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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE EFFECT OF TEACHERS' INDIVIDUAL VERBAL FEEDBACK AND PRAISE ON EFL LEARNERS' MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE

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#### ABSTRACT

Teachers use different methods to enhance students' motivation and attitude. One method is giving individual verbal feedback and praise which is used to encourage students and provide remediation.

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

#### INTRODUCTION

The enhancement of student motivation and interest is an issue of major concern and focus to most teachers and education researchers. Educators are often concerned about the low motivation level of students in learning a second language. As reviewed by Dörnyei (1994a, 1994b, 2001a, 2001b), there are motivation strategies teachers can adopt in a language classroom. One of the effective motivational teaching strategies is the provision of motivational feedback and praise by teachers. The present study arises from my own experience in working with English teachers in secondary schools and English Institutes in Jahrom. Over my teaching career, I had an ideal opportunity to work in different schools and English Institutes with students of different backgrounds and levels, but most teachers from these different schools and institutes indicated that they faced similar problems with learners having low level of motivation and interest. Teachers were concerned that their students had little interest and motivation in class, failed to remember completely or partially what their teachers had taught, performed poorly academically and had little or no desire to improve. From my teaching experience and observations of other teachers' practices, I felt that motivation was a wide area of concern that had considerable impact on the students' learning outcomes. A comprehensive understanding of learners' motivation and attitude could make a significant contribution to the educational field. This study was designed to investigate how teachers can help students' motivation and attitude to learn through more effective verbal individual feedback and praise.

Feedback is a vital component of any English language course. Ur (1996: 242) defines feedback as information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of the learning task, usually with the objective of improving their performance. It may serve not only to let learners know how well they have performed, but also to increase motivation and build a supportive classroom climate (Richards and Lockhart, 1996). According to Brookhart (2010), feedback includes two factors: cognitive and motivational factors. It gives learners necessary instruction and information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what they should do next—the cognitive factor. Once learners feel they truly understand what to do and why, most of them develop a feeling that they have enough control over their own learning—the motivational factor. This study is designed to examine how teachers can help students' motivation to learn through more effective verbal feedback and praise. The present study was designed to investigate how instructors can help students' motivation and attitude to learn through more effective verbal feedback and praise.

#### Statement of the problem

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

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Researchers have described motivation as a task specific orientation (Heggstad, 1997), or a behaviorally developed attitude (Bandura, 1997). Some researchers have examined motivation in academic situations (Ames, 1990; Cordova and Lepper, 1996), and in social environments (Bandura, 1997). Even though all of these experts and researchers define motivation and its foundational bases differently, they all come to the conclusion that motivation is pivotal to the achievement of success (Driscoll, 2000; Gottfried and Fleming, 2001). Verbal individual motivational feedback as an immediate and direct response to student academic performance is one of the most powerful classroom interventions that teachers can use to foster learning and improve student motivation. Effective feedback plays an important role in motivating further learning as it informs learners about the degree of their learning or their needs for improvement (Hyland and Hyland, 2006b). Effective feedback is essential for improving both teaching and learning. It enables the students to close the gap between the actual and the desired performance; and motivates teachers to modify and improve their teaching practices (Carless, Joughin and Lui, 2006 as cited in Lee, 2007).

Praise is also considered to have beneficial effects on learners' self-esteem, motivation, and performance. One group of researchers and teachers claim that normally a feedback message of praise increases motivation and leads to improvement in learners' performance (Cameron and Pierce, 1994; Dev, 1997; Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). Some researchers state that feedback which contains praise can be more effective since it causes a positive affective reaction, which is often linked to increased motivation and higher goals (Delin and Baumeister, 1994; Ilies and Judge, 2005). The researcher hopes the results of this study would provide educators and language teachers in Iran with evidence concerning the effectiveness of teachers' motivational verbal feedback and praise in L2 classes.

### Significance of the study

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

### Research question

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

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

### Hypothesis

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Teachers' verbal feedback and praise have no effect on Iranian EFL learners' motivation and attitude.

### Review of related literature

Based on Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is conceptualized as information provided by an agent with regard to aspects of one's performance or understanding. They suggest that:

A teacher or parent can give corrective information, a peer can give an alternative strategy, a book can provide information in order to clarify ideas, a parent can provide great encouragement, and a student can look up the answer to evaluate its correctness. Feedback thus is a "consequence" of performance (p.81). The definition presented above investigates different possible types of feedback given by different parties. The present study focuses just on teacher feedback. According to Black, and Wiliam (1998) having a desired aim is one of the three essential elements in feedback:

'When a learner is trying to learn, feedback about the effort has three main elements: recognition of the final goal, evidence about the present position, and clear understanding of a way to close the gap between the two situations' (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.141). To close this gap, students need to improve their knowledge and receiving enough constructive feedback is the means to this goal. The primary goals for giving feedback are to reinforce appropriate and desired learner behavior, let learners know how they are doing, and extend suitable learning opportunities. They strongly stress the significance of feedback to student to improve their current performance. The following discusses two kinds of feedback and their effectiveness. They include 'traditional' feedback and dialogic feedback.

### 'Traditional' teacher feedback-giving practice

To start with, this section tries to study some 'traditional' methods of delivery of feedback. 'Traditional' refers to a summative method of feedback delivery by teachers where feedback is from time to time and only given at the end of a summative assessment, in a written form on the report card. In 'traditional' feedback-giving, teachers often perceive feedback as a simple acquisition process. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) state that, feedback is often conceptualized by teachers as a transmission process where 'they 'transmit' feedback messages to learners about what is right or wrong in their academic work, about its weaknesses and strengths, and learners use this information to make improvements' (p.200).

As a result, feedback delivery is mainly controlled by and seen as the responsibility of teachers, so undermining the active engagement of students. These basic arguments against the sole use of point scale without appropriate descriptors can pave the way for a detailed discussion of the use of other sorts of feedback in the next section. They include constructive feedback – feedback with suggestions, and evaluative feedback, which are discussed more in the section that follows.

## The process of conducting dialogic feedback

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

### Verbal feedback

In the conduct of verbal feedback, an effective motivational feedback strategy is 'prompting an exchange of comments between educator and student. In this process, a two-way direct interaction between students and teacher is facilitated while at the same time helping educator-assessors check to what extent learners understand their learning goals. This can inform both teaching and learning regularly. As stated by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), to conceptualize feedback as a mutual dialogue rather than as information transmission can enhance the effectiveness of feedback because learners can play a more effective and active role and use the feedback to develop and regulate their performance. The dialogue can be about the aspects of learners' performance or the subjects that form the basis of the assignment. What is important is to generate a formal or informal discussion between learners and educators so that learners can develop a clear understanding of standards and expectations, to check out and correct misunderstandings and then get an immediate encouraging response to difficulties.

### Written feedback

Educators can have verbal interaction with learners in the form of a real dialogue; they can also deliver their feedback in written form. It can be done in a structured manner with success criteria and rubrics; with open positive comments embedded with praise, suggestion and criticism; and in the form of a journal that is more student-oriented. When examining the role of written feedback, Hyland and Hyland (2001) came upon the point that feedback can function well as praise, criticism and/or suggestion. They recognized in their research that praise was generally used to soften suggestion and criticism. Their survey also shows that learners vary significantly in what they want from educators in the form of feedback, so that there is a great need for teachers to change their feedback to fit specific learners and their personalities and needs. This gives importance to the issue of the need to deliver 'individualized feedback'.

### Non-verbal and non-written feedback

This section investigates feedback that is neither written nor verbal. It takes the form of gestures, facial expression, rewards, etc. Tunstall and Gipps (1996) have given some examples. They propose that there are four types of evaluative feedback - rewarding, punishing, approving and disapproving. Rewarding as a type of evaluative feedback can be provided in the form of symbols and treats (e.g. stickers).

Approving is a positive type of feedback, joined with the normative in relation to social and educational values. Non-verbal means of approving feedback embraces physical touch like holding learners' arms and a tap on the shoulder, or facial expressions such as nodding or smiles. Disapproval can be demonstrated in using physical gestures and a firm tone like pointing while speaking. The above-illustrated non-verbal and non-written feedback can be seen as different means of motivating (or demotivating) learners extrinsically or intrinsically.

## Content of dialogic feedback

### Constructive feedback – feedback with suggestions

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

With regard to constructive feedback, learners need advice on how they can improve. They need some helpful suggestion, advice or guidance. As stated by Black *et al.* (2004), 'comments should shed light on what has been done well and what still needs improvement and give enough guidance on how to make that improvement' (p.11). If constructive feedback described above is given, learners should be able to find their weaknesses and become more effective learners, while they do not feel that they are failures. In sum, constructive feedback assists learners to find their weaknesses and provide them with the strategies and skills in making improvement.

### Evaluative feedback

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

### Positive feedback

One prevalent way to classify feedback is whether it is positive or negative. 'Positive feedback is seen as pleasing, complimentary, and consistent with the learner's self-image' (Nicols, 1995, p.289). While receiving positive feedback, students are more likely to feel supported since it improves the students' self-esteem. A popular type of positive feedback is 'praise'. Salili (2001) maintains that praise is a positive feedback stating teacher's approval of learners' behavior or academic work. It is also claimed that praise is more than just a simple feedback on performance as it shows educators' positive affect and provides information about the value of the learner's behavior. This explanation emphasizes that praise is a type of positive feedback which is embedded with the teachers' positive affection and it is rich enough in information.

A more significant aspect of praise is that it also consists of information telling students the positive value of their performance. Having explained some of the attributes of positive feedback, it is worth examining the role of positive feedback in motivating learners to learn. It is discussed that positive feedback in the form of praise has a motivating function in maintaining students' learning. Nonetheless, it is vital to mention that praise can have negative effects on learners' motivation if it is misused or overused. Brophy (1981) proposes that 'praise delivered to the wrong student, or in the wrong way, or under the wrong circumstances may be not only ineffective but counterproductive' (p.21).

### Negative feedback

Negative feedback refers to feedback that is 'critical that may be rejected if not delivered skillfully' (Nicols, 1995, p.289). This section examines the facets and functions of criticism in addition to its relationship with learners' motivation to learn. Criticism is a type of negative feedback. As stated by Salili (2001): 'Criticism is described as showing disapproval of learners' academic work or behavior. It shows that the behavior is not suitable or the performance is poor' (p.81). With regard to the application of criticism by educators, Brophy (1981) proposes that criticism and praise would better be used together. Teachers do so to reinforce learners systematically.

As reviewed above, positive feedback does not necessarily motivate learners. If it is used inappropriately, it can have negative effects on learners' motivation to learn. In the same way, negative feedback such as criticism does not necessarily bring harmful effects to learners' motivation. Salili (2001) asserts that 'negative feedback, if not excessive and if it is followed by helpful guidance and explanations, may have a positive effect of motivating learners to work harder' (p.88). The above has examined the tone of feedback – positive feedback and negative feedback, including praise and criticism respectively.

### Motivation

The significance of motivation in improving foreign/ second language learning is undeniable. Lifrieri (2005, p. 4) reports that "most people would defiantly mention motivation among the factors which affect individual levels of success in any activity – like language learning –". Brown (2000, p.160) points out that "it is easy in L2 learning to insist that a student will be successful with the appropriate motivation". In the same way, Gardner (2006, p. 241) reports that "learners with stronger motivation will do better and more successful than learners with lower levels".

He also claims that "if a learner is motivated, he/she has enough reasons (motives) for being involved in the same activities, puts more effort, persists in the activities, pays attention to the tasks, has more desire to reach the goal, enjoys the activities more and more, etc." (Gardner, 2006, p. 243). A large number of research studies have demonstrated that motivation is vital for L2 learning since it directly influences how much effort learners make, their level of proficiency and how long they maintain and persevere in L2 skills after completing their language study (Cheng and Dornyei, 1998; Trang and Baldauf, 2007). In the same way, it gives students the driving force required to continue in a long learning process.

Cognitive skills in learning the target language are not a guarantee that a student can successfully master that language. In fact, in many cases, learners with greater L2 learning motivation get better grades and achieve better language proficiency (Wu and Wu, 2009). Moreover, high levels of motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies both in students' language aptitude and learning context (Dornyei, 2001a).

### Attitudes

Researchers in the fields of psychology and education, especially language learning, have offered several definitions of attitude which convey different meanings in different contexts and from different stand views (Alhmal, 2007). Gardner (1985) describes attitudes as important components of motivation in L2 learning. According to Gardner, "motivation ... refers to the combination of desire and effort to attain the goal of learning the L2 in addition to favourable attitudes toward learning the language" (p. 10). On the whole, Learning L2 is closely related to the attitudes towards that language (Starks and Paltridge, 1996). Karahan (2007, p.84) asserts that "positive language attitudes let students have positive orientation towards learning it". Hence, attitudes may perform a very influential role in L2 learning as they would appear to influence learners' success or failure in their learning.

### Praise

Praise has been considered as "favorable interpersonal feedback" (Baumeister, Hutton, and Cairns, 1990, p. 131) or "positive evaluations made by an individual of another's products, performances, or attributes" (Kanouse, Gumpert, and Canavan-Gumpert, 1981, p. 98). In general, praise is considered to have beneficial effects on learners' self-esteem, motivation, and performance. Therefore, educators are encouraged to use praise effectively as a reinforcer of a desired behavior (Dev, 1997). Feedback which contains praise can be more effective since it causes a positive affective reaction, which is often linked to increased motivation and higher goals (Delin and Baumeister, 1994; Ilies and Judge, 2005).

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

### Studies on Feedback, Praise, Motivation and Attitude

Burnett (2002) studied more than 700 Australian elementary school students to examine which types of feedback they prefer. His conclusion from a questionnaire is that negative teacher feedback and effort feedback are related to the learners' perceived relationships with their educators, and generally satisfied learners feel they get more positive feedback (such as general praise, effort feedback and general ability feedback) and less negative teacher feedback than dissatisfied learners. Brophy (1981) proposes that educators rarely praise learners in class, using 6% of the total class time on average to do so (as cited in Burnett, 2002, p. 7).

Merrett and Wheldall (1987) claim that “Even in a classroom, where an educator praises once every five minutes, the rate of praise for the average learner would be once every two hours” (as cited in Burnett, 2002, p. 7). In sum, the frequency of both positive and negative feedback is generally low. In “Teacher Praise: What Students Want,” Elwell and Tiberio (1994) attempt to find out whether learners generally value praise, as many educators and administrators may, but many learners may or may not—especially in a whole-class setting. Using the Praise Attitude Questionnaire, the writers conclude that most learners perceive praise as a significant element in their academic and social behaviors.

Learners on average prefer more private than public praise, the more so with age. While not explicitly and directly addressing feedback and praise, Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, and Prendergast (1997) explain the conditions needed for “opening dialogue” (p. 39). An indication a message has been received in dialogue is called *uptake* which is defined as occurring when the hearer asks the speaker about something which has been said previously. The writers state that meanings emerge fully through a face-to-face conversation, in which the speaker and hearer arrive at a clear shared understanding, the same as Vygotsky’s *negotiation of meaning*.

Consequently, the writers claim that without this negotiation, learning basically stops. (1997, p. 33) They also stated that the time spent on class discussion has a significant positive effect on learners and learning. This finding is closely relevant to this study because uptake is an indicator that feedback has been given or perceived correctly, and it happens only if there is a clear sharing of ideas and comments by all interlocutors.

El-Tatawy (2002) presents a complete study of negative feedback in SLA. First of all, El-Tatawy carefully reviews several accepted definitions of corrective negative feedback, as it usually happens in oral production. Chaudron (1988) defines corrective feedback as “any educator behavior that minimally tries to inform the student of the fact of error” (as cited in El-Tatawy, 2002, p. 1). According to Lightbown and Spada (1999) corrective feedback is defined as “any indication to students that their use of L2 is incorrect” (as cited in El-Tatawy, 2002, p. 1) and this feedback can be either implicit or explicit. Long (1996), Gass (1991), and Chaudron (1988) all claim that corrective feedback plays a significant role in SLA.

Gass (1991) proposes that feedback may be used as an attention-getting device that develops SLA. As an important component of positive feedback, laughter has been scarcely examined empirically in the L2 learning environment. However, having a sense of humor is a frequently recommended L2 classroom teaching strategy. In an action research case study, Magilow (1999) expresses clearly a link between error correction and classroom affect in his German L2 classes he taught.

In this survey Magilow tries to identify the complicated balancing act of the language educator; that is, providing a comfortable classroom environment and at the same time correcting overt errors. Magilow suggests that once positive affect is enacted—by use of humor, etc.—the teacher will be able to correct learners’ errors without damaging their self-perception.

Magilow discovered that many learners prefer more negative teacher feedback than had been given, and also for the teacher to let more student-to-student talk, time often monopolized by the educator, as discussed by Nystrand *et al.* (1997). The survey conclusion is that the issue of feedback may be inseparable from that of rapport.

When a teacher-student rapport is created, explicit error correction may be completely effective. Imai’s (1989) thesis aim is to find whether praise or correction is more likely to improve oral L2 proficiency. In brief, Imai hypothesizes that Japanese EFL university students’ grammar and pronunciation improve by error correction, but fluency would improve by praise. Accordingly, Imai’s conclusion is that neither correction nor praise has different effects on pronunciation; correction may have had a positive effect on oral comprehensibility.

Imai’s (1989) literature review investigates the role of feedback in SLA in detail. Vigil and Oller (1976) suggest that positive feedback may be in the form of praise markers like “OK,” “fine,” “good,” and “excellent” (as cited in Imai, 1989, p. 18), or a positive personal response. Moskowitz (1976) reports teacher techniques related to feedback giving practices. Moskowitz (1976) claims that effective feedback should be immediate and direct. This kind of feedback is best given in a warm, accepting classroom climate. He also stresses that effective praise for learners’ behavior is frequent, varied, and often nonverbal.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Participants

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

### Data Collection Procedure

In order to collect the data required for the fulfillment of the objectives of this study one of the teachers agreed to participate in the study. Two classes were selected randomly. Both classes were the same in terms of their level of English proficiency and gender and also they had the same English teacher. One class was considered as the control group (class A) and the other one was the experimental group (class B). The students’ motivation and attitude were measured twice by the prepared questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the study. The teacher was provided with a list of positive sentences and praise which had to be used as motivational tools during the semester while giving feedback to the learners.

All the participants in class A received motivational supportive feedback and praise along with required help and guidance individually and regularly.

**Research Design**

The research design for this study was an analytical (quantitative) survey which provided a numerical description of the variables. In the process of the study, teacher motivational feedback and praise were considered as the independent variable that was expected to bring about changes in students’ motivation and attitude which would be the dependent variables. The change in students’ motivation and attitude depended on the positive motivational feedback and praise they received.

**Instrument**

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

Attitude and motivation questionnaire: The questionnaire is an adaptation of the Attitude / Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Gardner and Lambert (1972), which has been translated and employed to describe students learning ESL in many countries. The AMTB is reported to have good reliability and validity (Gardner, 1985; 1980; Gardner and Smythe, 1981). The reliability for the modified questionnaire was calculated, and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.7. AMTB consists of a series of Likert scale items. Items are used to elicit information regarding the students’ motivation/attitudes towards learning the English language.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the researcher translated the questionnaire into Persian. Then it was submitted to a group of English professors to check the translation. To ensure its validity, the questionnaire was piloted prior to being used in the main study. On the basis of the outcome from the pilot study, the questionnaire was amended and the final draft was prepared for the main study.

**Data Analysis Procedure**

The data in the present study is quantitative. The quantitative data of the questionnaire is analyzed in terms of means, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To report, describe, and summarize the important general characteristics of the sets of the obtained data, descriptive statistics were used. In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the pretest and posttest before and after the treatment and to check whether the teacher’s individual verbal feedback and praise had improved the participants’ motivation and attitude or not, the paired samples t-test was run.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

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

**Descriptive Statistics**

To report, describe and summarize the important general characteristics of the sets of the obtained data, descriptive statistics were used. Table 4.1 reports descriptive statistics for Attitude and Motivation of the Experimental Group.

**Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics for Attitude and Motivation of Experimental Group**

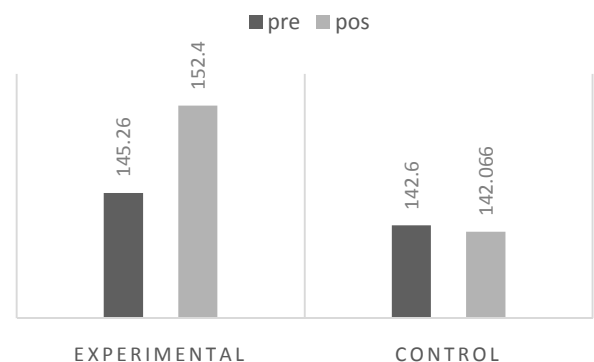
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	145.26	9.54	133	161
Posttest	152.4	8.02	137	163

As Table 4.1 shows the mean score of the participants in the experimental group is 145.26 in the pretest and 152.4 in the posttest. The participants in the pretest have the standard deviation of 9.54 whereas that of the posttest is 8.02. Table 4.2 reports descriptive statistics for Attitude and Motivation of the control Group. The mean scores and standard deviations are illustrated as well.

**Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics for Attitude and motivation of Control Group**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
pretest	142.6	5.89	134	159
Posttest	142.06	5.16	109	171

As Table 4.2 shows the mean score of the participants in the control group is 142.6 in the pretest and 142.06 in the posttest. The participants in the control group have the standard deviation of 5.89 in the pretest whereas that of the participants in the posttest is 5.16.



**Figure 4.1. Mean differences of attitude and motivation between pretest and posttest of the experimental and control Groups**

**Inferential Statistics**

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the pretest and posttest before and after the treatment and to check whether the teacher’s individual verbal feedback and praise had improved the participants’ attitude and motivation or not, the paired samples t-test was run.

**Discussion on Research Question**

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

**Table 4.3. Paired samples statistics for the effect of verbal feedback on attitude and motivation of Experimental Group**

	Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
	pretest – posttest	7.13		11.679	3.015			

According to Table 4.3, there was a significant difference in the scores for no verbal feedback condition in the pretest ( $M=152/4$ ,  $SD= 8.02$ ) and verbal feedback effect on attitude and motivation in the posttest ( $M=145.26$ ,  $SD=9.54$ ),  $t(2.36)$ ,  $p < 0.05$

**Table 4.4 Paired Samples statistics for the effect of verbal feedback on attitude and motivation of control Group**

	Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
	Pre- posttest	.60000		16.88110	4.35868			

According to Table 4.4, there was no significant difference in the scores for lack of verbal feedback in the pretest ( $M=142.06$ ,  $SD= 5.89$ ) and posttest ( $M=142.6$ ,  $SD=5.16$ );  $t(0.138)$ ,  $p > .05$

- Do teachers' verbal feedback and praise have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' attitude and motivation?

### Research Question

This section addresses the research question: Do teachers' verbal feedback and praise on Iranian EFL learners' attitude and motivation? As indicated previously, teachers can employ some skills and strategies to make feedback more effective and motivating. Following the research question, this study aimed at enhancing the effects of feedback on students' motivation and attitude and used praise to reduce the negative effects of suggestions and criticisms. Following this framework, the findings from the data in relation to this question are discussed below:

The results of the t-test revealed that the difference between the experimental and control groups was significant. When the experimental group received the teacher's verbal feedback and praise; there were changes in their attitudes and motivation toward the English language. The control and experimental groups were equal in all conditions, so the difference between them was due to the teacher's verbal feedback and praise. The participants in the experimental group had significant changes in their attitude and motivation. This finding echoes what researchers previously found. It found that normally a feedback message having praise increases motivation and leads to improvement in learners' performance (Cameron and Pierce, 1994; Dev, 1997; Pintrich and Schunk, 2002).

This explanation emphasizes that praise can enhance the positive effects of feedback and consequently improve students' motivation and achievements. This is also consistent with the findings gathered from the feedback studies which revealed that feedback which contains praise can be more effective since it causes a positive affective reaction, which is often linked to increased motivation and higher goals (Delin and Baumeister, 1994; Ilies and Judge, 2005). This also supports Shanab and colleagues (1981) that positive verbal feedback affects students' attitude and motivation. Csizer and Dornyei drew the same conclusion in their research and placed attitude at an important position for language learning (Csizer, K and Dornyei, Z, 2005). This is because positive language attitude lets learners have positive orientation toward language learning. Empirical data by some researchers in line with the findings of this study suggest that verbal rewards had also positive impacts on students' attitude.

(Deci, Koestner, and Ryan, 1999; Eisenberger and Cameron, 1996; Tang and Hall, 1995).

### Conclusion

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is information provided by an agent (e.g., parent, teacher, peer, book, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. It occurs typically after instruction that seeks to provide knowledge and skills or to develop particular attitudes. Feedback is among the most critical influences on student learning. On the other side, feedback can have negative effects on the learners if the teachers do not pay enough attention to the students' emotional feelings. As a solution to this threat, this study followed a new strategy to overcome this danger to the students' motivation and feelings. Therefore, the writer took benefit of the positive effects of praise and positive feedback in order to sugar the pill and enhance the positive effects of feedback on the students' motivation, attitude.

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

The study supports what previous research (Hufton, *et al.*, 2003) has found with respect to teacher influence in relation to student motivation. On the whole, the findings in this study provided insight into student motivation to learn in Navid English Institute in Jahrom. In response to the research question, the study found that the participants in the experimental group had significant changes in their attitude and motivation. The results of the study revealed that individual verbal feedback and praise had strong impact on the

students' level of motivation and attitude. The instructors, student advisors, curriculum designers, and all other educators involved in the teaching, instructing, and, consequently, motivating of students, must understand the motivation of the students they teach. These professionals should be provided with contemporary, research-based information about the relationships among the motivational factors within specific academic ability domains. The findings in this research began to dissect the motivational factors of students in the hope that educators will be able to design teaching strategies and curricula more effectively to help their students achieve success. This finding can be used by educators in the development of their instruction.

### Implications

This research study has its practical implications for various aspects of language teaching profession. These implications can encourage the relatives of the related field, especially in Iran, both to do more serious researches on the teachers' perceptions as the most involved actors of foreign language teaching stage regarding various aspects of feedback, motivation and their roles in language teaching and to make changes in the manner of feedback giving and even the method of teaching English. Teacher training programs must pay more attention to the elements of motivation, attitude, praise and feedback. A course in the role and method of effective feedback-giving skills and motivation can enhance foreign language teachers' awareness and competence. In order for the teachers to be aware of the more new beliefs, attitudes, and studies about the role of these elements, teacher training programs must be continued to appear as in-service trainings, and it is better to be a lifelong program for the teachers. The last but not the least important group that this study has a lot of words with is the group of language teachers. Iranian foreign language teachers should be aware of the importance of motivation and feedback in the language classroom, and they should try to improve their knowledge of feedback-giving techniques and motivation. This section presents in detail some implications of this study.

### Limitations of the study

There were a number of limitations to the present study which should be highlighted so as to avoid any overgeneralizations and misinterpretations of the results. Although this study aimed at studying the impact of teacher feedback and praise on motivation and attitude, the results of this study cannot be generalized because of the small number of the participants. Only 30 students in the two groups (experimental and control group) were involved in the study; the sample might not be representative of the target population of EFL students. To determine its broader application, other populations would need to be examined. Finally, various instruments such as teachers' interviews, learners' interviews, class observations etc. should be used to triangulate and validate the results as much as possible.

### Recommendations for further research

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

would be insightful to explore if the results of this study can be replicated in settings such as other schools and institutes of a different background in Iran or even other places outside Iran, where the context and cultural backgrounds are different. This study did not plan to, and thus had not done any follow-up work in regard to how students put teachers' feedback into action. In any future longitudinal research, this can be done through lesson observations, study of student works, and follow-up interviews, so that student responsibility can be studied. For lesson observation, if teachers find it intimidating or if students find it uncomfortable for a research observer to be present, researchers can use a video-camera instead.

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