

The Effect of Iraqi EFL Teachers' Feedback on Iraqi EFL Learners' Speaking Skill and Academic Buoyancy

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Abstract: In a teaching-learning process, a teacher interacts with his/her students. This interaction may be manifested among them by giving feedback to the students' utterances. This study investigated the effect of teacher's provided feedback in speaking class on students' academic buoyancy. Therefore, in a mixed-method design study, the researcher, in the quantitative phase, divided the Iraqi EFL learners into two groups of 30 students. So, one class was managed with teacher interaction process of providing feedback and the other one was managed within no teacher interaction in the process of teaching the oral proficiency to the students. Besides, in the quantitative phase of the study, the researcher interviewed the Iraqi EFL learners' attitudes towards the impact of teachers' provided feedback on their oral proficiency as well as academic buoyancy. The findings revealed that there was a significant and positive impact of teachers' feedback on the Iraqi EFL learners' speaking skill and their academic buoyancy revealing that the participants in the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control group. Moreover, in the qualitative phase, the interviewees reported that the reinforcements and positive corrective feedbacks led to the students' positive learning experience helping them improve their speaking ability. Therefore, it is implied that teachers are suggested to encourage students to speak English actively in class and have direct feedback to each individual rather than the whole class.

1. Introduction

The effective teaching focuses more on the role of teachers during classroom activities. Feedback is needed for students to check errors they made during oral activities. The successful teacher chooses the appropriate techniques of teaching that capacitate students to become more fluent and accurate disregarding problems they face in oral tasks.

Even though the students' errors are natural phenomena in a language classroom, it is quite difficult to figure out if the teachers should ignore or treat them. If the teachers decided to correct the errors, each one was faced with these questions: which errors should be corrected? And how can teachers help the students to make the errors work for them? The answers to these questions are as

complex as learning the language itself. It is even generally accepted that for the last two decades the language practitioners have different opinions on how to deal with the students' errors.

Besides, Martin and Marsh (2008) define academic buoyancy as students' ability to successfully deal with academic setbacks and challenges that are typical of the ordinary course of school life (e.g. poor grades, competing deadlines, exam pressure, difficult schoolwork). As it was argued below, academic buoyancy is distinct from the traditional 'resilience' construct as well as constructs reflecting 'everyday hassles' and 'coping'. Notwithstanding this, it draws on these three research domains to map onto the under-recognized notion of 'everyday resilience'. The present study aims to examine predictors of this everyday academic resilience, academic buoyancy. In assessing this construct and in identifying salient predictors across time, it's hoped to provide some guidance and shed some light on factors to target in counselling efforts that seek to enhance students' ability to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of everyday life in the academic context. Therefore, the current study intends to create another background and measure the relation of the aforementioned variables.

The problems and challenges that the current study deals with refer to the productive skill of speaking and according to Pan (2010) is one of the most difficult aspects for students to develop because it requires them to produce the language most of the time, spontaneously without enough time to construct the appropriate and correct utterances. To deal with this difficult productive task, receiving feedbacks from the teacher as a valuable and authentic source is very important and the likely problem and its effect on the learners' academic buoyancy needs investigation.

The finding of this study illustrated and manifested the effect of error feedback to the students in teaching English speaking skill and tried to provide effective ways and make the learners ready to receive such a helpful and appropriate feedback. On the other hand, this research would measure the effect of feedback in helping the students to improve their ability in speaking and opening new horizons on the students to improve their speaking and oral proficiency using their teachers as a reliable source.

Besides, the current study is valuable since, in most of countries like Iraq, the students do not have the higher opportunities to practice on their oral proficiencies outside the classroom and teachers are the most authentic, controllable and understandable option to the learner to practice on their speaking skill and improve their academic buoyancy (something that is the target of the present study to discover it).

The major end of this study is to answer the following research questions:

Q1. Does Iraqi EFL teachers' feedback have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL learners' speaking skill?

Q2. Does Iraqi EFL teachers' feedback have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL learners' academic buoyancy?

Q3. What are the Iraqi EFL learners' attitudes towards the implementation of feedback in their speaking development and boosting their academic buoyancy?

2. Review of the related literature

2.1. Speaking Skill

Speaking is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Speaking is defined operationally in this study as the secondary stage students' ability to express them orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context to serve both transactional and interactional purposes using correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and adopting the

pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language. In other words, they are required to show mastery of the following sub competencies/ skills:

Linguistic competence: This includes the following skills: Using intelligible pronunciation. Following grammatical rules accurately. Using relevant, adequate and appropriate range of vocabulary.

Discourse competence: This includes the following skills: Structuring discourse coherently and cohesively Managing conversation and interacting effectively to keep the conversation going.

Pragmatic competence: This includes the following skill: Expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately according to the context and register.

Fluency: This means speaking fluently demonstrating a reasonable rate of speech.

2.2 Teaching speaking

Teaching speaking is very important part in language learning. Teaching speaking for some teacher is not easy. As Brown (2001) states, successful oral communication in the target language with other speakers serves as a display of successful language acquisition. This statement brings forth the significance of developing speaking skill, indicating competent language learners. Thus, the need to improve students' speaking skills has been intriguing researchers' interest. As it is a well-known fact that speaking skill is generally ignored and neglected in foreign language classrooms. Teaching speaking is challenging even for language teachers, which requires more practice to improve (Pinter, 2001). Therefore, the way we try to bring the interesting topic for speaking of discussion-we're trying to encourage them to participate in the learning activity-they'll be more attentive to that interesting topic. They found it is fun, they can share with the class about their ideas, experiences and they can express themselves about it. This results in their practice for language fluency. English is considered as a first foreign language and becomes a compulsory subject from elementary to University. The educational curriculum of Indonesia has been designed to integrate all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and elements of language in English subject at senior high schools.

2.3. Feedback

According to Kauchak (1989), feedback is any information about the current behavior that can be used to improve the future performance of the students. Furthermore, Gagne (1961) defines feedback as a closing loop in the learning process which serves to fix the learning result and makes it permanently available. In addition, Ellis (1988) presents the definition of feedback as the identification and the correction of learners' error and positive reinforcement of correct utterances. Thus, the researcher may infer that feedback is any information from the students' effort that is fed back to the students as it functions as the identification and the correction of student' error also positive reinforcement of the correct utterances. Therefore, Stone and Nielsen (1982) state that affective feedback as any occurrence of the positive reinforcement to the correct response given by the students whose function is to secure the performance and to strengthen positive emotional reaction on the classroom. In this study, affective feedback is seen as any praise given by the teacher to motivate and appreciate students' utterances.

Besides, Stone and Chu (2011) stated that the term informational feedback refers to the information which functions as the correction, clarification, evaluation, and identification of the incorrect response produced by the students. It gives information about current behavior that can be used to improve the future performance of the students. In this study, the researcher defines informational feedback as any feedback that informs the learners that their responses are incorrect with the knowledge of the correct or desired responses particularly concerning linguistic focus i.e.

grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, below, the diverse types of feedbacks is going to be explained in details.

By the way, giving effective feedback is crucial concern for teachers. Feedback affects the learners' motivation in many different ways. Learners can receive feedback both in the form of rewards such as stickers and awards as contingencies to activities (Kazem, 2005). With respect to learning theories, behavioral theory tends to focus on extrinsic motivation such as feedback and rewards (Weiner, 1990). Receiving a reward or feedback for an action usually increases the likelihood that the action will be repeated. Feedback can help shape students' learning and performance. Learners who succeed at a task and continue to work hard are likely to expect future success and be motivated to expand their effort. Contrary to a behaviorists' argument, feedback can potentially also have a negative effect on learning. Learners who do not work hard and perform poorly on a task may not benefit from feedback (Butler, 2007). By understanding the effects of feedback on students' language learning, the theoretical aspects and related research studies are discussed.

2.4. Academic buoyancy

According to Martin and Marsh (2008), academic buoyancy is defined as students' ability to successfully deal with academic setbacks and challenges that are typical of the ordinary course of school life (e.g., poor grades, competing deadlines, exam pressure, difficult schoolwork). As we argue below, academic buoyancy is distinct from the traditional 'resilience' construct as well as constructs reflecting 'everyday hassles' and 'coping'. Notwithstanding this, it draws on these three research domains to map onto the under-recognized notion of 'everyday resilience'. The present study aims to examine predictors of this everyday academic resilience, academic buoyancy. In assessing this construct and in identifying salient predictors across time, it's hoped that some guidance and shed some light on factors to target in counselling efforts that seek to enhance students' ability to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of everyday life in the academic context. A critical aspect to our study is that buoyancy is proposed to be quite distinct from resilience. To underscore this distinction, we propose the two differ in definitional terms, in terms of the samples to which they relate, the operational differences, methodological distinctions, and indeed the interventions that respond to them. In terms of definitional- and sample-related differences, resilience has typically been characterized in terms of 'acute' and 'chronic' adversities that are seen as 'major assaults' on the developmental processes (Garmezy, 1981).

2.5. Related studies on academic buoyancy

The research literature suggests that the ability to deal successfully with the ups and downs of school life has a positive effect on students' educational experience, as well as enhancing outcomes outside of the academic context. Martin and Marsh (2008) showed that what they initially called academic resilience predicted three psychological and educational outcomes: enjoyment of school, class participation, and general self-esteem. Subsequently, Martin and Marsh (2008) found that academic buoyancy predicted a number of academic outcomes, including homework completion, absenteeism (negatively), and numeracy in relation to mathematics performance in adolescents. Martin (2008) clarified the distinction between academic buoyancy and academic resilience, concluding that both are 'distinct adversity-related constructs', with 'unique positive roles (p. 498). He noted that buoyancy had a direct impact on low-level negative outcomes (anxiety, uncertain control, failure avoidance), whereas its role in more major outcomes, such as failing a subject, was mediated by academic salience. Further, academic buoyancy is a construct referring to students' specific response to daily academic adversity. The nature of the processes explored in our study

suggests that, in order to function optimally in school, it is important to ensure that adversity does not disproportionately affect key academic processes and outcomes. In our research, this meant that academic buoyancy (dealing effectively with adversity) is an antecedent to other academic constructs such as achievement.

Martin (2010) explored the '5Cs' associated with academic buoyancy, which are confidence (which was assessed as confidence self-efficacy in their research), coordination (planning) commitment (persistence), composure (low anxiety), and control. Findings showed that these 5Cs were significant predictors of academic buoyancy and that they mediated the impact of prior academic buoyancy on subsequent academic buoyancy. A more recent paper also examined possible associated variables or mechanisms between academic buoyancy and performance in secondary school students (Collie, Martin, Malmberg, Hall, & Ginns, 2015). These researchers focused on control, which was defined as 'a student's sense of being able to control future academic outcomes' (p. 115) and found that control was important as a link between academic buoyancy and academic performance in the past and the future.

However, focused on the effect of feedback on academic Buoyancy in the oral skill as the main target of language learning.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the study

To test the effect of teachers' feedback on Iraqi EFL learners' speaking and their academic buoyancy, the current study was implemented through a mixed method design. Therefore, the required data were collected both quantitatively through the questionnaire of Academic Buoyancy Scale (ABS) as well as speaking test and qualitatively using an interview.

3.2. Participants

To collect the required data, 80 EFL Iraqi intermediate male and female learners were selected from among the Iraqi EFL learners with age range between 20-28 from among language learners at English institutes in Diyala, Iraq. After the homogeneity test, the participants with one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected for the present study comprising a sample of 60 Iraqi EFL learners.

3.3. Instrumentation

3.3.1. Oxford Placement Test:

The instrument utilized in this study to check the homogeneity of the participants was a standardized test from Oxford University Press used as the pre-test. The test can verify the English learners' level in an hour. The test can check all the skills and the participants' proficiency level. When you take the test, you receive a rating that is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

3.3.2. Academic buoyancy questionnaire

To assess L2 buoyancy, a new questionnaire designed by Jahedizadeh, Ghonsooly, and Ghanizadeh (2019) was used. It includes 27 items measuring four aspects of L2 buoyancy (sustainability, regularity adaptation, positive personal eligibility and positive acceptance of academic life). The items are answered on a five-point scale from 1 ("definitely disagree") to 5

(“definitely agree”); for example, “If I face any failure during my language learning (such as a low grade or teacher negative feedback), I can deal with it very well and never get disappointed, on the contrary I try to learn something from them.” (sustainability), “Sometimes in language learning I make myself do things whether I want to or not (I specify a goal for myself, like learning twenty new words this week),” (regularity adaptation), “I have enough energy to do to do what I have to do, for example the homework that the teacher assigns” (positive personal eligibility) and “I can usually look at a situation in a number of ways, for example positive aspects of homework, exams, and teacher rigidity, not just the negative sides”. Besides, in this study, the L2 Buoyancy Scale was used and validated by Jahedizadeh, Ghonsooly, and Ghanizadeh (2019). According to Jahedizadeh, Ghonsooly, and Ghanizadeh (2019), the L2 Buoyancy Scale has acceptable reliability in EFL context and it enjoys a validity indices computed by CFA: chi-square/df ratio (2.50).

3.3.3. IELTS Speaking test

In order to assess the participants’ speaking and check the effect of teacher’s feedback on this skill, an IELTS speaking test was used. The test took 4 to 5 minutes for each participant and the learners were scored based on the rubrics of scoring a IELTS speaking test. The speaking questions were based on the common IELTS speaking topics and questions selected from actual IELTS speaking tests in 2022. The speaking test consisted of the typical three parts of a IELTS speaking test.

3.3.4. Semi-structured interview:

In order to respond to the third research question of the study and conducting the qualitative phase of the study, the researcher posed an interview in order to collect the required data and answer the research question. Besides, the researcher gave the interview items to some experts in order to validate them.

3.4. The procedure and data collection

In order to conduct this study, the first phase was data collection through an experimental process. In order to collect the required data regarding the provided feedback by the teachers, the researcher firstly distributed the OPT test in order to homogenize the learners. After the homogenization, the researcher divided the learners into two groups of control and experimental group (each class 30 learners). Therefore, in the control group the learners participated in the speaking class without any provided feedback by the teacher while in the experimental group the feedbacks provided by the teachers in their process of speaking. After finishing the treatment (the treatment was conducted online using the webinar online teaching application and the teachers’ feedback were also provided throughout this application; it lasted 7 sessions and each sessions one hours), the researcher conducted the IELTS Test of Speaking as the post-test to both groups in order to measure the level of oral proficiency and measuring the impact of teachers’ provided feedback. For the next step, mean scores of the participants’ post-test speaking score in both groups were obtained and compared to reveal the effect of the provided feedback in the experimental group. Then, Academic Buoyancy Scale (ABS) questionnaire developed by Ghanizadeh, Ghonsooly, and Ghanizadeh (2019) was distributed throughout what’s app and email to the participants of both groups to measure their Academic Buoyancy scores. After that, the researcher obtained the mean scores of the Academic Buoyancy of both groups to compare them regarding their Academic Buoyancy and see if there is any significant difference between the two groups after the treatment. In the second or the qualitative phase of the study, the researcher interviewed 10 participants regarding their attitudes towards feedback effectiveness on their speaking skill development as well

as their academic buoyancy.

4. Results

4.1 Pre-test results

In order to investigate the differences in students' OPT scores between the experimental and control groups, an independent samples t-test was used. According to the test results, p -value = 0.241 showing that there was no difference between the scores in the control and experimental groups. It can be said that the two groups were homogeneous.

The results of the Academic Buoyancy Scale between the two groups in the pre-test revealed that p -value = 0.316, which is more than 0.05, it can be said that there was no difference between the experimental and control groups.

4.2. Test of Normality

To choose the appropriate statistical method, the normality test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov was conducted. According to the results, p -value was above 0.05 for the data distributions obtained by all of the instruments of the study proving the normality of the data as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

| | Buoyancy Exp. | Buoyancy Cont. | OPT Exp. | OPT Cont. | Speaking Exp. Post. | Speaking Cont. post | Speaking Exp. Pre. | Speaking Cont. Pre. |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed) | .082 | .155 | .200 | .054 | .200 | .085 | .066 | .159 |

4.3. Answers to the research questions

The results of the independent-samples t-test between the experimental and control groups showed that p -value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05 showing that academic buoyancy had a significant difference between the two groups and was higher in the experimental group. Therefore, after feedback in speaking in the experimental group, academic buoyancy was more than the control group.

To compare the academic buoyancy of the experimental group before and after feedback in speaking, paired-samples t-test was used.

According to the results, $p=0.000$ meaning that the use of feedback in speaking is effective on academic buoyancy.

Moreover, in order to check the difference in speaking scores between the control and experimental groups in the pre-test, an independent-samples t-test was used. Based on the results, p -value = 0.636, showing there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups.

In order to check the difference in speaking scores between the two control and experimental groups in the post-test, an independent samples t-test was used. As the results showed, p -value = 0.000 revealing that the speaking score in the experimental and control groups were different and according to the average, the scores of the experimental group are higher than the control group.

4.4. Analyzing the learners' mindsets (content analysis)

The researcher first tried to categorize the participants' comments using Content analysis. Therefore, the frequency of the EFL Iraqi learners' answer to any of the interview questions are provided in table 2.

Table 2: Results of the Interview

| Structured interview items | The interviewees(Iraqi learners) | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------|---------|-------|
| | agreement | Disagreement | Percent | Total |
| Do you believe in teachers' feedback? | 10 | 0 | 100% | 10 |
| Some experts believe that teachers' feedback impede speaking rather than improving it, do you think so? | 0 | 10 | 0% | 0 |
| What kind of feedback do you suggest for learning (<i>Explicit correction, Recast, Clarification request, Metalinguistic clues, Elicitation, Repetition</i>), do you believe all of them are helpful? | 10 All of them | 0 | 100% | 10 |
| Do you believe that teachers' feedback is related to Academic buoyancy, too? | 10 | 0 | 100% | 10 |

In the interview phase, that was provided both online and individually, most of the participants reported that teachers' feedback and any types of it is necessary for language learners, particularly for their speaking skills. In the context of Iraq where this study was conducted, the language learners are not managed to practice on their oral skills since they don't have some peers to be master to interact in the second language outside the class environment. Accordingly, teachers' feedbacks are a good panacea for learners to interact in English. Besides, despite the beliefs that teachers' feedback might make the learners who practice oral proficiencies disinterested or despair them to speak the language, the findings of the present study revealed that not only does teachers' feedback not impede learning, but also it improves and develops the language. More significantly, it removes the phenomenon of fossilization. To clarify, the learners naturally produce some statements and sentences that are neither grammatically nor in terms of word-order, collocation, and pronunciation correct. Accordingly, if they are not corrected by teachers urgently, the erroneous utterances might be fossilized. Therefore, 100% percent of the Iraqi interviewees believed that the teachers provided feedbacks are required for improving the oral skill and also 100% of the participants agreed that all the feedbacks (*Explicit correction, Recast, Clarification request, Metalinguistic clues, Elicitation, Repetition*) are required for improving the speaking skill.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The present research was motivated to fill the gap in the existing literature on the potential effect of Iraqi EFL teachers' feedback on Iraqi EFL learners' speaking skill and their academic buoyancy.

The quantitative results showed that Iraqi EFL teachers' feedback had a significant effect on the participants' speaking and their academic buoyancy. It was revealed that the participants in the experimental group who had received feedback outperformed their counterparts in the control group. Moreover, in the interview phase, most of the participants reported that teachers' feedback and any types of it is necessary for language focusing on its effect on their speaking skill and academic buoyancy.

In agreement with our findings, Pan (2010) studied the teachers' feedback on the accuracy of

EFL students' writing. He showed that teachers' feedback provides the students with a better linguistic knowledge and accurate writing with a higher degree after receiving teacher's corrective feedback.

Besides, Abdul Razak, Saeed, and Ahmad (2013) who investigated the effect of error correction on grammatical accuracy in students' essays illustrated that teachers' feedback is a major topic for both teachers and students. Moreover, Chu (2011) has stated that corrective feedback has a positive effect on improving oral English accuracy.

Sheen (2010) studied the effects of providing learners with oral versus written feedback on their production of English articles. The results indicated that implicit oral recasts did not facilitate learning notably.

Also, based on the results of the interviews, the participants delineated that teachers' feedback and any types of it are necessary for language learners, particularly for their speaking skills. According to the participants, informational feedback was also useful to remind students of their weaknesses when they always make the same mistake over and over. Finally, the interviewees said that the reinforcements were given for students' positive learning experience and led them to improve their speaking ability. Therefore, the teachers are required to concentrate on the issue of feedback as a crucial issue. Unlike the assumption that considered feedback as an impediment in learning, the interviewees considered it a vital element in the process of improving the speaking skill. According to the interviews, speaking skill requires receiving feedbacks from a higher source or native-like speakers since the students might have enough knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, but they cannot produce correct and meaningful sentences to interact and communicate effectively. Finally, EFL teachers are recommended to provide their students with corrective feedback to improve their speaking proficiency and academic buoyancy.

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