



Giving Feedforward to Improve Accuracy in Oral Communication

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Abstract

This action research aimed to help a group of missionary hopefuls improve their conversation skills, specifically their accuracy in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation by giving verbal feedback and feedforward on their day-to-day lessons and written assessment through lesson reports. This article is addressed to English teachers of all levels who are interested in learning more about the feedback mechanism. Feedforward is the suggestions to improve. It can help students with their skills in language learning and affirm their agency through formative assessment. Methodology is mixed. Quantitative data from the difference between the two means from pre and post-tests was 7.83, with a standard deviation of 2.87. Further comparison of all learners' scores (initial, units one and two) demonstrated that three out of the six A1 students managed to increase their speaking level whereas all B1 students experienced a drop in their scores due to issues with the rising challenge in topics. Qualitative results from students' reflections through the pre- and post-interviews expressed that feedforward helped most students improve. Students' reflections explained why their final scores were not higher ranged. Most did not have enough time for autonomous learning and assert their agency with a HyperDoc library because of work, COVID-19 health related issues, and/or personal problems at home.

Keywords: feedback, feedforward, speaking accuracy, autonomous learning, agency.

Resumen

Esta investigación de acción tuvo como objetivo ayudar a un grupo de misioneros aspirantes a mejorar sus habilidades de conversación, específicamente su precisión en gramática, vocabulario y pronunciación al brindar retroalimentación y sugerencias verbales, más la evaluación diaria escrita a través de informes de lecciones. Este artículo está dirigido a profesores de inglés interesados en aprender más sobre el mecanismo de retroalimentación. Feedforward son las sugerencias para mejorar. Pueden ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar sus habilidades en el aprendizaje de idiomas y afirmar su agencia a través de evaluación formativa. La metodología es mixta. La información cuantitativa proveniente de la diferencia entre las medias de las pruebas pre y post fue de 7.83, con una desviación estándar de 2.87. La comparación de entre todos los puntajes demostró que tres de seis estudiantes nivel A1 pudieron incrementar su nivel de comunicación oral mientras que todos los estudiantes de nivel B1 tuvieron un decrecimiento significativo debido a problemas en la complejidad en los temas expuestos. Los datos cualitativos provenientes de las entrevistas iniciales y finales notaron que el feedforward ayudó a la mayoría de los estudiantes a mejorar. Las reflexiones de los estudiantes incluyeron ideas sobre por qué sus puntajes finales en el habla del inglés no representaban un nivel más alto, éstas variaban entre no tener suficiente tiempo para hacer un aprendizaje autónomo y afirmar su agencia con una biblioteca HyperDoc debido al trabajo, problemas relacionados con la salud de COVID-19, y/o problemas personales en casa.

Palabras clave: retroalimentación, feedforward, precisión al hablar, aprendizaje autónomo, agencia.

Giving Feedforward to Improve Accuracy in Oral Communication

There is extensive research in how to assess (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Marzano et al., 2019), and give feedback to students (Abdullah & Aziz, 2019; Duckworth, 2017; Ericsson & Pool, 2016; Hall & Simeral, 2017; Pineda, 2019; Tobin & Behling, 2018). There is a gap, however; in studies related to feed-forward (Abatayo, 2020; Abdullah & Aziz, 2019, p. 11; Frey & Fisher, 2011; Goldsmith, 2015, 2017; Hirsch, 2017; Pollari, 2017; Trammell, 2018; Watanabe & Churches, 2017), and its importance to improve accuracy in speaking. There are recent studies in which feedforward is defined as part of feedback to improve writing skills (Abatayo, 2020; Karlsson, 2019; Pollari, 2017; Zarrinabadi & Rezazadeh, 2020; Xerri Agius, 2020; White, 2018).

There are studies on improving accuracy (A. Gonzalez, 2018; Pineda, 2019; Rojano, 2017; Safdari & Fathi, 2020; Safei & Atikah, 2020), but none referring to the use of the strategy of giving feedforward to improve it. There is also research on agency (Brown, 2014; Huang & Benson, 2013;) in adult students using a HyperDoc (Gonzalez, 2017; Highfill et al., 2019). Most studies were concerned with those in formal schooling levels or in universities. These have not been implemented in studies of more than one learner with different levels and backgrounds, or as missionary hopefuls (Skerret, 2019, p. 21) or even learners that follow a Christian religious faith (Perez, 2019).

“And he said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few’.” (Luke, 2011, p. 1358). This quote led to the discussion of how many missionary hopefuls have plenty of applicable skills, but have trouble communicating accurately in English. These adult learners have issues speaking accurately in English at the international level.

Missionaries go to other countries in Africa, Asia, or Europe, and find themselves struggling with the language. Many employ the English language to share the gospel using it as a bridge to learn another language or need it for everyday life tasks (Hobbs, 2021). They have the

calling to serve the Lord, but their efforts out in the field are made more difficult since their accuracy when speaking in English to others is lower than expected. They need to accurately speak when using the language to avoid being misunderstood or ambiguous, especially when they talk about their personal information or when they express their likes, dislikes, preferences, and opinions with respect to their mission.

Impacto Mundial (2022) is a non-profit organization that prepares its missionaries for their mission work, has continuously tried to instruct them through in-person English conversation skill courses with some small level of success. This low level of success is mostly due to lack of time to have these lessons in person and the lessons being more centered on grammar rules than conversation skills. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all lessons in-person turned to online sessions (Lee et al., 2021, p. 2; Quintana et al., 2021, para. 1). With online teaching, there was an initial opening for thirteen English learners of diverse backgrounds and levels to improve their speaking conversation skills; specifically, their accuracy through online one-on-one weekly lessons on the zoom platform. Throughout the teaching process of these lessons, it was determined that learners improved on their accuracy not only through the feedback given in the lessons, but also the feedforward.

This action research was conducted online on the application zoom to adult learners with different levels in English. The initial information gathered was of thirteen learners (men and women) with different backgrounds (ages and living places). The final count of learners was twelve, six A1 learners and six B1 learners.

Literature Review

The study explored the possible benefits of giving feed-forward to help English learners improve their accuracy in conversation speaking skills. The study was based on the agency theory which allowed adult learners to be independent in their second language

learning (Masland, 2021, para. 9; Van Lier, 2010). Consequently, it helped with autonomous learning (Benson, 2011, p. 124) and student-centered learning (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010).

Accuracy in Speaking

There have been studies on teaching accuracy in speaking skills. The importance of accuracy in conversation skills and its development is characterized by: “the correct use of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar” (Wang, 2014, p. 110). This is supported by A. Gonzalez (2018) who gave a more thorough description of these three elements that are part of accuracy in speaking and defined them as using the language “in context” (p. 196). This study focused on those three characteristics as the basis for making sure the learners can apply them on their own with the help of a HyperDoc library.

HyperDocs

A HyperDoc (a document that has a lot of hyperlinks) is what allows teachers to share the information and direction that students can take when they have a choice to explore their language learning through virtual means. They can enforce their agency (Brown, 2014) with access to technology (Carpenter et al., 2020, pp. 2-3, Highfill et al., 2019, p. 7) through the application of a HyperDoc with information about grammar, vocabulary, how-to activities, and pronunciation (J. Gonzalez, 2017). The application of a HyperDoc through the use of other online applications such as Google Drive or Google Classroom enables student-centered learning, provides choices to the learner from which they can exert their autonomy (Highfill et al., 2019, pp. 7-8) and further “facilitate student use of technology to access and analyze information” (Carpenter et al., 2020, p. 3). If the HyperDoc in question was tailored to the needs of the students (ibid. p. 10), it can certainly free the teacher from having to teach certain grammar rules that may be a turnoff for the learners as they do not have to listen to the teacher drone on when the goals are more on speaking than practicing grammar (Gonzalez, 2017). Finally, the HyperDoc offered a way for learners to work at their own

pace through the use of technology, they used it under the precept of autonomous learning (See Resistance to autonomous learning), thus exerting their agency when they made the decision to use them (Carpenter et al., 2020, p. 12).

Agency vs. autonomy in language learning

According to Hunter and Cooke (2007), agency is “the ability to act with initiative and effect in a socially constructed world” (p. 75). For Van Lier (2010), agency had the interesting dichotomy where it could both be passive and active in that a person could be *forced* to act or that they *decide* to act (p. x). Huang and Benson (2013) confirmed Van Lier’s definition of agency as having both strong and weak links between agency and control; the strong link refers to agency as “that part of the self which controls the identity-work of the self” (p. 13) and the weaker link as when a person shows agency in reaction to others’ actions (ibid. p. 13). Korhonen (2014), however; defined agency as the “question of the language learning person’s agentic behavior, personal disposition, contextually situated relationship and process” (p. 68) and this concept matched Hunter and Cooke (2007)’s in that agency is interrelated with initiative where it could be dependent on social forms or the person’s own idea of how to act for themselves and when. Carpenter et al. (2020) mentioned agency as something that learners have “to determine the way technologies are used” (p. 12) in relation to the use of HyperDocs and how they are perceived by educators to be beneficial for students.

On autonomy, Benson (2011) affirmed that it “is not a method of learning, but an attribute of the learner’s approach to the learning process” (p. 2). Korhonen (2014) labeled autonomy in language learning as being interconnected with “empowerment, (inter)personal transformation and authenticity as a member of complex network of communities” (p. 69). Therefore, agency or a learner’s agency is the passive learner’s potential to participate in self-directed behavior, but it is dependent on the how and when a learner wishes to do so (Huang

& Benson, 2013, p. 15-16); whereas autonomy or a learner's autonomy is the ability to control certain contextual aspects of their own learning process (ibid. p. 16), even though Benson (2011) previously admitted that autonomy was not closely related to the ideas of taking charge or being responsible for any learning the person may undertake (p. 58).

Resistance to autonomous learning

Autonomous learning is the kind of learning methodology that a learner can apply to its own learning process (Benson, 2011). Huang and Benson (2013) expressed that autonomous learning is the "learning in which a capacity to control learning is displayed or required" (p. 9). This definition corroborated Benson's initial assumption that this autonomous learning involves a high level of conscientiousness, focus, ability to reflect, and metacognitive awareness of what works best for the learner's own understanding (Benson, 2011, p. 118). Among the ideas of what autonomous learning is, Benson (2011) listed the characteristics that an autonomous learner must have, some of which validate that autonomous learning must be the learner's ability to be self-aware, disciplined, self-sufficient, skilled in investigating and learning, and most importantly; able to use evaluation criteria (p. 117). A learner's mastery in using evaluation criteria will allow them to achieve progress in any learning journey.

Khairallah et al. (2020) explained that resistance to autonomous learning is based on the level of students' acceptance of innovations in a classroom's methodology (p. 19). Traditional education where many formal institutions, and academies, for example, were forced to change to online education due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Lee et al., 2021, p. 2) and many students were also forced to adapt to the new status quo. Although most learners can use one form of technology or another, many may not have had enough knowledge on how to utilize it to their best effect. Khairallah et al. (2020) listed possible ways students may resist to apply themselves to autonomous learning, such as but not limited to: "feigning

misunderstanding of what is required of them, ‘forgetting to complete or turn in an assignment, ‘playing dumb’, ..., emotional outbursts, bargaining” (p. 19). In short, this resistance could happen if the learner has differing ideas about the learning process involved in an online course (ibid. p. 19). Another reason as to why students are resistant to autonomous learning might be due to previous approaches to education, where the instruction is limited to the teacher, or the student is used to the teacher facilitating everything to them and misunderstanding what it really means (ibid. p. 20).

Accuracy in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

A. Gonzalez (2018)’s definitions on accuracy are also validated by the Council of Europe’s latest companion volume published in April 2020, where grammatical accuracy, vocabulary and phonological controls (subdivisions of Control) are under the linguistic competence (p. 131-135). This research followed the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. One of the principles of CLT is to “focus on language use rather than usage” (Garrote et al., 2018, p. 46), where the student’s production is the one most expected, thus; fluency has greater weight because it is considered as “the ability to produce the spoken language” (Wang, 2014, p. 110).

Although, CLT’s basis is on both: fluency and accuracy; Pishkar et al. (2017) stated that “speech fluency is hard to acquire for most language learners” (p. 69) which is seen in many classrooms, where students do not want to share any of their thoughts for a number of reasons and thus, teachers’ efforts are more on the student production of the language without stuttering, hemming, or hawing (ibid. pp. 69-70). The research’s basis still applied because its focal point was on the practical use of the English language, and the interaction between teacher and learner or learner and examiner.

Additionally, the researcher made the “development of communicative competence” (Narayanan & Kumar, 2019, p. 19) a main concern and gave students the opportunity to use

the language in different scenarios through group sessions and the one-on-one practices they had with the teacher. Furthermore, there was the usage of the scaffolding technique as to “allow the learner to concentrate on those elements of the task that are within their competence” (ibid. p. 23) whereby the teacher made sure to separate the kind of information given to the learner according to their level and their own needs.

Feedback

Assessment in the CLT practice inside a classroom is based on the issuing of feedback. Marzano (2017) stated feedback is a “mechanism for students and teachers” (p. 21), but it is more like a cycle than a mechanism. Feedback, according to Marzano (2017), is “the information loop between the teacher and the students that provides students with an awareness of what they should be learning and how they are doing” (p. 6). Hattie and Clarke (2018) stated that feedback’s functions go from “reinforcing success, correcting errors, helping to unravel misconceptions, suggesting specific improvements, giving improvement advice for the future, praising, punishing or rewarding, all with different levels of effectiveness” (p. 5).

In other words, feedback acts like a path to self-discovery for the learner, but often turns out to be more about what the learner did wrong in the past than what they can do to fix their mistakes and move to the future (Hirsch, 2017, p. 17). Watanabe and Churches (2017) indicated that feedback should be “timely, appropriate and reflective, honest and supportive, focused on learning and linked to the task’s purpose, and enabling” (p. 21). The last one, enabling; referred to students being able to act on the feedback given, that they can apply the feedback and corrections, but most of the time they do not know how or where to go forth (ibid. p. 21, para. 7). According to Miller (2014), feedback must be frequent, rapid, and informative and that it being rapid is “a key feature of the best online learning experiences” (p. 21).

Watanabe and Churches (2017) also referred to the model of effective feedback (pp. 21 – 24) which has five stages. The five stages are: knowledge of results (KoR), knowledge of correct results (KCR), knowledge of correct results and explanation (KCR+e), KCR+e and specific actions to reduce the gap, and KCR+e and activity where stages four and five align with what Abatayo (2020) described as feedforward. In stage four, the students have knowledge of their results and scores. The teacher does not only give the difference between the results and scores, but also offers “specific actions they can take to reduce the gap” (Watanabe & Churches, 2017, p. 22, para. 4). In stage five, the teacher “provides students with KCR+e and specific actions to reduce the gap, as well as an activity that reinforces the processes, skills, concepts, or learning” (ibid. p. 22, para. 5).

Feedforward

Feedforward came from the Business field under Goldsmith (2015), but studies of it are still scarce in the educational field, a couple of studies are mostly on improving writing skills rather than speaking skills. Some notions were debated briefly by Frey and Fisher (2011), but they marked the feedforward more as guided instruction than its current definition and their book focuses more on how to give valuable feedback. Malthouse and Roffey-Barentsen (2018) stated that feedforward may permit students to have an understanding into “learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and general expectations of them while on the programme of study, may remove some elements of the ‘unknown’ in relation to these expectations” (p. 130). Though, Malthouse and Roffey-Barentsen relate learning outcomes and general expectations of them to feedforward, Zarrinabadi and Rezazadeh (2020) referred these outcomes and expectations as under the definition for feed up instead.

Finding a truly tested method of how to use feedforward in lesson reports was hard. The closest resources are related to business coaching books like Harvard Business Review (HBR) Guide to Delivering Effective Feedback (Harvard Business Review Press, 2016) and

Feedback to Feed Forward by Tepper and Flynn (2019). Studies over feedback and feedforward overall EFL classroom are limited (Abatayo, 2020; Brooks et al., 2019; Carroll, 2018; Hirsch, 2017; J. Gonzalez, 2018).

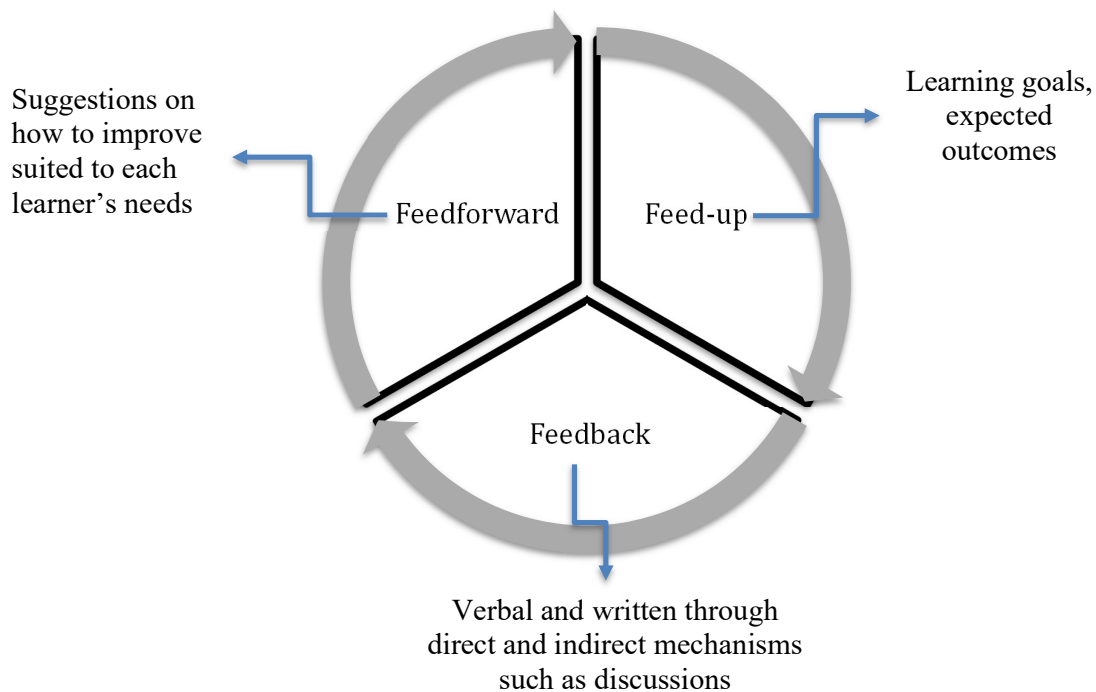
The closest definition given by an online dictionary states that feedforward is the “modification or control of a process using its anticipated results or effects” (Oxford Online Dictionary, 2021) which does not fit the concept in education or in business management. Karlsson (2019) stated that feedforward tells learners where they need to go next “thus providing learners as well as teachers with new goals” (p. 5), so it is the third part of a formative assessment. Hirsch (2017) brought the concept of feedforward as something that can “REPAIR the future” as it regenerates talent because it does not only allow people’s talent to regenerate, but that it enables engagement, a concept most spoken about in teaching and psychology. Engagement allows people to use their own agency (Brown, 2014) to be more open to learning, especially L2 learning (Van Lier, 2010). Another tenet of feedforward is that it expands thinking because it gives options (Hirsch, 2017, p. 31) since it allows students to use the feedback as a springboard from which they can jump to what they can do.

Although Goldsmith (2014) expressed that one of the rules of feedforward is that “no feedback about the past” (1:07) be given during the feedback mechanism. Abatayo (2020) defined the feedback mechanism as being a three-stage process, where the first stage is setting up the goals or objectives of the lesson according to a learner’s needs and this being introduced to the learner (feed up), the feedback stage is letting the student know “their own progress and achievement” (p. 75), and the last stage is the feedforward in which a discussion occurs between the teacher and the learner on their progress up-to-date and given suggestions in “how they can improve their own learning in the future” (ibid. p. 75, para. 3).

Duckworth (2017) corroborated Watanabe and Churches' ideas on how effective feedback can be when it is "wise" (pp. 218-219) implying that feedback offers a path to grow when it is unjudgmental, clear, timely, verbal or written, and ongoing (Hattie & Clarke, 2018, p. 3). Hirsch (2017) defined feedforward as that as well, when the feedback gives a clear path for growth; feedforward gives the student a look into the future of what the learner can do (p. 34). In addition, feedforward can supply "opportunities to implement the feedback and close the feedback loop" (Brooks et al., 2019, p. 17). The feedback loop is called as such because it defines the three parts of effective feedback:

Figure 1

The feedback loop



Note: This model was adapted from Figure 5.1: Three Major Feedback Questions by Abatayo, 2020.

Feedforward can have an effect in the student's self-assessment and lead to reflection on how to improve (Brooks et al., p. 17; Hirsch, 2017). Hirsch (2017) explained it further by

listing feedforward as six tools to REPAIR the future where it can regenerate talent, expand possibilities, be particular, be authentic, make an impact, and refine group dynamics. For this study, the teacher concentrated on the following tools: particular and authentic.

Finally, feedforward is the suggestion to improve that lets the student know where to go next (Frey & Fisher, 2011, p. 2), it can help students improve their skills in language learning if the assessment being done is formative in nature (Abatayo, 2020; Hirsch, 2017) since it is part of the feedback loop (Boud & Molloy, 2013, p. 699; Brooks et al., 2019, p. 17).

After the analysis of both the problem and the literature review, this study intended to address the following questions:

1. To what extent do feedback and feedforward improve student's speaking accuracy?
2. What are the students' perspectives on the use of feedforward to improve their conversation skills?

Innovation

The purpose of this research was to find out if giving feedback and feedforward to learners on their one-on-one online weekly forty-five-minute tutoring was an effective way to improve adult students' accuracy in English conversation by the application Zoom. The access to a Hyperdoc helped and encouraged learners with their agency and autonomous learning, as the one-on-one lessons focused on the learning done in the time given through spoken and written feedback, and feedforward in the form of lesson reports plus the access to the lessons' video, and through the use of rubrics (see Appendixes 1 and 2) also for formative and summative assessments. The intention of this action research was to help students improve their accuracy when speaking.

The key was to give feedback and feedforward in a timely and accurate manner through the use of lesson reports, and add feedforward which allowed students to understand where they were making their mistakes and fixing them on their own time before the next lesson. The study showed the students where they made mistakes with written lesson reports where feedback and feedforward were given, and they could listen to the corrections made by the trainer during the lesson and when they reviewed the videos shared to them online.

After the learners did a diagnostic speaking test, the teacher gave them six to seven lessons of conversation skills for forty-five minutes each week per unit to improve the quality of their accuracy in conversation. Following the administration of the intervention, instruction quality was assessed twice through a summative task for each unit. To increase the time where they practiced speaking English, they were invited to three one-hour sessions on topics related to the Christian Faith which happened on Zoom.

Though the scaffolding technique was used to limit the content for both A1 and B1 learners, each unit test increased the subjects to study as seen in the lesson plan for each unit (see Appendix 3) and the difficulty of the tests were significantly higher for both A1 and B1 learners, in comparison to the initial diagnostic test which was deemed too easy for the B1 learners as seen to the very high scores. Differences between initial, unit 1 and unit 2 scores (see Appendix 4) occurred due to the difference in rubrics used for the B1 learners as the diagnostic test's rubric was for the A2 level and the posttest's rubric was for B1 learners (see Appendixes 1 and 2). The use of the A2-level rubric was also too high a reach for some students to be based under as they were pre-A1 learners. The rubric used was initially deemed appropriate due to the initial participants.

Methodology

This action research was mixed because it had quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative method relied on the pre and post-tests done to assess the speaking levels of

the twelve students that accepted to be part of this study, and that were given a score using rubrics (Cambridge Assessment, 2020a, 2020b; see Appendixes 1 and 2). The assessment of the diagnostic and subsequent summative tasks (two unit speaking tests with the help of an examiner) were validated with the help of two English professors with master's degrees in teaching English as a foreign language who listened, reviewed the audios from all twelve learners' diagnostic tests (pre-test) and units one and two summative task tests, and filled in a validation form (see Appendixes 5 and 6) for both A1 and B1 learners.

The qualitative method relied on the initial and post-interviews that the twelve learners were asked to undergo so the teacher could understand how much they knew about the purpose of the study. The pre- and post-interview questions were based solely on the two research questions.

This study addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent do quality feedback and feedforward improve student's speaking accuracy?
2. What are the students' perspectives on the use of feedforward to improve their conversation skills?

Participants

The participants were twelve learners whose ages varied from eighteen to forty years old. Initially, there were thirteen learners, but unfortunately one of them had to drop out of the project due to personal issues. Almost all the learners were Ecuadorian, two were from other countries. Their socioeconomic levels varied given that in some cases they could not hold the lessons because they were at work or doing missionary work in rural areas, but they all had the Spanish language as their mother tongue and lived in the American continent.

All learners are connected to the Christian Faith; their interest in becoming missionaries and traveling abroad is what fueled them to learn English. Skerrett (2019)

described religious life as “a key context for developing sophisticated language and literacy competencies that are beneficial to literacy engagements in school and other social contexts” (p. 21), whereas Perez (2019) denoted that religious faith “is practiced and transmitted through the language and literacy practices of individuals, families, and communities” (p. 192) which in the end denotes the need for these learners to pursue both enlightenment and knowledge of the English language to spread the word. One of the sub-functions of religion and subsequently, religious language or the use of it by missionaries has a social cohesive element that interconnects a religious community through prayer or church sessions (Hobbs, 2021, p. 33). Due to this social cohesive element, the teacher invited the learners to expand their practice time of the English language with three one-hour Sunday sessions on Christian faith-related topics.

Instruments

The first research question “To what extent do quality feedback and feedforward improve student’s speaking accuracy?” is answered by the scores of the twelve students that participated in this action research by rubrics taken from the *A2 Key for Schools Handbook* and the *B1 Preliminary for Schools Handbook* (Cambridge Assessment, 2020a, 2020b) for each test taken. The rubric for the pre-test was adapted to fix the three elements of accuracy that were necessary for evaluation (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) and the fourth one was interactive communication to assess how much the learner had taken in the teachings given to them on their one-on-one sessions.

The pre-test score was the diagnostic which used the same rubric for both levels: A1 and B1 (Cambridge Assessment, 2020a, p. 45; see Appendix 1). The posttest was the score of the unit 2 test. For the two-unit tests, a B1 rubric was used and adapted (Cambridge Assessment, 2020b, p. 62) and used with the assessment of the B1 learners, the A1 learners used the same rubric as the one used for the pre-test (see Appendixes 1 and 2).

The teacher created validation forms that included the rubrics used depending on whether it was a diagnostic or the posttest oral tests. The purpose of these validation forms was to ascertain that the scores given by the teacher and the examiner fit each of the descriptors found in the rubric especially those elements that are related specifically to accuracy (correct use of: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; Council of Europe, 2020; A. A. Gonzalez, 2018; Wang, 2014). In addition, it established the reliability and methodological integrity of the feedback and feedforward written in the lesson reports of each student's test. The validation forms also included a questionnaire for the diagnostic test (the same questions were asked to all learners) and two different scripts (one for each level: A1 and B1) for the posttest. Another objective of these scripts and the use of the rubrics were that each level had different standards to pursue according to the Common European Framework of Reference and Assessment (CEFR) by the Council of Europe (2020). The scripts were expressly created to serve as guidelines for both the teacher and the examiners who helped carry out the speaking evaluations. The scripts can be found inside the lesson plan for each unit (see Appendix 3).

The second question "What are the students' perspectives on the use of feedforward to improve their conversation skills?" was answered by the interviews conducted to the twelve (initially thirteen) students with the purpose of first finding out if they understood the purpose of the study, the how and whys of the lessons to be conducted, and the post-interviews aims were to find out their perspectives on how aware they were of their agency throughout the project's progress and at the end of it, which resources helped them more in being more accurate in their speaking, and which helped them more, the feedback, the feedforward, or both (See Appendixes 7 and 8 for the questionnaires and codes). Both interviews took about 20 to 30 minutes each. For the pre- and post-interviews, the participants were asked the questions in Spanish to avoid complications in translation of the key terms such as feedback

and feedforward. All activities (interviews, lessons, tests) were carried out online using the program Zoom and organized with the help of the WhatsApp phone application due to the social distancing measures applied by the Ecuadorian government, the surge of the COVID-19 or any variants that came up during the time the program was being implemented, and for the two learners whose country of origin was not Ecuador.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre- and posttests scores answered the first research question. Further analysis was made out of the initial, unit 1 and unit 2 scores with each learner from both A1 and B1 levels. The pre- and post-interviews answered the second research question. The results of the instruments were reported and presented in tables and figures to make the understanding of them easier. The interviews were recorded, the questions written and translated into Spanish, grouped and coded according to the two variables: spoken accuracy and feedforward. Then, an interpretation of the questionnaires of the pre- and post- interviews (See Appendixes 9 and 10) was written down based on the codes previously noted. Descriptive statistics included mean, standard deviation, and sample size.

Ethical Considerations

The study's ethical considerations included preserving the anonymity of the participants by not mentioning the names of the participants, although the place where they reside was limited to the country and city, but not the address or the telephone number. The organization that allowed this study to go forth agreed to accept the letter of intent from the university. The confidentiality of the learners was assured through the whole process, including through the validation process by the two Masters in English as a Foreign Language teachers who filled in the validation forms not knowing the names of the learners as the teacher only used the learners' initials in all the labels.

It is of the utmost importance that the personal information of the missionary hopefuls is not presented or published as it has been reported by many religious leaders, missionaries face real dangers due to not being able to apply religious pluralism (The Aspen Institute, 2019). Due to various factors affecting religious freedom in many countries of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, missionaries could encounter certain death if they were to be discovered (Ohikere, 2021, para. 8).

Results

Twelve learners were invited to partake in the study of how giving feedforward helps students' accuracy in speaking conversation skills improve. Results indicated that the speaking accuracy decreased between the initial speaking test and the final speaking scores ($M = 7.83$, $SD = 2.87$). The following table shows the means for both pre-test and posttest scores and each test's standard deviation.

Table 1

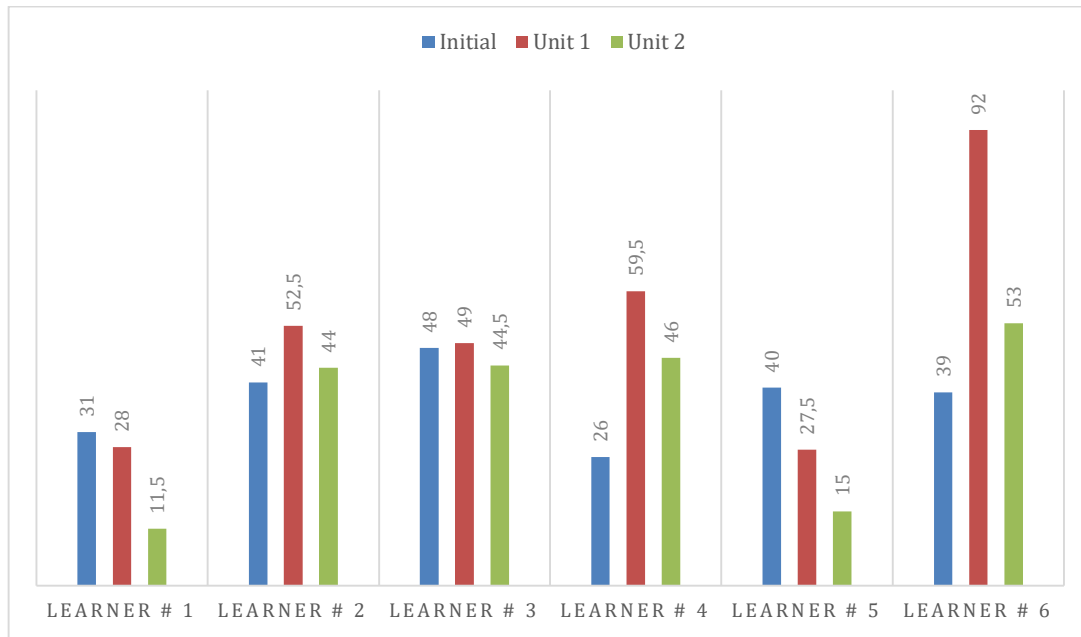
Comparison of Means between Pre-test and Posttest

Speaking scores	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	12	65,8333	30,20486
Post-test	12	58,0000	27,33380

The probable causes for the mean to be low can be seen by comparing the means for the pre-test and posttest scores in Table 1. The causes are how the difficulty and the number of topics increased in each unit test, since students were challenged more, so the subsequent scores were slightly lower. You can see this when you consider the scores from the summative tasks separately (see Appendix 4).

Figure 2

Comparison of scores for Initial, Unit 1 and Unit 2 in A1 learners

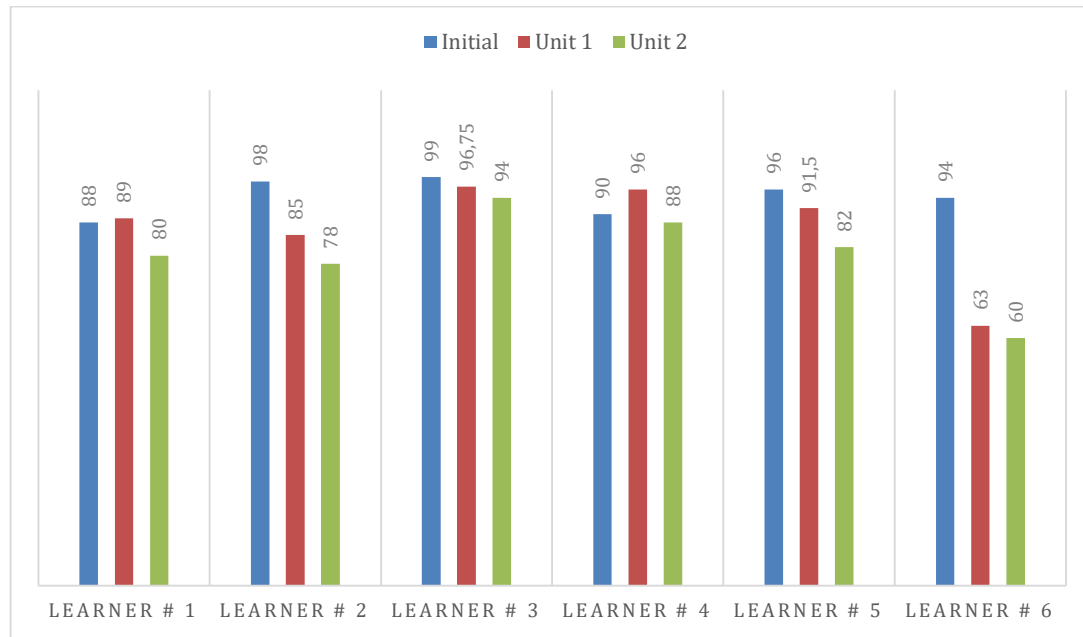


The representation of colors is the same in both figures. All initial scores for B1 learners are high (see Figure 3). Four out of six learners show that their scores in the first unit test are lower than their initial scores. The exceptions were learners' number one and four. Learner number one's score is one point higher and learner number four was six points higher. The unit two test scores were lower for all B1 learners.

Another outlier was learner number six. Between the first unit test and the initial test, there is a steep drop of thirty-one points. In addition, the difference between the second unit test and the first one is of three points. Possible reasons for that were: the learner had less knowledge of the grammar rules, the learner admitted to not practicing daily or having someone to practice with, and the topics were too challenging.

Figure 3

Comparison of scores for Initial, Unit 1 and Unit 2 in B1 learners



Learner # 2 had a decrease of 13 points from the initial score to the first unit. The learner stated that the contents from unit one and unit two were more challenging. The learner had some medical issues at the end of the first unit that disallowed extra time for autonomous learning. Learner # 3 had studied in an academy before doing the lessons with the teacher. Though the lesson report for the first unit test demonstrated the high scores in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; both the examiner and teacher agreed on the learner having issues in some grammar rules such as prepositions, subject-verb agreement rules to name a few, and had confused the use of some vocabulary words seen in the unit. In the second unit, the learner continued to have issues with specific grammar rules and vocabulary words, plus issues with pronunciation which affected her overall score.

Other reasons for learners not obtaining higher scores in speaking may include the students becoming too nervous to speak during the summative tasks with the examiners and having a smaller number of lessons than their peers due to concerns with work, family life, or health. Learners expressed this when the final feedforward was given after unit two's summative evaluation. Some learners acknowledged that they put less time and effort to their

autonomous learning during the study of unit two. In their post-interviews, most learners declared that the amount of work they had, took time away from autonomous learning.

The second question was answered with the pre- and post-interviews given by the twelve students. Initially, there were thirteen students, but due to complication in their schedule, one student had to leave the study. As there were many students, and all answers were in Spanish, the interpretation of the results was given in a table format instead of a full recount of all thirteen learners expressing themselves. You can find the coding table with the questions in Spanish and in English in Appendix 5 and the table of the interpretation of the answers to the pre-interview questionnaire in Appendix 6.

The codes that were defined ranged from foreknowledge of feedback which was related to questions one and four. Ten out of the initial thirteen students had a foreknowledge of what feedback was. The other three students had no clear idea of what feedback was until they were told about it. Of the three who had no idea, one learner expressed *“Retroalimentación es como instruir tu memoria”* (Feedback is like instructing your memory), giving the illusion that she had never heard the term even in Spanish.

For the answers to questions four and six, one student said he had no idea what quality feedback or even quality feedforward were. In the questions of what feedforward was, all thirteen students told the teacher what feedforward in their own words was, but only because the contextual translation from English to Spanish was a suggestion to improve, most were able to understand the concept easily. One student expressed that maybe feedforward was like getting homework.

Questions three and six referred to the code on improving spoken accuracy. For question number three, most students' answers ranged from being told where to practice grammar, having a book at hand, and ideas on how to get better at speaking, among others. Most students agreed to thinking that their spoken accuracy would improve if they were

given quality feedback and feedforward. One student was able to even give a percentage of 100 of improvement just by being given suggestions to improve. The last code was called awareness of receiving feedback and feedforward and it referred to questions seven and eight. All thirteen students thought they were receiving quality feedback and feedforward. However, only eight students were able to explain how they knew they were given feedback and feedforward. Out of those eight, seven stated that they felt like they were improving in their accuracy because the feedback mechanism was constant, and they took to heart the feedforward to improve. The other student, she felt she needed the written feedback to remember the advice given during the lessons.

The post-interview questionnaire (see Appendix 7) was given to twelve students in total. The codes and to which question they were related to (see Appendix 9) are as follows: Importance of feedback and feedforward for question one, awareness of the importance of feedback and feedforward (question two), awareness of receiving feedforward (question three), awareness of how the resources helped in the learning process (questions four, five, and six), and autonomous learning (question seven).

The results for question one was that nine out of twelve students stated that feedback and feedforward are important to the practice of English conversation skills because it helps them improve and practice pronunciation. One student said that it was important because without feedback there is no discipline and without discipline there is no learning. For question two, nine out of twelve students expressed that both feedback and feedforward helped them improve their English conversation skills. Two students had similar responses when they said that if they did not practice, they would not learn anything and that it helped them strengthen their skills whenever they had doubts about any of the elements in accuracy.

For question three, all students expressed that they were certain they received feedforward, but only six stated that it helped them with the three elements of accuracy:

grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. For the question on resources used and shared, ten out of twelve agreed that it was the lesson reports where both feedback and feedforward were given, the PDF files, the presentations shared, and the online zoom lessons that helped them improve their English conversation skills. Only seven out of twelve agreed that the HyperDocs helped them out with the betterment of their English conversation skills, and most answers as to the reason why they were not able to use some of the resources ranged from work to not having the time to access the zoom program for the Sunday sessions.

When asked about how much time they spent in autonomous learning, only three students stated more than two hours daily. Two mentioned they spent two hours weekly. Five students stated they spent one hour in autonomous learning and the last two said they spent half an hour and forty-five minutes respectively in autonomous learning. Those who stated that they spent less than two hours in autonomous learning referred to the time spent being weekly. The reasons they gave were because they were busy with work or had health and personal problems.

Discussion

The first research question was meant to answer whether giving feedforward improved accuracy in conversation skills. Although the quantitative data did not show a significant increase in the mean ($M = 7.83$, $SD = 2.87$) found by deducting the pre-test score minus the post-test score, this is answered by the qualitative data collected from the pre- and post-interviews where all twelve participants agreed that both the feedback and feedforward given was effective in that it helped them improve their English conversation skills to a certain degree.

As shown in figure 2, the blue bar represents the initial scores, the red bar was the unit one scores, and the unit two scores were green. Unit one scores for learners two, three, four, and six were higher than their initial scores and, in three learners (numbers two, four, and

six), the second unit scores were slightly higher than the initial scores, but lower than the first unit. The variation in scores may be attributed to how high or low the examiner granted points to the learner as opposed to the observer (the teacher who was listening in) who may have given a higher or lower grade based on the same rubric. The two learners (numbers one and five) where the scores are higher in the diagnostic test (initial score) and decline as they move into the first and second unit; the reasons shared by the learners ranged from not having time to do autonomous learning to having irregular number of lessons due to personal or health issues; the results from the post-interview might have alluded to showing resistance to autonomous learning (Khairallah et al., 2020).

Feedforward is an essential part of the feedback mechanism (Abatayo, 2020, p. 75), but without the feedback, the feedforward is not enough as shown by the qualitative data collected from both the pre- and post-interviews which helped to a greater extent in giving a more thorough view of the students' perspectives on whether feedforward was necessary. Accuracy in speaking is based on three elements: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (A. A. Gonzalez, 2018). Autonomous learning (Benson, 2011) is also an important part of CLT and the use of agency (Masland, 2021, para. 9) to improve the accuracy in conversation through HyperDocs (Highfill et al., 2019, p. 7).

The second research question was completely answered by the learners' responses to the pre- and post-interview questionnaires. The students seemed to agree that feedforward helped them improve their English conversation skills, even though this was not shown by the quantitative results.

Conclusions

This study explored the impact of feedforward in the improvement of English-speaking accuracy. Though the results obtained through the pre-test and post-test were negative, the students' reflections gotten through the pre- and post-interviews permitted a

more qualitative outlook on how giving feedforward during the lessons helped the students' more. The dissonance created by having a negative quantitative result by comparing the means of both initial and final scores versus the positive perception of feedforward by the students brings up some credibility to the belief that scores and performance records in the modern educational system can undermine real and significant learning to occur (Hirsch, 2017, p. 5). This dissonance not only gives some credibility to this belief, but also affirms what Abatayo (2020) stated regarding feedforward being an important part of the feedback loop.

The second research question was completely and satisfactorily answered by the students' reflections where most admitted that the constant oral and written feedback and feedforward during the lessons, in addition to they being given after each of the tests helped them to know what mistakes they had made and how to overcome them. This gives credence to two beliefs: one, the feedback loop works better when it is formative (Abatayo, 2020; Hirsch, 2017), and two, feedforward is an important part of the feedback loop (Brooks et al., 2019, p. 17).

Limitations

The difficulties and challenges that came up during the implementation of the innovation or conducting the research centered on the elaboration of the speaking test' scripts, having to make up lessons due to difficulties aforementioned (work, family life, health) on both the learners' and teacher's sides, consequently these difficulties also affected the schedule set to gather the data. Absence from students due to work or personal issues created problems in the gathering data stage as well. Another limitation was the search for resources to be used for the students as the teacher had to make the HyperDoc library from scratch without the backing of an institution. Creating the validation forms took time as seeking a format for this was not readily available to the teacher.

Recommendations

It is recommended to others that would like to replicate this study that a much larger sample be taken into consideration. If a larger sample is procured, a survey may be procured in order to get more data on students' perceptions. The use of rubrics should be the suitable ones for each level from the start, thus allowing a better assessment score. Other studies could go from adding feedforward as part of the lesson planning, studying the effects of feedforward in different kinds and levels of students to ascertain how feedforward should work and define its use in the assessment process better, or to how feedforward works when there are no numerical scores. Further studies could include how feedforward enhances students' agency in the classroom or how does feedforward affect autonomous learning on online lessons.

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Appendix 1

Diagnostic test rubric for all learners

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Summative Assessment rubrics

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Table of Student scores: Initial Speaking test, Unit 1 and 2's speaking tests

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

Validation form for the Diagnostic test for both A1 and B1 learners

Available upon request.

Appendix 6

Validation form for the Unit 2's test for A1 and B1 learners

Available upon request.

Appendix 7

Pre-interview Questionnaire and Codes

Available upon request.

Appendix 8

Post-interview Questionnaire's codes

Available upon request.

Appendix 9

Pre-interview Questionnaire's codes and interpretation of the results

Available upon request.

Appendix 10

Post-interview Questionnaire's codes and interpretation of the results

Available upon request.