had distinctive functional profiles that could partially justify their abnormal frequency.

In the other study conducted in Iran, Ebrahim and Saeedeh (2012) investigated formulaic languages and their relationship with speaking and listening abilities. The results indicated that the internal mental mechanisms which form and are formed by the use of FSs are meaningfully related to language skills and components.

Schmitt *et al.,* (2004) implemented a longitudinal study to determine how well learners on two professional EAP programs dealt with acquiring a number of targeted formulaic sequences under semi-controlled conditions (Schmitt *et al.,* 2004). In this respect, the current study was designed to determine The Effect of Practicing Formulaic Sequences on Speaking Skill of Iranian EFL Learners.

The Study

Participants

The participants of the current research were from 6 intact classes at Shokouh Zaban Jouyan English language institute (S.E.I.) in Bandar Abbas, Iran. There were 80 intermediate level students at S.E.I. They have been studying a conversation course for six terms at this language institute and they are all at their intermediate level. Nelson English Language Test 200-A was administered to find out if they are exactly at the intermediate level. The result of the test showed that out of the total number of 80, 50 students approved to be at intermediate level as per the standard test. Since there were 34 students required to participate in this study, based on stratified random selection, this number (34) were selected accordingly and randomly put in two groups.

Their age ranges from 19 to 23. Each of these two classes consists of 17 students, 10 female and 7 males. The students were divided in two groups, control and experimental.

Instruments

At the unset of the study, Nelson English language test 200 A, adopted from Fowler and Coe (1976) devised for intermediate level was used as a proficiency test in order to assure the homogeneity of the groups.

The main source for both groups which were used in each class was Four Corners series published by Cambridge University press, volume four, units 1 to 6.

As the pretest, IELTS speaking test was conducted for each group separately. The main material provided for each group was Four Corners series written by Jack C. Richards, Cambridge publication. Apart from this main material, the experimental group was presented by some formulaic expressions including fillers, collocations, proverbs and idioms adopted from different sources and used as the treatment. Finally at the end of the course, another IELTS speaking test was conducted as the posttest. To ensure the validity of

the test, the content of the instrument was reviewed by experts in the field and they are all agreed that they measure the same ability at the intermediate level. The contents were all relevant to the level of the students/ participants we well as to the topic and the questions. The reliability of the test calculated using Cronbach's Alpha were 0.74 to 0.94 respectively, which are acceptable values.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As stated in the previous section, there were 34 students divided in two groups, namely control and experimental. Participants were all at the intermediate level and have been studying English for six semesters at the very language institution. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants, Nelson English language test was administered and respectively an IELTS speaking test was conducted for both groups as Pretest.

The main source for both groups used in each class was Four Corners series, volume 4, units 1 to 6. The term scheduled for 17 sessions, each session 90 minutes.

The control group went through the usual syllabus plan for the same source, but the participants in the experimental group were presented by some formulaic sequences including collocations, fillers, idioms, and proverbs each session throughout the term beside the main text book as the control group.

The presentation of formulaic sequences was not specified to a specific time of the class, but during the presentation of each session / lesson and whenever necessary.

Participants have been informed that they will be considered for a study and their progress will be evaluated, but the focus of the study was never disclosed.

During the course of each session and whenever there was the time for students to practice any parts of the lessons in the form of role play, speaking practice, dialogues, monologues, etc. they had to use any sorts of such expressions they learned so far, but the practice and presentation was not in a way that students notice the focus and intention of the course and study.

Almost 3 items of formulaic expressions of each kind were presented / practiced each session and they regularly practiced and reviewed the expressions every other session till the completion of the semester. Ultimately, once the term is completed, an IELTS speaking test was administered as posttest to evaluate participants' speaking fluency. Hence, there were three different interviewers appointed to accomplish the final test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Investigating the First Research Question

To answer the first research question on if formulaic expression teaching has any impact on intermediate Iranian learners' fluency, assurance on the initial status of participants on the pretest is required. Hence, at first participants' performance on the pretest would be compared in both control and experimental groups. Then the experimental and control groups' performance from the pretest to the posttest will be tested to realize if any gains are achieved. Finally, their performance on the prettest would be scrutinized.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Results of Pretest

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	control group	17	5.4412	.76816	.18631
	experimental group	17	5.6765	.55737	.13518

As displayed in Table 4.1, the total mean score and standard deviation for control group are 5.4 4 and .76, respectively. In addition, the mean score and standard deviation for experimental gro up are 5.67 (*SD*=.55).

Table 4.2: T-Test concerning Control and Experimental groups' performance on the pretest

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.994	.326	-1.022	32	.314	-.23529	.23018	-.70416	.23357
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.022	29.191	.315	-.23529	.23018	-.70594	.23535

As displayed in Table 4.2, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to see if the experimental and control groups differed on the pretest score. The results indicated there was not a statistically significant difference for the subjects in the experimental and control groups t =.-1.022, p = .314, df = 32.

Table 4.3: Experimental group's pre-posttests

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	5.6765	17	.55737	.13518
	posttest	5.71	17	.470	.114

As table 4.3 shows, the mean score of the experimental group receiving formulaic expressions has marginally increased from the pretest (M=5.67 SD= .55) to the posttest (M= 5.71, SD= .47). To confirm the observed increase from the pretest to the posttest has been large enough to show a statistically significance difference between the two occasions, a paired samples t-test was applied and its results are as follow:

Table 4.4: Paired Samples Statistics for Pre-posttests of the Experimental group

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	pretest - posttest	-.02941	.37377	.09065	-.22159	.16276	-.324	16	.750

The difference in the fluency of intermediate learners from the pretest to the posttest was analyzed with a paired-samples t-test. The results indicated no significant increase in the fluency of experimental group participants from the pretest to the posttest), t (16) = -.324 p= .75 >0.005 (two-tailed). Hence, teaching formulaic expressions had no significant impact on Iranian learners' fluency.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Results of Control group's pre-posttests

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	5.4412	17	.76816	.18631
	Posttest	5.41	17	.755	.183

As Table 4.5 demonstrates the mean score of participants from the pretest (M=5.44, SD=.76) to posttest (M=5.41, SD= .75) has decreased, but to show its efficacy to differentiate between pre-posttest, sig value in Table 4.5.needs to checked.

Table 4.6:Paired Samples Statistics for Pre-posttests of the Control group

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	pretest posttest	-.02941	.37377	.09065	-.16276	.22159	.324	16	.750

As shown in Table 4.6, a Paired samples t-test was applied to see if the difference between pre-posttest means scores was statistically meaningful.
The results indicated a statistically not significant increase in fluency scores from the pre- test to the post-test, t (16) = .32 p= .75>0.005 (two-tailed).

Table 4.7: Descriptive Results of the Posttest

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	control group	17	5.41	.755	.183
	experimental group	17	5.71	.470	.114

The comparison of control group and experimental group on the posttest, as evident in Table 4.7, shows that control and experimental groups' mean scores are respectively, 5.41, and 5.71.

Table 4.8: T-Test concerning Control and Experimental groups' performance on the posttest

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	5.081	.031	-1.364	32	.182	-.294	.216	-.733	.145
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.364	26.773	.184	-.294	.216	-.737	.148

To find out if the mean scores of the posttest varies concerning experimental group being taught formulaic expressions and control group being instructed regular intermediate course books, an independent samples t-test was administered and the results of which as table 4.8 indicates, shows there was not a significant difference for the subjects in the experimental and control groups (t =-1.36, p =.18, df = 32).

Investigating the Second Research Question

To understand the most and the least frequent formulaic expressions, only descriptive results of c hi-square as part of the output of chi-square tests were used and the frequency of formulaic expressions on both the pretest and the posttest in both controls and experimental groups were reported as follows:

Table 4.9: Frequency of Formulaic Expression on the Pretest

			Formulaic Expressions				
			Collocation	**Proverb**	**Idiom**	**Filler**	**Total**
Group	control group	Count	203	34	56	106	399
		Expected Count	185.8	45.2	51.2	116.8	399.0
		% within group	50.9%	8.5%	14.0%	26.6%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	58.8%	40.5%	58.9%	48.8%	53.8%
		% of Total	27.4%	4.6%	7.6%	14.3%	53.8%
	experimental group	Count	142	50	39	111	342
	Expected Count 159.2 38.8 43.8 100.2 342.0						
		% within group	41.5%	14.6%	11.4%	32.5%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	41.2%	59.5%	41.1%	51.2%	46.2%
		% of Total	19.2%	6.7%	5.3%	15.0%	46.2%
Total		Count	345	84	95	217	741
		Expected Count	345.0	84.0	95.0	217.0	741.0
		% within group	46.6%	11.3%	12.8%	29.3%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	46.6%	11.3%	12.8%	29.3%	100.0%

As table 4.9 shows, out of 399 formulaic expressions used by learners on the pretest in the control group, collocation with the frequency of 203 stood at the first place, fillers with the frequency of 109 occupied the second place. The least frequent formulaic expression, on the other hand, was the use of proverb with the 34 frequency counts.

Also, the frequency of formulaic expressions in the experimental group from the highest to the lowest use followed this order: collocation with the frequency counts of 142, fillers with 111 and proverb with frequency counts of 50, respectively occupied the first, the second and the third places.

Finally, idioms as the least frequent expressions were utilized 39 times. Moreover, as demonstrated in Table 4.8, the totality of results on the pretest pinpointed that collocation (345 counts) was the most frequent formulaic expressions used by learners. On the contrary, proverb (84 counts) was the least frequent formulaic expression.

On the whole, out of 424 formulaic expression used by participant in the control group, collocation was used as the most frequent formulaic expression with the 218 frequency counts, at the second place stood filler with the 116 frequency counts.

Proverb, however, with 34 frequency counts was the least frequently used expression by learners.

On the other hand, the most frequent formulaic expressions as used by participants in the experimental groups were collocations and fillers with 208 and 187 frequency counts, respectively.

The least frequent expression at the disposal of participants in the experimental group was idiom (57 counts).

Reporting the percentage of each formulaic expression in the control and experimental groups on the whole, it is inferred that collocation and filler with frequency counts of 426 and 303 were the most frequent formulaic expressions at the disposal of learners on the posttest while idiom was the least frequent one with 113 frequency counts.

Table 4.10: Frequency of Formulaic Expression on the Posttest

			Formulaic Expressions				
			Collocation	**Proverb**	**Idiom**	**Filler**	**Total**
Group	control group	Count	218	34	56	116	424
		Expected Count	187.6	53.3	49.8	133.4	424.0
		% within group	51.4%	8.0%	13.2%	27.4%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	51.2%	28.1%	49.6%	38.3%	44.0%
		% of Total	22.6%	3.5%	5.8%	12.0%	44.0%
	Experimental group	Count	208	87	57	187	539
		Expected Count	238.4	67.7	63.2	169.6	539.0
		% within group	38.6%	16.1%	10.6%	34.7%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	48.8%	71.9%	50.4%	61.7%	56.0%
		% of Total	21.6%	9.0%	5.9%	19.4%	56.0%
Total		Count	426	121	113	303	963
		Expected Count	426.0	121.0	113.0	303.0	963.0
		% within group	44.2%	12.6%	11.7%	31.5%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	44.2%	12.6%	11.7%	31.5%	100.0%

Investigating the third Research Question

The difference in the use of formulaic expressions will be tapped into in two occasions, i.e. on the pretest and posttest as follows:

Table 4.11: Gender and the Use of Formulaic Expressions on the Pretest

			Formulaic Expressions				
			Collocation	**Proverb**	**Idiom**	**Filler**	**Total**
Gender	Male	Count	59	19	15	50	143
		Expected Count	59.4	20.9	16.3	46.4	143.0
		% within Gender	41.3%	13.3%	10.5%	35.0%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	41.5%	38.0%	38.5%	45.0%	41.8%
		% of Total	17.3%	5.6%	4.4%	14.6%	41.8%
	female	Count	83	31	24	61	199
		Expected Count	82.6	29.1	22.7	64.6	199.0
	% within	% within Formulaic Expressions	58.5%	62.0%	61.5%	55.0%	58.2%
	Gender						
	41.7%	% of Total	24.3%	9.1%	7.0%	17.8%	58.2%
	15.6%						
	12.1%						
	30.7%						
	100.0%						
Total		Count	142	50	39	111	342
		Expected Count	142.0	50.0	39.0	111.0	342.0
		% within Gender	41.5%	14.6%	11.4%	32.5%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	41.5%	14.6%	11.4%	32.5%	100.0%

In terms of gender use of formulaic expressions, males made the most use of collocation (59 counts) and fillers (50 counts), while idiom (15 counts) and proverb (19 counts) were among the least frequently used expressions. Females, on the other hand, made the most use of collocation (83 counts) and filler (61) whereas idioms (24 counts) and proverbs (31 counts) formed the least rate of formulaic expression

occurrences. Finally, as Table 4.10 shows, a Pearson Chi-Square was applied to find the gender differences in terms of the use of formulaic expressions.

Table 4.12: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.959[a]	3	.811
Likelihood Ratio	.961	3	.811
Linear-by-Linear Association	.274	1	.601
N of Valid Cases	342		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.31

A Chi-square for independence was applied to realize whether the two genders are statistically different in terms of formulaic expressions use. Since the p value is larger than 0.05, we can assume two groups are not different in terms of formulaic expressions use on the pretest (p=.81, df =3).

Table 4.13: Gender and the Use of Formulaic Expressions on the posttest

			Formulaic Expressions				
			Collocation	Proverb	Idiom	Filler	Total
Gender	Male	Count	93	27	22	73	215
		Expected Count	83.0	34.7	22.7	74.6	215.0
		% within Gender	43.3%	12.6%	10.2%	34.0%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	44.7%	31.0%	38.6%	39.0%	39.9%
		% of Total	17.3%	5.0%	4.1%	13.5%	39.9%
	Female	Count	115	60	35	114	324
		Expected Count	125.0	52.3	34.3	112.4	324.0
		% within Gender	35.5%	18.5%	10.8%	35.2%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	55.3%	69.0%	61.4%	61.0%	60.1%
		% of Total	21.3%	11.1%	6.5%	21.2%	60.1%
Total		Count	208	87	57	187	539
		Expected Count	208.0	87.0	57.0	187.0	539.0
		% within Gender	38.6%	16.1%	10.6%	34.7%	100.0%
		% within Formulaic Expressions	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	38.6%	16.1%	10.6%	34.7%	100.0%

As Table 4.11demonstrates, collocation was the most frequently used formulaic expressions among male and females (93 & 155 counts). Also, filler was the second most frequent expression among both genders (male, 73 counts & female, 114 counts). The least instance of frequency among both genders was idiom (male, 22 counts; female, 35 counts).

Table 4.14: Chi-Square Tests Concerning Gender Differences

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.958[a]	3	.175
Likelihood Ratio	5.026	3	.170
Linear-by-Linear Association	.880	1	.348
N of Valid Cases	539		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.74

A Chi-square for independence was applied to realize whether the two genders are statistically different in terms of formulaic expressions use on the posttest. Since the p value is larger than 0.05, we can assume two groups are not different in terms of formulaic expressions use on the posttest (p=.17, df =3).

Discussion and Conclusion

The researcher of this study tried to investigate to find out whether practicing formulaic sequences has any effect on speaking fluency of Iranian EFL learners. In the meantime, the researcher tried to determine the most and least frequent formulaic expressions used by the same learners, while investigating if there is any difference between genders and use of the aforesaid expressions.

A study focused on the effects of formulaic expressions on Iranian EFL learners' writing production fluency conducted by Ranjbar (2012) shows that teaching lexical bundles has positive effect and it is influential in developing learning paragraph writing proficiency. While as per the finding of this study and according to the result highlighted in chapter 4, no influential impact was detected on speaking fluency of Iranian EFL learners and there is no significant difference in pretest and posttest of the experimental group.

Another case study conducted by David Wood focused on the effects of instruction of formulaic sequences on fluent expressions in second language narratives shows that the increased use of formulaic sequences was a help in increasing fluency of expressions in many cases for this learner although it was difficult to generalize from this one brief case study.

In addition, as per another the study conducted by Khodadady and Shamsaee (2012) about formulaic sequences and their relationship with speaking and listening abilities it could be realized that the use of collocations does not have any significant relationship with learners' oral proficiency, but the most frequent formulaic sequences which was found among the eight categories established by Ohlogge (2009), *Personal Stance Markers and Transitions*, have a significant relationship with learners' speech fluency.

This is while the finding of this study reveals that although collocations and fillers respectively were the most frequent formulaic sequences used by the learners but they have no significant impact on learners' speaking fluency.

Moreover, referring to the result of this study which is provided in chapter 4 clearly reveals that although collocations were the most frequent expressions and fillers the second most frequent one used by the both males and females participated in this research, two genders in two groups are not statistically different in terms of formulaic expressions use in the posttest.

The analysis of the data proved that there is no significant difference between the control group and the experimental one in speaking fluency.

In other words, practicing formulaic sequences has no effect on speaking skill of Iranian EFL learners. It is noteworthy that a sign of native-like speakers could be noticed within the experimental group and they used formulaic expression more appropriately and they sound more like native speakers, but their fluency and rate of speed in speaking had not been remarkably changed comparing to the pretest. Generally speaking, there was no difference between the groups' pretest and posttest. Hence, the first hypothesis stating that FSs. play a significant role on learners' speaking fluency is rejected.

Considering the second research question it was found that collocations are the most and fillers the second most frequent formulaic expressions used by the learners. It is noteworthy to highlight that the second hypothesis also is not confirmed as the result of the study confirms that collocations and fillers are the most frequent formulaic expressions used by the learners.

Moreover, the result of the data analysis shows that there is no difference between two genders in experimental group in terms of formulaic expression use. This is in line with the final hypothesis raised in this study and the same is accepted.

Some implications or employing formulaic sequences in EFL context could be highlighted as follows:

1. Students can develop their writing skills as well having a good treasure of formulaic expressions.
2. They feel more comfortable and self-confidence if they have sufficient knowledge of formulaic expressions and use them automatically and native-like while they are in communication.

Although being successful in confirming the effect of formulaic sequences on the speech fluency, this study faced a number of limitations that could not be avoided. First, it is needed to conduct the posttest which is in the form or an IELTS speaking interview. To do this, an IELTS examiner is required to attend the interview session which is not possible for the researcher. Second, the population of the research was small. It was not appropriate to generalize the research results to other groups. Although formulaic sequences have received considerable attention from TEFL researchers during last year's, however, so far very limited research has been undertaken to examine the link between the use of formulaic sequences in speech and effectiveness on oral fluency. The better result of the study could be achieved if presentation and practice of formulaic expressions could be in place from the very beginning levels in all language centres. This will probably plays a significant role on speech fluency as well.

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