International Journal of Enhanced Research in Educational Development (IJERED), ISSN: 2320-8708
Vol. 2, Issue 2, March-April, 2014, pp: (32-42), Impact Factor: 1.125, Available online at: www.erpublications.com

The comparative effect of explicit corrective feedback and clarification request feedback on impulsive and reflective EFL learners oral fluency

Dr. Masoud Seyed Motahari[1], Azardokht Ghasemi Nik Manesh[2]
[1]Assistant Professor, English Language Department, Islamic Azad University, Central Branch, Tehran, Iran
[2]TEFL M.A Student, English Language Department, Islamic Azad University, Central Branch, Tehran, Iran

Abstract: The present study was an attempt to investigate the effect of explicit error correction and clarification requests on impulsive and reflective EFL learners' oral fluency. The participants were 120 freshmen male and female adults EFL learners who were selected based on their scores on a piloted PET and the Impulsiveness Questionnaire was. The participants were divided into two main groups: 60 impulsive and 60 reflective. One impulsive and one reflective group received explicit corrective feedback and the other group received clarification request. After 14 sessions of instruction, participants took part in a posttest. The analysis of the data revealed that there was no significant difference between Impulsive and reflective EFL learners' oral fluency.

Keywords: Corrective Feedback, Oral Fluency.

I. Introduction

Today, the need for communication taps on the social side of human beings realized in the two channels of oral or written language, but the emphasis is on oral communication as the best demonstration of language abilities (Cele-Murcia, 2000). From a teaching point of view, speaking in a second or foreign language has often been looked at as the most demanding of all four skills. Speaking is a task that according to Brown (2008), like any other learning tasks involves making mistakes. Even speakers of L1, make mistakes or errors in using their own language when they are lost for words or forced into inappropriate language by a difficult or unusual situation; therefore, EFL teachers need to make informed decisions about what, when, and how correct in order to help learners improve their speaking skills without damaging their confidence (Keyvanfar & Azimi, 2009). Traditionally, in language classrooms, error treatment has been a hot topic. In the days of Audio-lingual method, errors were viewed as "phenomena to be avoided by over learning, memorizing, and 'getting it right' from the start" (Brown, 2008, p. 273). Among Audio-lingual proponents was Brooks (1960) who favored immediate, consistent, and explicit error correction. But, in 1970s and 1980s, emergence of communicative approaches, namely Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), began to change the scene. According to CLT, errors were no more considered as sins but as the evidences of learner's linguistic development.

Regarding the way the errors should be handled, Panova and Lyster (as cited in Brown, 2008) argue that one way for rectifying errors is getting feedbacks which include: recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, explicit correction, and repetition. The first studies and theories about feedback, according to Thorndike (as cited in Brookhart, 2007), are almost 100 years old and emerged from the psychological perspective called Behaviorism. Positive feedback was considered "positive reinforcement," and negative feedback was considered "punishment" (p. 7). Brookhart (ibid) further adds that both reinforcement and punishment affect learning; thus, feedback was theorized to be effective. The problem with this theory is that not all feedbacks actually are effective. Recently, corrective feedback has also gained prominence in studies of ESL and other educational contexts. This area of discussion has encouraged many ESL instructors to study corrective feedback in second language achievement. The purpose of giving feedback is to help the learners identify a problem with their production, resulting in the correct form being used following feedback. However, the form of feedback that should be used has been a point of argument in ESL teaching in recent years. According to (Baghbani, 2007), the students "have a preference of not only receiving feedback from their instructors but also a preference toward a certain feedback style they personally find more effective" which means learners prefer feedbacks which correspond to their unique personality, cognitive, and learning styles (p. 1).

According to Brook (1964), "Conventionally, all the errors in oral production are considered bad and in need of correction" (p. 65). However, in recent years, language learning specialists have taken a more balanced view regarding the way errors should be treated. This new view does not abandon error correction altogether, nor does it insists on correcting every single error. Advocating the importance of considering implicit error correction parallel to explicit method, Terrell (1985) states: "There are three reasons for not correcting students' errors directly: (1) it does not lead to more correct language usage in the future, (2) it may result in negative affective feelings that interfere with learning, and (3) it will probably cause students to focus their attention on language rather than meaning (p. 284)". Therefore, EFL practitioners arrive at this conclusion not to explicitly correct all of the errors. However, regarding fossilization, if we do not react immediately to our students' mistakes, they may change into everlasting errors. Considering these apparently conflicting points of view, the existing different learning styles, learner types, and different responses to one stimuli by people (Harmer, 2001) and impulsivity/ reflectivity (Fontana, 1995) as influential learning factors should be seriously considered before making any decision.

Feedback

In the context of teaching in general, feedback is information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the object of improving this performance. Some examples in language teaching: the words "yes, right," said to a learner who has answered a question; a grade of 70% on an exam; a raised eyebrow in response to a mistake in grammar; comments written in the margin of an essay. Feedback has two main distinguishable components: assessment and correction. In assessment, the learner is simply informed how well or badly h or she has performed. A percentage grade on an exam would be one example; or the response "No" to an attempted answer to a question in class; or a comment such as "Fair" at the end of a written assignment. In correction, some specific information is provided on aspects of the learner's performance: through explanation, or provision of better or other alternatives, or through elicitation of these from the learner…. In principle, correction can and should include information on what the learner did right, as well as wrong, and why!(Penny Ur, 1996, p. 242). Although feedback includes all types of verbal and nonverbal responses to the students and their speaking, the most commonly used in language classes is error correction (Chastain, 1988, p. 283).

Oral fluency

Richards (2009) defines fluency as "natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his/her communicative competence"(p.13). There is an array of definitions regarding fluency beside many identifying variables to consider when assessing it (Weaver, 2005). Richards and Schmidt (2002) define fluency in speech as the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions. Colorado (2007) adds that fluency without comprehension will require instructional intervention in vocabulary and comprehension skills.

II. Methodology

1. Participants

Participants of the study were 173 male and female students between the age ranges of 20 to 32 who were selected based on the result of the administration of three tests (as described in the following section).

2. Instruments

The following four instruments were used in this study:

a. The Preliminary English Test (PET)

For homogenizing participants based on their proficiency level, the researcher administered the PET proficiency test prior to the treatment. This test was first piloted among a sample of 30 students freshman male and female adult EFL learners at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch bearing almost the same characteristics as the target sample. All items went through an item analysis procedure, and the items proved to be malformed were omitted. The reliability of the test was estimated to be 0.89

b. Pretest of Oral Fluency

Before treatment, a pretest which was the speaking section of another PET was administered in order to know the students' speaking ability before the treatment. An oral test was thus piloted with 30 students prior to its administration and the inter-

rater reliability of the two raters was calculated. The used rating scale was the predetermined official "Cambridge General Mark Schemes" for speaking.

c. Eysenck and Eysenck Impulsiveness Questionnaire (EIQ)

The Impulsiveness Questionnaire by Eysenck and Eysenck (1990) is a 54-item questionnaire containing 3 subscales: (1) Impulsiveness (Imp, 19 items), (2) Venturesomeness (Vent, 16 items), (3) Empathy (Emp, 19 items). A standardized Persian impulsivity sub-scale of the questionnaire by Salimi (2001) consisting of 19 likert-scale items was employed in this study. Salimi (ibid) translated the original questionnaire to Persian and validated its impulsiveness sub-scale with 1820 subjects from Tarbiat Moddares University.

d. Oral Fluency Post-test

After the treatment, the speaking part of another PET was used as post-test to see if there existed any significant difference between the participants in terms of their oral fluency. The same procedure for scoring pretest was also followed for this test.

3. Procedure

First, the PET was administered to the 173 male and female students described above to select homogeneous participants for the study. One hundred and twenty (120) participants whose scores fell one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected as the main participants of the study and thus were chosen to take the pretest of oral fluency. To ensure the reliability of the scoring, an inter-rater reliability was run among the two raters (the researcher and a qualified rater, with a Ph.D. degree in TEFL, based on the rating scale provided by Cambridge ESOL for PET). It is also of great importance to mention that inter-rater reliability between two raters before pre and post-tests of oral fluency were calculated, using 30 EFL learners with almost the same characteristics of the target sample. The result showed a high degree of consistency between the scores of raters, and therefore, a high inter-rater reliability. Then, the Impulsiveness Questionnaire was administrated to the participants to distinguish between impulsive and reflective participants. The 120 subjects were divided into two groups: one impulsive (60 participants) and one reflective (60 participants). Each of these groups was divided into two classes with 30 participants (totally 4 classes). One impulsive and one reflective class received "Explicit Error Correction" and the other impulsive and reflective classes received "Clarification Request Feedback". All the participants were taught using the same material (New Interchange 3) and received the same amount of instruction. All four classes comprising the two groups were instructed by the same teacher, the researcher herself. The course consisted of 14 sessions spanned over a period of approximately three months and two sessions were allocated for final exam. Each session lasted around approximately two hours.

The conversation classes were held for four hours once a week. The class started with the teacher asking students some questions as the warm-up based on the content of the unit they were to work on. In every session, about three pages of the course book were taught. It normally took two sessions for a unit to finish. Each unit contained a part called snapshot which graphically presented interesting real-world information that introduces the topic of a unit and also new vocabularies. The participants were asked to answer follow-up questions while talking about their personal experiences. Students were put in pairs or groups of three to talk about the questions. After five to six minutes students were asked to express their opinions. It should be mentioned that all students had the chance to talk and receive correction(s) from their teacher.

In case of students who are usually reluctant to speak the teacher should make them to speak by any means. Afterwards, they listened to the tape. The audio track was repeated twice. Students answered some questions based on listening text and then checked their listening comprehension in pairs or in groups of three. This was followed by open-class checking of the answer which was volunteered by the students and controlled by the teacher. After that, the students were exposed to a new grammar focus. For this part, after the instruction was completed, the students were asked to do the exercises and compare their answers with a partner and check the similarity of their opinions. In the next part, they were asked to act out a conversation based on what they listened to, using their own questions and information.

The error corrections in this study were explicit error correction and Clarification requests. Explicit error correction based on the model of Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006), occurred when teacher directly indicated that what the student has said was incorrect. Such explicit negative feedback was sometimes introduced by phrases such as " oh, you mean X" or " you should say Y". Typacal requests for clarification took the form of " I am sorry", " pardon" , " I do not understand" based on the model of Panova and Lyster(2002, p. 583).

After the treatment phase and at the end of the course, again a speaking test (speaking section of another piloted PET test) was administrated and the scores gained by participants were compared with their pretest to measure their improvement and the effect of the treatment.

III. Results

Firstly, the researcher had to make sure that there was no significant difference between the oral fluency of the two groups of impulsive and reflective learners before the outset of the treatments. So, a t-test had to be run but prior to that the assumption of normality of both sets of scores had to be checked. The following table shows the result:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Scores in the Pretest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Ratios
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	
Impulsive pretest	60	14.00	17.75	16.3833	.66458	-.607	.309	-1.97
Reflective pretest	60	15.75	18.75	16.8667	.69115	.400	.309	1.30
Valid N (listwise)	60							

As shown in the above table the scores obtained to the impulsive group were negatively skewed as the skewness ratio exceeded the normality range of ±1.96. Therefore, a Mann Whitney U test, as the non-parametric equivalent for t test was conducted.

Table 2: Ranks in Pretest Scores

	personality type	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
pretest scores on oral fluency	impulsive	60	49.94	2996.50
	reflective	60	71.06	4263.50
	Total	120		

As table 2 shows the reflective group obtained a much higher mean rank. The following table shows whether the difference was significant or not:

Table 3: Test Statistics[a]

	pretest scores on oral fluency
Mann-Whitney U	1166.500
Wilcoxon W	2996.500
Z	-3.353
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

a. Grouping Variable: personality type

As table 3 demonstrates, the difference between the mean ranks of the two groups turned out to be significant (M=1166.5, p=.001<.05), hence a significant difference existed between the two groups with respect to their oral fluency before the intervention.

As the two groups were shown to be similar regarding their oral fluency before the treatment, as there were two independent variables (feedback type and personality type) and one dependent variable (oral fluency), a two-way ANCOVA should be conducted, to factor out the influence of the pretest scores on the posttest scores. Firstly the assumption of normality of the distributions was checked:

Table 4 :Descriptive Statistics of Normality Assumption

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Ratios
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	
Reflective clarification request feedback	30	15.00	18.63	17.3587	.77135	-.515	.427	-1.21
Reflective Explicit error correction feedback	30	16.25	19.00	17.2543	.61815	.746	.427	1.75
Impulsive clarification request feedback	31	14.75	18.00	16.9516	.65961	-1.056	.421	-2.5
Impulsive Explicit error correction feedback	30	16.00	18.25	17.2417	.63138	-.166	.427	-.39
Valid N (listwise)	30							

Table 4 (the last column) shows that the skewness ratios all fell within the normality range of ±1.96 except for the scores belonging to impulsive group receiving clarification request feedback. The following graphs represent the distribution of the scores.

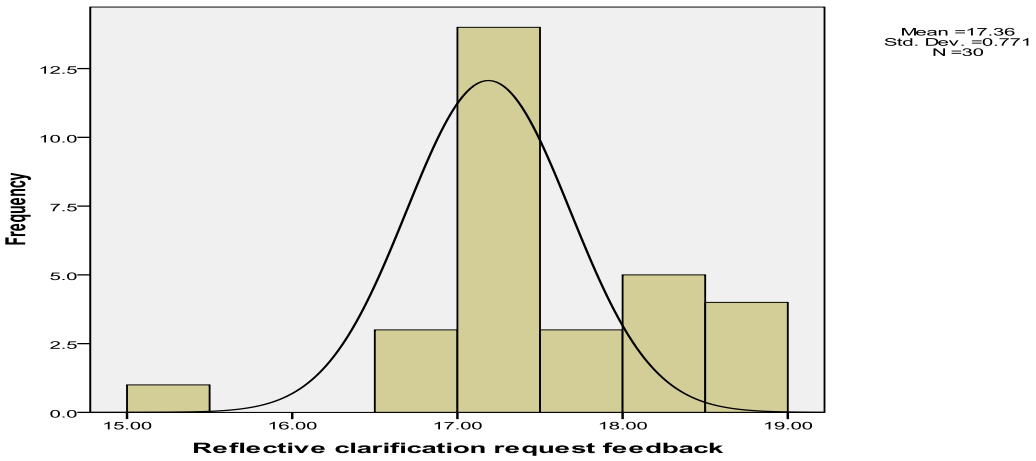

Figure 1: Reflective' s Distribution of Scores Received Clarification Request Feedback

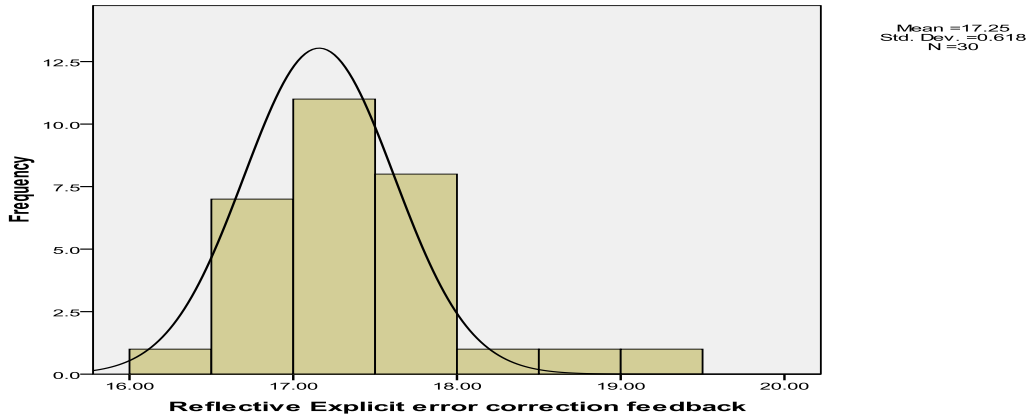

Figure 2: Reflective' s Distribution of Scores Received CExplicit Error Correction Feedback

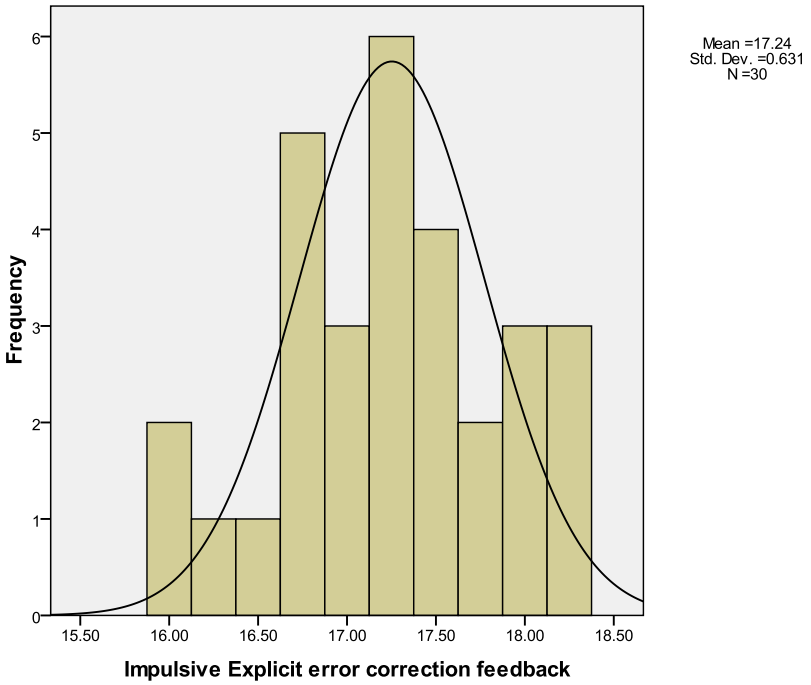

Figure3: Impulsive's Distribution Scores Received Explicit Error Correction

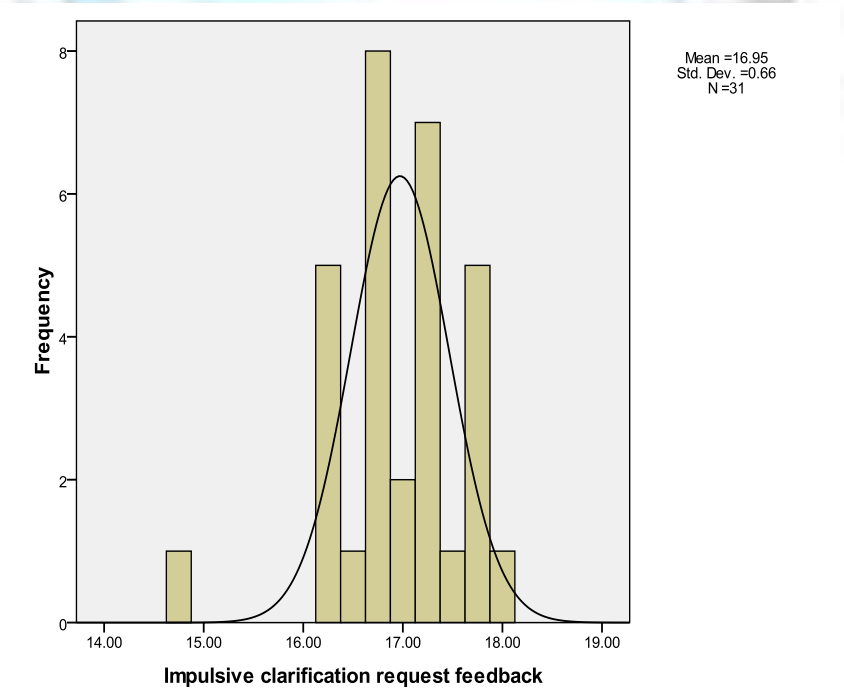

Figure 4: Impulsive's Distribution Scores Received Clarification Request Feedback

The first assumption for a two way ANCOVA was violated because one of the sets of scores turned out to be skewed, and as there is no non-parametric equivalent for ANCOVA test, the researcher tried to make the distribution of this set of scores normal by eliminating the possible extreme scores. The following plot shows the existence of an outlier.

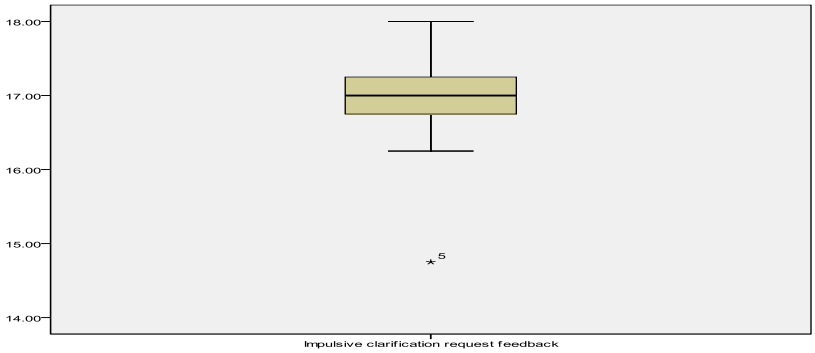

Figure 5: Existence of an Outlier

After detecting an extreme score and deleting it from the distribution, the researcher inspected the normality again in the following table:

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Normality Assumption after Deleting the Extreme Score from the Distribution

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Ratio
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	
Impulsive clarification request feedback	30	16.25	18.00	17.0250	.52666	.096	.427	.23
Valid N (listwise)	30							

As table 5 depicts, the distribution became normal after deleting the extreme score. The following graph also shows the normality of the distribution of this set of scores after deleting the outlier.

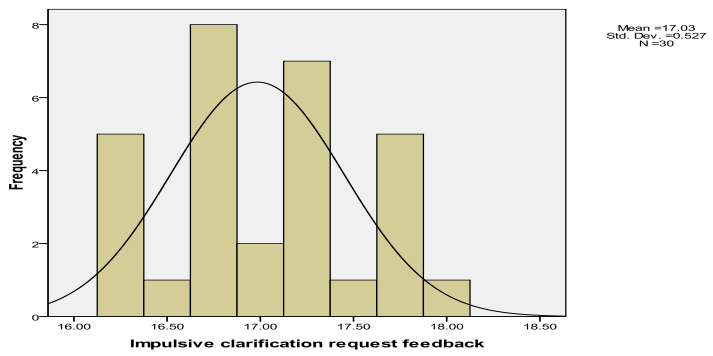

Figure6: Normality of Distribution after Deleting the Outlier

Therefore, the researcher could go ahead with the ANCOVA calculations. Another assumption that had to be checked was the correlation between the dependent variable and the covariate. The following table shows the result:

Table 6: Correlations Between the Dependent Variable and the Covariate

		posttest scores	pretest scores
posttest scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.532**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	119
pretest scores	Pearson Correlation	.532**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	119	120

As the above table shows, the assumption was met (r=.532, p=.000<.05) meaning that there was a significant relationship between the dependent variable and the covariate (pretest scores). Also, linearity of this relationship split by the independent variables was checked visually through the scatter plots demonstrated below:

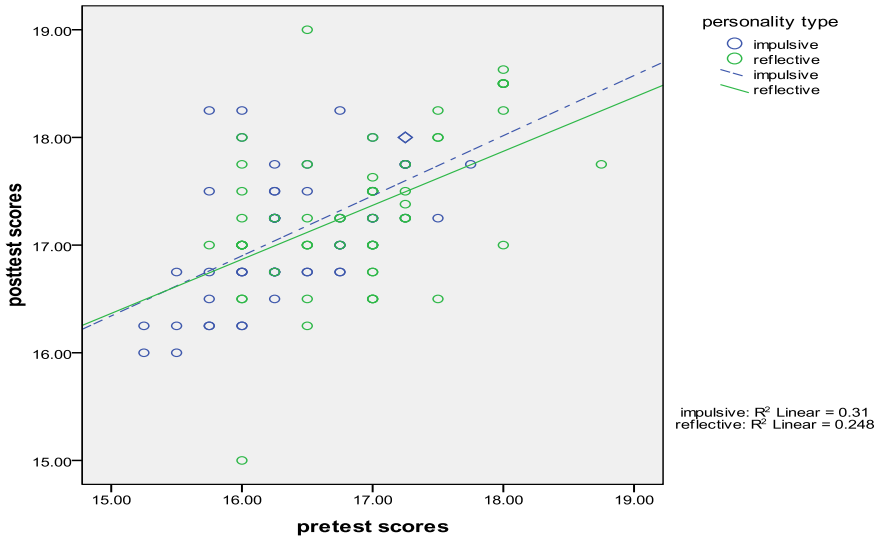

Figure7: Linearity of the Relationship of the Pretest and Posttest Scores Split by the Independent Variable(Personality Type)

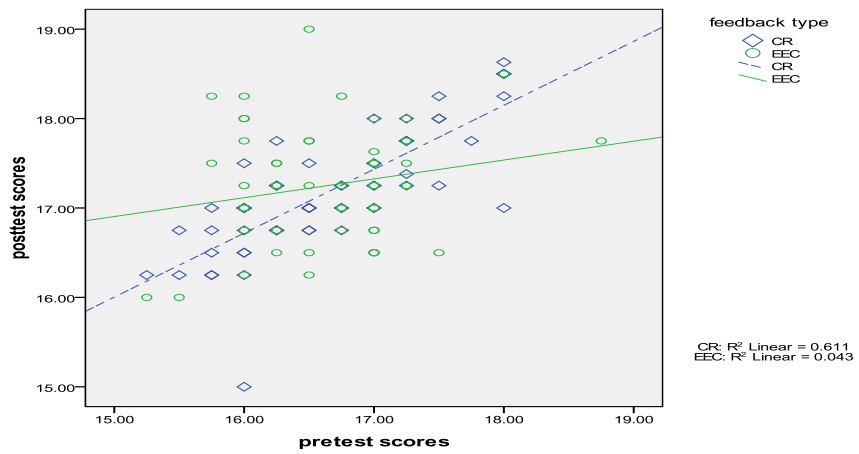

Figure8: Linearity of the Relationship of Pretest and Posttest Scores Split by the Independent Variable (Feedback Type)

As both of the figures above show the relationship between the pretest and posttest scores were linear as the scores clustered around straight lines in the scatter plots.

Table7: Between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	N
feedback type	1.00	CR	61
	2.00	EEC	59
personality type	1.00	impulsive	59
	2.00	reflective	61

Table 8 : Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variable: Posttest Scores

feedback type	personality type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CR	impulsive	16.9417	.66851	30
	reflective	17.3552	.75864	31
	Total	17.1518	.73974	61
EEC	impulsive	17.2500	.64087	29
	reflective	17.2460	.61990	30
	Total	17.2480	.62483	59
Total	impulsive	17.0932	.66776	59
	reflective	17.3015	.69031	61
	Total	17.1991	.68449	120

Table 9: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:posttest scores			
F	df1	df2	Sig.
3.222	3	116	.025

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

As table 9 demonstrates, the homogeneity of variances assumption was violated (F=3.22, p=.025<.05). However, the researcher decided to proceed with the analysis on the grounds that the size of the two groups was reasonably similar (larger/smaller=61/39=1.04 <1.5) and based on the fact that analysis of variance is reasonably robust to violations of this assumption provided that the size of the groups is similar (Stevens, 1996, p.249).

Table 10:Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: posttest scores						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	20.513[a]	4	5.128	16.735	.000	.368
Intercept	11.620	1	11.620	37.919	.000	.248
Pretest	17.629	1	17.629	57.526	.000	.333
grouping2	.255	1	.255	.833	.363	.007
grouping1	.143	1	.143	.466	.496	.004
grouping2 * grouping1	1.131	1	1.131	3.690	.057	.031
Error	35.241	115	.306			
Total	35552.771	120				
	55.755	119				

a. R Squared = .368 (Adjusted R Squared = .346)

Table 10 shows that the interaction between the two independent variables was not significant (F=3.69, p=.057>.05). Also the main effects for feedback type (grouping 2) and personality type (grouping 1) were not significant either (.363>.05 and .496 >.05). And the output demonstrates that the pretest scores had a significant effect on the posttest scores (F=57.52, p=.000<.05).It is concluded therefore that after removing the effect of the initial difference between the two groups of impulsive and reflective learners regarding their oral fluency.

All four null hypotheses maintained on the basis of the non-significant effect of the feedback type on impulsive and reflective oral fluency and the fifth one on the basis of the non-significant interaction between the two independent variables.

Conclusion

Although a number of researches e.g., (Saracho, 2001) pointing to the fact that students prefer teachers who match their styles or based on Zhang and Sternberg (2006) students and teachers have preferred styles and that their styles affect significantly on their learning and teaching behaviors, respectively, the results of this study- the pretest and post test analyses- clarified that impulsive and reflective students received different feedback- clarification and explicit error correction- were at the same level of oral fluency and different instructions had not any significant difference on it and according to the results of this it was revealed that this holistic perspective needs to be modified by considering the individual differences. Although the reflective style is suggested to be superior in influencing learning (Rashtchi and Keyvanfar, 2010), this study showed the impact of clarification request and explicit error correction on impulsive and reflective learners' oral fluency was somehow the same; meaning that there was no significant difference between them regarding their oral fluency.

According to Richards (1990), "effective language teaching programs depend on systematic data gathering, planning, and development within a context that is shaped and influenced by learner, teacher, syllabus designers, material developers, school, and societal factors" (p. 20). So, it can be said that even syllabus designers and material developers should at least work in cooperation with both students and teachers in order to include techniques and learning activities, particularly on the role and methods of learners' error correction which can be best used to bring about learning for all types of EFL learners (Richards, 1990). Moreover, as argued by Evans and Waring (as cited in Zhang, Sternberg, and Rayner, 2012) it will be good if teachers not just behave as teachers but also as researchers in their classes and identify their students' individual styles and match these styles in a way that could satisfy the needs of all students. Although attempting to the needs of all the students may seem difficult, being sensitive to students' needs and preferences and balancing corrections using different techniques for different learners in the classroom can make teachers sure that they have treated the students equally.

References

[1]. Aminzadeh, R., Alinezhad, H., (2011). The Comparative Effect of Direct-only Correction and Direct Metalinguistic Correction on the Improvement of EFL Learners' Writing Ability. Journal of English Studies 1(3), 41-49.
[2]. Baradaran, A., Khalili, A., (2009). The impact of online chatting on EFL learners' oral fluency. Journal of English Studies 1(1), 63-77.
[3]. Brooks, N. (1960). Language and language learning: Theory and practice. NewYork: Harcourt, Brace.
[4]. Brooks, N. (1964) Language and language learning: Theory and practice (2nd edition). New York. Wesley Longman.
[5]. Chastain, k. (1988).Developing Second_ language Skills, Theory and Practice,(3rd ed.).HBJ.
[6]. Chu, R (2011). Effects of teacher's corrective feedback on accuracy in the oral English of English-majors College students. Theory and Practice in Language Studies. 5, 1, 454-459.
[7]. Colorado, C. (2007). Assessing fluency. Retrieved on July 19, 2008, from: www.coloroncolorado.org/educators/teaching/vocabulary/fluency
[8]. Dabaghi, A. (2008). A comparison of the effects of implicit and explicit corrective feedback on learners' performance in tailor-made tests. Journal of Applied Sciences, 8(1), 1-13.
[9]. Ellis, R., Loewen, S., Erlam, R. (2006). Implicit and explicit corrective feedback and the acquisition of L2 grammar. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 28(2), 339-368.
[10]. Fontana, D. (1995). Psychology for teachers (3rd ed.). Londoni Macmillian Press LTD.
[11]. Harmer,J. (2001). The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th ed). Pearson Educational Ltd.p.99.
[12]. Keyvanfar, A. & Azimi, F. (2009). Nonverbal : A remedy for Speaking Grammatical Inaccuracy. Journal of English Language Studies 1(1), 25_26.
[13]. Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation form in communicative classrooms. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19, 137-66.
[14]. Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1998). Negotiation of form, recast, and explicit correction. Language Learning, 48(2), 183-218.
[15]. Mohseni, A., Edalat pour, L. (2012). Iranian EFL learners and their teachers' preferences for oral error correction. Journal of Language and Translation, 3(1), 9-16.
[16]. Panova, I., &Lyster, R. (2002). Patterns of corrective feedback and uptake in an adult.ESL classroom.TESOL Quarterly, 36, 573-595.
[17]. Rashtchi, M. and Keyvanfar, A. (2010). ELT:Quick and Easy. Tehran: Rahnama Press.
[18]. Rassaei, E. and Moinzadeh, A. (2011). Investigating the effects of three types of corrective feedback on the acquisition of English wh- question forms by Iranian EFL Learners. English Language Teaching, 4, 2, 97-106.

[19]. Richards, J.C. (1990). Language teaching matrix. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 8-20.
[20]. Richards, J.C. & Rodgers, T. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[21]. Richards. J.C. & Schmidt, R. (2002). Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics. Malaysia, KVP: Pearson Education Limited.
[22]. Riding, R., & Cheema, I. (1991). Cognitive styles - an overview and integration. Educational Psychology, 11, 193–216.
[23]. Rozencwajg, P., & Corroyer, D. (2005). Cognitive processes in the reflective/impulsive cognitive style. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 166(4), 451-463.
[24]. Salimi, E. (2001). On the relationship between impulsive and reflective performance on TMU English Exam, Unpublished master's thesis. Tarbiat Modarres. Tehran, Iran.
[25]. Ur, P. (1996). A course in language teaching: practice and theory. Cambridge University Press, 242-253.
[26]. Weaver, E. C. (2005). Can you speak English- A look at what fluency really means. Retrieved on October 26,2008, from: www.edu-talk.info/wordpress/?tag=esl-speaking-fluency.
[27]. Zhang, L., Sternberg, R. J., and Rayner, S (2012). Handbook of intellectual styles: Preferences in cognition, learning , and thinking. Springer Publishing Company, LLC.232-250.