



The effect of pending feedback on the IELTS speaking test result: grammatical range and accuracy in focus

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Abstract

Providing feedback on EFL Learners' speaking errors has been extensively researched, with numerous studies highlighting its benefits (Van Ha, et.al, 2021; Hartono, 2022). This study investigates the impact of "pending feedback", a type of feedback where students must independently discover the correct answer. This research emphasizes the need for feedback in solidifying knowledge during targeted practice based on Skill Acquisition Theory (Dekeyser, 2020), which holds that language acquisition moves through declarative knowledge, proceduralization, and automatization phases; Furthermore, the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) guides this study and emphasizes the need for learner autonomy and interaction in supporting language development. Moreover, the study uses Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, which holds that cognitive awareness or "noticing" of language structures is necessary for language acquisition. Sixty IELTS learners, 30 in the experimental group and 30 in the control group, were recruited. Both groups displayed similar pre-test results. The experimental group received pending feedback, while the control group received teacher-selected feedback methods, excluding pending feedback. To find any possible significant difference in the group's performance and to detect the relation between pending feedback frequency of occurrence and the increased speaking scores in the experimental group, an Independent Sample t-test and Pearson correlation were conducted on two groups of participants. The experimental group improved IELTS speaking scores, indicating a strong correlation between pending feedback and better speaking performance. Additionally, the frequency of pending feedback was examined within the experimental group, further confirming that students who received more frequent pending feedback opportunities indicated enhanced performance.

Keywords: IELTS speaking; correct answer; pending feedback; speaking errors

Introduction

The feedback stage mainly highlights the interaction between the teacher and students. Feedback is a valuable tool for assessing students' language learning progress and needs. The goal of using feedback is to make students more conscious of their learning and accomplishments. Additionally, it aids students' ability to assess their progress and performance in learning a second language and to adjust as needed. When arranged appropriately, feedback guides students by providing instructions and pointers on accomplishing specific objectives. Consequently, it increases engagement and lesson absorption (Bojar, 2018).

Feedback is an interactive stage in the classroom where teachers and students engage in assessment; it is focally used to notify students of their learning gaps. Hyland and Hyland (2006) believe that the ultimate goal of feedback is to make students more independent. They can evaluate their essays critically and change their cognitive process and essays when necessary. In other words, feedback allows students to develop and master metacognitive skills or strategies. Furthermore, Butler and Winne (1995) proposed that feedback has a particular impact on the choice and formulation of learners' goals, the selection, adoption, and output of cognitive strategies, and the evaluation of learning outcomes, thus further affecting learners' academic achievement. The selection and formulation of goals, the selection and adoption of cognitive strategies, and the evaluation of learning outcomes are precisely what metacognitive strategies focus on (Chamot & O'Malley, 1996). However, few available studies have provided empirical evidence for the effect of feedback on the use of metacognitive strategies in the speaking process.

According to Ellis (2008), feedback is using information about learners' current knowledge to improve their future performance. In other words, feedback is an umbrella term overarching any method of making students aware of their language mal performance and raising their consciousness in using the correct language in a similar context. Feedback has been categorized based on several factors: the feedback provider, the time, the focus, and the method of providing feedback. Lyster and Ranta (1997) proposed six feedback types: recast, elicitation, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, explicit correction, and repetition—recasts as the most frequent feedback. Panova and Lyster (2002) also conducted a similar study to find out the most frequent type of feedback. Suzuki (2004) repeated the same Study but with three teachers. Jimenez (2006) examined types of feedback used in two language levels. Yoshida (2010) conducted a similar research study in the university context.

Extensive research highlights the crucial role of feedback in enhancing learning. According to previous studies, contextual features can affect selection and type of feedback. In a more recent study, Zargaran (2024) found seven types of feedback in the IELTS-speaking context in Iran. All the first six types were found in Lyster and Ranta (1997), but a new feedback type was coined as pending feedback. This study addresses the fact that pending feedback entails integrating discovery learning in the feedback stage. According to this study (Zargaran, 2024), pending feedback is not spoon-fed to learners. However, learners act like agents and use their experiential knowledge to figure out the problem and find a solution. This type of feedback may be inferred as delayed feedback by mistake. However, a new perspective engages learners to accommodate their previous language knowledge to fill the gap actively. In delayed feedback, the teacher postpones the feedback to another time, mainly after the task or the end of the teaching session. However, pending feedback proposes the priority of learners' assessment in finding the correct answer after searching for the correct answer and supportive reasons to back up the selected answer. It is used when the teacher realizes an ill situation in learners' knowledge that cannot be recovered quickly through other feedback methods.

Additionally, it is the conditions under which pending feedback is recommended. It is usually advised when the feedback point's cognitive load is high and needs the student's full attention and deep understanding. Therefore, it is recognized as a discovery learning approach to feedback. It also encourages students to be independent learners and boosts the implementation of metacognitive strategies in language learning. This type of feedback can promote long life and autonomous learning and help learners' self-directed learning by focusing on the accommodation and adaptation of knowledge.

In this vein, Zargaran (2024) further declares that teachers usually give corrective feedback to students' grammar errors without highlighting the importance of grammar availability and its appropriate use according to the type of questions, especially in part three of the IELTS test. This method of giving feedback develops many performance problems, including a lack of automaticity in selecting appropriate grammar and restricting the knowledge of grammar to the most readily available ones. According to the IELTS speaking test, band score, **grammatical range, and accuracy** are among the assessed areas that scale the wide selection of grammar according to the proper context of use and grammar accuracy. The standard methods of teacher feedback investigated and studied so far did not consider this significant issue, though the IELTS speaking test part three requires more demand in this regard. Although giving feedback is not a new research topic in language pedagogy, it entails some gaps in the context and type of feedback. All other studies have investigated different types of feedback but pending feedback. There is also no information regarding IELTS speaking classes or task-oriented speaking performance, particularly in Iran. Therefore, the IELTS speaking context was chosen to see if its demands seek other alternative methods of giving feedback.

Another point to mention is the research's IELTS teaching experience, which shows that students always address Part Three of the IELTS speaking test as the most challenging language skill since it requires extensive vocabulary, accurate word pronunciation, and context-appropriate grammar. Moreover, students must give the examiner an abrupt answer considering all scoring criteria, especially grammar selection and its accurate use. Even in ideal conditions, some students may find it challenging to engage in speaking activities (Nurpianti, 2020). Therefore, teachers must adapt their feedback strategies to align with students' abilities for successful speaking instruction. One way to do this is by giving learners pending feedback. This feedback type can help IELTS learners develop self-paced learning and strategic awareness of their language knowledge. In other related studies, there is no evidence to show how feedback can make students aware of their knowledge and how to adapt and use their learned knowledge. In addition, other types of feedback do not manifest learners' metacognitive strategies in using the language elements, here grammar, properly. Moreover, in previous research, feedback was given to students as corrective feedback in speaking sessions. However, this study purports to determine constructive feedback in speaking sessions while focusing on accuracy and the broader selection of appropriate grammatical structures. The findings of this research study can open new horizons into the realm of feedback in speaking classes because its results can introduce a new type of feedback, pending feedback, with an altogether broader structure of use in the context of IELTS speaking in general and in grammar accuracy, fluency, and appropriacy, in particular.

Literature Review

Feedback on Speaking

Spoken feedback can be given using various methods, primarily based on the teacher's preferences and the student's comprehension level. One method involves keeping track of every student's error and discussing these errors in an open class. For example, the instructor can

write both accurate and wrong statements and then ask the class if they can identify any differences between the two sentences. In addition, this also acts as an evaluation tool that allows the teacher to monitor the students' language understanding development. In this vein, Sermsook et al. (2017) assert that educators must give students anonymous feedback when they make mistakes. Pupils may get very discouraged, and learning may be impeded if the students who made these blunders are made public. The significance of using discretion while dealing with students' errors is covered in another research. According to this Study, responding to students' work with spoken corrective feedback is the most effective way to provide it. For example, when a teacher observes that a student is having trouble pronouncing words correctly, the instructor should acknowledge the student's attempts and give spoken remedial feedback (Penning de Vries et al., 2011).

Better learning is facilitated by the opportunity for interaction that online spoken corrective feedback affords between the teacher and the student. This method makes it possible to quickly analyze the correct and incorrect versions of the given sentences. It is the perfect strategy since it allows for objective language instruction that benefits students' learning results. Pfanner (2015) asserts the importance of immediate feedback because this allows students to contextualize form-focused education without concentrating on a specific language structure. According to the author, feedback throughout the work causes students to concentrate exclusively on the highlighted errors, making it challenging to comprehend other components that the assignment may include. For example, when a student reads a chapter and the instructor corrects them every time they mispronounce a word, they are likely to concentrate on not making that error and overlook other vital lessons they should be learning from the passage (Alsolami, 2019).

The effect of oral corrective feedback on learners' language proficiency may be evaluated in various ways. Only certain sorts of language faults should be the focus of the correction method. Some mistakes rarely alter the sense of the sentences or statements; therefore, they do not skew communication. These errors should not be fixed because learners self-correct as their language skills improve. Alsolami (2019) divides communication failures into global and local categories. While local faults are readily ignored since they have less impact on communication, global errors are those that hinder communication. However, some educators need to discriminate between local and global mistakes, which leaves them unable to choose whether to use oral corrective feedback techniques. However, this recommendation emphasizes the conversational component of oral corrective feedback and recognizes its educational value in supporting appropriate language acquisition (Alsolami, 2019).

The effectiveness of spoken corrective feedback is evaluated in the classroom based on the learners' responses to the input. Uptake, intake, and repair are the key markers that demonstrate the influence of such feedback. In this situation, constructive criticism is anticipated to lead to linguistic errors being fixed or corrected. The capacity of the learner to receive, comprehend, and apply constructive criticism demonstrates their awareness of essential adjustments (Kitchener et al., 2005). Occasionally, students may not reply to corrections, which prevents the instructor from evaluating how well the corrective input was received. Because of this, most of the experimental research on the effect of oral corrective feedback on learners' language abilities uses comparisons between pre- and post-test results (Alsolami, 2019).

Feedback Types in Speaking Classes

There have also been reports on the efficacy of specific types of oral feedback. For instance, Nicolas et al. (2001) reported that recasts, a reformulation of the learners' utterances in the correct form, are considered the most essential and advantageous kind of oral feedback

because they enable the learners to identify their mistakes cognitively after the utterance. Furthermore, it is probable that further vocal feedback, such as adjusting the learner to the error, requesting an explanation, prompting the incorrect sentence, and offering a metalinguistic remark, will strengthen students' interlanguage and increase their motivation (Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Leeman, 2007; Zrair, 2019).

In EFL lessons, oral feedback is the most popular type of corrective feedback (Ellis, 2008). Recasts, for example, are supposed to assist students in concentrating on form and meaning during class engagement (Carroll & Swain, 1993). Removing incorrect statements and seeking explanations are efficient oral feedback techniques since they do not stifle discussion and help students improve communication. Furthermore, spoken feedback is required for learners to express themselves constructively, according to Carroll and Swain (1993) (Zrair, 2019).

For EFL students, oral feedback is a valuable teaching method (Faqeih, 2012). L2 learners typically make grammatical mistakes and need help to produce the language correctly in EFL classes. For their interactions to continue, the learners must communicate continuously and in the appropriate language form (Ellis, 2008). This research suggests that oral feedback is connected to evaluation to guarantee that the highest possible goals and objectives are met. When learning, oral feedback is crucial, mainly when communicating with others. Its use in improving and changing incorrect speech gives it significance. Additionally, it is crucial to encourage and inspire students to speak up without holding back or worrying about making mistakes (Lyser, 2004). It is beneficial for the instructor to support the learner in identifying the correct answers and eliminating or canceling the incorrect ones (Zrair, 2019).

Pending Feedback

According to the findings of the study's first phase (Zargaran, 2024), seven types of feedback were discovered in the IELTS speaking class of one of the researchers. Pending feedback was a new type that showed a broader lens through which to view how feedback works in the class.

Pending feedback is mainly based on discovery learning and taps into learners' sense of awareness. The teacher allows learners to search for the correct answer to maintain 'pending feedback'. The teacher leaves a specific period to allow learners to discover the best answer and check the answers in an open class discussion.

The following extract shows a class interaction when the teacher gives 'pending feedback.'

S1: We should eat natural food.....

S2: He said natural food; I think it is better to say healthy food

T: Very good 'healthy' or instead of healthy, what other words can be used?

S3: Nutrition.....nutritional

T: Nutritional....nutritious... which one?

S4: Nutritious, it is an adjective

T: How about nutritional? Is it an adjective, too? Can it be used here? Check it for the next session

The main difference between 'pending feedback' and 'delayed feedback' is that in delayed feedback, the teacher postpones the correction stage to the end of the practice or session in the same session. Moreover, the teacher answers or elicits the correct answer immediately without allowing learners to discover the answer after searching or checking other sources.

In contrast, pending feedback facilitates learners' analysis of situations, helping them identify optimal answers. In this case, correction decreases learners' cognitive load and gives them new insights into more options. In addition, while searching for the correct answer, learners can

experience more related knowledge, enhancing their language competence. In other words, this feedback type is the opposite of spoon-feeding learners with the prescribed teacher-led correction. The open class discussion is a collaborative form of giving feedback that involves all learners in the feedback stage. ‘Pending feedback’ was only used in the experimental group for GR/A in practicing part 3 of the IELTS interview, where students make the most significant number of grammar mistakes.

Second Language Learning Theories and Pending Feedback

Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory

Pending feedback creates a social atmosphere where students co-construct knowledge through directed interaction, hence optimizing Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); it also reflects Vygotsky’s focus on learning as a socially mediated process in which teacher scaffolding fills in between present and future competencies. Through cooperative interaction, a hallmark of sociocultural theory, the open-class debate promotes group problem-solving and allows students to absorb linguistic rules.

Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis and Conscious Awareness

Pending feedback directly engages notice and awareness, which is fundamental to Schmidt’s theory (1990). Encouraging students to match their output with target forms helps the teacher generate “noticing the gap,” a necessary action for turning input into intake. When students argue about adjective use, for instance, they deliberately register form-meaning correlations in line with Schmidt’s assertion that deliberate attention drives learning. Delayed resolution prolongs this noticing phase, promoting deeper processing of linguistic alternatives and meta-cognitive reflection.

DeKeyser’s Skill Acquisition Theory and Proceduralization

Pending feedback fits DeKeyser’s approach (2020) of intentional practice leading to skill development. Requiring students to examine mistakes and seek answers independently shifts declarative knowledge (clear rules) toward proceduralized, automated application. Regular completion of the tasks, such as grammar in IELTS Part 3, helps to gradually lower the cognitive load, hence promoting fluency. Pending feedback also targets high-error scenarios (e.g., grammar in complex speaking tasks), facilitating skill automatization in relevant domains.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy in the IELTS Speaking Test

The IELTS speaking test score is calculated according to a four-criterion scoring sheet. Each criterion weighs 25% of the overall score. GR/A scales 25% of the test score, but one-fourth of the test score cannot be achieved easily, especially in section 3. It is usually hard for IELTS candidates to show full performance of their grammar competence in the speaking test compared to the lexical performance. It is generally assumed that IELTS candidates seeking a score beyond 7 lack immediate use of various and relevant grammar; they are not usually capable of using a wide range of grammar that fits the question. This challenge is highlighted in section 3 of the IELTS speaking test because the questions are abstract, and there is no planning time to think about the required answers. To gain 7+ in the speaking test, candidates are required to maintain using particular grammar to fit the band score; for example, to answer the question “What did you do in your free time when you were a child?” the candidate may say “*I went to the gym when I was younger*”; however, a more complex answer is required, for instance, “*I used to go to the gym when I was younger*”. This research aimed to gain insight into encouraging more grammatically varied answers in section 3 of the test using pending feedback.

Although there have been some recent studies examining the effect of feedback on IELTS writing (Monjezi & Mashhadi, 2021; Pearson, 2022), there has been no focal attention to the effect of feedback on the IELTS speaking test in general and considering the IELTS speaking test sections, in particular. Studies in IELTS have yet to specify types of feedback that could improve students' performance in the IELTS speaking test grammar. In addition, pending feedback is a newly explored type of feedback. Its impact on students' performance, accuracy, and wise selection of proper grammar in the IELTS speaking test has been untouched.

There have also been reports on the efficacy of specific types of oral feedback. For instance, Nicolas et al. (2001) reported that recasts, a reformulation of the learners' utterances in the correct form, are considered the most essential and advantageous kind of oral feedback because they enable the learners to identify their mistakes cognitively after the utterance. Furthermore, it is probable that further vocal feedback, such as adjusting the learner to the error, requesting an explanation, prompting the incorrect sentence, and offering a metalinguistic remark, will strengthen students' interlanguage and increase their motivation (Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Leeman, 2007; Zrair, 2019). Although all these mentioned studies have strived to show an upside picture of oral feedback, they didn't address its benefits for the wise selection of grammar and evaluating learners' metacognitive awareness in using the proper language forms.

To bridge the research gap in the literature mentioned above, the current study aimed to explore the effects of using pending feedback on the grammatical range and accuracy (GR/A) of students' speaking performance in section 3 of the test. Moreover, the frequency of feedback provided to students was investigated to see if the frequency of encountering students with pending feedback can increase their speaking scores. Specifically, it tried to answer two research questions:

1. Does pending feedback affect IELTS learners' grammar selection and accuracy in section three of the IELTS speaking test? (GR/A to be examined)
2. Is there any relationship between the frequency of receiving pending feedback and increasing the score in the third section of the IELTS test?

Methodology

Participants

This study examines the effect of pending feedback on the IELTS speaking test GR/A, part three score results. For this, two intact groups of 30 intermediate English proficiency students, males and females aged 18–45, who studied in an IELTS Center in Ahvaz, Iran, were selected to collect the required data. They entered the course after doing an IELTS speaking placement test containing all three parts of the IELTS speaking interview. The students' IELTS placement score was between 5.5 and 6.0, and they enrolled in the IELTS course to improve their speaking score to 7.0 +. The only focus of the IELTS class was speaking, and other IELTS skills were not taught in the class. The participants were all Persian native speakers, and English was their unofficial foreign language to learn.

Instrument

IELTS Pre-test

All 60 participants were allowed to enroll in the intermediate IELTS speaking class after taking part in an IELTS speaking test, including all three test parts: introduction, cue card, and discussion. The minimum score required to enter the course was an overall speaking score of 5.5, and the maximum was 6.0. All 4 test scoring criteria in the IELTS speaking test assessed

students' IELTS speaking ability. The scoring criteria in the IELTS speaking test include fluency (F/C) and coherence, grammatical range and accuracy (GR/A), lexical resources (LR), and pronunciation (P), and all are on the band scores of 1 to 9. Scoring 1 in any criteria indicates a primary language user, and 9 shows a proficient language user.

Although all these scoring criteria were used in this research study's IELTS speaking placement test, the GR/A variable was examined. This means that the researchers reviewed the GR/A criterion of all the participants and realized that they all scored relatively similarly, with an average band score of 6 for this criterion.

IELTS Post-test

At the end of the term, after 30 hours of teaching, an IELTS speaking test was used as the post-test to determine the effects of using pending feedback on learners' GR/A of the IELTS speaking test results. The post-test interview was carried out by one of the center's teachers, not the researchers, to reduce the halo effect. The post-test interviewer was another IELTS teacher in the same IELTS institute who had experience teaching and examining IELTS speaking tests. The post-test interview was scored by an outsider to eliminate the human effect.

Validity and Reliability of the Pre- and Post-IELTS Speaking Tests

To maintain the validity of the pre-and post-IELTS Speaking tests in this study, the researcher used materials available from IDP IELTS; the researcher is a certified IDP IELTS trainer and has access to some materials shared by IDP IELTS. Moreover, the IELTS speaking test is generally valid because it rigidly follows the recognized principles of the post-scientific era (Ginting et al., 2023). However, one of the criticisms of the IELTS speaking test is the reliability of the scores. In this Study, to control the reliability and truthfulness of the test results, all interviews were recorded first; second, inter-rater reliability was used. For this purpose, the scores given by two raters were compared (Khan et al., 2022). In the pre-test and post-test, the same teacher from the institution rated the tests the first time, and then the researcher rated the tests for the second time and compared the scores. The researcher found no significant discrepancies in scores; therefore, the tests were reliable.

Task Difficulty of the IELTS Speaking Tasks Used in this Study

Task difficulty is mainly identified as a task's demands for learners, including task characteristics and performance conditions (Fulcher & Reiter, 2003). These features can lead to different scores if they are not tailored accurately. According to Skehan and Foster (1997), familiar information, structured tasks, and the complexity of the knowledge required to do the task can generate differentiated outcomes. To manage task difficulty, the researcher employed a rubric developed by Fulcher and Reiter (2003) to evaluate the complexity of the interview questions, focusing on factors such as familiarity and structure. Moreover, the interviewer was the same in the pre-test and post-test; therefore, the performance condition was highly controlled. During the treatment sessions, all materials were selected from Cambridge IELTS past paper books to meet the requirements of fairness in task demands.

Procedure

Pre-test Phase

Students had to take a simulated IELTS speaking test to enroll in the IELTS speaking course. This test was used as the pre-test phase, where participants' overall IELTS speaking scores in all the criteria were collected; however, the focus of the study was on improving students' scores in the GR/A section; therefore, this criterion was also checked separately to assure that all participants had similar abilities in the GR/A section of the test when entering the course.

Intervention

Treatments for the Experimental Group

The main aim of this research study was to detect the effect of pending feedback on the IELTS learners' GR/A in the IELTS speaking test. Based on their experience and evidence of teaching IELTS, researchers knew that IELTS learners mainly lag behind accuracy and appropriate grammar selection in the third section of the IELTS speaking test. Therefore, they included some particular grammar to be studied: tenses like future structures, conditional type II, passive structure, and possibility of future in the study.

In the first two sessions of working on section three of the IELTS speaking test, the teacher, who was the researcher, of the experimental group made students consciously aware of using the grammar mentioned above in response to various questions. During the consciousness-raising sessions, the teacher practiced how each question in part three required a particular type of grammar selection. For instance, in response to the question, "How would technology change the way people communicate in the next ten or twenty years?" the teacher helped learners to retrieve the related grammar such as future possibility, passive structure, on the top, besides other standard grammar that could be used.

During the feedback sessions, in part three of the test, students received feedback on accuracy and selecting the most appropriately related type of grammar to answer the questions. In this case, GR/A was highlighted in the class feedback sessions. Another point worth mentioning is that pending feedback was the only type used for the selected testing criterion and in part three of the IELTS speaking test.

Pending feedback is supposed to be more effective for intermediate students and above regarding the maturity of language behavior and competence. In other words, 'pending feedback' requires students' metacognitive strategy to be active and have sufficient cognitive power to implement discovery learning. To use pending feedback, learners must have enough language knowledge to rely on for more discoveries.

Teachers should know that the type of grammar error can affect the type of feedback to be selected. In this Study, pending feedback was used in section three of the IELTS speaking test because of the abstract questions and the type of answers that learners must be able to give. For example, if the question is 'How will societies change if robots dominate human lives?', learners' answers must include grammar such as future structures, possibility, and conditional type I, II.

Pending feedback was used to assist IELTS learners in discovering the best grammar and knowing why the teacher corrects their mistakes. In part three of the IELTS speaking test, GR/A problems are more detected, and learners need a much deeper understanding of the feedback given to them. The teacher of the experimental group used both weak and strong versions of pending feedback and monitored their impact on learners' performance in GR/A.

The whole term consisted of twenty sessions, and the last six sessions were used to practice section three of the IELTS speaking test. One of the researchers was the teacher of the experimental group. GR/A errors were treated only through 'pending feedback' in the experimental group. The other researcher taught the control group, and the types of feedback provided for the learners did not include 'pending feedback.' All six sessions were audio-recorded for later possible use.

The frequency of students' exposure to the pending feedback was also examined. For this aim, all sessions were recorded for later double-checking. A checklist was also developed for all learners to proceed with the frequency (number of times that students receive feedback); therefore, each learner was checked for the number of times that they were exposed to pending feedback.

In conclusion, the intervention phase highlighted that pending feedback is a valuable tool for addressing GR/A issues in the IELTS speaking test section three. By fostering deeper understanding and active engagement with grammatical choices, it is assumed to support learners in achieving higher proficiency levels.

Treatments for the Control Group

During the teaching sessions, the teacher taught the students the strategies for answering the questions and gave them feedback except for pending feedback. The teacher's feedback types were reported to be categorized as elicitation, recast, explanation, explicit correction, and repetition. The teacher of the control group was made aware of the pending feedback type, so he controlled the potential of using a similar method to give feedback. Participants in the control group received all the strategies that participants in the experimental group were exposed to but not pending feedback to correct their errors.

Post-test Phase

Learners were given the IELTS interview at the end of the term, and their GR/A was assessed for any changes in part three of the IELTS speaking test. The post-test IELTS speaking test was carried out by another teacher who was not a part of this study to maintain the interrater reliability and reduce the human effect. The IELTS interviewer was an IELTS teacher in the same institute who was experienced in teaching and examining IELTS.

Result

The pre-test and post-test scores from the experimental and control groups were compared to find any differences between groups after using pending feedback. The data were collected to investigate the score improvement between and within groups.

Within Groups Analysis

In the first step of the statistical data analysis, the descriptive analysis of the Mean scores, illustrated in Table 1, was obtained for the pre-test and post-test differences within the experimental and control groups.

The data showed a distinctive change from 5.700 to 6.367 for the former group and 5.767 to 5.867 for the latter group. To confirm this statistical difference, the Wilcoxon test had to be used. The Wilcoxon test was selected due to the non-normal distribution of the data, allowing for appropriate analysis of pre-test and post-test differences. The normality test was observed to ensure that this test was suitably selected for the collected data.

As is shown in Table 2, the distribution of both groups in the two tests is not normal ($P < 0.05$). The normality result showed that a non-parametric test was needed to conclude the difference analysis within two tests for both experimental and control groups. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was tallied to examine whether there was a difference between the tests.

In the next step, pre-test and post-test data were compared within each experimental and control group. In the experimental group, after running the Wilcoxon, the obtained P-value was equal to 0.000, which was less than 0.05; that is, the Mean difference between the Pre-test and Post-test within this group was statistically significant (see Table 3). The same Wilcoxon test was utilized for the control group; the P-value was 0.134, which was higher than 0.05, showing that the Mean difference between the Pre-test and Post-test in this group was not statistically significant. To determine the effect size for the two groups, the researcher used the effect size r formula and calculated it manually using $r = \frac{|z|}{\sqrt{N}}$.

Table 1 Descriptive analysis within groups

Descriptive statistics						
Group		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Experimental	Post_Test	30	5.50	7.50	6.367	.50742
	Pre_Test	30	5.50	6.00	5.700	.24914
	Valid N (listwise)	30				
Control	Post_Test	30	5.50	6.50	5.867	.34575
	Pre_Test	30	5.50	6.00	5.767	.25371
	Valid N (listwise)	30				

Table 2 Groups tests of normality

Tests of normality							
Group		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experimental	Post_Test	.232	30	.000	.888	30	.004
	Pre_Test	.389	30	.000	.624	30	.000
Control	Post_Test	.256	30	.000	.787	30	.000
	Pre_Test	.354	30	.000	.637	30	.000

^aLilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 3 Finding the difference within groups

Test statistics	
Group	Pre_Test - Post_Test
Experimental	Z = -4.573 ^a
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = .000
Control	Z = -1.500 ^b
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = .134

^aWilcoxon Signed Ranks Test; ^bBased on positive ranks.

In this study, the z values for the experimental and control group were 4.573 and 1.500, respectively. After calculating the r for each group, the effect size of the experimental group was 0.834, while the effect size of the control group equaled 0.275. According to Cohen's (1992) guidelines, the r value of the control group was more extensive than 0.5, which means it had a significant effect. On the other hand, the control group depicted an effect size smaller than 0.1 to 0.3, which was a small effect. The difference between the speaking scores of the groups practically affected the improvement that learners gained after the pending feedback treatment.

Between Groups Analysis

The scores collected from the pre-test and post-test in both experimental and control groups were compared between groups to confirm the actual effect of implicating pending feedback on participants' speaking test results. The results from the post-tests in experimental and control groups were also compared. As seen in Table 4, the statistical analysis of the data revealed that the calculated Mean score of the pre-test for the experimental group is 5.700, and the Mean score for the control group is 5.767. The Shapiro-Wilk test was calculated to check the normality of the collected data.

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test for each experimental and control group in the Pre-test is calculated. If the P-value is equal to or greater than 0.05, the data is usually distributed; if the P-value is less than 0.05, the distribution is abnormal. According to the data analysis, the P-value for the experimental and control group control was 0.0, which was less than 0.05, indicating that the data distribution data was not statistically normal.

The normality test shows that both groups, experimental and control, have non-normal data distributions (Table 5). Due to the number of groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the results and conclude the difference between the groups.

An Independent U test was used to detect the difference in pre-test scores. The data analysis was carried out to ensure that the possible difference in the post-test would not be because of the pre-test rather than the type of feedback used for the students in the experimental group.

As the Mann-Whitney U table shows in Table 6, the P-value is 0.305, which is higher than 0.05; it means there was no significant difference between groups in the Pre-test. It also illustrates no significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. To evaluate the r value, r formula, $r = \frac{|z|}{\sqrt{N}}$, was used. The calculated r value (0.132) maintained the small effect size. According to Cohen (1992), it was interpreted as the pre-test scores had no significant difference between groups showing that both groups were at the same level of competence and performance when entered this study.

To detect the effect of pending feedback on the two groups' post-test scores, first, the normality of the post-test scores was calculated. Then, the Mann-Whitney U was employed to check the existence of the difference due to the type of feedback given to the experimental group.

Table 7 shows that the post-test Mean scores for the experimental and control groups were calculated as 6.367 and 5.867, respectively.

As the result shows, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test for each group in the post-test is calculated (Table 8). The P-value in both groups is 0.0, less than 0.05, inferring that the data is not normally distributed.

The normality test depicted a non-normal distribution; therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the result and conclude the difference between the groups.

The Mann-Whitney U table (see Table 9) shows that the P-value is 0.000, less than 0.05. It means there was a significant difference between groups' scores in the post-test, which resulted in the difference because of the use of pending feedback in the experimental group. To confirm

Table 4 Descriptive analysis between groups (pre-test)

Descriptive statistics						
Group		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Experimental	Pre_Test	30	5.50	6.00	5.700	.24914
	Valid N (listwise)	30				
Control	Pre_Test	30	5.50	6.00	5.767	.25371
	Valid N (listwise)	30				

Table 5 Test of normality within groups

Tests of normality							
Group		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experimental	Pre_Test	.389	30	.000	.624	30	.000
Control	Pre_Test	.354	30	.000	.637	30	.000

^aLilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 6 Independent U test between groups (pre-tests)

Independent-samples Mann-Whitney U test summary	
Total N	60
Mann-Whitney U	510.000
Wilcoxon W	975.000
Test Statistic	510.000
Standard Error	58.455
Standardized Test Statistic	1.026
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.305

the magnitude of the difference between groups, the effect size of the obtained was calculated by r formula, $r = \frac{|z|}{\sqrt{N}}$. The r value was tallied as 0.51 which suggested a large effect size. According to Cohen’s (1992), the observed difference between the groups is both statistically significant and practically meaningful.

Table 7 *Descriptive analysis of the mean scores in the post-tests*

Descriptive statistics						
Group		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Experimental	Post_Test	30	5.50	7.50	6.367	.50742
	Valid N (listwise)	30				
Control	Post_Test	30	5.50	6.50	5.867	.34575
	Valid N (listwise)	30				

Table 8 *Normality test for post-tests*

Tests of normality							
Group		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experimental	Post_Test	.232	30	.000	.888	30	.004
Control	Post_Test	.256	30	.000	.787	30	.000

^aLilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 9 *Difference between groups (post-test)*

Independent-samples Mann-Whitney U test summary	
Total N	60
Mann-Whitney U	200.000
Wilcoxon W	665.000
Test Statistic	200.000
Standard Error	63.923
Standardized Test Statistic	-3.911
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	.000

The total analyses show that the pending feedback provided for the experimental group significantly affected students' progress in the Post-test. The following graph illustrates this change in brief.

As is seen in figure 1, feedback frequency affects results; in other words, the more feedback a student receives, the more fruitful results they may gain and, hence, the more significant the improvement in the speaking score.

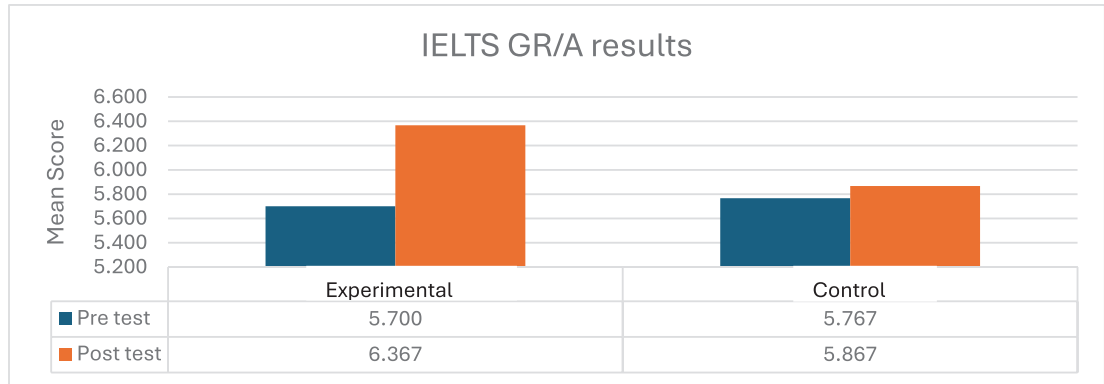


Figure 1 The difference between groups because of pending feedback

Table 10 Descriptive analysis of the correlation data

Descriptive statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Differences	30	0.667	0.399
Frequencies	30	6.533	3.344

Table 11 Data analysis for the Pearson correlation coefficient

Pearson correlation coefficient			
		Differences	Frequencies
Differences	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.9005**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	30	30
Frequencies	Pearson Correlation	0.905**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	30	30

Therefore, to examine this hypothesis, answer the second question, and find the relation between the frequency of giving pending feedback and its relation to the increase of the total IELTS speaking score, part 3, a Pearson correlation analysis was run for the experimental group. The frequency of giving feedback to each participant was recorded through a pre-developed chart and audio files of the treatment sessions. The researcher recorded the number of times she gave pending feedback to a student.

According to the obtained data, Tables 10 and 11, the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.905$) indicates a robust positive correlation between the score differences and the

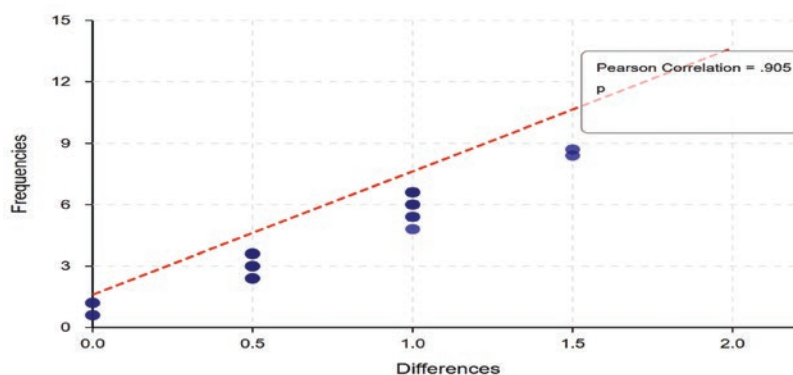


Figure 2 Scatter plot showing correlation differences and frequencies

frequency of receiving pending feedback in the experimental group. The robust positive correlation ($r = 0.905$) demonstrates that an increase in students' speaking scores is associated with a rise in the frequency of receiving pending feedback. In particular, around 81.9% ($r^2 = 0.819$) of the variance in the number of times that students are given pending feedback can be attributed to the higher scores in the speaking test, indicating a significant shared variance between these two variables. The strong correlation ($r > 0.7$) suggests a significant linear connection between the variables. Additionally, the positive nature of this correlation indicates that the relationship is direct, implying that increases in one variable are linked to increases in the other. The p-value ($p < 0.001$) suggests that the observed correlation is very unlikely to be due to random chance. With 28 degrees of freedom ($df = N - 2 = 28$), the correlation observed surpasses the critical threshold required for statistical significance at the 0.01 level. It enables us to dismiss the null hypothesis that posits no correlation between these variables. This correlation suggests that increasing the frequency of feedback could be a strategic focus for teachers aiming to improve students' speaking performance.

As shown in Figure 2, the scatter plot visually demonstrates a strong positive linear relationship, which is supported by the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = .905$, $p < .001$, $N = 30$). This high correlation suggests that the difference is defined by the frequency of feedback given to students in the experimental group. In conclusion, the results indicate that regular feedback significantly enhances speaking scores, especially when provided frequently, thus supporting its use in language instruction.

Discussion

This research study was carried out to answer two questions, whether using pending feedback affects the **grammatical range and accuracy** of students' IELTS speaking test, section 3, and whether the frequency of students' exposure to pending feedback predicts students' test score increase.

Effect of Pending Feedback on IELTS Learners' Grammar Selection and Accuracy

In the first part of the Study, pending feedback was used to determine its effect on the degree of accuracy and grammatical range in students' IELTS speaking test performance. The findings confirmed the effective role of using pending feedback on students' GR/A improvement, especially on the selected grammatical range used to answer questions in part three of the test.

In other alternative types of feedback, students are usually spoon-fed, and their level of language awareness is not profoundly increased. Pending feedback encourages learners to utilize their existing language knowledge and take time to think or consult resources to decide upon the best grammar option and its accurate form. In other words, pending feedback is assumed to assist learners with section 3 of the IELTS speaking test, where the accuracy of the language form is not the only concern. However, grammar selection can make a massive change in learners' performance. Looking closely at the questions in part 3 of the IELTS speaking test, it is evident that the types of questions and the expected answers strictly rely on the wise selection of grammar. Other feedback methods, which are commonly used in speaking classes, mainly focus on the immediate result of correction. However, students may be unable to modify and add feedback knowledge to their intake. The immediate input after receiving the feedback is likely satisfactory, but the knowledge is not usually permanently established for later, automatic use. Regarding pending feedback, the teacher allows learners to accommodate and adapt the knowledge, hence making it easier to retrieve the grammar knowledge in similar contexts of language use.

As mentioned, one of the students' challenges in the IELTS speaking test is retrieving proper grammar according to the question. Students may know the grammatical structures, but the ability to use the appropriately selected grammar has always been an issue. Studies such as Farrokhi et al. (2018) and Rahnema et al. (2019) provided positive evidence for using feedback to increase students' speaking performance accuracy. However, the present Study incorporated a new lens of reviewing students' speaking performance in IELTS classes, mainly using pending feedback. Pending feedback is a new approach to providing feedback in the classroom. Unlike traditional immediate correction, this method delays feedback to give students time to independently discover the correct answer (Zargaran, 2024).

Using pending feedback assists teachers in encouraging students to become active learners by postponing feedback and relying on their existing knowledge and external resources to solve problems. This method can boost students' confidence and independence and reduce the cognitive burden of immediate correction.

Pending feedback can be used through its weak and strong versions. In the weak version, the teacher hints at the error and provides guidance. In the robust version, students are responsible for finding the correct answer without teacher intervention.

In this study, both versions of pending feedback, weak and strong, were used, and the results showed the solid effect of making students aware of their problems and giving them a chance to discover the gap and the remedy. Weak and strong versions of pending feedback were used randomly in this research study; however, the teacher researcher controlled the opportunities where students received both versions of pending feedback. In other studies, the effect of each version can be examined in more depth. This type of feedback, pending feedback, promotes students' conscious selection of grammar and grabs their focus on how to raise the appropriateness of answering the questions by not only looking at accuracy.

The unidimensional perspective of the accuracy-in-center approach affects students' IELTS speaking scores. However, pending feedback provoked learners' multifaceted attention to accuracy and the proper selection of grammar for each type of question in section three of the IELTS speaking test. In other words, the promising rise in students' GR/A scores is mainly due to students' grammar awareness and selection to integrate discovery learning essence (Darussalam & Fahrinawati, 2023).

Pending feedback originates from guided discovery learning, where teachers act as facilitators and enhance students' awareness. However, the accurate performance substantially lies in the

student's self-discovery guided by the teacher. Discovery learning can improve students' understanding of grammar (Chen et al., 2024).

Relationship Between the Frequency of Receiving Pending Feedback and Increasing the Score

The second question of the research is purported to explain the relation between feed frequency exposure and the possibility of students' score increases in GR/A of the IELTS speaking test, section 3. The study's findings confirmed the importance of frequent exposure to pending feedback. The finding is in line with Hartshorn, et al. (2023) confirming that frequent feedback significantly improves grammatical accuracy in student writing. The correctional analysis maintained the manifestation of higher GR/A scores for the students who were exposed to more feedback chances. More practice through receiving feedback is an explanation of how frequent exposure to pending feedback can enhance the chance of success in using grammar accurately and appropriately. Another point that needs to be raised is the number of opportunities given to students to notice the appropriate selection of grammar and its accurate use. In other words, the more exposure, the more understanding. The effectiveness of feedback depends on its consistency and clarity. Inconsistent or poorly timed feedback can reduce its impact on grammar improvement (Wahyuni, 2017; Basturkmen & Fu, 2021).

Overall, this study is an academic reference for General English and IELTS course teachers, IELTS material developers, and teacher educators. Pending feedback can encourage students' grammar awareness and increase their attention. In other words, discovering the learning essence in pending feedback involves students' active participation in the feedback process (Flora, 2022).

While pending feedback has potential benefits, it is unsuitable for all students or error types. Higher-level learners may benefit more from this approach, but those who prefer immediate feedback might find it frustrating. Additionally, some errors might require immediate correction to prevent reinforcement of incorrect patterns (Zargaran, 2024).

The results show that students who actively identify and implement suitable grammar structures instead of focusing on instantaneous correction and waiting for teacher feedback immediately after the error raises have more conspicuous language awareness. Eventually, active learning and self-discovery, assisted by weak and strong forms of pending feedback, helped learners to raise their speaking performance. Furthermore, the study underlined the need for constant and unambiguous feedback for ongoing development since it showed that regular exposure to expected feedback was favorably linked with higher GR/A scores. Although pending feedback has several advantages, its application depends on learner preferences and error types, indicating a need for customized implementation.

Conclusion

This research study found the significant effect of using pending feedback in IELTS speaking classes, particularly when students struggle with the GR/A of the answers in section 3. The combination of delayed feedback and discovery learning significantly influences students' awareness while allowing them to take responsibility for their knowledge, giving responsibility for the required knowledge, and letting them explore and experience the knowledge they need to accommodate or adapt their old knowledge to the new one. Another point to mention, according to the research findings, is the number of times students are exposed to pending feedback. The higher frequency of pending feedback can develop student autonomy and, hence, improve performance. In this case, both variables of using pending feedback and frequent implication of this feedback type end in an improvement in the selection of various

and proper grammar and accurate use of grammar to answer the questions in part 3 of the IELTS speaking test. The findings of this study can increase a new insight into how pending feedback, the combination of several languages learning theories, including active learning, discovery learning, experiential learning and autonomous learning, could change the assess of the feedback type and process in English speaking classes, IELTS preparation classes, in particular. This research also supports the moderated frequency of giving pending feedback to students to promote the effect of this feedback type in grammar selection and accuracy of learners speaking performance.

This study provides sophisticated knowledge of how pending feedback, rooted in active learning, discovery learning, experiential learning, and autonomous learning theories, can transform conventional feedback practices in English-speaking classrooms. This research also significantly advances the field of language instruction. It mainly offers practical advice for IELTS preparation classes since it shows how careful and strategic use of pending feedback enhances grammar choice and accuracy in speaking assignments. In conclusion, this study opens the road for more effective pedagogical approaches focusing on learner-centered and long-term skill development. It stretches the spectrum of feedback strategies applied in language instruction.

However, future studies can examine the difference between pending feedback and particular types of feedback in speaking classes rather than IELTS. Moreover, the effect of adding pending feedback to teacher feedback repertoire in other language productive skills namely writing would lighten up new paths to writing feedback in the language pedagogy.

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