Differential Effects of Non-linguistic Feedback Types on Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency of EFL Learners' Speaking Performance in Online Education

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Abstract

This study examined the impacts of providing regulatory focus feedback (RFF) in the forms of prevention and promotion as well as reference of comparison feedback (RCF) in the forms of normative and self-referential on EFL learners' speaking complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) in online speaking courses. For this purpose, 100 intermediate EFL learners in a language institute were randomly assigned into four experimental groups and one control group (N=20). Language learners were required to respond to two speaking tasks from the IELTS exam before and after receiving 16 sessions of the intervention. The data were subjected to ANCOVA analysis and paired samples comparisons. The results showed that the participants' speaking performance was better in all four experimental groups compared to the control group. Moreover, the superiority of self-referential feedback in improving the participants' oral production ability over normative feedback was demonstrated. Prevention-focused feedback was shown to be influential in improving accuracy. Finally, practical implications for how EFL teachers can enhance language learners' oral production ability are discussed.

Introduction

Providing appropriate feedback to language learners has been an issue of ongoing debate throughout the years. High-quality feedback undeniably influences language learners' achievement by increasing the probability of deep learning (Hattie & Jaeger, 1998). Therefore, understanding different feedback approaches and their potential effects on learning is crucial for L2 researchers (Ellis, 2017). Numerous studies have investigated the effects of corrective feedback (CF) on the oral production ability of language learners (Gholami, 2021; Ha et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2020; Zhao & Ellis, 2020). However, most studies have focused on comparing the advantages of different CF types (Amiryousefi & Geld, 2019), such as explicit versus implicit feedback, or recasts versus prompts. This narrow focus has left other important areas underexplored. Specifically, there is a notable lack of research examining the impact of behavioral feedback and non-linguistic feedback. These types of feedback could play a crucial role in language acquisition by influencing learners' motivation, anxiety levels, and overall engagement in the learning process. Therefore, further investigation into these underrepresented feedback types is essential to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various forms of feedback can enhance language learning outcomes.

As one of the theories which can be adopted to provide feedback, the fitness and validity of the regulatory focus theory (RFT) proposed by Higgins (1998) in motivation and language learning inquiries has been confirmed by Papi (2018). RFT suggests that viewing an end-state as an ultimate and maximal goal (such as an ideal, benefit, or progress) prompts the adoption of a promotion-focused approach. On the other hand, seeing an end-state as a basic goal (like a duty, avoidance of loss, or protection) leads to a prevention-focused approach.

This implies that different goals can trigger either a promotion-focused enthusiasm or a prevention-focused caution. Regulatory focus functions within a motivational hierarchy that encompasses multiple layers: the objectives individuals aim for (the systemic level), the methods they utilize to chase those objectives (the strategic level), and the choices and actions they execute to fulfill their goals (the tactical level) (Scholer et al., 2010). Feedback aligned with this theory can trigger different responses, acting as an influential mechanism that informs individuals about their progress towards their objectives and what modifications are necessary.

Reference of comparison (self-referential /normative) is another framework based on which behavioral feedback can be provided (Pekrun et al., 2014). While students are involved in performing a task, they continuously seek a benchmark to evaluate their performance (Nicol, 2020). According to reference of comparison, there are two forms of feedback that can assist students in assessing their performance: one involves contrasting an individual's performance with the performance of their peers. The other form is to concentrate on the individual's current performance and measure it against their past one. As Liu et al. (2023) emphasize the importance and necessity of integrating self-reference into the educational system, introducing self-referential feedback into second language (L2) education can be beneficial for L2 learners to experience its advantages.

Overall, behavioral feedback types designed according to the tenets of these two frameworks are not yet implemented in the experimental studies to examine their effects on EFL learners' oral production achievement. Therefore, investigating how feedback based on RFT and by adopting different references of comparison affect CAF can pave the way for new directions in SLA research and add knowledge to what is already known about the process of language acquisition by looking at motivation from the vantage point of feedback.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Feedback

Hattie and Timperley (2007) define feedback as the information provided to learners by an agent regarding their comprehension and performance. They contend that the purpose of giving students feedback is decreasing the difference between their present performance and their ideal performance. From their vantage point, appropriate feedback techniques are the ones which encourage the recipients to expand their effort, deal with more challenging tasks, and value high quality experiences. Research has shown that feedback containing praise on effort is necessary to foster willingness to communicate (WTC) (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). Students also view feedback an essential part of their speaking skill development though their perception of feedback varies and they have different views toward it (Lynch, 2009). Yorke (2003) notes that the psychology of how to provide feedback bears significance in that it can exert effect on the consequent achievement. In this study, four types of feedback based on theories of motivation from educational psychology are examined in the context of language teaching.

1.2. Feedback types

One categorization of feedback is based upon RFT (Higgins, 1998). This theory is one of theories of social and educational psychology that can explain the link between the affective and cognitive aspects of language learning since it can show not only the end-states toward which individuals strive but also the strategies they pursue to reach their desired goals. For instance, a promotion-focused language learner aiming for high scores in final exams or high-stakes tests like TOEFL and IELTS employs an enthusiastic approach to reach their desired outcome. This includes studying additional materials and engaging with native speakers to increase the likelihood of achieving the desired score.

On the contrary, an EFL learner who is prevention-focused takes a vigilant strategy and tries to avoid any grade loss by doing all the assignments and listening carefully in the classroom (Papi, 2016). Therefore, according to this theory, two types of feedback are suggested: promotion and prevention. Within a promotion-oriented framework, learners prioritize progress and achievement, striving to reach their desired goals (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). In fact, individuals with promotion tendency associate success with positive outcomes. Contrariwise, individuals with prevention tendencies seek to avoid undesired end states and fulfil obligations and responsibilities expected from them (Higgins, 1998). Accordingly, feedback types devised considering the principles of this theory are two types: prevention-focused and promotion-focused feedback. In the former, teachers' comments are concerning students' successful performance and growth, while in the latter the teacher will remind students of performance expectations.

According to Higgins (2005), providing learners with feedback based on regulatory focus theory may enhance motivation by emphasizing the importance of the goal, and involve individual's engagement in goal-directed activity. Elliot et al. (2001) hold that feedback emphasizing successful performance enhances students' motivation to approach tasks and achieve mastery goals. Conversely, prevention-focused feedback tends to result in learners developing avoidance-oriented motivation and performance-avoidance goals. Further, Zarrinabadi and Dehkordi (2021) found that promotion-focused feedback positively affects willingness to communicate and classroom participation. By contrast, prevention-focused feedback negatively affects these variables. Han and McDonough (2018) found that tasks with prevention focus were more beneficial than tasks with promotion focus since they increased language learners' speech rate and accuracy.

The other categorization of feedback is according to reference of comparison which classifies feedback into self-referential feedback versus normative feedback. For giving self-referential feedback, the teacher focuses on each student's performance and compares it with that same persons' previous performance, while for giving normative feedback, the teacher adopts social comparison. In other words, when teachers give normative feedback, the standard criterion they implement for evaluating learners' task performance is contrasting their performance against that of a normative group (Negru, 2009).

On the benefits of self-referential feedback, Nicol (2019) states that comments alone cannot bring about progress in students' performance, unless they make a comparison between them and produce internal feedback from that comparison. Besides, Hughes (2011) proposes that self-referential feedback may be a solution to sustain learners' motivation as this approach helps learners concentrate on how to expand their knowledge and skill over time rather than meeting competitive short-term outcomes. Chan and Lam (2010) hold that self-referenced feedback exerts beneficial effects on self-efficacy in the acquisition of English vocabularies in that it can provide learners with a feeling of control over their progress. This type of feedback has been shown to be beneficial in improving positive emotions and decreasing the negative ones such as anger (Pekrun et al., 2014; Mehri et al., 2023). Moreover, Zarrinabadi and Dehkordi (2021) found that self-referential feedback increases WTC and decreases anxiety.

Concerning the effects of normative feedback, Tesser et al. (1988) hold that normative feedback involving social comparison evokes strong emotions and more strongly influences students' perceptions of difficulty of the task. It weakens learners' sense of control over their success and threatens their self-efficacy (Chan & Lam, 2010). It has also been found that normative feedback might tax learners' attentional resources in a way that is and induces extraneous cognitive load. As a result, it will negatively impact learners' ability to generate ideas (i.e., fluency). In addition, cognitive load can not only mediate the relationship between creative thinking and feedback but also the relationship between creative thinking and creative self-efficacy; therefore, as a result of more cognitive load exposed to learners upon receiving normative feedback, their oral production will be affected from different aspects (Redifer et al., 2021). Contrariwise, there are some positive outcomes associated with normative feedback including urging students to have a better performance to show their ability to others and increasing WTC (Popham, 2001; Zarrinabadi & Dehkordi, 2021).

1.3. CAF

Mastering speaking skill is a challenging goal that most L2 learners seek to attain (Paterson, 2021). However, acquiring this skill demands more effort in non-English-dominant countries Pitura (2022). This multi-faceted and complicated skill is not only difficult to acquire but also to measure. CAF has been regarded as three major measures of progress in oral production skill by language researchers (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Accuracy is conformity between language performance and target language standards (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Complexity is the ability to use a high-level language upon which adequate control may not be exercised (Skehan & Foster, 1999). Fluency is the ability to use language without resorting to reformations, pauses, and repetitions (Skehan, 1996). Previous studies have indicated that fluency takes a different trajectory for development from accuracy and complexity. Besides, it takes more time for accuracy and complexity to develop since the nature of the cognitive processes involved is different. As stated by Bui et al. (2019), their development demands the complicated cognitive processes of integration and comparison which are essential for system-revision to happen.

The majority of research on the impact of feedback on oral production ability have been restricted to studying the effect of CF on accuracy and it has been shown that CF benefits grammatical development (Sato & Lyster, 2012). An important point is that as a result of the limitations in the attentional resources, it is difficult to attend to these three facets concurrently (Schmidt, 2001). Therefore, SLA researchers try to propose different interventions to improve CAF simultaneously. After analyzing theoretical and empirical research on CF, Chen et al. (2016) demonstrated that the positive effect of feedback on accuracy has been proved, while still there is controversy on its effect on fluency and complexity. Likewise, a recent feedback study carried out by Nasaji (2020) calls for research on the effect of feedback on fluency. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect of behavioral feedback types on CAF. The following questions guided this research.

1. Does RFF and RCF affect FEL learners' speaking complexity?
2. Does RFF and RCF affect FEL learners' speaking accuracy?
3. Does RFF and RCF affect FEL learners' speaking fluency?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

One-hundred EFL learners (gender: 42 male and 58 female, age range: 18-30, native language: Persian, proficiency level: intermediate) from a private English language institute preparing students for the IELTS exam located in Isfahan, Iran, took part in the study. All the classes were held online using the Skype platform. The classes were assigned to normative, self-referential, promotion, prevention, and control groups (N =20 for each of them). According to Oxford Quick Placement Test Version 2, all participants had similar levels of English language proficiency. For selecting the participants, convenient sampling was applied. However, their division into experimental and control groups was random. The teacher for all of the five groups was the first researcher of the study and was familiar enough with how to practice the feedback types by studying the required references. All the classes were identical in terms of the course book, types of training, and number of sessions (16 sessions).

2.2. Materials and Instruments

2.2.1. Instrument 1

The first instrument employed in the research was the OQPT. Its purpose was to gauge the participants' English proficiency level to confirm uniformity in terms of their general English skills. Previous studies have indicated that the OQPT is a valid test (Wistner et al., 2009), comprising 60 multiple-choice questions covering grammar and vocabulary. Participants were allotted 45 minutes to complete the test, adhering to the provided administration guidelines. The test scores could vary between 0 and 60.

2.2.2. Instrument 2

To elicit the participants' oral production ability, two cue cards from the book entitled "*IELTS Speaking Forecast*" were used. Cue cards are used as part 2 in the speaking module of the IELTS exam and involve one general question with three sub-questions. Language learners were given one minute to think about the questions, and they were informed that they have two minutes to answer the task.

Cue card 1

Describe a person you admire the most. You should say:

- Who this person is.
- What qualities this person has
- How long you have known him or her
- Explain why you admire this person

Cue card 2

Describe an environmental problem that the world is facing now.

- What environmental problem it is
- Why it is happening
- What harmful effects it has
- What can be done to prevent it

2.2.3. Instrument 3

To measure the oral production ability, the CAF triad was used.

Fluency measure: The number of syllables produced was divided by the time in seconds to complete the task, then multiplied by 60. (Wendel, 1997).

Accuracy measure: The percentage of the clauses that were free from syntactic, lexical, and morphological errors was calculated (Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

Syntactic complexity measure: The ratio of clauses to AS units, Analysis of Speech unit, (i.e. "a single speaker's utterance consisting of an independent clause, or a sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either" (Foster et al., 2000, 365) in the participants' task performance was calculated (Foster et al., 2000).

2.3. Procedure

After obtaining the necessary permissions from the head of the language institute to conduct the study, the participants' language proficiency was measured using OQPT. After ensuring the participants' homogeneity, they were divided randomly into 5 groups (4 experimental groups and 1 control group) . Participants in all the groups were given a cue card to answer as the pretest. To answer the task, language learners had 1 minute for planning and 2 minutes to answer the questions. Subsequent to the pretest, the treatment was implemented in the experimental groups.

As the intervention was regarding providing different feedback types, the experimental group participants received feedback on their speaking performance. The feedback types were regarding different aspects of CAF with a specific focus on the assessment criteria of the IELTS. In more detail, in the self-referential group, the teacher made a comparison between a learner's present performance and that of his or her previous performance in terms of strengths and weakness (e.g. In this task you used a rich lexical resource in comparison with previous tasks). In the normative group, however, the teacher compared each student's performance with that of his or her peers and the criterion applied was normative (e.g. You appear to excel beyond your classmates in using idiomatic expressions). Aligned with the tenets of RF, in the promotion group, the teacher accentuated the growth and progress that learners achieved and reminded them of their desires to reach the target score (e.g. Great, you demonstrate strong proficiency with conditional sentences). In contrast, in the prevention group, the teacher highlighted what students should avoid in order not to lose any score (e.g. Using simple sentences has a negative impression on the examiner).

The control group did not receive any feedback on their performance. After receiving 16 sessions of intervention, they responded to another cue card as the posttest. The reason why a different cue card was applied for the posttest is that repeating exactly the same task familiarizes language learners with the content (Bygate, 2001). Hence, their attention will shift from meaning to form. Consequently, their oral performance will promote in fluency and complexity (Bygate, 2001). The audio-recordings of the learners' answers were transcribed, segmented and analyzed applying the measures chosen for assessing CAF. Besides, the interrater reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960) , yielding values of $K = 0.94$ for AS-units , $K = 0.86$ for subordinate clauses and $K = 0.88$ for morphosyntactic errors.

2.4. Data Analysis

The study utilized SPSS v.22 for statistical analyses. Initially, descriptive statistics were conducted for each test. Subsequently, the data met the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance. Thereafter, scores were analyzed using ANCOVA to assess group differences. Post hoc analyses identified specific divergences among groups. Finally, paired samples t-tests discerned within-group variations.

3. Results

3.1. Effects of feedback on fluency

The table below presents the descriptive statistics for group fluency scores.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of fluency*

Group	N	Pretest		Posttest	
		M	SD	M	S
Self-referential	20	118.65	26.40	144.82	33.68
Normative	20	123.94	26.21	129.69	30.00
Promotion	20	113.29	22.58	121.58	25.88
Prevention	20	124.40	30.40	123.05	28.87
Control	20	114.91	28.41	123.39	30.37

Table 1 shows that the self-referential group's posttest mean score exceeded those of other groups. After verifying assumptions, ANCOVA was conducted. Table 2 indicates a significant effect of feedback $F(4, 94) = 4.37$, $P = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$. As $P < .05$.

Table 2. *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Fluency*

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	5	23.042	.000	.551
Intercept	1	12.232	.001	.115
Emotion pretest	1	98.357	.000	.511
feedback	4	4.379	.003	.157
Error	94			
Total	100			
Corrected Total	99			

Post-hoc comparisons revealed that the self-referential group's estimated marginal mean score (145.12) was higher than the normative group's (125.80), and the promotion group's score (126.14) exceeded the prevention group's (118.80). Table 3 shows a significant difference in fluency between the self-referential group and both the normative and prevention groups ($P < .05$).

Table 3. *Pairwise Comparison of Means of Fluency*

(A)Group	(B)Group	Mean difference	Sig
Self-referential	Normative	19.321*	.046
	Promotion	18.985	.053
	Prevention	26.321*	.001
	Control	18.459	0.066
Normative	Promotion	-.336	1.000
	Prevention	7.001	1.000
	Control	-.861	1.000
Promotion	Prevention	7.337	1.000
	Control	-.525	1.000
Prevention	Control	-7.862	1.000

3.2. The Effect of Feedback Types on Accuracy
3.2.1. Effects of feedback on accuracy

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for accuracy scores.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics of accuracy*

Group	N	Pretest		Posttest	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*S*
Self-referential	20	50.53	9.93	63.01	13.01
Normative	20	55.58	18.14	57.26	16.78
promotion	20	54.92	10.16	59.60	15.04
prevention	20	53.58	13.45	64.78	12.92
control	20	55.03	11.57	53.77	7.68

The prevention and self-referential groups had higher mean scores than the other groups. Subsequently, ANCOVA was conducted.

Table 5. *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Accuracy*

Source	*df*	*F*	*Sig.*	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	5	10.605	.000	.361
Intercept	1	31.166	.000	.249
Emotion pretest	1	41.325	.000	.305
feedback	4	4.128	.004	.149
Error	94			
Total	100			
Corrected Total	99			

Table 5 shows a significant effect of feedback F (4, 94) = 4.12, P = 0.00, partial η^2 = .14). With ($P < 0.05$), significant differences between group mean scores on the posttest are evident. Table 6 details the pairwise comparisons.

Table 6. *Pairwise Comparison of Means of Accuracy*

(A)Group	(B)Group	Mean difference	Sig
Self-referential	Normative	8.695	.201
	Promotion	5.979	1.000
	Prevention	.015	1.000
	Control	11.874*	.017
Normative	Promotion	-2.717	1.000
	Prevention	-8.681	.195
	Control	3.179	1.000
Promotion	Prevention	-5.964	1.000
	Control	5.896	1.000
Prevention	Control	11.860*	.016

Table 6 indicates a significant difference in accuracy between the self-referential and control groups (*MD* = 11.87, *P* < .05).

3.3. Effects of feedback on complexity

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for group complexity scores.

Table 7. *Descriptive Statistics of complexity*

Group	N	Pretest		Posttest	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*S*
Self-referential	20	.66	.27	.94	.31
Normative	20	.79	.42	.98	.42
promotion	20	.68	.36	.68	.35
prevention	20	.76	.29	.70	.37
control	20	.60	.40	.55	.28

An ANCOVA was conducted to examine the effect of feedback on complexity. Results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Complexity*

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	5	9.674	.000	.340
Intercept	1	42.064	.000	.309
Emotion pretest	1	22.568	.000	.194
feedback	4	5.263	.001	.183
Error	94			
Total	100			
Corrected Total	99			

Feedback had a significant effect, $F (4, 94) = 5.26$, $P = 0.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .18$). Post hoc comparison results are in Table 9.

Table 9. *Pairwise Comparison of Means of Complexity*

(A)Group	(B)Group	Mean difference	Sig
Self-referential	Normative	.007	1.000
	Promotion	.263	.112
	Prevention	.279	.073
	Control	.354	.008
Normative	Promotion	.102	.139
	Prevention	.102	.087
	Control	.103	.011
Promotion	Prevention	.102	1.000
	Control	.091	1.000
Prevention	Control	.075	1.000

There was a significant difference in mean scores between the self-referential and control groups, as well as between the normative and control groups (*P* < .05).

3.4. Within-group Differences

Paired samples t-test results indicate significant fluency gains in the self-referential and normative groups. The self-referential group also showed significant complexity improvement. Additionally, both self-referential and prevention feedback significantly enhanced participants' accuracy.

Table 10. *Paired samples t-test CAF*

Oral production ability	Fluency		Complexity		Accuracy	
	Pre-Post		Pre-Post		Pre-Post	
Self-referential	118.65	144.82*	0.66	0.94*	50.53	63.01*
Normative	123.94	129.69*	0.79	0.98	55.58	57.26
Promotion	113.29	121.58	0.68	0.68	54.92	59.60
Prevention	124.40	123.05	0.76	0.70	53.58	64.78*

- * $P < .05$

4. Discussion

This study investigated the effect of four types of behavioral feedback on the oral production ability of EFL learners. In the self-referential group, learners' CAF scores were higher than those in the normative group and prevention group. This significant disparity could be explained by referring to the fact that in the self-referential group, experiencing higher levels of WTC and self-confidence led participants to take more risk (Zarrinabadi & Dehkordi, 2021). Consequently, they were more engaged in speaking tasks and showed higher fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Besides, the differences in the performance of these groups can be attributed to the higher levels of negative emotions felt in the latter groups. In the normative group and prevention group higher levels of anxiety, anger, shame, and hopelessness (Mehri et al., 2023) had a debilitating effect on L2 performance. However, in the self-referential group, learners received affective support, and it positively affected their speaking performance. This finding can be justified by the positive effect that activating emotions exert on learning, which is through strengthening engagement, motivation, strategy use, interest, and self-regulation of learning (Loderer et al., 2020). On the contrary, negative emotions lead to disinterest, compromise self-regulation, shallow learning strategy use, and irrelevant thoughts that reduce the cognitive resources accessible for performing tasks (Pekrun et al., 2014; Pekrun et al., 2017). This finding is in line with Lee (2014) in that hope, pride, and enjoyment have a positive relation with L2 performance.

Moreover, by means of self-referential feedback, language learners were provided with some progress checks. Receiving progress checks can be regarded as a reason for improving participants' competence and active engagement in speaking tasks (i.e. higher WTC). This finding aligns well with the findings of Muir and Dörnyei (2013) reporting that receiving progress checks results in higher motivation and participation. Conversely, the lack of perceived satisfaction and progress check in the other groups could result in boredom, which by itself may lead to poor language performance (Pawlak et al., 2020).

Besides, regarding the improvement in the accuracy score of this group, it can be argued that in the self-referential group raising learners' awareness of their strengths and weakness and comparing their performance over time was the reason for accuracy improvement. The other reason could be that, as White (2018) contends, positive emotions increase the ability to noticing the language input and strengthen awareness. Therefore, accuracy improvement in the self-referential group might be because of higher self-awareness and higher noticing ability, which resulted from enjoying positive emotions.

Similarly, the accuracy score of the participants in the prevention-focused group improved. One possible reason could be that learners who received prevention feedback concentrated primarily on the potential losses they might face when participating in speaking tasks. Consequently, they aimed to avoid errors and were anxious about making mistakes during class. Thereby, their accuracy score significantly improved. In fact, when learners adopt performance-avoidance goals, they become afraid of losing their present potential and repeating mistakes. Therefore, these participants strived to avoid repeating mistakes and looking incompetent. This finding is in line with Zarrinabadi and Dehkordi (2021) in that prevention-focused feedback makes learners worried about making mistakes.

Surprisingly, despite experiencing negative emotions, the results showed fluency gains for the participants in the normative group. This finding can be justified by the positive effect that normative feedback can have on WTC in language learners which can subsequently improve their fluency (Zarrinabadi & Dehkordi, 2021). Besides, according to Afzalimir and Safa (2021) competitive learning provides the ground for the speaking ability development. In fact, normative feedback can act as a technique of competitive learning, which improves learners' fluency. As noted by these researchers, competitive classrooms provide a ground in which language learners try to do their best and push each other in order to exceed their own boundaries. Ultimately, this push which is provided by peers performs as an external motivation that might bring about better speaking performance. Besides, the beneficial effect of normative feedback on fluency might highlight how peer scaffolding, as described in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978), contributes to learners' development. In other words, competition can be regarded as an indirect way of providing support for learners which will be done with the help of their peers which can provide pressure for L2 users to go beyond their limits.

Another conceivable reason for the present findings might be the fact that thanks to the rewards which are principally inherent in competitive situations, language learners were more motivated while receiving competitive comments and as a result, they tried their best to demonstrate a better task performance than their classmates (Oloyede et al., 2012) and that is why they performed better in the posttest condition.

Conclusion

The study examined the impact of RFF and RCF on language learners' oral production ability. The findings offered both theoretical and practical support for how different types of behavioral feedback influence the development of CAF. This study's theoretical contributions to L2 behavioral feedback research are found in linking theories from positive psychology with L2 teaching practices and evaluation. Furthermore, the way the feedback types were designed in

this study provided a new perspective on designing non-linguistic feedback types in instructed SLA.

The findings revealed robust CAF gains in the self-referential group. Prevention-focused feedback was shown to be influential in terms of improving accuracy scores. Among the four types of feedback, self-referential feedback was the most beneficial type in improving the participants' oral production ability. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should be cautious about their reaction to their students' speaking performance. Those teachers who intend to increase their language learners' participation as well as their active engagement in speaking task performance are suggested to compare their learners' performance with their prior performance and enlighten them about any progress they have achieved.

The results might be useful for teacher educators in that they can take a closer look at different ways and methods in which they can provide behavioral feedback in addition to CF and engineer different situations in which they can give feedback and transfer this knowledge for the training of their teachers. As we may infer from the results, informing teachers of the importance of the art of providing effective feedback is a necessary aspect in teachers' professional development.

In spite of the informative and interesting results that go in line with our theoretical expectations, this study has to be seen through the light of some limitations. The primary limitation of this research is that it relies solely on quantitative data, which reduces the depth of understanding of the issue. Besides, the findings of this study may be constrained by the specific nature of the task used in the research. Future researchers are invited to study the effects of RFF and RCF types on overall language achievement by measuring it through the test of language proficiency. Likewise, implementing and examining prevention versus promotion feedback types in L2 writing courses and providing learners with these types of feedback on their writing performance is another promising direction for researchers which may yield interesting results.

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