The Effect of Teachers' Individual Verbal Feedback and Praise of EFL Learner's Achievements

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Abstract

Teachers use different methods to enhance students' motivation and hence their achievements. One method is giving individual verbal feedback and praise which is used to encourage students and provide remediation. This study aimed to explore the effects of teachers' verbal feedback and praise on students' achievements. A pre-post test was used as the research tool and two groups of female students participated in this study (N=30) under two conditions: no feedback, feedback and praise provided by the instructor.The findings showed that teachers' verbal feedback and praise had a significant positive impact on the learners' motivation and hence their achievements. As a result of giving feedback and praise to the students and their effects on motivation and achievements, it can be argued that the more motivated students are, the more and the better they will learn. This study has implications for instructors, learners and researchers especially in Iran both to do more serious researches on the teachers' perceptions as the most involved actors of Foreign Language Teaching regarding various aspects of feedback, motivation and their roles in language teaching and to make changes in the manner of feedback giving and even the method of teaching English.

Keywords: Individual verbal feedback; Motivation; Praise; Achievement

I.Introduction

1.1 Background

The enhancement of student motivation and interest is an issue of major concern and focus to most teachers and education researchers. Educators are often concerned about the low motivation level of students in learning a second language. As reviewed by Dörnyei (1994a, 1994b, 2001a, 2001b), there are motivation strategies teachers can adopt in a language classroom. One of the effective motivational teaching strategies is the provision of motivational feedback and praise by teachers.

The present study arises from our own experiences in working with English teachers in secondary schools and English Institutes in Jahrom, Iran. Over teaching career, the researchers had an ideal opportunity to work in different schools and English Institutes with students of different backgrounds and levels, but most teachers from these different schools and institutes indicated that they faced similar problems with learners having low level of motivation and interest. Teachers were concerned that their students had little interest and motivation in class, failed to remember completely or partially what their teachers had taught, performed poorly academically and had little or no desire to improve. From our teaching experiences and observations of other teachers' practices, the researchers felt that motivation was a wide area of concern that had considerable impact on the students' learning outcomes. A comprehensive understanding of learners' motivation could make a significant

contribution to the educational field. This study was designed to investigate how teachers can improve students' motivation and hence their achievements in learning English through more effective verbal individual feedback and praise.Since class assessment and class participation are carried out each session regularly and continuously, the researchers saw them suitable vehicles for exploring teacher feedback in Navid English Institute.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In the realm of education, many variables can affect learning and determine whether instruction will be effective or not. Many of these effective factors are related or intertwined with one another. One of the most critical pieces of the educational puzzle is motivation. If students are not motivated enough to learn, they are unlikely to learn, and there is little chance that instruction will be effective.

Verbal individual motivational feedback as an immediate and direct response to student academic performance is one of the most powerful classroom interventions that teachers can use to foster learning and improve student motivation and achievements. Effective feedback plays an important role in motivating further learning as it informs learners about the degree of their learning or their needs for improvement (Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). Effective feedback is essential for improving both teaching and learning. It enables the students to close the gap between the actual and the desired performance. (Carless, Joughin & Lui, 2006 as cited in Lee, 2007).

Praise is also considered to have beneficial effects on learners' motivation and performance. One group of researchers and teachers claim that normally a feedback message of praise increases motivation and leads to improvement in learners' performance (Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Dev, 1997; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Some researchers state that feedback which contains praise can be more effective since it causes a positive affective reaction, which is often linked to increased motivation and higher goals (Delin & Baumeister, 1994; Ilies & Judge, 2005).

The researcher hopes the results of this study would provide educators and language teachers in Iran with evidence concerning the effectiveness of teachers' motivational verbal feedback and praise in L2 classes.

1.3 Significance of the study

The concept of motivation within educational systems has been studied for many years. The domain of educational motivation is a continually evolving area of thought; therefore, the viewpoints regarding the significance of motivational factors within the educational realm are continually changing. To be able to provide the most suitable and best suited instruction for learners in each of the domains to be explored in this study, instructors, curriculum designers, and student advisors must understand the motivations of the students they teach. In addition, these professionals should be provided with contemporary, research-based and reliable information about relationships among motivators and specific academic ability domains. Effective individual verbal feedback and praise as two important motivational factors can take a great part in this regard.

II.Review of Related Literature

Based on Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is conceptualized as information provided by an agent with regard to aspects of one's performance or understanding. The present study focuses just on teacher feedback. According to Black, and Wiliam (1998) having a desired aim is one of the three essential elements in feedback: 'When a learner is trying to learn, feedback about the effort has three main elements: recognition of the final goal, evidence about the present position, and clear understanding of a way to close the gap between the two situations' (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p.141). To close this gap, students need to improve their knowledge and receiving enough constructive feedback is the means to this goal. They strongly stress the significance of feedback to students to improve their current performance.

The following discusses two kinds of feedback and their effectiveness. They include 'traditional' feedback and dialogic feedback.

2.1 'Traditional' teacher feedback-giving practice

'Traditional' refers to a summative method of feedback delivery by teachers where feedback is from time to time and only given at the end of a summative assessment, in a written form on the report card.

In 'traditional' feedback-giving, teachers often perceive feedback as a simple acquisition process. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) state that, feedback is often conceptualized by teachers as a transmission process where 'they 'transmit' feedback messages to learners about what is right or wrong in their academic work, about its weaknesses and strengths, and learners use this information to make improvements' (p.200). As a result, feedback delivery is mainly controlled by and seen as the responsibility of teachers, so undermining the active engagement of students.

These basic arguments against the sole use of point scale without appropriate descriptors can pave the way for a detailed discussion of the use of other sorts of feedback in the next section. They include constructive feedback – feedback with suggestions, and evaluative feedback, which are discussed more in the section that follows.

2.2 The process of conducting dialogic feedback

Most criticisms of the 'traditional' way of feedback-giving have given teachers deep insight into what makes educator feedback more 'constructive' and effective. As proposed in the previous section, the two-way dialogic feedback is always more effective and motivating than the 'traditional' way of feedback-giving practice. The sections that follow first explore the ways to conduct dialogic feedback properly, then its content and tone. Below are three different methods to deliver dialogic feedback: verbal, written and non-verbal non-written feedback:

2.2.1 Verbal feedback

In the conduct of verbal feedback, an effective motivational feedback strategy is 'prompting an exchange of comments between educator and student. In this process, a two-way direct interaction between students and teacher is facilitated while at the same time helping educator-assessors check to what extent learners understand their learning goals. This can inform both teaching and learning regularly.

As stated by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), to conceptualize feedback as a mutual dialogue rather than as information transmission can enhance the effectiveness of feedback because learners can play a more effective and active role and use the feedback to develop and regulate their performance. What is important is to generate a formal or informal discussion between learners and educators so that learners can develop a clear understanding of standards and expectations.

2.2.2 Written feedback

Educators can have verbal interaction with learners in the form of a real dialogue; they can also deliver their feedback in written form. It can be done in a structured manner with success criteria and rubrics; with open positive comments embedded with praise, suggestion and criticism.

When examining the role of written feedback, Hyland and Hyland (2001) came upon the point that feedback can function well as praise, criticism and/or suggestion. They recognized in their research that praise was generally used to soften suggestion and criticism. Their survey also shows that learners vary significantly in what they want from educators in the form of feedback, so that there is a great need for teachers to change their feedback to fit specific learners and their personalities and needs. This gives importance to the issue of the need to deliver 'individualized feedback'.

2.2.3 Non-verbal and non-written feedback

This section investigates feedback that is neither written nor verbal. It takes the form of gestures, facial

expression, rewards, etc. Tunstall and Gipps (1996) propose that there are four types of evaluative feedback - rewarding, punishing, approving and disapproving. Rewarding as a type of evaluative feedback can be provided in the form of symbols (e.g. stickers). Approving is a positive type of feedback, joined with the normative in relation to social and educational values. Non-verbal means of approving feedback embraces physical touch like holding learners' arms and a tap on the shoulder. Disapproval can be demonstrated in using physical gestures and a firm tone like pointing while speaking.

2.3 Content of dialogic feedback

2.3.1 Constructive feedback – feedback with suggestions

As mentioned above, knowing about one's weaknesses and strengths is not enough. Konold, Miller and Konold (2004) stress that learners need to be helped to progress suitable strategies to gradually improve their performance. One of the suggested ways is to give constructive feedback. This means students should be given as much help and guide as they need to employ their knowledge.

In sum, constructive feedback assists learners to find their weaknesses and provide them with the strategies and skills in making improvement.

2.3.2 Evaluative feedback

As stated by Tunstall and Gipps (1996), evaluative feedback is judgmental which is opposite if just being descriptive. It is either positive or negative and the judgments are made based on implicit and explicit norms. Moreover, evaluative feedback relates more to affective aspects of learning than do descriptive kinds.

Below is a brief discussion of the tone of two-way dialogic feedback which includes positive and negative feedback:

2.3.3 Positive feedback

One prevalent way to classify feedback is whether it is positive or negative. 'Positive feedback is seen as pleasing, complimentary, and consistent with the learner's self-image' (Nicols, 1995, p.289). While receiving positive feedback, students are more likely to feel supported since it improves the students' self-esteem.

A popular type of positive feedback is 'praise'. Salili (2001) maintains that praise is a positive feedback stating teacher's approval of learners' behavior or academic work. It is also claimed that praise is more than just a simple feedback on performance as it shows educators' positive affect and provides information about the value of the learner's behavior. This explanation emphasizes that praise is a type of positive feedback which is embedded with the teachers' positive affection and it is rich enough in information. A more significant aspect of praise is that it also consists of information telling students the positive value of their performance.

Moreover, it is discussed that positive feedback in the form of praise has a motivating function in maintaining students' learning. Nonetheless, it is vital to mention that praise can have negative effects on learners' motivation if it is misused or overused. Brophy (1981) proposes that 'praise delivered to the wrong student, or in the wrong way, or under the wrong circumstances may be not only ineffective but counterproductive' (p.21).

2.3.4 Negative feedback

Negative feedback refers to feedback that is 'critical that may be rejected if not delivered skillfully' (Nicols, 1995, p.289). This section examines the facets and functions of criticism in addition to its relationship with learners' motivation to learn.

Criticism is a type of negative feedback. As stated by Salili (2001): 'Criticism is described as showing disapproval of learners' academic work or behavior'. (p.81). With regard to the application of criticism by educators, Brophy (1981) proposes that criticism and praise would better be used together. Teachers do so to reinforce learners systematically.

As reviewed above, positive feedback does not necessarily motivate learners. If it is used inappropriately, it can have negative effects on learners' motivation to learn. In the same way, negative feedback such as criticism does not necessarily bring harmful effects to learners' motivation.

The above has examined the tone of feedback – positive feedback and negative feedback, including praise and criticism respectively.

2.4 Motivation

The significance of motivation in improving foreign/ second language learning is undeniable. Lifrieri (2005, p. 4) reports that "most people would defiantly mention motivation among the factors which affect individual levels of success in any activity – like language learning –". In the same way, Gardner (2006, p. 241) reports that "learners with stronger motivation will do better and more successful than learners with lower levels". He also claims that "if a learner is motivated, he/she has enough reasons (motives) for being involved in the same activities, puts more effort, persists in the activities, pays attention to the tasks, has more desire to reach the goal, enjoys the activities more and more, etc." (Gardner, 2006, p. 243).

Research Studies concerning individual variables in L2 learning also show the close relationship between motivation and achievement. In one research study, Gardner et al (1997) claim that language learning causes motivation, and this motivation in turn affects attainment.

A large number of research studies have demonstrated that motivation is vital for L2 learning since it directly influences how much effort learners make, their level of proficiency and how long they maintain and persevere in L2 skills after completing their language study (Cheng & Dornyei, 1998; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). Cognitive skills in learning the target language are not a guarantee that a student can successfully master that language. In fact, in many cases, learners with greater L2 learning motivation get better grades and achieve better language proficiency (Wu & Wu, 2009).

2.5 Praise

Praise has been considered as "favorable interpersonal feedback" (Baumeister, Hutton, & Cairns, 1990, p. 131) or "positive evaluations made by an individual of another's products, performances, or attributes" (Kanouse, Gumpert, & Canavan-Gumpert, 1981, p. 98). In general, praise is considered to have beneficial effects on learners' self-esteem, motivation, and performance. Therefore, educators are encouraged to use praise effectively as a reinforcer of a desired behavior (Dev, 1997).

Feedback which contains praise can be more effective since it causes a positive affective reaction, which is often linked to increased motivation and higher goals (Delin & Baumeister, 1994; Ilies & Judge, 2005).

Evidence of a direct or mediated positive effect of praise on performance and motivation is abundant but not without flaws. There are also instances of the negative effect of praise on individuals' learning. An early study by Baumeister's et al. (1990) presented evidence that praise can both facilitate and impede students' performance. The analyses demonstrated that although positive feedback improved learners' performance on effort tasks, it led to impairment in skilled performance.

2.6 Studies on Feedback, Praise, Motivation and achievement

In an action research case study, Magilow (1999) suggests that once positive affect is enacted— by use of humor, etc. —the teacher will be able to correct learners' errors without damaging their self-perception. The survey conclusion is that the issue of feedback may be inseparable from that of rapport. When a teacher-student rapport is created, explicit error correction may be completely effective.

Kubota (1994) (as cited in Burrell's literature review, 2000, p.26) finds that an experimental group receiving explicit linguistic and metalinguistic feedback performs better on language learning tasks than a group receiving no feedback. In this survey both implicit and explicit feedback are found to facilitate SLA.

Imai's (1989) thesis aim is to find whether praise or correction is more likely to improve oral L2

proficiency. In brief, Imai hypothesizes that Japanese EFL university students' grammar and pronunciation improve by error correction, but fluency would improve by praise.

Moskowitz (1976) reports teacher techniques related to feedback giving practices. Moskowitz (1976) claims that effective feedback should be immediate and direct. This kind of feedback is best given in a warm, accepting classroom climate. He also stresses that effective praise for learners' behavior is frequent, varied, and often nonverbal.

Some researchers (Fadzil et al., 2011) conducted a research to examine the relationship between various socio-psychological variables like motivation, attitude, anxiety and instrumental orientation on performance in English as L2. The findings demonstrated that these variables were significantly correlated with students' performance. Furthermore, the regression analysis indicated that all the variables except for personal motivation had significant effects on performance with attitude and instrumental orientation having positive effects while anxiety having a negative effect.

Based on Gardner and Lambert (1972), in acquiring a foreign language, motivation is affected by attitude .Evidence for positive correlation of English proficiency with positive attitude and being highly motivated towards learning English as a second language has been accumulating, for both integrative (Nida, 1956; LoCastro, 2001) and instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1960; Brown, 2000).

Liu's (2007) survey on Chinese university students' motivation and attitude to learn English and the correlation of both variables with the learners' English proficiency also indicated similar findings. Moreover, correlation analysis indicated that learners who had more positive attitudes towards learning English tended to score better in the proficiency test. Accordingly, Liu proposed that higher instrumental and travel orientations and more positive attitudes might also be the result of students' higher English proficiency.

According to Haitema (2002) and Saracaloğlu (2000), there is a positive relationship between foreign language achievement and affective characteristics. In her survey, Saracaloğlu (2000) refers to the learners' attitudes that they differ in.

Bartley (1970) reported that his studies have indicated that there was a direct relationship between high achievement and positive attitudes as well as low achievement and negative attitudes. That positive attitudes enhance achievement has been insisted on and explained by Lambert et al. (1963), and Spolsky (1969).

Gardner (1985) maintained that motivation has close relationship with students' achievement. He analyzed the role of motivation and attitude in second language acquisition through his previous survey. The findings revealed that the attitudinal-motivational factors were significantly related to learners' achievement.

III.Research Question

In order to explore the effects of individual motivational verbal feedback and praise on Iranian EFL learners' achievements, the study addressed the following research question:

1)Do teachers' verbal feedback and praise have any effects on Iranian EFL learners' achievements?

Hypothesis

H0: Teachers' verbal feedback and praise have no effect on Iranian EFL learners' achievements.

VI. Methodology

4.1 Setting

This study was conducted at Navid English Institute in Jahrom. The Institute contains a student population of 1400 students in total. Classes in this institute ranges from KIDS 1 (age 7) to FCE (advanced level). 25

English teachers are teaching English in this Institute (10 MA, 14 BA and 1 PHD students).

4.2 Participants

The participants of the study were all EFL learners of Navid English Institute in Jahrom. The researcher randomly selected two female classes. The number of the participants was 15 in each class. All the participants were native speakers of Persian and their age ranged from 17 to 24. The participant students were all at a high intermediate proficiency level. Some of them were High school students and some others had completed 12 years of schooling while a few of them had graduated from different universities in Iran at BA level and some were following their education at the university. The teacher participant was an English-major holder and had a master degree in education. Mr. Jafarian, the teacher participant, has been teaching in this Institute for 10 years. He is one of the most successful instructors in this institute.

4.3 Data Collection Procedure

In order to collect the data required for the fulfillment of the objectives of this study, one of the teachers agreed to participate in the study. Two classes were selected randomly. Both classes were the same in terms of their level of English proficiency and gender and also they had the same English teacher. One class was considered as the control group (class A) and the other one was the experimental group (class B). The students' achievements were measured twice by the prepared pre and post-test. The teacher was provided with a list of positive sentences and praise which had to be used as motivational tools during the semester while giving feedback to the learners. All the participants in class A received motivational supportive feedback and praise along with required help and guidance individually and regularly. The teacher helped the learners know where they were going, how they were going and what to do next. In this way they would feel confident enough to follow the teacher's guidance closely.

4.4 Research Design

The research design for this study was an analytical (quantitative) survey which provided a numerical description of the variables.

In the process of the study, teacher motivational feedback and praise were considered as the independent variable that was expected to bring about changes in students' motivation, and hence their achievements which would be the dependent variable. The change in students' motivation and hence their achievements depended on the positive motivational feedback and praise they received.

4.5 Instrument

In order to meet the objectives of this study, the following instrument was used:

-Pre and posttests: The tests were prepared by a group of experts and university professors in Central Navid Institute in Shiraz and then they piloted the tests in some classes and calculated their reliability. When they were sure of their reliability and validity, they passed them to other branches and classes to be used regularly. Each test was composed of 50 items in reading, listening and writing based on the students' course book, the second edition of Top Notch, in Navid Institute.

4.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The data in the present study is quantitative. The quantitative data of the pre and post-test was analyzed in terms of means, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To report, describe, and summarize the important general characteristics of the sets of the obtained data, descriptive statistics were used.

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the pretest and post-test before and after the treatment and to check whether the teacher's individual verbal feedback and praise had improved the participants' achievements or not, both the paired samples t-test and the independent samples t-test were run.

V. Results and Discussion

5.1 Preliminaries

The purpose of this section is to provide the analysis of the data collected for the study designed to address the research question, "Do teachers' verbal feedback and praise have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' achievements?" The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of praise and feedback on changing motivation toward the English language and hence their achievements.

Descriptive Statistics

To report, describe and summarize the important general characteristics of the sets of the obtained data, descriptive statistics were used.

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for the achievements of the experimental group. The mean scores and standard deviations are illustrated as well.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for achievements of Experimental Group				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	75.9333	8.81935	62.00	94.00
Posttest	90.8667	3.54293	86.00	98.00

As Table1 shows the mean score of the achievements of the experimental group is 75.93 in the pretest and 90.86 in the post-test. The participants in the experimental group have the standard deviation of 8.81 in the pretest whereas that of the participants in the post-test is 3.54. Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics for the achievements of the control group. The mean scores and standard deviations are illustrated as well.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Achievements of Control Group				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
pretest	82.6000	5.90157	74.00	94.00
Posttest	84.2667	5.48331	76.00	96.00

As Table 2 shows the mean score of the achievements in the control group is 82.60 in the pretest and 84.26 in the post-test. The participants in the control group have the standard deviation of 5.90 in the pretest whereas that of the participants in the post-test is 5.48.
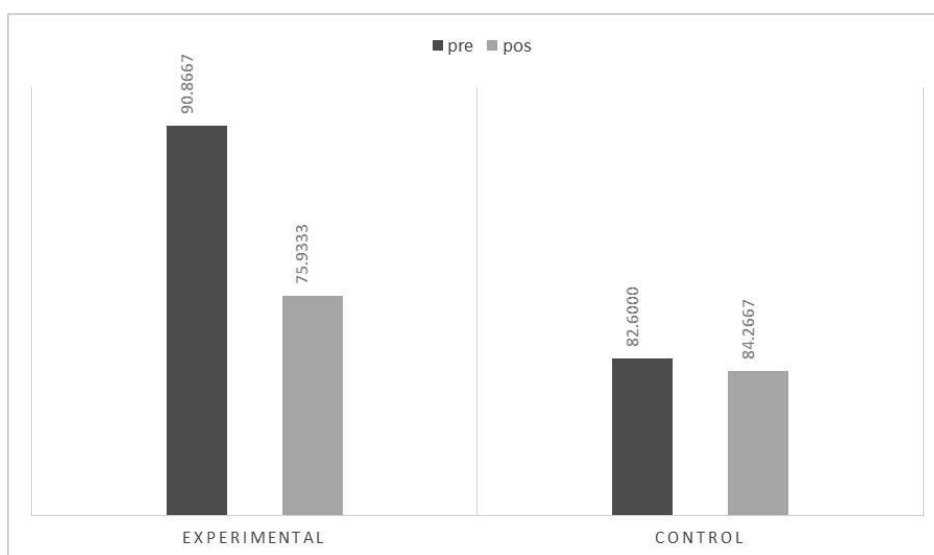

Figure 1: Mean differences of achievements between pretest and post-test of experimental and control Group

5.2 Inferential Statistics

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and

control groups in the pretest and post-test before and after the treatment and to check whether the teacher's individual verbal feedback and praise improved the participants' achievements or not, the paired and independent samples t-test were run.

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in pre and post-test, a paired samples t- test was run.

Table 3: Paired samples statistics for the effect of verbal feedback on the achievements of the experimental group

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre and posttest	-14.93333	7.27488	1.87836	-18.96202	-10.90464	-7.950	14	.000

According to Table 3, there was a significant difference in the scores for no verbal feedback in pretest (M=75.9333, SD=8.81935) and verbal feedback in post-test (M=90.8667, SD=3.54293), t (-7.950) =, p < .05

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics for the effect of verbal feedback on achievement of the control group

	Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
precon – postcont	-1.66667	4.62395	1.19390	-4.22733	.89399	-1.396	14	.184

According to Table 4 there was not a significant difference in the scores for lack of verbal feedback in the pretest (M=82.6000, SD=5.48331) and post-test (M=84.2667 SD=5.90157), t (-1.396), p >.05. In order to find out if there was a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control groups in pretest, an independent samples t-test was run.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-Test for Difference between Treatment and Control Group in Pretest

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.852241	0.1843	2.4331	28	.0816	-6.60000	2.739946	1.054143	12.279191
Equal variances not assumed			2.4331	23.9	.0826	-6.60000	2.739946	1.017125	12.316209

An independent-sample t-test was run to see if there was a significant difference in achievement scores of control group (M=82.6000, SD=.75.9333) and experimental group (M=75.9333, SD=8.81935), t (23) = 2.4331, p = 0.08. The results suggest that there is no significant difference between the experimental and control group in pretest. In order to find out if there is a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control group in post-test, an independent samples t-test was run.

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test for Difference between Treatment and Control Group in post-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								ce	Lower	Upper	
Equal variances assumed		2.667	.114	-3.916	28	.001	-6.60000	1.68561	-10.05281	-3.14719	
Equal variances not assumed				-3.916	23.955	.001	-6.60000	1.68561	-10.07927	-3.12073	

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the difference in achievement scores in oral feedback and no oral feedback conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for oral feedback (M=90.8667, SD=.91478) and no oral feedback (M=84.2667, SD=1.41578), t (23)= -3.916, p < 0.05. As Tables 5 and 6 show, the results suggest that giving verbal feedback really does have an effect on students' achievements. Specifically, our results suggest that when the participants receive feedback, their achievements in tests increase.

5.3 Discussion on Research Question

In discussing the findings, this part answers the research question raised in this study:

1)Do teachers' verbal feedback and praise have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' achievements?

Research Question

This section addresses the research question: Do teachers' verbal feedback and praise have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' achievements?

The research question asked whether teachers' verbal feedback and praise affect Iranian EFL learners' achievements. To this end, a paired and an independent samples t-test were performed. The result of the paired samples t- test revealed that the difference between the experimental group in the pretest and posttest, when the experimental group received teacher's verbal feedback and praise, was significant. There were also changes in their achievements. The control and experimental groups were equal in all conditions, so the difference between them was due to the teacher's verbal feedback and praise. The learners' achievements in the experimental group were significantly improved in learning English. After the treatment many participants got better scores in the post-test.

The above findings support Latif, et al., (2011) research findings. The results indicated that socio-psychological variables like attitude and motivation were significantly correlated with learners' performance in the English course conducted at Open University of Malaysia.

The findings echoes clearly what researchers previously found. It was found that evidence for positive correlation of English proficiency with positive attitude and being highly motivated towards learning English has been accumulating, for both instrumental (Brown, 2000) and integrative motivation (LoCastro, 2001). Liu's (2007) study on Chinese university students' attitudes and motivation to learn English and the correlations of both variables with the students' English proficiency also revealed similar findings. In addition, correlation analysis showed that students who had more positive attitudes towards learning English tended to score higher in the proficiency test.

In line with the findings of this study Bartley (1970) stated that his studies showed that there was a direct

relationship between positive attitudes and high achievement as well as negative attitudes and low achievement. That positive attitudes enhance achievement has been confirmed and described by Lambert et al. (1963), and Spolsky (1969).

The findings of the study are also in line with the results of previous studies by Haitema (2002) and Saracaloğlu (2000). They revealed that there is a positive relationship between affective characteristics and foreign language achievement.

Finally, the findings supports Catano, 1975, 1976 who states that praise improve adults' performance greatly at skilled tasks, comparing the performance of a control group. In another study by Henderlong and Lepper (2002), in line with the findings of the present study, they report the positive effect of praise on students' performance. Although the findings of the present study seem contradictory to what was reported by Baumeister's et al. (1990). They presented evidence that praise can both facilitate and impede students' performance. A possible explanation for such a result may be over-use or under-use of praise or using praise for a wrong person.

VI.Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is information provided by an agent (e.g., parent, teacher, peer, book, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. It occurs typically after instruction that seeks to provide knowledge and skills or to develop particular attitudes. Feedback is among the most critical influences on student learning.

On the other side, feedback can have negative effects on the learners if the teachers do not pay enough attention to the students' emotional feelings. As a solution to this threat, this study followed a new strategy to overcome this danger to the students' motivation and feelings. Therefore, the writer took the benefit of the positive effects of praise and positive feedback in order to sugar the pill and enhance the positive effects of feedback on the students' motivation and achievements.

The second strategy which the writer took in conducting this research study was giving the feedback verbally and individually. Accordingly, the verbal feedback which is given individually can help the students to speak about all aspects of teaching and learning face to face with the teacher and this can help both the teacher and the learner to have a real comprehension. Moreover, learners can play a more proactive role in the learning process by participating in feedback-giving practice, building up the habit of self-evaluation, communicating with the teachers and making open dialogue with them. Teachers can also offer support to students in this respect to enhance their self-regulating skills and guide them step by step. Finally, when the feedback is given verbally and individually, teachers can improve their communication strategies, enrich and polish the content of feedback and build rapport with their students.

To respond to the research question, the learners' achievements in the experimental group were significantly improved in learning English. After the treatment, many participants got better scores in the posttest. The control and experimental groups were equal in all aspects, so the difference between them was due to the teacher's verbal feedback and praise.

The instructors, student advisors, curriculum designers, and all other educators involved in the teaching, instructing, and, consequently, motivating of students, must understand the motivation of the students they teach. These professionals should be provided with contemporary, research-based information about the relationships

among the motivational factors within specific academic ability domains.

The findings in this research began to dissect the motivational factors of students in the hope that educators will be able to design teaching strategies and curricula more effectively to help their students achieve success. This finding can be used by educators in the development of their instruction.

6.2 Implications

This research study has its practical implications for various aspects of language teaching profession. These implications can encourage the relatives of the related field, especially in Iran, both to do more serious researches on the teachers' perceptions as the most involved actors of foreign language teaching stage regarding various aspects of feedback, motivation and their roles in language teaching and to make changes in the manner of feedback giving and even the method of teaching English.

Teacher training programs must pay more attention to the elements of motivation, praise and feedback. A course in the role and method of effective feedback-giving skills and motivation can enhance foreign language teachers' awareness and competence.

In order for the teachers to be aware of the more new beliefs, attitudes, and studies about the role of these elements, teacher training programs must be continued to appear as in-service trainings, and it is better to be a lifelong program for the teachers. The last but not the least important group that this study has a lot of words with is the group of language teachers. Iranian foreign language teachers should be aware of the importance of motivation and feedback in the language classroom, and they should try to improve their knowledge of feedback-giving techniques and motivation. This section presents in detail some implications of this study.

6.1.1 Implications for teaching practice

As for pedagogy, this study has revealed the importance of teacher feedback which can motivate students to learn and hence improve their achievements. This section discusses some implications for teaching practice.

This study implies that teachers need to gain some feedback delivery skills to motivate learners. The relationship between teachers and students, and how students perceive their teachers, can also determine how students interpret the corresponding feedback. This study also implies that teachers should acquire some strategies to deliver feedback that is motivating to students. Hence, communication strategies are one of the important areas teachers can focus on.

Feedback strategy is prompting an exchange of comments between teacher and pupil. As a result, it is important for teachers to build up a positive relationship with the students as it is a major facilitating factor for enhancing students' motivation to learn.

The findings of this study also imply that teachers have to be better equipped theoretically in order to make effective use of teacher feedback as a motivating tool. To support teachers' professional growth in this regard, it is suggested that teacher education providers should cover theoretical background knowledge such as motivation theories with different motivation constructs, so that teachers can tailor their feedback to these ends. Training offered to in-service and pre-service teachers should also include feedback-giving techniques as one of the core elements in pedagogy.

6.3 Limitations of the study

There were a number of limitations to the present study which should be highlighted so as to avoid any overgeneralizations and misinterpretations of the results. Although this study aimed at studying the impact of teacher feedback and praise on motivation and hence on achievement, the results of this study cannot be generalized because of the small number of the participants. Only 30 students in the two groups (experimental

and control group) were involved in the study; the sample might not be representative of the target population of EFL students. To determine its broader application, other populations would need to be examined.

Moreover, the study was mostly conducted during the third semester of the academic year; a thorough study should be done to reveal the effects on the long term. Sufficient time and practice were needed to reveal successful results. Finally, various instruments such as teachers' interviews, learners' interviews, class observations etc. should be used to triangulate and validate the results as much as possible.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

This study investigated the role of teacher's individual verbal feedback and praise in enhancing student motivation and hence their achievements. Despite the pedagogical significance of this study, I propose several areas for further investigation in the future:

It would be insightful to explore if the results of this study can be replicated in settings such as other schools and institutes of a different background in Iran or even other places outside Iran, where the context and cultural backgrounds are different.

This study did not plan to, and thus had not done any follow-up work in regard to how students put teachers' feedback into action. In any future longitudinal research, this can be done through lesson observations, study of student works, and follow-up interviews, so that student responsibility can be studied. For lesson observation, if teachers find it intimidating or if students find it uncomfortable for a research observer to be present, researchers can use a video-camera instead.

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