Journal of

Second and Multiple Language Acquisition

JSMULA

Table of Contents

ARTICLES

Formative Assessment, Feedback, and Scoring Enhance Iranian Students' English Language Proficiencies

Parvin Safari[1]
Shiraz University, Iran
Mohammad Razagh Pourhashemi[2]
Teacher Education University of Yazd & Ministry of Education, Iran

Abstract

The researcher investigated the effects of formative assessment (FA) and feedback which help learners take control of their own learning, as students' current level of English language proficiency and the available gap to attain the target proficiency are illuminated through FA. So, the researchers organized students into small groups as a key step to facilitate self- and peer-feedback on the test to enhance their learning outcomes. The researcher also examined the effect of scoring as a traditional way of providing feedback on students' learning enhancement. To do so, three groups of female EFL students of junior high school (75, in total) from Yazd, Iran participated in this research. The researcher administered similar tests during an educational semester. As a traditional form of class, the first group received formative assessments (students can find their weaknesses) and exam scores as the sole feedback. While the second and the third groups were in the form of small groups, who received different kinds of feedback, except scoring that the exam papers of group three were devoid of any. It was found that formative assessment and feedback significantly affected overall achievement of students. However, the performance of the third group was highly significant than others' which can be attributed to their non-scored exam papers. On the basis of this study, it is suggested that teachers provide learners with various sorts of feedback excluding exam scores.

Keywords   Formative Assessment; Feedback; Scoring; Small Group; Learning Enhancement; Iranian high-school students

1. Introduction

Assessment and teaching are so integral and interwoven that they cannot be separately taken into account. Teachers might have different forms of formal and informal assessments during the academic years, as these might happen while (s)he feels there is a need to find the students' progress or their understandings of a special topic. To elaborate on the relationship between assessment, teaching, and learning, Kellough (1996, p. 417) states that

---

[1] She is a Ph.D. candidate of TEFL at Shiraz University. So far, she has presented and published many papers at national and international conferences and in reputable journals. Her areas of interest include critical pedagogy, critical language testing, ecological language learning, semiotics and the philosophy of language, teacher education, and sociocultural theory. Corresponding author: psafari2009@gmail.com

[2] He got his M.A. in TEFL from Yazd University. He is an English language teacher in Teacher Education University of Yazd and Ministry of Education. His areas of interest are teaching methodology, teacher education, critical pedagogy, and sociocultural theory of learning and teaching. Thus far, he has presented several papers at national and international conferences and journals. mpourhashemi2009@gmail.com

"teaching and learning are reciprocal processes and depend on and affect one another. Thus, the assessment component deals with how well the students are learning and how well the teacher is teaching". Furthermore, teachers might be interested in frequent assessment tasks, especially diagnostic ones, as it will provide teachers with insightful information concerning the current students' level of proficiency in an especial topic, as it also helps teachers to adopt their teaching styles accordingly to meet the students' needs (Angelo & Cross, 1990).

Each scholar provides a definition to have a clear understanding of the term assessment. Hoy and Gregg (1994) described assessment as a non-stop cycle of gathering the needed information, analysis and coalition of the obtained data. Black and Wiliam (1998b) extended the definition of assessment to almost all teachers' and students' practices in classrooms which help them to get some information for diagnostic purposes to change and revise the already adopted teaching and learning styles. It is believed that such perception of assessment attracted some further attentions to the vital roles of observing teachers' style of teaching in classrooms, classroom discussions, and analysis of students' progress based on their assignments or tests. Crooks (1998) and Black and Wiliam (1998) in particular emphasized on the improvement nature of assessments, as they will help students to have progress in their learning, and teachers to improve their understandings of the classrooms to adopt most well-pertinent teaching styles and materials. Nicol (2003) as well stated that students and teachers are provided with tabulated progression through the assessments, as both teachers and students benefit from the cumulated information.

1.1. Formative assessment and feedback
1.1.1. The role of formative assessment

As Alvarez et al. (2014) state, formative assessment has the capability of teaching and learning enhancement, especially for English language learners. Teachers and students are both engaged in formative assessment, as students also have the ability and power to assess their own progress which help them to find strength and weak points on the one hand, and teachers to modify the style of teaching and revise the already adopted teaching materials. In other words, formative assessment is a process, yielding information which is useful for both students and teachers. Teachers use this type of information to shape and improve instruction while students use it to better develop their own learning (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). This type of assessment meets the formative criteria if the obtained information is actually used to change new styles of teaching to meet the students' needs (Black & William, 1998). Duncan and Dunn (1988, p. 73) also defined formative assessment as the "assessment concerned with providing information for class management decisions". Additionally, formative assessment is strongly connected with feedback, as Stobard and Gipps (1997, p. 22) believed that "Feedback must be descriptive, specifying, constructing the way forward". Actually, the role of feedback in the process of formative assessment is so crucial that it is called the "inchpin", integrating the elements of the formative assessment process (Brookhart, Moss, & Long, 2010, p.41).

On the relationship between formative assessment and feedback, O'Connell (2015) believed that formative assessment has a significant positive effect on student learning. Accordingly, Sadler (1998) stated that formative assessment happens to provide learners with feedback on their performance which at the same time helps them progress in their learning cycles. Therefore, teachers play a pivotal role in learners' progress by engaging them in class discussions with their peers, and providing questions to help learners find their current levels of understanding of the course. In fact, learning progression is developmental in that it concerns "the trajectory of learning in a domain" over an extended period of time—months to years (Heritage, 2008, p. 3). Further, "learning trajectories" (Sztajn, Confrey, Wilson, & Edgington, 2012) is used to describe learning progression, defined as " descriptions of successively more sophisticated ways of thinking about an idea that follow one another as students learn: [The descriptions] lay out in words and examples what it means to move toward more expert understanding" (Wilson & Bertenthal, 2006, p. 3).

Formative assessment helps teachers find students' progress and their weaknesses during the continuum of teaching and learning. So, it works like a pharos in the oceans which helps teachers to adjust their teaching styles or materials based on the students' needs. Formative assessment, hence, would be helpful for both teachers and students as it has a monitoring purpose for continuously checking the learners' progress. Actually, students become active agents in their own learning and are increasingly engaged in independent skills through formative assessment process (Clark, 2012). While formative assessment informs students on their learning progress and persuades students to take responsibility of their own learning, it is also fruitful for the teacher to adjust or revise the teaching styles. Accordingly, Nicol (2003) also mentioned that formative assessment improves learning by providing insightful feedback for both teachers and students.

1.1.2. The role of formative feedback

To fullfill a formative purpose, assessment is in need of providing actionable information for both teachers and learners (Heritage, 2010a & b; Shepard, 2005). Feedback provision is indeed the central part of assessment. As Brown, Bull and Pendlebury (1997, p. 5) stated "when people are trying out new approaches, they may be insecure and vulnerable". Supportive and constructive feedback is also important in the processes of teaching, learning and assessment. Accordingly, Pintrich and Zusho (2002) highlighted that formative assessment and feedback empower the students as self-regulated learners. Further, feedback promotes learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998) and helps learners clarify learning goals, their own progress toward goals of leaning, and what they require to do in order to achieve the goals (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Actually, formative feedback discloses something about a learner's development toward goals of learning, thinking processes, and misconceptions (Supovitz, 2012).

Feedback is also helpful in that learners find the gap between their desired level of proficiencies and their current level of knowledge, and as already mentioned it paves the way to achieve the goal of learning, targeting the right level of language development (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989).

Thus, with the aid of formative feedback, students can advance the capability to monitor, assess, and tailor their learning (Nicol, 2010). It is noteworthy to mention that some researchers (e.g. Bangert-Browns, Kulick, & Morgan, 1991; Elawar & Corno, 1985) also indicated that feedback on tests and assignments provides learners and teachers with specific comments about diagnosed mistakes and particular suggestions to improve learners' understanding of the course and fill the gap between their knowledge and desired level of proficiency.

Teachers' feedback might be verbal or written, but the most effective feedback should have the criteria of being timely, specific, and related to the explicit criteria. The limited evidence on feedback suggested that students want more (Higgins, Hartley & Skelten, 2002). It also showed that teachers try to adjust their teaching or assessment strategies to meet the learners' needs (Koller, 2005). So, feedback empowers students, especially those with low proficiencies to be successful in their learning process (Black, 1998).

While teachers are generally considered as feedback providers, learners can also self-evaluate their progress, so they can have a vital role in formative assessment (Fonta & Fernandes, 1994; Frederikson & White, 1997). Recently, there is a change in teaching and learning process, as it is also highlighted in the underpinnings of critical pedagogy (Safari & Pourhashemi, 2012, 2015). The teacher, nowadays, is not the mere knowledge providers in the classrooms and students as the recipients of knowledge (Safari & Rashidi, 2015). The same is also true about the assessment process in classrooms (e.g. Cheng & Warren, 2000). McDonald and Boud (2003) also stressed that students' direct involvement in assessing their learning and reflection on their desired goals, adopted learning strategies and the outcomes are highly effective in enhancing their learning and achievement.

 Some further researches (e.g. Boud, 1995; Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 1999) also investigated the effects of self- and peer-feedback on learning. Regarding the significance of peer feedback, McConlogue (2012) believed that peer feedback provides learners for the sorts of critical review capabilities and skills which their professional contexts in future may demand, particularly any practice in peer assessment and feedback. Accordingly, CADQ (2013) argued that this skill is considered as an important life-skill to suggest learners. The requirement for peers' engagement through the process of peer feedback is also stressed by Wimhurst and Manning (2013) who stated that the learners' understanding of assessment is elaborated through this sort of assessment process in which they need to draw upon both explicit and tacit knowledge.

Sadler (1998, p. 78) looked at the feedback from another perspective, as "feedback is concerned with praise for effort, which leads to higher self-esteem, more effort and finally higher achievement". Black and William (2001, p. 8) also argued that feedback "improves learning" as it helps learners find their strengths and weaknesses in learning continuum. They (2001, p. 631) indicated that "good feedback causes thinking", and as teachers provide feedback on the students' progress or the existed gaps to achieve the desired goal (Black & William, 2003) so that "this enables new learning" (Shephard, 2001, p. 1075).   Therefore, assessment mediates the teaching and learning process (Roos & Hamilton, 2005) and improves

learning (Vygotsky, 1987). In fact, through the process of formative feedback, teacher models language which is slightly above student's current level to promote students' language development (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). This issue has been emphasized in sociocultural theory of Vygotsky and learning within ZPD.

In an attempt, Wiggins (1997) enumerated the criteria of facilitative feedback which improves learning. These include: highlighting students' strengths, reminding the students of the existed gaps which they still need to learn, and preventing the students from making the same mistakes. However, feedback should be continuous and presented at the appropriate time. Otherwise, the students will learn nothing if the teacher's feedback is received too late. In the case of delayed feedback, the students might forget the mistakes and have no interest to be reminded of their mistakes.

It is believed that good feedback and formative assessment provide both teachers and students with the necessary information they need, as the teachers find the students' level of knowledge and the students receive appropriate information on the mistakes and try to avoid its recurrence in further practice of learning. As Yoke (2003, p. 482) noted "The act of assessing has an effect on the assessor as well as the student. Assessors learn about the extent to which they [students] have developed expertise and can tailor their teaching accordingly".

New conceptions of feedback and formative assessment are in conflict with their conceptualizations as a transmission process and some researchers have recently challenged this perspective (e.g. Yorke, 2003; Boud, 2000, Sadler, 19998). Based on this traditional model, teachers "transmit" feedback to their students about strengths and weaknesses of their results on the tests and assignments, and on the other hand, students acknowledge teachers' advices and comments for further improvement in their learning process. Some other researchers (e.g. Chanock, 2000; Hyland, 2000) emphasized the point that in the case of transmission, students fail to acknowledge this type of feedback as they cannot work on the already received feedback since this process sounds more like "telling" that ignores the students' engagement to construct meaning and act based on the feedback. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2005), the process of feedback should be constructive so that students can interact through subject matter while discussing and transforming it with other peers so as to internalise meanings and connect it with previous knowledge and understanding.

Actually, the conceptual model of formative assessment and feedback as an alternative gives priority to the students, since they regularly monitor their own learning to achieve the desired goals and construct their own perceptions of received feedback from external sources such as teachers or their peers (Ivanic, Clark & Rimmershow, 2000; Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Through the process of formative feedback and assessment, teachers might face a number of problems. Brown (2006) enumerated the problems of formative assessment as students might not pay much attention as they have for summative assessment. Thus, it would take too much time for different kinds of formative assessment to be conducted as students' level of

proficiencies changes over the continuum of learning and its implementation among students with different levels of proficiencies should be observed.

1.1.2.1. Informal and formal feedback

Informal feedback is regarded as a dialogue among students or students and teachers for further assistance and advices. Here, students' voice and their understandings is highly emphasized, as they have the power to express their ideas (Black, 1998). At the same time, it should be remembered that in populated classrooms, it would be difficult for the teachers to have dialogue with all students, but teachers might still have such communication with the students to provide them with the necessary feedback. But, small group can promote discussions of feedback (Nicol & Boyle, 2003; Boyle & Nicol, 2003) through peer-feedback, and thus short feedback cycles benefit both the students and the teacher (Steadman, 1998).

On the other hand, formal feedback is a graded assignment with comments. That is, graded comments are the most common sort of feedback which students receive in class (Marzano, 2000; Oosterhof, 2001). In fact, grades give this chance to teachers to have a convenient summary of learners' performance and provide all interested parties with information concerning students' achievement (Lipnevich & Smith, 2008). Although grading can be regarded as formal feedback and provide students with feedback, Butler (1988) highlighted that as students' learning can be improved by feedback through comments, grades will have negative effect on students since they ignore comments when grades are also presented to them based on their tests or assignments. Butler (1987) has also stressed that grading the students' performance has less effects than the feedback through comments, as it encourages students to compare themselves with their peers than focus on the weaknesses highlighted in the tests. Craven, Marsh and Debus (1991) also indicated that feedback in the form of grades has more negative effects on students who suffer from lack of self-esteem.

1.1.2.2. Internal vs. external feedback

Internal feedback happens as students monitor their learning and engagement with tasks and learning practices, leading to learners' achievement of their desired goals (Pintrich, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). The process of monitoring the interactions between the tasks and students which are continuously conducted through the learning process generates internal feedback. This sort of feedback can be compared with the students' current level of knowledge and proficiency with the desired goals, while at the same time students receive external feedback from their teachers, peers, or other sources of feedback. However, Nicol (2006) believed that such externally received feedback might improve, concur or conflict with the students' perception of the task and learning. Freeman and Lewis (1998) emphasized the quality of external feedback, as it should be provided in appropriate time while students are totally aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, proper external feedback should help students work on their strengths and overcome the building blocks of learning.

Some researchers (e.g. Juwah, Macfarlane-Dick, Matthew, Nicol, Ross, Smith, 1991) also stressed that self-assessment or internal feedback, and

peer assessment or external feedback, in both formative and summative situations, help learners to solve the difficulties by raising students' expectations, motivating them to acknowledge feedback, and the development of learners' independence and autonomy. According to Stobart and Gripps (1997), self-evaluation and self-assessment are extensively related to formative assessment and self-reference. As students fail to assess their progress without appropriate feedback, which should be based on their own achievement in the past (self-reference). Therefore, students should have an opportunity to evaluate their own learning and progress.

1.2. The present study
This study has attempted to address the following questions:

1. Does formative assessment with just scores without other sorts of feedback affect subsequent learning and eventual achievement?
2. Does formative assessment with feedback and scores affect subsequent learning and overall achievement?
3. Does formative assessment with feedback alone without scores affect subsequent learning as well as final achievement?

2. Methodology
This study is a quasi-experimental research in which the researcher selected three intact classes to conduct the research.

2.1. Subjects
The participants of present research were three intact classes of female students studying in grade three of a high school in Yazd, Iran. In each class, there were 25 female students with different proficiency levels. However, the proficiency levels had been balanced across the different classes so that students of different abilities had been dispersed, to some extent, equally to these three classes based on the school curriculum and agenda. Their textbook was composed of six units, three of which are covered for the first semester.

The research treated these three classes as three groups: 1. traditional group; 2. the group with formative feedback and scoring; and 3. the group with formative feedback but no scoring. Random assignment was used to randomly select each class as one of these groups.

2.2. Instrumentation and procedures
The instruments used in this study included: a pretest, treatment, and a post-test.

2.2.1. The pre-test
In order to determine whether there exist any significant differences between the respective groups, we implemented a pre-test which was on the basis of the first unit of their nationwide textbook. This test comprised two parts, 10 grammatical point items and 10 vocabulary ones.

2.2.2. The treatment

During the research, the same tests were conducted among three groups of participants. These tests were based on the taught units of the students' textbook during the first semester. They included two parts of vocabulary and grammar, just like the pre-test. However, the treatment for each of these groups differed with respect to the presence or the kind of feedback (students who also took FAs received feedback based on their test results), provided to the students. The three different sorts of treatment for each group involved:

Group I.

They received the same three formative tests with two-week interval. There was no teacher's feedback, comments, discussion, or the other peers' feedback. There was also no focus on the students' self-assessment. The sole feedback supplied to them was the grades on their test papers. In this classroom, students' misunderstandings were not clarified by the teacher or peers. The students did not have any chance of interaction with the teacher in the form of dialogue to get an immediate response to their problems. The students were not also given any opportunity to work in pair or groups to give and receive feedback. The physical form of the class was traditional as many of the formal classes in Iranian state schools, all chairs were faced to the board with no interaction between students and the teacher, or among students themselves. In other words, no external or internal feedback was observed in this class.

Group II.

It differed in major respects compared with group one, but the same three tests were conducted in their class. The same traditional form of classroom arrangement was not seen in this class. The students were organized in groups of five. In these small groups, there would be one or two clever students who were in charge of managing the group, guiding and providing feedback. This selection of the talented students was based on the students' results in pre-test. Each group constituted a mini-circle facing the board.

First of all, the teacher clarified assessment criteria, goals, and standards in the form of explicit written statements, verbal descriptions, or discussion prior to the formative tests. The purpose of providing the assessment goals (and criteria and standards) for the students was that if students did not share (at least in part) their teacher's conceptions of assessment goals, then the feedback information they received was unlikely to "connect" (Hounsell, 1997).

After conducting each test, the teacher saved ten minutes to discuss responses to questions with the whole class. This might be a teachable moment since students will best remember the test questions, their incorrect answers, and corrections. In the following session, the teacher turned back the test papers including colored feedback comments in details. The student's grade was also written on the first sheet of the colored test papers. The teacher's comments included notes of students' strengths and weaknesses in a non-authoritative tone. The grade and the teacher's comments formed the written feedback.

After turning the test papers back, the teacher produced informative and relevant timely feedback as well as discussion. The teacher gave feedback to the whole class that was concerned with the areas for improvement, ambiguous points, and the appropriate strategies to answer the questions. Teacher's external feedback provided can be in the form of dialogue between the teacher and the students. If students had problems in certain areas, learning activities were also assigned to them.

While receiving the exam papers, the members of each group were asked to generate peer-to-peer feedback on the test. On the significance of peer assessment and feedback, it should be noted that it is an ideal opportunity in which students serve as instructional resources to one another resembling the way collaborative learning acts (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Thus, in this class, the learners in these small groups were given sufficient time to focus on the comments and to clarify their misunderstandings. They interacted with each other to disambiguate incorrect answers, while each student monitored her own progress. Each learner in the group had this opportunity to assess her own learning in addition to giving external feedback to the other members of the group. Each member was also required to have a self-report to note down the different points concerning written explanations for the correct and incorrect answers, peer feedback, self-assessment and the problems.

The students should deliver their self-reports to the teacher, so that she can concentrate on the students' difficulties, the forgotten points on the part of the teacher and the better strategies for the improvement.

Thus, in group two both kinds of feedback, external (both teacher and peer feedback) as well as internal feedback (self-assessment) were provided. Although there was interaction among students and teachers, some of the students could not focus on the external feedback and comments since their attention was distracted from feedback to the given scores on their test papers.

Group III.
The same tests and procedures implemented for group 2 were utilized for the third group in exactly the same way. The crucial difference was that while the teacher gave the students' test papers back; it was observed that the papers involved just the colored comments without any marks. The teacher followed the same procedures and gave the detailed feedback and discussion as in group 2. Peers in each group supplied feedback to each other. Each learner monitored her own learning as well as those of others through giving and receiving feedback from other peers and the teacher in the form of interaction. A superior student in each group was observed to be in charge of providing the appropriate feedback to the other members. In this group, the same as group 2, each student should possess a self-report to explain the answers of test items, the feedback, the possible problems, etc. These reports were collected from each group and delivered to the teacher. The teacher had a focus on the students' self-assessment, the quality and the appropriacy of the feedback received from the peers and the teacher. Next Session, while the teacher had prepared a note of what the whole class had mentioned in their reports, she discussed the students' difficulties, the best

strategies to answer the questions and also supplied the kinds of feedback based on the students' needs.

As mentioned earlier, the teacher submitted the test papers without any scores to the students. A couple of sessions after reporting the scores, the teacher provided sufficient feedback to the students, clarified their difficulties, and assigned the tasks and activities for improvement.

2.2.3. Post-test (Summative test)

After giving three formative tests, besides the pre-test during the first semester, we developed a post-test, as the school final exam. This summative test was actually based on the first four units of their nationwide text book. It was implemented for the three groups simultaneously in the exam hall of the school.

3. Findings and discussion

We administered a pre-test to see if there would be any kind of differences between the respective groups concerning their proficiency levels. As table (1) shows, the one-way ANONA proves that the difference between the participants of these three groups is not significant (F=.080; P=.923). With respect to this table, the subjects acted above the level of .05 (P=.923). So, these groups appeared to have no differences in their levels of proficiency, or they are at the same level.

Table 1. The one-way ANOVA result for the three-group pre-test

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Groups' Pre-test	Between Groups	3.947	2	1.973	.080	.923
	Within Groups	1776.720	72	24.677		
	Total	1780.667	74			

The table (2), using ANOVA analysis, illustrates that the performance of subjects in group one is nearly, but not absolutely, significant (F=2.674; P=.052). It was previously mentioned that this group received just frequent formative assessment without being given any other forms of feedback, except the scores. This class was a traditional class which acted as the control group and gave us the chance of comparing the results of treatment in other groups with this one. This class pursued the regular and traditional form of learning which can currently be seen in the most of English classes of public schools. Hence, there was no treatment for this class except the regular forms of formative assessment and teacher fronted instruction. Thus, their scores as the dependent variable were compared at the pretest, during the semester, and posttest phases to see any differences in their learning progress. The independent variable was the regular instruction during the academic year. The result which was not absolutely significant can be attributed to a couple of reasons such as the traditional form of the classroom, the lack of interaction between peers to exchange feedback, the

teacher as the sole authority in the class, lack of self and peer assessment, giving back the exam papers involving just scores without any comments and subsequent feedback. The reason for the result that is nearly significant can be due to the frequent formative assessment in the form of tests. As we know, this kind of assessment has a crucial impact on the students learning, raising the level of student attainment, increasing the improvement of student outcomes, and developing student's ability to learn.

Table 2. One-way ANOVA analysis of the performance of group I

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Group 1	**Between Groups**	163.230	3	54.410	2.674	.052
	Within Groups	1953.520	96	20.349		
	Total	2116.750	99			

In group 2, the dependent variable is the students' scores during treatment and posttest phases. The type of instruction was also based on the formulation of the small groups, different formative feedback and testing. The purpose is to understand whether this change in the structure of classroom and also the provision of different types of formative feedback affected students' learning and progress. Table 3 depicts the level of significance with respect to the frequent tests in group two at the level of P=.011 and F=3.905. In this group, the degree of significance is remarkably higher than the first group. This can be due to some reasons like the change of classroom atmosphere from the traditional form into small-group one, the high amount of feedback provided in different forms, the peer interaction within group, between groups, and with the teacher, giving the opportunities to the students to have self- as well as peer-feedback.

Table 3. The one-way ANOVA analysis of the performance of group II

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Group 2	**Between Groups**	151.230	3	50.410	3.905	.011
	Within Groups	1239.360	96	12.910		
	Total	1390.590	99			

In group 3, the independent variable was the same as group two except its manipulation in the case of the delivery of the test scores to students which was not immediate. In table 4, the effect of the manipulation of the independent variable on the dependent variable in the form of students' scores can be seen. It is understood that the subjects of group three performed highly significantly on the tests (P=.000; F=11.066). As it was

stated before, we applied the same procedures that we went through for group two, except their exam scores that were not noted down by the teacher. Of course their marks were announced two or three sessions later. This finding can support Butler's proposal (1987, 1988) and Craven, et. al. (1991).

Table 4. The one-way ANOVA analysis of the performance of group III

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Group 3	Between Groups	570.800	3	190.267	11.066	.000
	Within Groups	1650.640	96	17.194		
	Total	2221.440	99			

In order to understand the effect of treatment or independent variable across three groups, we compared the post-test or overall achievement scores of the respective groups through the application of one-way ANOVA. Table (5) indicates that the differences between the eventual achievement of the three groups is significant at .05 (P=.010; F=4.866). In sum, it is understood that there are differences between the three groups with regard to the kind of treatment that was received by each.

Table 5. The post-test scores of group three

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Groups' Post-test	Between Groups	118.907	2	59.453	4.866	.010
	Within Groups	879.760	72	12.219		
	Total	998.667	74			

4. Conclusions

In this study, we observed the importance of formative assessment and feedback in addition to their effects on students' learning. Hence, in line with other researchers such as Fluckiger et al. (2010), it is suggested that in language courses, planning time is needed for students' effective feedback and formative assessment considered as significant and challenging features of the learning and teaching process. It was also revealed that excluding scores (a traditional type of feedback) from students' exam papers can help students concentrate and therefore digest other kinds of feedback provided by the teacher and peers in the classroom. Since scoring can be considered as an obstacle in the streamline of learning through feedback phase, it diverts students' attention. Consequently, the crucial point is that if we abandon the traditional way of delivering the students' exam papers in the

way that the papers involve just the comments without scores, we would undoubtedly experience good results.

It is suggested that if we facilitate interaction among students through forming the small groups, we can guarantee the self- and peer feedback on the test since as Nagori and Cooper (2014) put it, peer feedback enhances the amount of feedback learners obtain and they absorb it faster than the tutor feedback.

Actually, through the process of incorporation of peer feedback into learning, dialogue and learning are enhanced, leading to the reduction of the power between assessor or teacher on the one hand, and students on the other hand (Nicol & Draper, 2008).

Hence, teachers are recommended to provide the students with opportunities to participate in the class discussions, group interaction, so as to provide feedback to each other. When the classroom atmosphere is friendly and the students feel at ease, they can concentrate on their own learning and like to learn from each other through receiving and giving feedback. The last, but not the least point is that small grouping in language classes can be a strategy to overcome the students' frustration, anxiety, fear, and embarrassment as well as an aim to enhance their learning progress, knowledge, and understanding.

References

Alvarez, L., Ananda, S., Walqui, A., & Rabinowitz, S. (2014). Focusing formative assessment on the needs of English language learners. San Franciso: WestEd.

Angelo, T. & Cross, P. (1990). Classroom Assessment Techniques. New York: Jessey-Bass.

Bangert-Drowns, R. L., Kulik, C. C., Kulick, J. A., & Morgan, M. T. (1991). The instructional effect of feedback in test-like events. *Review of Educational Research, 61*(2), 213-238.

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. (1998a). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 5*(1), 7-74.

Black, P. & William, D. (2003). 'In praise of educational research': Formative assessment, *British Educational Research Journal, 29*(5), 623-637.

Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (1998b). *Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment.* London: School of Education, King 's College.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Accountability, 21*(1), 5–31.

Boud, D. (1995). *Enhancing Learning through Self-assessment.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Boud, D., Cohen, R. & Saupson, J. (1999). Peer learning and assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 24*(4), 413-426.

Boyle, J. T. & Nicol, D. J. (2003). Using classroom communication systems to support interaction and discussion in large class settings. *Association for Learning Technology Journal, 11*(3), 43-57.

Brookhart, S. M., Moss, C. M., & Long, B. A. (2010). Teacher inquiry into formative assessment practices in remedial reading classrooms. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 17*(1), 41–58.

Brown, G. A., Bull, J., & Pendlebury, M. (1997). *Assessing student learning in higher education.* New York: Routledge.

Brown, S. (2006). *Using formative assessment to promote student learning.* University of Leeds learning and teaching conference. Retrieved December 10, 2015 from http://www.ldu.leeds.ac.uk/news/events/documents/BrownPowerPoint.pdf

Butler, R. (1987). Task-involving and ego-involving properties of evaluation: Effects of different feedback conditions on motivational perceptions, interest and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *79*(4), 474-482.

Butler, R. (1988). Enhancing and undermining intrinsic motivation; the effects of task-involving and ego-involving evaluation on interest and performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 58*(1), 1-14.

CADQ (2013). CADQ Guide, Nottingham Trent University. Retrieved December 12, 2015 from http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/assessment_awards/creating_effective_assessment_feedback/index.h tml.

Chanock, K. (2000). Comments on essays: Do students understand what tutors write? *Teaching in Higher Education*, *5*(1), 95-105.

Cheng, W. & Warren, M. (2000). Making a Difference: Using peers to assess individual students' contributions to a group project. *Teaching in Higher Education, 5*(2), 243-255.

Clark, I. (2012). Formative assessment: A systematic and artistic process of instruction for supporting school and lifelong learning. *Canadian Journal of Education, 35*(2), 24–40.

Craven, R. G., Marsh, H. W., & Debus, R. L. (1991). Effects of internally focused feedback and attributional feedback on enhancement of academic self-concept. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *83*(1), 17-27.

Crooks, T. J. (1988). The impact of classroom evaluation practices on students. *Review of Educational Research*, *58*(4), 438-481.

Duncan, A. & Dunn, W. (1988). *What Primary Teachers should know about Assessment.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Fluckiger, J., Tixier, Y., Pasco, R., & Danielson, K. (2010). Formative feedback: Involving students as partners in assessment to enhance learning. *College Teaching, 58*(4), 136-140.

Fontana, D. & Fernandes, M. (1994). Improvements in mathematics performance as a consequence of self-assessment in Portuguese primary school pupils. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 64*(3), 407-417.

Frederiksen, J. R., & White, B. J. (1997). *Reflective assessment of students' research within an inquiry-based middle school science curriculum.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Freeman, R. & Lewis, R. (1998). *Planning and Implementing Assessment.* London: Kogan Page.

Gipps, V. C. (1994). *Beyond Testing: Toward a Theory of Educational Assessment.* London: The Falmer Press.

Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 81–112.

Heritage, M. (2008). Learning progressions: Supporting instruction and formative assessment. Paper prepared for the Formative Assessment for Teachers and Students (FAST) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Washington, DC: CCSSO.

Heritage, M. (2010a). F*ormative assessment: Making it happen in the classroom.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Heritage, M. (2010b). Formative assessment and next-generation assessment systems: Are we losing an opportunity? Paper prepared for the Council of Chief State School Officers. Los Angeles: UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

Higgins, R., Hartley, P. & Skelton, A. (2002). The conscientious consumer: Reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning. *Studies in Higher Education, 27*(1), 53-64.

Hounsell, D. (1997). Contrasting conceptions of essay-writing. In F. Marton, D. Hounsell & N. Entwistle (Eds), *The Experience of Learning* (pp. 106-125). Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Hoy. C. & Gregg. N. (1994). *Assessment: The Special Educator's Role.* CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Hyland, P. (2000). Learning from feedback on assessment. In P. Hyland, & A. Booth (Eds), *The practice of university history teaching* (pp. 233-247). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Ivanic, R., Clark, R. & Rimmershaw, R. (2000). What am I supposed to make of this? The messages conveyed to students by tutors' written comments. In M. R. Lea & B. Stierer (Eds), *Student Writing in Higher Education* (pp. 47-65). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Juwah, C., MacFarlane-Dick, D., Matthew, B., Nicol, D., Ross, D. & Smith, B. (2004). *Enhancing Student Learning through Effective Formative Feedback.* York: Higher Education.

Kellough, R. D. & Kellough, N. G. (1996). *Middle School Teaching: A Guide to Methods and Sources.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Koller, O. (2005). Formative assessment in classrooms: A review of the empirical German literature. In J. Looney (Ed.), *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms* (pp. 265-279). Paris, France: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Lipnevich, A. A., & Smith, J. K. (2008). Response to assessment feedback: The effects of grades, praise, and source of information. *ETS Research Report Series, 2008*(1), i-57.

Marzano, R. (2000). *Transforming Classroom Grading.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development.

McConlogue, T. (2012). But is it fair? Developing students' understanding of grading complex work through peer assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 37*(1), 113-123.

McDonald, B. & Boud, D. (2003). The impact of self-assessment on achievement: The effects of self-assessment training on performance in

external examinations. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 10*(2), 209-220.

Nagori, R., & Cooper, M. (2014). Key principles of peer assessment: A feedback strategy to engage the postgraduate international learner. *The IAFOR Journal of Education, 2*(2), 1-27.

Nicol, D. & Draper, S. (2008). *Redesigning written feedback to students when class sizes are large.* Paper presented at the Improving University Teachers Conference, July, Glasgow.

Nicol, D. (2010). From monologue to dialogue: Improving written feedback processes in mass higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*(5), 501–517.

Nicol, D. J. & Boyle, J. T. (2003). Peer instruction versus class-wide discussion in large classes: A comparison of two interaction methods in the wired classroom. *Studies in Higher Education. 28*(4), 457-473.

Nicol, D. J. & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2005). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 31*(2), 199-218.

Nicol, D. J. & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). *Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice, 31*(2), 199-218.

O'Connell, R. (2015). *Tests given throughout a course as formative assessment can improve student learning.* Paper presented at ASEE Zone III Conference (Gulf Southwest – Midwest – North Midwest Sections).

Oosterhof, A. (2001). *Classroom Applications of Educational Measurement.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Pintrich, P. R. & Zusho, A. (2002). Student motivation and self-regulated learning in the college classroom. In J. C. Smart & W. G. Tierney (Eds), *Higher Education: Hardbook of Theory and Research:* (Vol. 17). New York: Agathon Press.

Roos, B. & Hamilton, D. (2005). Formative assessment: A cybernetic viewpoint. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 12*(1), 7-20.

Sadler, D. R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science, 18*(2), 119-144.

Sadler, D. R. (1998). Formative assessment: Revisiting the territory. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 5*(1), 77-84.

Safari, P., & Pourhashemi, M. R. (2012). Toward and empowering pedagogy: Is there room for critical pedagogy in educational system of Iran? *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 2*(12), 2548-2555.

Safari, P., & Pourhashemi, M.R. (2015). Toward an empowering pedagogy: Is there room for critical pedagogy in the educational system of Iran. In A. Darder, P. Mayo, & J. Paraskeva (Eds.), *International critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 221-229). London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

Safari, P., & Rashidi, N. (2015). Teacher education beyond transmission: Challenges, concerns, and opportunities for Iranian EFL teachers. *Issues in Educational Research, 25*(2), 187-203. http://www.iier.org.au/iier25/safari.html

Shepard, L. A. (2005). *Formative assessment: Caveat emptor.* Paper presented at the ETS Invitational Conference 2005. The Future of Assessment: Shaping Teaching and Learning, New York. Retreived December 21, 2015 from http://www.cpre.org/ccii/images/stories/ccii_pdfs/shepard%20formative%20assessment%20caveat%20emptor.pdf

Shepard, L.A. (2001). The role of classroom assessment in teaching and learning. In V. R. Richardon (Ed.) *Handbook of research on teaching (4thedn)* (pp. 1016-1101). Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.

Steadman, M. (1998). Using classroom assessment to change both learning and teaching. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 1998*(75), 23-35.

Stobart, G. & Gipps, C. (1997). *Assessment: A teacher's guide to the issues.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Supovitz, J. (2012). Getting at student understanding—the key to teachers' use of test data. *Teachers College Record, 114(*11), 1–29.

Sztajn, P., Confrey, J., Wilson, P. H., & Edgington, C. (2012). Learning trajectory based instruction: Toward a theory of teaching. *Educational Researcher, 41*(5)*, 147–156.

Trumbull, E. & Lash, A. (2013). *Understanding formative assessment: Insights from learning theory and measurement theory.* San Franciso, CA: WestEd.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky*: *Vol. 1. Problem of general psychology* (N. Minick, Ed. and Trans.). New York: Plenum Press.

Wiggins, G. (1997). Feedback: How learning occurs. In E. E. Chaffee (Ed.), *Assessing impact: Evidence and action* (pp. 31-39). Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Wimshurst, K. & Manning, M. (2013). Feed-forward assessment, exemplars and peer marking: Evidence of efficacy. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 38*(4), 451-465.

Yorke, M. (2003). Formative assessment in higher education: Moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education, 45*(4), 477-501.

Zimmerman, B. J. & Schunk, D. H. (Eds.) (2001). *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement*: *Theoretical perspectives* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.