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The Effect of Praise for Effort versus Praise for Intelligence on the Learning of English Conditional Structures by Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

Parisa Etemadfar[1],*, Azzizollah Dabaghi Varnosfadran[2]

[1] Department of English language and literature, Faculty of foreign languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran; parisa.etemadfar@fgn.ui.ac.ir;

[2] Department of English language and literature, Faculty of foreign languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran; dabaghi@fgn.ui.ac.ir;

Abstract

Over the past few decades, studies have gained considerable momentum on the concept of growth mindset, which has become one of the major factors in evaluating learner uptake of academic outcomes. This quantitative study examined how the incorporation of praise for intelligence and praise for effort affects young Iranian language students' achievement of English conditional structures. For this purpose, a Quick Oxford Placement Test (QOPT) was administered to the target population of female learners learning English in a private language institution. From those at the lower intermediate proficiency level, three groups, 25 in each, were randomly selected and divided into one control group and two experimental groups, namely praise for effort and praise for intelligence. All the groups attended grammar lessons on English conditionals for twelve 75-minute evening sessions on alternate days of the week. Prior to the treatment, a pretest on grammar conditionals was applied to assess the learners' entry behavior. After the treatment, a parallel form of the same test was given to gauge the efficacy of the intervention. The analysis of the obtained data revealed that the proper use of praise for effort and praise for intelligence could improve the learners' competence in conditional structures compared to those in the no-treatment group. Notably, the results of the study may offer practical implications for how language teachers improve learners' success in language grammar in general and English conditional structures in particular.

Keywords: English conditionals, Mindset theory, Praise for effort, Praise for intelligence, Iranian EFL learners.

I | INTRODUCTION

It is almost impossible to overlook the roles of praise in language teaching and learning since it is one of the easiest and most useful instruments to involve and motivate EFL/ESL language learners. When implemented successfully, praise can turn around behavior challenges and develop learners' attitude toward learning process. Consequently, meaningful and appropriate praise is even more essential for learners who have different learning styles and thoughts and often receive negative feedback as a consequence of their inability in attaining the course objectives (Pashler et al., 2008).

Teacher praise is a form of social attention typically communicated through verbal feedback. It is often said that contingent and behavior-specific praise is a research-based strategy that can help EFL teachers to increase appropriate behaviors by blanketing out learners' inappropriate responses. The concept of praise in educational contexts enjoys a long history relating it back to the 12th century when it was used for children learning the Torah. In modern times, however, praise refers to a technique that comes to mind as positive teacher management facilitating tool which serves various objectives such as providing encouragement to students, helping build self-esteem, and creating a close teacher-student relationship (Ferguson, 2013).

Within the classroom context, the word praise can be translated into a positive teacher effect which may take various forms and bring about different reactions (Copes & Williams, 2007). Therefore, praise is a verbal or physical expression of teacher endorsement of desired student behavior that goes beyond mere verbal feedback for appropriate response (Reinke et al., 2008).

Bear (2010) states that the frequency of delivering praise and reward to students is much less important than the manner in which it occurs. Global Praise (GP) with comments such as 'great job' or 'this class is very good' is considered non-targeted praise and cannot reinforce students' appropriate behavior and/or learning simply because this type of praise is not linked to a specific behavior or completion of a task (Robins, 2012).

It is admitted that, for praise to be effective, it must consider a wide range of linguistic, individual, and contextual factors, meaning that what works for one learner on one particular occasion may not be appropriate for another. In other words, as the saying goes: A man's meat may be another man's poison. Despite the fact that language teachers spend considerable amounts of time giving praise on various aspects of language, they still feel uncertain about the efficacy of their work (Hyland, 2019). Teachers who wish to praise efficiently should evaluate how different students respond to praise and how they process its meaning to make sense of their ability, effort, and outcome of their effort. Therefore, the quality of praise is much more important than its quantity.

It is interesting to note that the findings reported by past research on the utility of praise have often been fragmentary and piecemeal. It is more recently admitted that verbal praise for intelligence may have certain undesirable consequences compared to verbal praise for effort. As an illustration, some practitioners (Butler, 1987) contend that praise for intelligence may cause children to develop a "performance goal orientation," which, in turn, may have certain negative consequences.

The experimental studies concerning the efficacy of praise for eliciting targeted behaviors have often been contradictory. Many scholars (e.g., Bates, 2015; Chivers, 2017; Glerum et al., 2020) do not completely endorse the effectiveness of praise feedback interventions. However, there is also an increasing body of evidence that shows such interventions can indeed improve students' appropriate behaviors in different teaching/learning situations (Sisk et al., 2018).

Despite the presence of such inconsistencies, rather than evaluating the effectiveness of a specific mindset intervention, the present study examined whether praise for effort and intelligence can collectively influence female young English learners' acquisition of English conditional structures and whether they respond differently to such different types of praise. Since the effect of the different types of praise constitutes the foundation underlying the mindset theory and mindset interventions, the main goal of this study is to develop a classroom-level intervention by reproducing the original praise procedures with a different group of students.

Therefore, this paper seeks to critically examine recent research on the practicality of incorporating praise for effort and intelligence in the process of language learning since such interventions may positively affect learners' achievement of language skills (Skalecká, 2010).

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Praise-Related Theories

Although praise is a constructive learning tool, its effective application is complicated because the related evidence reflects that praise can improve learners' intrinsic motivation, undermine it, and do everything in between (Reinke et al., 2008). According to Henderlong and Lepper (2002), there is a set of conceptual factors that seem to govern the effects of praise and illuminate its complexity. Because sincere praise "encourages performance attributions to controllable causes, promotes autonomy, enhances competence without an overreliance on social comparisons, and conveys attainable standards and expectations," they contend, it can boost intrinsic motivation. (p. 774).

Mueller and Dweck (1998) argued that students who are praised for their intelligence may exhibit a variety of maladaptive attitudes and behaviors, especially when they sail to complete the assigned tasks. Contrariwise, those praised for effort may exhibit a far more adaptive response to the targeted tasks. Current research has revealed that personal praise can result in a reduction in intrinsic motivation because it is structured using generic linguistic forms such as "you are exceptional in oral production!", which denotes that the expected behavior is guided by stable traits that are a crucial part of the learner's nature (Cimpian et al., 2007). Clearly, the application of such generics escalates the risk of failure, which may in turn result in defensive reactions and feelings of helplessness.

Process praise consists of non-generic linguistic forms which pinpoint the learning goal more specifically (e.g., "You did a great job on the vocabulary test"). These forms carry fewer expectations and have a significant effect on persistence. Consequently, unlike personal praise which is detrimental, process praise provides learners with appreciable benefits across various learning outcomes, including the desire for challenges, error awareness, cheating, and failure-related shame (Zhao et al., 2017).

It is interesting to note that repeated exposure to praise may result in praise addiction making it a controlling tool in the hands of the teachers. This creates a psychological dependency or addiction, which according to Baumeister et al., (2001), may lead to a tolerance of the effects of praise causing students to engage in behaviors merely for the sake of eliciting praise regardless of whether or not those behaviors evoke intrinsic motivation. Moreover, praise used to control behavior may very likely decrement intrinsic motivation (Brummelman et al., 2014). It is also important to distinguish between controlling and tangible rewards because they evoke different behavioral and motivational consequences. Contrary to tangible rewards, praise has no negative effects on young learners' intrinsic motivation. The main reason is that learning a new lesson, learners may perceive praise as a supportive rather than a controlling tool (Ulber et al., 2016).

The semantic or temporal aspects of delivering praise may influence learners differently. In other words, the efficacy of all kinds of praise is communicated by the words which teachers use not only during praise delivery but also by the timing of the praise delivery. As a consequence, praise can be either inflated or contingent. When the praise statement is exaggerated, it becomes inflated. Using an adjective like *wonderful* or an adverb such as *extremely* in a generic statement of praise invariably adds an exaggerating flavor to it. Teachers usually use inflated praise to students they perceive as having low self-esteem in order to raise their self-esteem (Axe & Laprime, 2017). These teachers believe that praise becomes reinforcing when it is delivered contingently and immediately. All in all, there are a variety of outcomes associated with praise which can be both positive and negative impacting both the teachers delivering it and the students who are receiving it.

2. Mindset Theories

Some experts in educational psychology contend that praise for overall ability may be harmful since it suggests that any good performance is the product of learners' natural ability and that poor performance is a result of poor intelligence. Therefore, praise for the attainment of educational objectives that emphasizes ability can dissuade the learners from facing a challenge, which may have the possibility of failure and may adversely affect their overall self-esteem (Lang, 2016).

Dweck and Legget (1988) in their theory known as Mindset Theory (MT) maintain that people basically possess two mindsets about intelligence; namely a fixed mindset and an incremental or growth mindset. The proponents of the so-called entity theory perceive intelligence as a fixed trait predetermined by nature. By contrast, incremental theorists view intelligence as a malleable and incremental trait that can be improved (Costa & Faria, 2018). In addition, mindset theorists assert that beliefs about intelligence influence motivation, attitude, and behavior (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). In fact, implicit beliefs about intelligence can have a profound bearing on motivation to learn.

Shenk (2010) stated that beliefs about intelligence can influence the learners' performance considerably since success is a result of an underlying mindset. In real-life learning contexts, when students hold a growth mindset and believe that intelligence can be improved and expanded, they tend to venerate effort, commitment, and motivation to learn. Such a theoretical stance about intelligence is the central idea of MT introduced by Dweck (1998) which places a high premium on the fact that intelligence can be improved and incremented through effort.

Therefore, incremental and entity theory of intelligence are labeled as "growth mindset" and "fixed mindset" and represent two different but complementary theories of intelligence. Whereas growth mindset represents an incremental theory of intelligence, the fixed mindset elucidates an entity theory of intelligence (Dweck, 2016). Empirical investigations on growth and fixed mindset aspects of intelligence explicate that implicit theories of intelligence influence such educational concepts as goal orientation, academic achievement, adjustment, academic emotions, resilience, and motivation.

Learners possessing a growth mindset tend to adopt learning goals in which they attempt to improve their abilities for the sake of learning and understanding a concept. In contrast, students with a fixed mindset tend to hold performance goals whereby they engage in learning for the sake of proving how smart they are compared to their peers (Dweck, 2000).

The implicit theories of intelligence can impact the way learners manage difficulties and setbacks related to different learning tasks. A growth mindset germinates a mastery orientation making students persist and apply novel strategies when faced with a specific difficulty or setback. However, Dweck and Master (2009) suggest that learners who have a fixed mindset are more likely to become demotivated failing to attain task objectives when confronted with difficulties and setbacks. Abdullah (2008) asserts that students with a growth mindset are comparatively superior to those with a fixed mindset in that they enjoy a higher self-efficacy and intrinsic goal orientation because they are willing to work harder to increase their knowledge and skills.

Some researchers such as Boaler (2013) suggested that ability and intelligence can be expanded with effort and practice, while others (e.g., Dweck, 2016) admit that teachers must fuel students' long-term success by best offering them the advantages of meaningful work in order to create a growth mindset in their classrooms. According to Saphier and Gower (1997), to cultivate such a culture, teachers need to utilize attribution training to get students to change their attributions of success and failure by using specific guidelines. These strategies are: (a) Offering praise for effort and persistence, (b) Aiming for deep learning rather than quick learning, (c) Educating students about the differences between having a fixed or growth mindset, (d) Setting personal goals with students, (e) Considering challenges rather than just success, and (f) Planning a scoring system for evaluating growth.

Some studies investigated various effects of MT on the motivation and academic achievement of different students in different academic contexts. For example, Burnette et al., (2018) investigated the effects of a growth mindset intervention on the academic performance of 222 10th-grade adolescent girls from the population of a rural low-income high school in the southeastern United States. The findings showed that compared to the no-treatment group, the participants receiving the mindset intervention reported a stronger growth mindset for learning the academic outcomes. The findings indicated that the mindset intervention had improved the learners' motivation and self-efficacy.

Akbari and Chalak (2019) examined the impact of praise on the expanding trend of university students studying TEFL and linguistics. Two sophomore classes with a combined total of thirty students each were chosen from the target population of English majors at the Islamic Azad University in Isfahan, Iran. It was discovered that the experimental group, which was exposed to a wide variety of instructor praise expressions, had advanced substantially more than the control group during the intended acidic year, demonstrating a positive correlation between instructor praise and learner progress.

In a longitudinal study of learner mindsets by Tang et al., (2019) about the concept of grit defined as consistency of interest and perseverance of effort involving six nine graders from Finland, it was discovered that grit is linked to higher levels of engagement and academic achievement; therefore, practitioners looking to boost adolescents' grit should emphasize goal commitment over growth mindset.

Glerum et al., (2019) assessed the impact of various kinds of praise on 108 students in a vocational context focusing on mindset theoretical models. The results were not consistent with the predictions claimed by the mindset theory because both experimental and control reacted in the same way. Overall, the results did not report a positive correlation between fixed and growth mindset beliefs and interventions addressing academic performance.

Forty adult-English L2 learners who were enrolled in writing classes at the women's College of Basic Education participated in a different study, Akbar and Al-Gharabally (2020) tried to investigate the possible effects of praising ESL learners' writing efforts in English as opposed to evaluating their writing abilities. In contrast, to praise for skills, the results showed that praise for effort boosts students' motivation and fosters a laid-back teaching and learning environment.

In a recent study, Iranian EFL learners' language mindsets, perceived communication competence, speaking anxiety, and willingness to communicate (WTC) were all examined by Zarrinfard and Rahimi in their 2021 study. They found that praise for intelligence and praise for effort had different effects. The results of the study involving sixty-three junior high school students revealed that praise for effort enhanced learners' growth mindsets, communicative competence, and WTC, and decreased their speaking anxiety. Contrarily, praise for intelligence and no praise conditions caused students to have less of a growth mindset, which in turn caused them to have lower WTC and more speaking anxiety.

What makes the present study unique is the fact that it tried to investigate the efficacy of both fixed and growth mindsets for gauging the academic achievement of the language students learning English conditional structures. Previous research on praise for effort and praise for intelligence has often considered them separately focusing on either praise for effort or praise for intelligence.

In view of the above remarks, it can be concluded that the significance of investigating the role of praise in academic achievements in different educational contexts is vitally important in teaching English as a foreign language. Unfortunately, in teaching grammar to young EFL learners, the concerned practitioners have often neglected effort and growth mindsets collectively in a single experiment. Therefore, it is interesting to note that this study employed both praise for effort and praise for intelligence in order to assess their implications on the learning of conditionals.

III. AIM OF THE STUDY

Teacher praise is a form of social attention typically communicated through verbal feedback. It is often said that contingent and behavior-specific praise is a research-based strategy that can help EFL teachers to increase appropriate behaviors by blanketing out learners' inappropriate responses. The present quantitative study aimed to examine how the incorporation of praise for intelligence and praise for effort affected young Iranian language students' achievement of English conditional structures.

IV. METHODOLOGY

1. The Design of The Study

A pretest-posttest true experimental design was used as the blueprint of the study preparing the operational ground necessary for implementing and assessing the research question under investigation. Essentially, the design was founded on three stages: the pretest, the treatment, and the posttest. The basic objective of the first stage was to specify the participants' knowledge of English conditionals and their use in various linguistic contexts prior to the treatment. In the second stage, the instruction of all learners started using a distinct approach to incorporating praise for each of the three study groups. Unlike the experimental groups, the control group received their instruction without the application of any feedback involving praise. Finally, in the third stage-that is, at the end of the treatment period, lasting for twelve sessions-an alternate form of the pretest was administered as the posttest to measure the possible effects of praise for effort and praise for intelligence on the participants' knowledge of the conditionals.

2. Participants

Based on the scores obtained from the administration of Quick Oxford Placement Test (QOPT) 75 female participants at the intermediate level of proficiency were selected from the target population of students learning English at a private language center and randomly assigned to two experimental groups, one treated by praise for effort and the other by praise for intelligence (PEG and PIG). Clearly, the control group (CG) served as the placebo sample not receiving any praise feedback at all. The participants' age range varied between 17 and 23 and spoke Persian as their first language. All students in the three study groups enjoyed a similar sociocultural and educational background. Notably, the researcher had only access to female language learners, therefore the gender variable was controlled in this study.

3. Materials

The teaching materials used for the instruction of conditional clauses were Chapter Twenty of English Grammar (Destination B1) written by Mann and Knowles (2018) and six reading passages at B1 level (intermediate) extracted from a photocopiable electronic website which provide supplementary resources for ESL teachers and learners. As a source for consolidating the targeted grammar rules, these passages provided a high-frequency input on the use of conditionals in various contexts, which were used for the students in both the experimental and control samples.

4. Instruments

4.1. Quick Oxford Placement Test (QOPT)

The participants' level of general English proficiency was assessed using the QOPT version II (2002). There are three parts to the test. The first part, which consists of 40 questions, focuses on students' knowledge of L2 grammar, while the second part, which consists of 20 questions, examines vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Finally, an evaluation of the students' writing abilities is the goal of the third and final section. Based on the evaluation criteria established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), also known as the international standard for determining a learner's proficiency in a language, only the learners who scored between 30 and 47 (i.e., the intermediate proficiency level participants) were chosen for the intended experimentation.

4.2. Pretest

Pretesting is frequently employed to establish a baseline before intervention. In fact, pretests aim to link the level of instruction to appropriate materials and to students' current level (i.e., to identify what they already know or what deficiencies they have).

The pretest was a 60-item multiple-choice exam which was designed by the researcher. The test items addressed type zero, type I, type II, and type III conditionals. The reliability was estimated using KR-21 formula which turned out to be 0.81 and validity was determined using expert opinion.

4.3. Posttest

A different pretest format was used as the posttest with the items rearranged to prevent learners' familiarity with the pretest from confounding the effect of treatment, thereby removing any chance of pretest sensitization effects or pretest effects. The use of pretests has the potential to lead to incorrect interpretation of test results if the pretest sensitization effect is not properly assessed. The reliability of the posttest was also established based on KR-21 Formula. In fact, the KR21 coefficient value for both pre and posttests were calculated in SPSS by using the AGGREGATE procedure and they happened to be 0.81 and 0.84 respectively. The validity of the tests, however, was established based on expert opinion.

5. Procedures

5.1. Experimental Groups Treatment

It is interesting to note that the researcher also acted as the teacher of control and experimental samples involved in the study following both explicit and implicit approaches. For the implicit part of the class, the steps defined by Ellis's (2008) emergentist account of interactional input was used, where language learners acquire their L2 knowledge from dynamic cycles of language use, language exchange, language perception, and language learning in the interactions of class members. Consequently, students in each group were divided into groups of five, and the input on conditionals was given to each group by twenty carefully designed task prompts. Each group had a different list of sentences on conditionals. By interacting and comparing their sentences, the groups eventually discovered the generalization underlying the use of conditionals implicitly. By contrast, the explicit part was applied right after the implicit approach. Here, the teacher employed the 3P technique (present, practice, and produce) to enhance the possibility of rule acquisition.

The teacher made an effort to engage the students in a dialogic interaction during the class sessions by acting as a facilitator, using the passages on the use of conditionals in two consecutive sessions. She used praise for effort and praise for intelligence in the experimental groups to give the participants varying levels of intervention, from the most implicit to the most explicit, to aid them in internalizing the grammar of

the targeted conditionals. Statements like *"I can see your hard work in this assignment."*, *"Keep using your strategies! You're making good progress!"*, and *"You have totally mastered the use of conditionals"* were used as praise for effort. By contrast statements such as *"You are great at learning English", "You are so talented" "Your ability to learn grammar is so impressive"*, and *"You should be so proud of yourself"* were used as praise for intelligence.

Consequently, after the implicit phase involving interactional tasks, the teacher provided learners with explicit intervention helping them to produce accurate sentences. In other words, by adopting a deductive approach in the explicit phase, the teacher first explained the grammar rule and then provided the learners with an adequate number of examples enabling them to consolidate their knowledge of the target structures. Finally, the posttest was carried out at the end of the treatment to see how well the desired grammar rules had been internalized.

5.2. Control Group Treatment

The method of instruction for teaching English conditionals was exactly the same for the control group. In fact, the no-treatment learners were identically exposed to implicit and explicit kinds of input. The only difference was that they did not receive any kind of praise statements from the teacher. However, the teacher used different techniques such as self-feedback, peer feedback, or recast in order to correct their performance errors when tackling various learning tasks.

6. Data Analysis

The data obtained on the research question were carefully analyzed by the related statistical techniques. In fact, the statistical analyses comprised both descriptive and inferential analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to estimate the mean and standard deviation values related to the learners' performance on pre and posttests. The inferential statistics, however, included multiple analysis of variance (ANCOVA).

V. RESULTS

In this section chapter, an account of the results of the study along with their analyses are provided. In other words, this chapter focuses on the main findings underlying the target research questions along with their related statistical measures. Before analyzing the obtained data, the assumptions underlying one-way ANCOVA were checked (as presented in Table 4.1). Then the results of descriptive statistics are provided in Table 4.2, and finally, the one-way ANCOVA results are presented in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 respectively.

In Table 1, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality are shown in order to make certain the distributions of scores on both pretest and posttest for the learners in the PEG, PIG, and CG are normal:

Table 1. Results of the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality.

Groups	Tests	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	*df*	*Sig.*
PEG	Pretest	.950	25	.245
	Posttest	.950	25	.255
PIG	Pretest	.976	25	.800
	Posttest	.947	25	.211
CG	Pretest	.930	25	.086
	Posttest	.959	25	.397

As can be seen, the p values under the Sig. column of the Shapiro-Wilk test reveal that the distributions of scores for the pretests and posttests of the PEG, PIG, and CG learners are normal because all these p values are found to be greater than the .05 level of significance ($p > .05$). Thus, the normality assumption is met for the one-way ANCOVA test. The other underlying assumptions of ANCOVA, such as the homogeneity of variances ($p = .70 > .05$) and homogeneity of the regression slopes (through scatterplots) were also checked and no violation of these assumptions was observed.

Notably, the results of the descriptive statistics for the pretest and posttest scores of the learners in the three groups of PEG, PIG, and CG are displayed in Table 2:

Table 2. Results of Descriptive Statistics.

Groups	Tests	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
PEG	Pretest	25	14.04	2.79	-.04	.60
	Posttest	25	18.60	2.62	.07	.39
PIG	Pretest	25	14.36	2.09	.18	.21
	Posttest	25	17.20	1.93	.59	.58
CG	Pretest	25	14.12	2.50	-.16	1.42
	Posttest	25	15.28	2.38	.03	.94

It is clearly observed from Table 2 that the number of learners in each group, their mean scores on the pretest and posttest, their standard deviations, skewness values, and kurtosis values. This table is informative in that it shows the three groups of learners differed only slightly with regard to their pretest scores (M_{PEG} = 14.04, M_{PIG} = 14.36, and M_{CG} = 14.12). It also shows that all three groups of learners experienced improvements from pretest to posttest, though to varying degrees. PEG learners managed to obtain the highest posttest mean score (M = 18.60), while PIG learners were ranked second (M = 17.20) and the CG learners received the lowest mean score on the posttest (M = 15.28). The bar graph in Figure 1 also shows the pretest and posttest scores of the learners in the three groups:
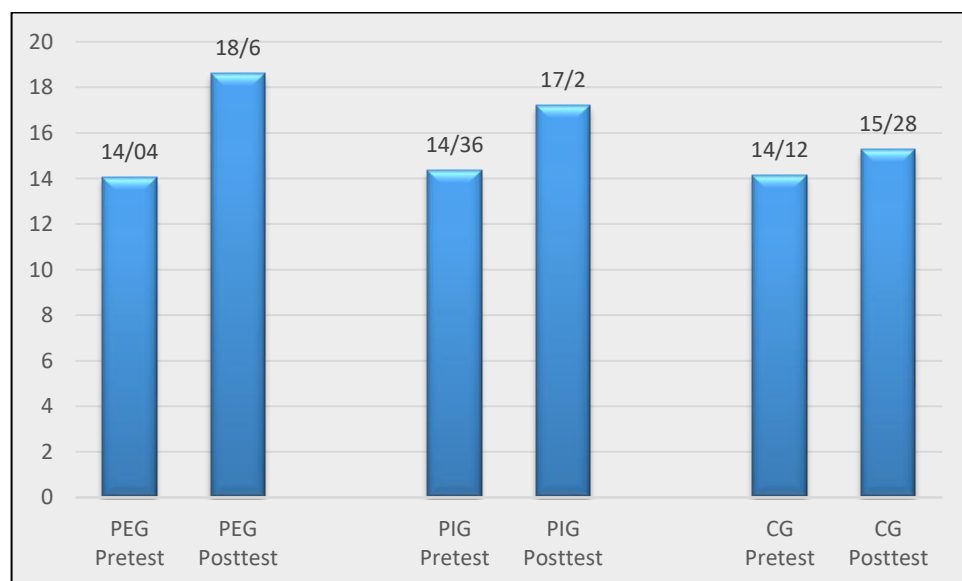

Figure 1. Mean Scores of the PEG, PIG, and CG Learners on the Pretest and Posttest.

The bar graph above also shows the approximate equality of the learners in the three groups on the pretest. With regard to their posttest scores, however, PEG learners outperformed PIG learners, who in turn could outweigh the learners in the CG. Whether these differences among these three groups of learners on the posttest could reach statistical significance is determined in the one-way ANCOVA table below (Table 3):

Table 3. Results of One-way ANCOVA for Comparing the Posttest Scores of the Learners.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	490.39	3	163.46	279.30	.000	.92
Intercept	41.63	1	41.63	71.14	.000	.50
Pretest	351.48	1	351.48	600.57	.000	.89
Groups	143.73	2	71.86	122.79	.000	.77
Error	41.55	71	.58			
Total	22275.00	75				
Corrected Total	531.94	74				

Table 3 unveils the fact that there was at least a significant difference among the learners in the three groups $F(2, 74) = 122.79$, $p < .05$; the partial eta squared column on the far right hand of the table shows that the effect size for this comparison was very large (.77), which means that the treatment(s) used in this research accounted for 77% of the variances in the post-test scores of the learners in different groups. Now, to find the exact locations(s) of the difference(s), the Bonferroni post hoc test table (Table 4) should be consulted:

Table 4. Results of the Post Hoc Test.

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PEG	PIG	1.68*	.21	.000	1.15	2.21
	CG	3.39*	.21	.000	2.86	3.92
PIG	PEG	-1.68*	.21	.000	-2.21	-1.15
	CG	1.70*	.21	.000	1.17	2.23
CG	PEG	-3.39*	.21	.000	-3.92	-2.86
	PIG	-1.70*	.21	.000	-2.23	-1.17

The results of pair-wise comparisons indicated that the PEG learners were significantly superior to both PIG and CG learners with regard to their posttest scores ($p < .05$), and the difference between the PIG and CG learners also reached statistical significance.

VI. DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that pedagogical grammars are planned for different purposes compared to their theoretical counterparts, it is now clear that they are closely entwined with the theoretical developments in general linguistic descriptions. It is believed that "teacher's grammar" stands somewhere between "academic grammar" and "grammar for the learner" and represents an indirect relationship between the layman and expert views concerning language (Coupland & Jaworski, 2004). Therefore, the language and teaching processes almost invariably involve grammatical phenomena that should be focused on either explicitly or implicitly (Liamkina & Ryshina-Pankova, 2012). Largely because of such concerns, this study sought to adopt appropriate intervention and meditation strategies for teaching the grammar of conditional structures by incorporating two basic types of praise; namely, praise for effort and praise for intelligence.

To test the prediction, the main goal of the study was to elucidate how effectively the application of targeted praise statements could affect the development of English conditionals by intermediate Iranian EFL learners. To this end, drawing on the insights provided by the related literature, an experimental setting involving three participant samples, 25 each, was randomly selected. Under controlled conditions, the control group received no praise feedback, while the experimental groups were supported by appropriate statements of praise delivered by the teacher.

The quantitative analyses of the posttest data related to the study groups demonstrated that the impact of praise feedback on the learning of conditional structures by the treatment samples compared to the non-treatment group was statistically significant. The results demonstrated that praise for effort and praise for intelligence differentially affected learners' growth mindsets concerning the learning of English conditionals. While the praise for effort group's (PEG) performance on the posttest was highly significant and superior to other groups in terms of their growth mindsets, the praise for intelligence group (PIG) similarly outperformed the participants in the non-treatment sample (CG), though to a lesser degree. The results of the study are in contrast to those of some earlier investigations (e. g. Bates, 2015; Chivers, 2017; Glerum et al., 2020) that do not entirely support the efficacy of interventions including praise feedback.

However, the findings of the present study are in line with the findings of Skalecká 's study on the importance of using praise while teaching adults. Similarly, Blackwell et al., (2007) showed that growth mindsets improve significantly after presenting praise for effort.

Overall, the findings by both education and psychology experts on praise for effort versus praise for intelligence mostly have reported that effort-based praise is functionally more effective than ability-based praise (Akbar & Al-Gharabally, 2020; Akbari & Chalak, 2019; Zarrinabadi & Rahimi, 2021). These reports are all based on the assumption that with a growth mindset, individuals tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset. These people believe that their talents can be developed through hard work, sound strategies, and feedback from others. While individuals with a fixed mindset believe their talents are innate gifts and unchangeable. This is because these individuals worry less about looking smart and put more grit into learning.

The findings of the present study are consistent with Dweck's investigation regarding the positive effect of praise for effort on growth mindsets. The findings are justifiable in the light of having a false growth mindset in which people believe that the qualities they have (i.e., their abilities) are innate and fixed. The crux of the matter is that every individual is in effect a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets and that mixture develops with experience (Dweck, 2016). Obviously, people regard intelligence either as being fixed or malleable-something that can be changed. The way people view the malleability of intelligence plays a pivotal role in educational contexts. Learners who assume intelligence is fixed typically believe that the need to use effort to learn is a sign of low intelligence. Accordingly, when these individuals face a concept that they do not understand, they think that they are incapable of mastering it thus expending less effort to learn it (Dweck, 2000).

In recent years, concepts emerging from research and practice on the malleability of intelligence have drastically changed the beliefs about how best teachers can develop the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of students. More specifically, the orthodox beliefs that students, parents, and community members hold about the fixed nature of intelligence, particularly about themselves and their abilities, and the approaches they take in academic situations are being changed dramatically (Blackwell, 2015; Ng, 2018).

In line with such current research developments on the concept of intelligence malleability, this study sought to prove that both praise for effort and praise for intelligence can benefit language learners if and only if praise statements are carefully designed. In fact, the quality of support students receive from teachers can have a profound impact on their academic success (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Interestingly, the findings of this study revealed that the targeted samples in experimental groups treated with praise for effort and

praise for intelligence had acquired the knowledge of conditional structures much better than the participants in the placebo group.

VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study sought to investigate the effects of praise for effort and praise for intelligence on EFL learners' growth mindsets in learning English conditional structures by setting up a carefully designed experimental method and applying the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The findings revealed that both ability-based and effort-based feedbacks greatly bear on growth mindsets and learners' grammatical competence. In this study, the condition of no praise, on the other hand, significantly mitigated growth mindsets and had no effect the grammatical development of the students in the control group.

Overall, the common theoretical themes that demonstrate the interconnected nature of this praise and language teaching and learning process include reciprocal social interaction and collaborative relationships between the teacher as an expert and the learner as a novice. They define language learning as an interactive process and fit it into constructivist philosophy and cognitive developmental psychology (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

Notably, due to the social nature of language learning, the learning context should encourage the development of cognitive functions like praise feedback which guides the flow of social interactions between the learners and a knowledgeable teacher who carefully monitors the application of developmental and intellectual activities in presenting the teaching materials. As such, the incorporation of praise feedback in language classes can really make a big difference. Furthermore, drawn from research into the workings of the human brain, it is now strongly suggested that learning potentials can be considerably expanded when students are provided with praise feedback because it makes them get involved in the learning process actively and learn how to manage learning in light of the existing information by trying to consolidate what they have learned in a manner suited to their own learning styles.

According to Gregory and Chapman (2007), effective teachers must believe that "every student has potential and is committed to finding the key that will unlock that potential". Consequently, the primary objective of the present study was to investigate how the use of praise for effort and praise for intelligence can improve the learners' achievement of grammatical patterns like English conditionals. The findings of this study also have an aspirational message for EFL teachers: The conventional one-size-fits-all methodological standards miss a lot of the realities of language learning. By offering the operational merits of praise feedback, this study proved that carefully designed praise statements strengthen EFL teachers' mediatory roles as professional mentors.

This study suffers from certain limitations. First, it only focused on female participants. It is important to use both male and female participants to make sure that the findings are generalizable. This is because the rationale for considering gender effect in implementing research is a prerequisite to the validity of the outcome. Second, a small sample size may inadvertently reduce the study power and increase the margin of error, as it may not be representative of the target population; larger sample sizes produce more accurate mean values, identifying outliers that could skew the results and ensure better validity. Given the immediate need to implement research on praise feedbacks in language teaching, future studies should examine this topic in more depth to identify better ways for teachers to use these techniques.

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Parisa Etemadfar is a Ph.D. Candidate. in TEFL in the Department of English language and literature at the University of Isfahan. She currently teaches research methodology and advanced writing at the University of Isfahan. She has authored several papers and books and presented several papers at national and international conferences.

Dr. Azzizollah Dabaghi Varnosfadran is an Associate Professor of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Isfahan. He graduated from the University of Auckland, New Zealand with a Ph.D. in Language Teaching through a prestigious scholarship award. He has authored numerous articles and several books in the related English language teaching area.

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