# Effects of Explicit Corrective Feedback with Metalinguistic Explanations on Oral Productions of English Tenses: Iranian EFL Learners' Attitudes

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## Abstract

The current classroom study was conducted to investigate the EFL learners' attitudes towards corrective feedback (CF) mediations after speaking assessment tasks on their effects on learning four English tenses. To do that,27 upper-intermediate participants were randomly allocated to the experimental group and 27 students to the control group. The sample was taken based on convenience sampling regarding their scores on a model of Oxford Placement Test. This study consisted of a pre-test, treatment, a post-test, and an attitudinal questionnaire. To confirm the validity and reliability of the pre-test speaking questions, we conducted a pilot test on a number of students. Faqeih's (2012) questionnaire was used in this study to measure the participants' attitudes towards picture-cued task, error correction in general, and explicit CF on speaking assessment. Using t-test, the data were analyzed for the first research question and the results revealed that the experimental group performed more effectively in learning four English tenses than the control group after being provided with CF. A One-way ANOVA was also run to analyze the attitudinal questionnaire. The study also indicated that participants had positive attitudes towards receiving explicit CF after speaking assessment. The current study can contribute to improving oral skills of EFL Iranian learners after being provided with CF.

**keywords:** *Speaking Assessment; Explicit Corrective Feedback; Intensive Task of Speaking; English Tenses; Picture-Cues; Learner Attitude*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Corrective Feedback

It is typical of all language classrooms to have a diversity of interaction types, particularly between students and teachers. Among those, greater attention has been given to oral feedback, which

students receive from their teachers implicitly or explicitly. In addition, students are likely to be asked to clarify their utterances. Studies have shown that oral feedback has a pivotal role in second language learning and contributes to interactional process to facilitate learning (Mackey, 2006). Oral corrective feedback or interactional feedback, which is theoretically related to the sociocultural theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and the interaction hypothesis, has been considered productive in improving the implicit and explicit L2 knowledge of forms (Nassaji, 2016).

Accordingly, the basic component of form-focused instruction in second language learning is corrective feedback (Amini & Ashrafi, 2019). In the early sixties, language experts considered language errors as the indication of progression (Faqeih & Mardsen, 2014). Corder (1974) mentioned that the learner's errors are useful for teachers because they represent the items of information that the learners have learned. Subsequently, teachers can reform their instructions based on the learners' needs. Likewise, Hendrickson (1978) points out that language errors are a widespread phenomenon of learning. Thus, systematic error analyses help the researchers, teachers, and learners understand the language acquisition process more properly. Correspondingly, Hendrickson (1978) introduced some relevant questions considering the error types that can be modified, those in charge of error corrections, and the different ways of correction. Researchers have scrutinized the questions mentioned by Hendrickson for a long time. On that account, different types of CF that are most effectual with regard to the students' learning have been discussed by Carroll & Swain (1993); Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam (2006); Li (2010); Lyster & Ranta (1997); Lyster, Saito, & Sato (2013); Mackey & Goo (2007); Russell & Spada (2006); Sheen (2006); and Sheen & Ellis (2011). A growing body of research has shown that oral CF contributes to L2 development though its effects may be limited by individual learner differences and contextual factors (Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2013; Pawlak, 2017).

The theoretical framework of this study is based on one of the moves of Lyster, Saito & Sato's taxonomy (2013). Hanh and Xuan Tho (2018) state that a relatively recent oral CF classification model has been developed by Lyster, Saito, and Sato (2013) who have helped expand the previous models. They put different feedback moves on a continuum regarding the dichotomy of prompts and reformulations (see Figure 1). At the furthest end of the explicit point are explicit correction and metalinguistic explanation, while at implicitness end are recasts and clarification requests (Hanh & Xuan Tho, 2018).

Obviously, explicit correction refers to providing the correct form explicitly as a response to student error, while implicit CF requires the elicitation of the correct response from students in order to help them correct their mistakes (Babanoğlu & Ağçam, 2015). Prompts, as a CF, provide the learners with the chance of self-repairing by withholding the correct form (Karimi & Heidari Darani, 2018). In contrast, as a kind of feedback, in reformulation, the teacher rebuilds the wrong utterance to make it accurate (Vahdani Sanavi & Nemati 2014).
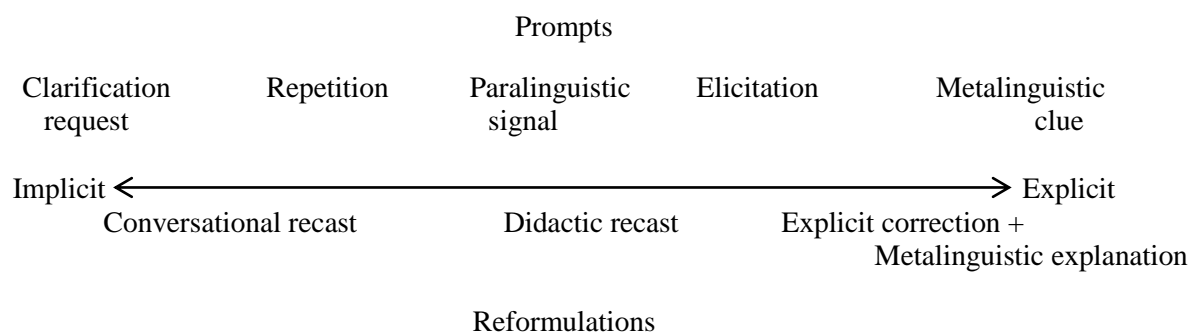
<div align="center">Prompts</div>

| Clarification request | Repetition | Paralinguistic signal | Elicitation | Metalinguistic clue |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Implicit ⟵ ——————————————————————————————— ⟶ Explicit

| Conversational recast | | Didactic recast | | Explicit correction + Metalinguistic explanation |

<div align="center">Reformulations</div>

Figure 1 *CF Types continuum (taken from Lyster, Saito and Sato, 2013, p. 5 & adapted from Lyster & Saito 2010; Sheen & Ellis 2011)*

According to Figure 1, explicit correction is a kind of reformulation of a student's utterance and can have a definite indication of an error and metalinguistic explanations (Mansouri Zadeh & Abdullah,

2014). Hence, the potential factor to contribute to accuracy improvement in language learning depends on the type of corrective feedback being provided. In spite of ample evidence approving both implicit (Lalande, 1982) and explicit corrective feedback (Yilmaz, 2012), this research domain, i.e. investigating different intervening variables, is dramatically on the rise (Mansourizadeh & Abdullah, 2014). Providing metalinguistic explanation with explicit corrective feedback is a recent developing area of research on corrective feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). In line with this trend of research, this study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of oral explicit feedback with meta-linguistic explanation on EFL learners' acquisition of some English tenses while engaged in speaking assessment. Some related studies on corrective feedback are discussed later.

## 1.2 Intensive Task of Speaking Assessment

Assessment is a well-known term in current educational practice and assists the teachers to discover the practicality and benefits of the instructional activities in which the students are engaged. Hence, assessment can be a bridge between learning and teaching (William, 2013).

According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), there are four basic types of speaking assessments: *imitative*, *intensive*, *responsive*, and *extensive*. Accordingly, *intensive* types are the production of short sentences to represent competence in a narrow band of English proficiency. They manifest in *direct response tasks* to elicit an exact grammatical form, *read-aloud tasks* which include reading sentences up to paragraphs, *oral questionnaires* which require the test-takers to read dialogs with some omitted lines to complete, and *picture-cued tasks* that can be used to elicit oral language performance.

There has been some considerable controversy concerning the efficacy of CF and the ways of correction (Faqeih & Mardsen, 2014). For example, Krashen (1982) propose that there is no need to provide the students with CF. In contrast, some scholars are in favor of providing the students with CF (Carroll, Roberge, & Swain, 1992; Ellis, 2009; Hanh & Xuan Tho, 2018; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long, 1996; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen, 2004); they mention that feedback is an important factor in language learning since it makes the students pay attention to the targeted forms. Thus, students are more likely to fix their incorrect productions. Furthermore, the usefulness of CF and its intended learning results may be different in classroom settings and laboratory (Li, 2010; Spada & Lightbown, 2009). Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam (2006) suggest that classroom-based research is the best way to identify the validity of the CF.

This study was designed to investigate the effects of explicit CF with metalinguistic explanations on improving the students' acquisition of four English tenses in intensive speaking assessment. According to Ryan (2012), the main advantage of this method is that the student immediately recognizes that the form he/she provided was incorrect. However, the disadvantage with this method is that the student may not retain the corrected form that was provided for him/her. Therefore, the following metalinguistic explanations can compensate for its demerits. Additionally, this study investigated the participants' attitudes towards CF on speaking assessment.

## *2. Literature Review*

Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of CF on language learning from a variety of perspectives. Sarandi and Çelik (2019) conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate the effects of explicit recasts and output-only prompts, on the acquisition of English third person '-s' and a clear advantage of explicit recast on the oral productions were revealed. The findings suggested that explicit recasts might have more effective impacts on the acquisition process than only prompts.

Guchte and Braaksma (2015) examined the effect of recasts and prompts on the acquisition of comparative and German dative. The results revealed that the prompt group performed better that the

recast and control group. Additionally, the findings indicated that the recasts' effectiveness was controlled by the structures under the study. Generally, the study showed that recasts were not mostly as productive as the prompts for learners to do self-correction.

Moreover, Hashemian and Farhang-Ju (2018) investigated the effects of metalinguistic feedback on FI/FD intermediate L2 learners' writing accuracy. In spite of the same results, the FD learners were better than the FI group. Hence, the findings have broad pedagogical implications for researchers and L2 teachers to provide L2 learners with varieties of cognitive styles to improve their writing accuracy.

Zarei, Ahour, and Seifoori (2019) examined the effects of explicit, implicit, and emergent CF on the fluency and accuracy of oral production among Iranian EFL learners. The results indicated significant differences among different types of CF in both future-tense and past-tense accuracy. While the emergent group performed more effectively than the other groups concerning accuracy, no significant difference was found among the three different types of feedback considering fluency. Moreover, the content analysis represented that the learners mostly preferred emergent feedback. Thus, the findings contribute to raising the teachers' awareness of different CF types and their functions.

Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) studied the efficacy of three types of direct corrective feedback. Accordingly, three groups including two experimental and a control group were compared. One of the experimental groups obtained direct error correction and the second group got direct error correction with both oral and written meta-linguistic feedback. The findings indicated substantial learning achievement of one of the experimental groups which experienced direct error correction with meta-linguistic feedback both orally and in written form. The finding also shows that using meta-linguistic explanation leads to a reduction in errors.

The main SLA theory which serves as the basis for the present study is the interaction theory (Long 1996 & Swain 1995) which shows that corrective feedback has a beneficial role in language learning (Bitchener, 2012). Based on this theory, interaction between more fluent and less fluent speakers and, in the case of classrooms, between teacher and students can promote language learning. Through interaction, input is modified, and the modified input is more comprehensible and more available for learning (Long, 1985). Modified input could be in the form of corrective feedback which comes in various types. Meta-linguistic feedback refers to providing clarifications and explanations for the rules of language based on the mistakes that students made in their productions. Therefore, awareness of language can improve language learning (Schmidt 1993; Long 1996).

In this regard, Carroll and Swain (1993) conducted an investigation into recasts and explicit CF feedback on 100 participants. They were all adult Spanish native speakers learning English in Toronto. The results supported the fact that adult language learners need more explicit explanation.

Likewise, Mackey's (2006) study is considered as a classroom investigation of how the students' reports of noticing CF may be related to L2 development. The data were collected through a questionnaire, learning journals, etc. Statistical data analyses supported the correlation between noticing and L2 development. By the same token, Mackey & Goo's (2007) study on eleven L2 learners of Arabic and their teachers who watched videotaped CF episodes from their classroom interactions confirmed that, generally, only 36% of the CF was received as the teachers had desired. Explicit CF, either consisting of metalinguistic information or directly eliciting self-repair, was more appropriately received than implicit CF such as recasts and negotiations for meaning.

As to CF, some researchers propose that explicit techniques are better than implicit ones. Similarly, Norris and Ortega's meta-analysis (2000) revealed lesser effect of implicit instruction (d = 0.81) than explicit instruction (d=0.96). Particularly, Norris and Ortega (2000) investigated the effectiveness of recasts and metalinguistic feedback. The results conveyed more effectiveness of metalinguistic feedback than recasts.

Accordingly, Saito & Lyster (2012) made a comparison among the results of instructional tasks with and without CF. The findings revealed that the effects could be greater with CF than without CF. In accordance with the effectiveness of CF, Carroll and Swain (1993) believed that explicit instruction with metalinguistic feedback could be more useful for learners to acquire difficult rules and learning abstract linguistic generalizations.

In addition, Lyster' (2004) study on 148 fifth-grade students investigated the effectiveness of different models of form-focused instruction and CF (no feedback, FFI only, FFI + recasts, & FFI + prompts) on the learning of French grammatical gender in immersion classrooms in Canada. The findings revealed that recasts were not as effective as the prompts for learning through self-correction mode.

Regarding CF preference, Schulz (1996) clarified that 90% of the questionnaire respondents in her investigation of foreign language classes in the US believed that CF was important. Additionally, Jean and Simard (2011) conducted a study on the opinions of 2,321 high school students using a questionnaire on CF; they concluded that most of their learners had positive attitudes towards receiving CF in class.

In a study, Unsal Sakiroglu (2020) presented the time and the ways of error correction regarding the students' attitudes in EFL communicative classes. 65 intermediate students were interviewed answering a self-report questionnaire. The results presented that almost all of the students preferred being corrected. Mostly the participants revealed their interest in being corrected after accomplishing the speaking task attentively. The results showed that the teachers' awareness of the learner attitudes towards oral CF is absolutely essential.

Considering the above research findings, the current study aimed to examine the effectiveness of explicit instructional feedback on speaking assessment in an Iranian EFL context, in connection with their attitudes towards CF.

## 3. Significance of the Study

According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), in traditional assessment, scores are sufficient for feedback, while in alternative assessment individualized feedback should be taken into account. Hence, the first significant point of this study is promoting speaking assessment tasks because of their prominent roles. Secondly, an important factor in language assessment is "washback" which is defined as "the effect of testing on teaching and learning" (Hughes, 2003, p, 1). In classroom-made assessment, washback may contain a great deal of positive effect. Feedback on the learners' performance can be considered as washback (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Hence, it can be a useful tool to be applied in classes (Ibrahim & Bello, 2020). Thirdly, according to Sabahi and Rabbani Yekta (2019) teaching grammar to English learners is one of the most challenging tasks for teachers and the usage of the right verbs is one of the most problematic issues for English learners (Sabra, 2020). In broad terms, this study sheds lights on productive acquisition of English tenses.  Generally, this study signifies the role the direct and explicit error correction in speaking assessment can play in second language learning. While it is widely accepted that CF is not a significant factor in the first language acquisition (Krashen, 1982), Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis mentioned that learning takes place when input contains a dialogue format with linguistic modifications. The main aim of this research is to provide additional insight on the effects that feedback to the learners, who are involved in speaking assessment, has on the development of second language acquisition. As teachers, we are responsible for the improvement of the students' learning and considering our students' attitudes towards CF. We must be aware of the significance of our feedback even at the time of assessment.

## *4. Research Questions*

1. Are there any statistical differences in accurate oral production of the Simple Present tense, Simple Past Tense, Present Perfect Tense, and Future Tense, after providing Iranian EFL learners with explicit CF with metalinguistic explanation?

2. What are the learners' attitudes towards receiving explicit CF and their effects on their oral production?

## Statement of Hypothesis

1. There are no statistical differences in accurate oral production of the Simple Present tense, Simple Past Tense, Present Perfect Tense, and Future Tense, after providing Iranian EFL learners with explicit CF with metalinguistic explanation.

2. Learners have no positive attitudes towards receiving explicit CF and its effects on their oral production.

## *5. Objectives of the Study*

The main objective of the present study is to investigate whether explicit CF with metalinguistic explanations has any effect on Iranian EFL Learners' oral production. Most specifically, the researchers aim to know if CF influences accurate oral production of four English tenses. The second objective deals with the learners' attitudes towards being provided with CF and its effects on their oral production.

## *6. Method*

### 6.1 Participants

In order to carry out the study, 27 upper intermediate English language learners were selected randomly to participate in the control group. Likewise, a group of 27 learners with the same English language proficiency level and conditions participated in the experimental group. It should be mentioned that the total number of all the participants of the study was selected based on Krejcie and Morgan' sample size table (1970). Since one of the researchers was the participants' teacher, convenience-sampling was applied in this study at first. All the participants were female Farsi native speakers and had 6 years of English language learning experience at an institute in Shiraz. They all had the same sociocultural background and the participants' mean age was 13 years. They were chosen from a population of 60 EFL learners, who were studying Top Notch English books at the institute.

### 6.2 Design

This study employed a pre-test, treatment, post-test experimental design, and the tool used to collect the data was an attitudinal questionnaire.

### 6.3 Instrumentations

First, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to determine the participants' homogeneity in terms of language level of proficiency. Based on their performance on OPT, an oral pre-test was administered in the form of structured interviews which included twenty-four questions. These questions were divided into four groups. Each group contained six questions. Group one included six questions based on applying the simple present tense such as "What does your father do in his free time?"; group two covered six questions regarding the simple past tense such as " What did you do yesterday afternoon?"; group three included six questions with regard to the present perfect tense such as "Have you

ever gone to Kish?"; and group four contained six questions about the future tense (will) such  as "Where will you live in future? In each group, three questions were in the form of yes-no questions and three questions in the form of WH-questions. When applying the questions, we made an attempt to use different subject pronouns. (See Appendix A)

All questions were based on "intensive" types of speaking assessment tasks that referred to the production of short and limited stretches of oral language through directed response tasks to elicit a particular grammatical form. The teacher recorded the test-takers' output to score it based on intensive scoring scale in Brown and Abeywickrama, (2010). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the pre-test questions was about .75. The validity of the pre-test was confirmed by the academic staff of English language department. The researcher requested some experts in TEFL in English department in Shiraz Islamic Azad University (IAU) to measure the validity of the pre-test. To do so, we delivered a copy of the pre-test questions, a questionnaire, and a validity form including three parts (accept, edit, and reject) to the experts. Finally, the validity of the pre-test was confirmed by the experts. The treatment was based on picture-cued task of speaking assessment. The post-tests were also in the form of structured interviews like pre-test. Forty-two pictures were used for each participant to assess their intensive speaking in treatment sessions. All pictures had the cues of some frequent English verbs taken from Top Notch English books (Saslow & Ascher, 2013).

The participants' voice was recorded and then transcribed. A checklist based on Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) was used to score the oral tests. If the interviewees answered the question correctly, grade one was given and if they failed to answer correctly zero was given. For each interview session, fifteen to twenty minutes were allotted. Each participant's voice was recorded and  to analyze the recorded voice, we considered only the factor of accuracy in applying the four tenses. In other words, other aspects of oral assessment criteria, such as fluency, pronunciation, etc., were ignored. A lot of authentic (not animated) pictures downloaded from the Internet were used in the treatment sessions.

The next instrument used in the study was a replicated five-point Likert scale attitudinal questionnaire developed by Faqeih (2012). The questionnaire was administered to respond the second research question of the study. The attitudinal questionnaire in the current study deals with measuring attitudes towards three constructs: learners' ideas about picture-cued tasks (Qs:1,2,3,4,20), learners' ideas about error correction and accuracy on speaking assessment in general (Qs: 5,6,8,9,10,14,18,19), and learners' ideas about explicit CF with metalinguistic explanation applied after speaking assessment (Qs:7,11, 12,13,15,16,17, 21). Twenty-one items with five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) were used to cover the three mentioned areas. Moreover, the attitudinal questionnaire was first piloted on 10 participants to confirm the validity of the questionnaire. (See Appendix D)

## 6.4 Procedure

After confirming the homogeneity of the participants through a sample model of Oxford placement test, a pilot study, as a small-scale preliminary study, was conducted to measure the validity and strengths of the pre-tests and picture-cued tasks. Ten students matched with the participants of the study participated in the pilot study. (See Appendix B)

Before treatment, the experimental and control groups were pre-tested.  The pre-test was in the form of intensive task of speaking assessment to interview all participants individually to elicit answers in a limited way which was one sentence. In the treatment sessions which lasted only fifteen to twenty minutes for each participant, the experimental group received explicit CF with metalinguistic rules and the control group received the task but without CF. An attitudinal questionnaire developed by Faqeih (2012) was used to measure the participants' attitudes towards picture-cued task, error correction, and explicit CF on speaking assessment.

## 6.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used through SPSS to respond to the first research question. After administering the pre- and the post-test, according to the obtained data, the performance of the two sample groups was compared and contrasted by applying an Independent Samples *t*-test to determine any significant difference between the groups.

In order to code the attitudinal questionnaire, each participant was given a number, e.g., S1, S2, S3 ……. etc. and each question was also given a number from 1-21. Each answer was also coded based on the rank of the scale since the questionnaire was in the form of five-point Likert scale starting from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). One-way ANOVA was also run to analyze the attitudinal questionnaire.

## 7. Results

### 7.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups in the pre-test and post-test) are presented in Table 1. The statistical analyses indicated that in the experimental group the mean score of the pre-test was $\pm$ SD=15.33 $\pm$ 6.45 and that of the post-test, it was$\pm$ SD=30.59 $\pm$ 5.92. In the control group the mean score of the pre-test was $\pm$ SD=14.03 $\pm$ 5.08 and that of the post-test was$\pm$ SD=14.02 $\pm$ 4.64. Accordingly, in both groups the mean scores were almost the same.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of the Pre-test and Post-test of the Experimental and Control Groups*

| Group | | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | Pre-test | 27 | 10.00 | 29.00 | 15.3333 | 6.45100 |
| | Post-test | 27 | 17.00 | 38.00 | 30.5926 | 5.92426 |
| Control | Pre-test | 27 | 10.00 | 28.00 | 14.0370 | 5.08755 |
| | Post-test | 27 | 10.00 | 27.00 | 14.2593 | 4.64586 |

### 7.2 Inferential Statistics

As demonstrated in Table 2, there seems to be no significant difference between the scores of the pre-test in the control and experimental groups (t (52) = .820, p ≤ .117). In fact, an independent sample *t*-test was run to confirm the homogeneity of all participants in both groups in the pre-test. The results shown in Table 2 confirm the fact that because the Sig. value for Leven's test was 0.117, which is larger than 0.05, the participants' variances were equal.

Table 2. *Independent Sample t-test of the Pre-tests of the Experimental and Control Groups*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | *t*-test for Equality of Means | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Experimental Equal Variances | 2.547 | .117 | .820 | 52 | .416 | 1.29630 | 1.58112 | -1.87646 | 4.46905 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| assumed | | | | | | | | |
| Control Equal Variances not assumed | | | .820 | 4.32 | .416 | 1.29630 | 1.58112 | -1.88057 | 4.47316 |

As to the first research question, Table 3 indicates the mean scores of four tenses in the experimental and control groups in the pre- and post-tests. According to the following Table, the experimental group outperformed the control group in accurate use of all four tenses in the post-test.

Table 3. *Mean Scores of Four Tenses in Pre- & Post-test in Control & Experimental Group*

| Tenses | Experimental Group | | Control Group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre- | Post- | Pre- | Post- |
| 1.Simple Present | 3.5185 | 4.8519 | 3.5556 | 3.3333 |
| 2.Simple Past | 2.8519 | 4.9259 | 2.8519 | 2.8148 |
| 3.Present Perfect | .9630 | 3.9259 | 2.3333 | 2.3333 |
| 4.Future (Will) | 3.1481 | 5.2963 | 2.8148 | 2.8519 |

Table 4 show the result of Paired Sample Test and by looking at Sig. (2-tailed) which is the probability (p) value, this value is less than .05 in all four tenses in the experimental group.

Table 4. *Paired Sample Test of Four English Tenses*

| Group | Pre- | Post- | Sig.(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 Experimental | Simple Present | Simple Present | .000 |
| Pair 1 Control | Simple Present | Simple Present | .514 |
| Pair 2 Experimental | Simple Past | Simple Past | .000 |
| Pair 2 Control | Simple Past | Simple Past | .787 |
| Pair 3 Experimental | Present Perfect | Present Perfect | .000 |
| Pair 3 Control | Present Perfect | Present Perfect | .327 |
| Pair 4 Experimental | Future | Future | .000 |
| Pair 4 Control | Future | Future | . 211 |

The results show that there are significant differences between the scores of the four tenses (Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense,  Present Perfect Tense, and  Future Tense) production in the pre- and post-tests in the experimental and control groups.

## 7.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the scores of the learners' ideas about picture-cued tasks revealed a mean score of 15.70, for the learners' ideas about error correction in general 27.85, and for the learners' ideas about the explicit CF applied after speaking assessment 34.22. The results indicated that the participants had positive attitudes toward being provided with explicit CF after speaking assessment. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of the attitudinal questionnaire.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics of the Attitudinal Questionnaire*

|  | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Picture-cued tasks | 27 | 13.00 | 21.00 | 15.7037 | 1.93778 |
| Error correction | 27 | 21.00 | 32.00 | 27.8519 | 2.76939 |
| Explicit CF | 27 | 28.00 | 40.00 | <u>34.2222</u> | 2.65059 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 27 |  |  |  |  |

## 7.4 Inferential Statistics

Table 6 shows the result of the ANOVA analysis and whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the three factors. As shown, the significance level is 0.000 (p = .000), which is below 0.05. Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the three factors. Accordingly, the participants were in favor of being provided with explicit CF.

Table 6. the *intergroup and within group differences*

|  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inter Groups | 4738.891 | 2 | 2369.445 | 368.881 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 494.597 | 77 | 6.423 |  |  |
| Total | 5233.487 | 79 |  |  |  |

## *8. Discussion*

The current study aimed at investigating the effects of explicit CF with metalinguistic explanations on intensive task of speaking assessment. In this study, we included a pre-test, treatment, a post-test, and an attitudinal questionnaire. While the participants in the control group did not receive any treatment, those in the experimental group were provided with CF. The results revealed better performance of the experimental group in the post-test regarding higher level of four English tenses accuracy. Finally, an attitudinal questionnaire was administered to measure the participants' attitudes towards picture-cued task, error correction in general, and explicit CF on speaking assessment. The findings indicated positive attitudes towards the components of the questionnaires.

According to the first research questions, the findings of the *t*-test supported the significant roles of explicit CF with meta-linguistic explanations in the acquisition of four English tenses after finishing speaking assessment individually. The results suggested significant differences in the performance of the experimental group in the production of the tenses after receiving CF with metalinguistic explanations through picture-cue treatment. This study is in the same line with Ammar's study (2006) that showed the significant difference of CF between the experimental and control groups using the picture-cued tasks on post-tests. The significant results for the CF group might support the claim that "embedding CF within communicative activities is more effective than participation in such activities without CF" (Ammar & Spada, 2006, p.562). In addition, this study is consistent with the findings of previous studies on the positive effects of explicit CF (Azimi Amoli, 2020; Lee & Lyster, 2016; Zhai & Gao, 2018).

The findings of this study are not in line with the discussions provided by Schwartz (1993) and Truscott (1996), indicating that positive evidence is adequate for second language learners of English, and they are different from those of Lightbown, & Spada (2001); Long, (2006); Long and Robinson (1998); Mackey and Philp (1998), conveying that both form and meaning should be focused to make CF facilitative. As measured by the intensive oral production, the results suggest the useful role of explicit CF

with metalinguistic explanation on the oral outcome measure. On the other hand, the beneficial role of explicit CF in the picture-cued tasks of intensive speaking assessment in the experimental group in the pre- and the post-test is different from Krashen's (1982) claim which suggests that explicit correction of grammar would only improve the explicit knowledge since in this study explicit CF was with metalinguistic explanations of the rules and it was an educational opportunity for the students to internalize the grammar rules with practical examples. Therefore, the current experimental classroom study suggests that explicit CF and metalinguistic information proved to be effective for EFL learners and that language teachers could use these types of CF in language classes where learners are involved in speaking assessment.

In contrast to this study, according to McFerren (2015) a growing body of literature has confirmed that years of exposure to language cannot contribute to the accuracy of verb inflections (e.g. Birdsong & Molis, 2001; Flege, Yeni-Komshian, & Liu, 1999; Johnson & Newport, 1989), and that the inconsistency of using verb inflections might be with students permanently in most adult L2 learners (e.g. Clashen & Hong, 1995; Lardiere, 1998; White, 2003).

Regarding the second research question of the study about learners' preference, the positive attitudes toward the pictures provided for this study suggest that picture-cued tasks could be effective as classroom activities. Similar to this study, Schulz (1996) indicated that most students expressed positive attitudes towards error correction. The findings of this study seem to be consistent with some researchers. Borg (2003) found that learner preferences can influence learning behaviors. Accordingly, there was a correlation between the learners' attitudes towards error correction and their post-test scores producing accurate four English tenses in the experimental group. Similar findings were reported by Loewen et al. (2009), demonstrating that Arabic and Japanese English learners were in favor of error correction and grammar explanations.

In spite of the fact that there is a general tendency for students to receive CF, some studies have shown that the strength of the preference is different based on the learners' previous and current language learning experiences, cultural backgrounds, and proficiency levels. A discrepancy between the learners' preference to receive CF and teachers' opinions on providing CF has been reported by Lyster, Saito and Sato (2013). Accordingly, Loewen et al. (2009) surveyed language classes of eight different language groups at an American university and found that learners of English had the strongest dislike of CF (and the least concern for grammatical accuracy), whereas foreign language learners of Arabic, Chinese, and various less commonly taught languages had the most positive attitudes towards CF and grammatical accuracy. Consequently, being immersed in the environment of the target language may play a greater role than a learner's foreign language learning background in determining attitudes towards CF and grammar instruction.

### Conclusions

The findings of the current experimental study provided empirical support for the efficacy of explicit CF techniques in L2 learning. A summary of the statistically significant differences between both the control and experimental groups in the post-test indicated that explicit CF with metalinguistic explanations was beneficial to the participants' increased oral accuracy. Overall, the results of this study revealed the practicality of explicit feedback in learning English tenses.

Therefore, the obvious effects of explicit feedback in the current study might be attributed to the fact that all participants in the experimental group received feedback individually. According to Dlaska and Krekeler (2013), individual CF is a significant and powerful teaching tool. Hence, the researchers of this study provided the participants of the experimental group with individual explicit CF and metalinguistic explanations and corrected all their mistakes. The effectiveness of picture-cued tasks of

speaking assessment was observed in the current study possibly because they are one of the most popular tools to elicit oral language production intensively and extensively (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Finally, with regards to the learners' preference and positive attitudes towards error correction, it can be assumed that explicit CF with metalinguistic explanations can be effective to be used in class activities. Consequently, it is strongly suggested that EFL teachers should pay focused attention to their students' attitudes and beliefs, in particular to error corrections (Ul Hassan & Dzakiria, 2019). Park (1995) mentioned that beliefs can influence different areas of language learning and language acquisition, e.g. the proficiency level; thus, there is a link between positive attitudes towards CF and language learning. Generally, beliefs have considerable theoretical and pedagogical implications. Accordingly, Sheen (2006) indicated that only if learners become aware of their being corrected, their attitudes towards teacher's providing CF and explaining grammatical rules may have facilitating influences. Hence, in this study because of individual and repeated CF, all students were aware of being corrected.

On the other hand, it is obvious that a number of limitations could have influenced the results obtained. To begin with, there are some limitations in the research as well. First, the sample size was not large enough to generalize the results. Thus, increasing the sample size contributes to increasing the reliability of the instruments and validity of the findings. Secondly, the number of the English learners at that institute was limited and at the outset of the study, the participants were not selected randomly. Moreover, providing the participants with individual feedback out of the class time was time-consuming and tough for both the researchers and the participants.

The present findings might have important implications for solving EFL learners' problems. This study outlines the mediating roles of assessments, picture-cued tasks of speaking, and learners' beliefs towards explicit CF with metalinguistics explanations to appreciate the students' accuracy. The current study suggests that EFL teachers should consider their learners' preferences towards different types of CF and assign the classroom activities accordingly. A further important implication of this study is applying picture-cued tasks more and more in English learning classes since they could improve the students' speaking skills, e.g. fluency, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Simamora, Sembiring, & Pangaribuan, 2018).

Further experimental studies are needed to estimate the effects of explicit CF with metalinguistic explanations or other CF types on international speaking exams (e.g. IELTS, TOFEL, FCE) which are reliable and valid, and their criteria are strict. More broadly, research is also needed to determine the effects of individual and collective feedback on other components of speaking exams (e.g. pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar) with a larger sample size.

## List of abbreviations:

CF= corrective feedback
FD= field dependent
FI= field independent
SLA= second language acquisition
L2= second language
EFL= English as a foreign language
TEFL= teaching English as a foreign language
OPT= Oxford placement test

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## *Appendices*

## Appendix A: Oral Pre-test and Post-test Questions

All two pre- and post-tests were based on responsive speaking tasks (question and answer). The oral pre-test was administered to identify the homogeneity of the participants' oral skill in applying four English tenses with regard to the following questions. Post-test questions were similar to these questions but they were not identical. After greeting, the teacher asked the following questions:

## Simple present tense

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

| 1 | How is the weather like today? |
|---|---|
| 2 | What do your mother and father do in their free time? |
| 3 | What does your father eat for breakfast? |
| 4 | What time does your mother get up? |
| 5 | Where do you like to travel in the summer? |
| 6 | How do we know each other? |
| 7 | What do I teach every session? |

| 1 | Do you drink coffee for breakfast? |
|---|---|
| 2 | Is your mother a morning person? |
| 3 | Does your father make the beds every morning? |
| 4 | Do your sisters like to eat fish for breakfast? |
| 5 | Do we understand each other? |
| 6 | Does your cell-phone work well? |
| 7 | Am I an extrovert or introvert teacher? |

## Simple past tense

| 1 | What did you buy yesterday morning? |
|---|---|
| 2 | What time did your father come home from work last night? |
| 3 | Where did your mother clean two days ago? |
| 4 | When did we meet each other for the first time? |
| 5 | Where was your high school? |
| 6 | How many students did I have last term? |
| 7 | How did your sisters get to school yesterday? |

| 1 | Did you go to a public high school or a private one? |
|---|---|
| 2 | Did your father have to wear a uniform in high school? |
| 3 | Was your class big or small last semester? |
| 4 | Did your mother study at university in the past? |
| 5 | Did your brother enjoy watching football last night? |
| 6 | Were you parents active students in the past? |
| 7 | Did I draw a picture on the board last session? |

## Present perfect tense

| 1 | What have you done lately? |
|---|---|
| 2 | How many times has your father changed his car? |
| 3 | How long has your mother lived with your father? |
| 4 | What have your classmates studied lately? |
| 5 | How many times have I asked you today? |
| 6 | How many times we have visited here? |
| 7 | How many times has my cell phone rung today? |

| 1 | Have you ever gone abroad? |
|---|---|
| 2 | Has your mother ever ridden a motor cycle? |
| 3 | Have I ever gotten angry in class? |
| 4 | Has your father ever broken a glass? |
| 5 | Have we ever shaken hands in class? |
| 6 | Have your parents ever played computer games with each other? |
| 7 | Has your watch ever stopped? |

## Future (will) tense

| 1 | When will you send me an e-mail? |
|---|---|
| 2 | What will your sister need for her party? |
| 3 | What will your brother lend you? |
| 4 | Where will your parents go shopping? |
| 5 | What will the news report tonight? |
| 6 | When will we finish this interview? |
| 7 | When will the winter come? |

| 1 | Will you give up your English class in the summer? |
|---|---|
| 2 | Will you be a successful person in your life? |
| 3 | Will your brother learn new languages? |
| 4 | Will your parents live with you? |
| 5 | Will we stay here for a long time? |
| 6 | Will I give you a good mark? |
| 7 | Will the weather get cold tomorrow? |

## Appendix B: Participants' Grades on the Pilot Study

1. Atefe Keshavarzi          Correct: 24          Incorrect: 18

| Simple Present | Simple past | Present Perfect | Will |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. T | 7. T | 25.T | 37.T |
| 2. F | 8. F | 26. T | 38.T |
| 3. F | 9. T | 27. T | 39. T |
| 4. F | 10. T | 28. F | 40. T |
| 5.F | 11.T | 29. F | 41. T |
| 6.T | 12.F | 30. T | 42. T |

2. Saba Mardi          Correct: 14          Incorrect: 28

| Simple Present | Simple Past | Present Perfect | Will |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. F | 7. F | 25.T | 37.F |
| 2. T | 8. T | 26. F | 38.F |
| 3. T | 9. T | 27. F | 39. F |
| 4. T | 10.T | 28. F | 40. T |
| 5. T | 11.F | 29. F | 41. T |
| 6. T | 12.F | 30. F | 42. T |

3.Maryam Karimi          Correct: 10          Incorrect: 32

| Simple Present | Past continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. T | 19.F | 25.F | 37.F |
| 2. F | 20.F | 26. F | 38.F |
| 3. T | 21.F | 27. F | 39. F |
| 4. T | 22.F | 28. F | 40. F |
| 5. F | 23. F | 29. F | 41. F |
| 6. T | 24.F | 30. F | 42. T |

| 4. Mahdied Mousavi | Correct: 11 | | Incorrect: 31 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple Present | Past continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
| 1. T | 19.F | 25.F | 37.F |
| 2. T | 20.F | 26. F | 38.F |
| 3. F | 21.F | 27. F | 39. F |
| 4. T | 22.F | 28. F | 40. F |
| 5. T | 23. F | 29. F | 41. F |
| 6. T | 24.T | 30. F | 42. F |

| 5. Fateme Mofidi | Correct: 28 | | Incorrect: 14 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple Present | Past continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
| 1. T | 19.T | 25.F | 37.T |
| 2. T | 20.T | 26. F | 38.T |
| 3. T | 21.T | 27. T | 39. T |
| 4. T | 22.F | 28. F | 40. T |
| 5. T | 23. T | 29. F | 41. F |
| 6. T | 24.T | 30. F | 42. T |

| 6. Mohadese Mohammadi | Correct: 12 | | Incorrect: 30 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple Present | Past continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
| 1. F | 19.T | 25.F | 37.F |
| 2. F | 20.F | 26. F | 38.T |
| 3. T | 21.F | 27. F | 39. T |
| 4. F | 22.F | 28. F | 40. T |
| 5. T | 23. F | 29. F | 41. T |
| 6. F | 24.F | 30. F | 42. T |

| 7. Fateme Nadaf | Correct: 13 | | Incorrect: 29 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple Present | Past Continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
| 1. T | 19. T | 25. T | 37. F |
| 2. F | 20. F | 26. F | 38. T |
| 3. T | 21. F | 27. F | 39. F |
| 4. F | 22. F | 28. F | 40. F |
| 5. T | 23. F | 29. F | 41. F |
| 6. F | 24. F | 30. F | 42. F |

| 8. Fateme Ranjbar | Correct: 12 | | Incorrect: 30 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple present | Past Continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
| 1. T | 19. F | 25. F | 37. F |
| 2. F | 20. F | 26. F | 38. T |
| 3. T | 21. F | 27. T | 39. F |
| 4. T | 22. F | 28. F | 40. T |
| 5. F | 23. F | 29. T | 41. T |
| 6. F | 24. T | 30. F | 42. T |

| 9. Maryam Monfarad | Correct: 10 | | Incorrect: 32 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple present | Past Continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
| 1.  T | 19. F | 25. F | 37. F |
| 2. F | 20. T | 26. F | 38. F |
| 3. F | 21. F | 27. T | 39. T |
| 4. F | 22. F | 28. F | 40. F |
| 5. F | 23. F | 29. F | 41. T |
| 6. F | 24. F | 30. F | 42. F |

| 10.Sara Kavaki | Correct: 23 | | Incorrect:19 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple present | Past Continuous | Present Perfect | Will |
| 1. T | 19. T | 25. T | 37. F |
| 2. T | 20. T | 26. F | 38. F |
| 3. T | 21. F | 27. F | 39. T |
| 4. T | 22. F | 28. T | 40. F |
| 5. T | 23. F | 29. T | 41. T |
| 6. T | 24. F | 30. T | 42. T |

## Appendix C

Tell me your feelings about what we have been doing in these sessions. Please honestly circle one (ONLY) of the numbers that best describes your feelings. Thank you for your time.

| * | Sentences | 1 Strongly disagree | 2 disagree | 3 uncertain | 4 agree | 5 Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The activities are interesting. | | | | | |
| 2 | The activities are not up to my level. | | | | | |
| 3 | The activities are easy. | | | | | |
| 4 | The activities are short. | | | | | |
| 5 | I feel it is my teacher 's duty to correct my errors all the time. | | | | | |
| 6 | I feel frustrated when you correct me. | | | | | |
| 7 | I feel better when you give me the rules. | | | | | |
| 8 | I feel discouraged when I repeat the same errors. | | | | | |
| 9 | I feel nervous about speaking after you have corrected my errors. | | | | | |
| 10 | I feel it is better for me to know the corrections of my errors. | | | | | |
| 11 | I feel that I am not used to being corrected when I do grammatical mistakes. | | | | | |
| 12 | I feel that this way of correction is new for me. | | | | | |
| 13 | I am benefitting from your corrections. | | | | | |
| 14 | Having my errors corrected is the best way to learn English. | | | | | |
| 15 | I feel most comfortable with your direct corrections. | | | | | |
| 16 | The corrections you have been providing are not important. | | | | | |
| 17 | I prefer providing me with rules and information. | | | | | |
| 18 | I think the most helpful way is correcting my errors directly. | | | | | |
| 19 | I need a lot of time to think about my mistakes. | | | | | |
| 20 | I need to finish the activities fast so I can attend my other classes. | | | | | |
| 21 | What you are doing does not improve my English. | | | | | |