The Effect of Teachers' Follow-up Move Approach (F-move) on Iranian EFL Learners' Conversation Quality

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Abstract

The present paper investigated the effect of teacher's follow-up move approach on Iranian EFL learners' conversation quality. Ninety students were selected in a senior high school in Poldokhtar, Iran. Through an oral test sixty out of ninety students whose scores were between one standard deviation (SD) above and below the mean were selected as the participants of the study. Then they were divided into two equal homogeneous groups of experimental and control. The experimental group received the treatment which was five units of Top Notch A and was taught under the supervision of the teacher using follow- up (F-move) strategy but the control group was taught in the traditional way. After the teaching period was over, a posttest was presented to both groups to see whether the teacher's follow-up moves had been effective. The scores obtained through the pre and the posttest were analyzed using the Paired and Independent Samples t-test procedure and the results reported. The results indicated that the experimental group of EFL learners under the supervision of teachers applying follow-up move acted better than their counterpart (control group) that paved the way in traditional way.

Keywords: Follow-up Move, Conversation Quality, EFL Learners, Interaction.

1. Introduction

The term follow-up move has become the preferred term, in recognition of the fact that 'feedback' describes a function of the move rather than the move itself (Sinclair & Brazil 1982). In follow-up move, the focus is on the form of the learner's response: whether, for example, the lexical item or grammatical structure provided by the learner was acceptable or not. The feedback may be an explicit acceptance or rejection of the response (Chaudron, 1988).

As Hugh Dubberly (2009) states, Quality of conversation is a progression of exchanges among participants. Each participant is a 'learning system', that is, a system that changes internally as a consequence of experience. This highly complex type of interaction is also quite powerful, for conversation is the means by which existing knowledge is conveyed and new knowledge is generated.

According to Tony and Mark (2014), conversation is a complex and perplexing activity. It embodies rules and etiquette. It requires participants to possess skills that are improved with practice. Those who lack these can find themselves socially, even physically, isolated. Those who find it difficult to engage in conversation and dialogue inevitably have fewer chances to practice the art so tend to find them locked into a vicious circle.

According to Nasir and Abdul Majid Khan (2006), the classroom interaction has gone through many fundamental shifts since the development of interaction analysis systems more than forty years ago. Present day classrooms are more student oriented, activity based and demanding in practice. Thus requiring teachers to be more responsive, spontaneous and critical to create and maintain a classroom environment serving the learner needs. The changing needs were identified by Newton (2002, as cited in Nasir & Abdul Majid Khan, 2006) to describe the needs of the today's classrooms by designing a beneficial framework for effective classroom talk in science classroom which promotes student thinking.

The quality of the classroom environment is made up of a host of varied components. "As long as we are aware of the vast repertoire of techniques that are at our disposal, it is up to us to choose the specific ones that we will apply, based on the specific needs that arise in our concrete circumstances"(Dornyei, 2007, p. 730). The basic aim of this research was to consider the role that teachers' follow-up moves perform in the English language classroom. In reality, the present research was an attempt to deal with the emphasis of teachers' follow-up moves performs in the classroom for Iranian EFL teachers as a helpful way to gain mastery upon classroom environment and better communication. This research investigates a particular aspect of teacher talk-the teacher's provision of feedback or follow-up-and examines the role it plays in EFL/ESL classroom discourse. One of the major concerns for EFL teachers is ignoring their follow up strategy to the educational environments where they are speaking English. Therefore, focusing on this supportive way to enhance the quality of teachers' conversation along with and due to emphasizing teachers' talking in the classroom is vital to both teaching and learning enhancement particularly in conversation environment. Follow-up questions are an important part of conversation. Without follow-up questions, you and your conversation partner will end up asking and responding to a series of questions without ever talking in depth about any one topic. Follow-up questions keep the conversation moving forward and allow for clarification and elaboration of details. Conversation lies at the heart of informal education.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

One of the major concerns for EFL teachers is ignoring their reflections and their adaptations to the educational environments where they teach English. Therefore, finding a supportive way to enhance learners' needs along with and due

to emphasizing teachers' reflections in the classroom is vital to both teaching and learning. Due to few exposures to English and lack of real contexts for Iranian EFL learners, specific approaches of teaching are needed to compensate. Students also should feel no stress when communicating in the foreign language. Regarding the important role that conversation plays in communicating, finding an effective way to promote conversational abilities seems essential. The aim is to improve EFL learners' learning. Put another way, the current study was to measure the potential influence of this trend on Iranian EFL learners' conversation as a whole as a nominal step at least in Poldokhtar, Iran. Thus, the present study aimed at investigating whether EFL teachers' follow-up moves perform in the classrooms is effective for both teaching and learning than learning traditional way of teaching and learning.

1.2 Literature Review

Teachers spend a lot of time searching for the best methods since they want to teach their students in the best way. Each time they have tried something new they are disappointed of the result of their teaching. History of language teaching shows how many different approaches to language teaching and learning has been used and how many approaches resulting from different philosophical views have been replaced by the others. The biggest difference can be seen in the new approach moving from traditional teaching to student learning process. In traditional teaching the teacher is an authority and directs all the activities in the classroom, he/she conducts guides and controls the student's behavior in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). The ability to use English for spoken communication is one of the main reasons many people around the world study English, and like people in other countries, Iranian learners often evaluate their success in language learning, as well as the effectiveness of their English course, on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken-language proficiency. However, in language classrooms the teaching of speaking skills has often misrepresented the nature of spoken English and spoken interaction; and, as a result, speaking classes are most often little more than unfocussed discussion sessions, with little real teaching of what oral proficiency in spoken English entails. This paper explores issues involved in teaching English in the Iranian context, and offers suggestion to improve approaches to the teaching of spoken English. According to Tony and Mark (2014), conversation is a complex and perplexing activity. It embodies rules and etiquette. It requires participants to possess skills that are improved with practice.

Yook (2010) examined numerous studies on EFL teachers' beliefs and follow up moves and class practices, concluding that despite inconsistencies between what teachers say they believe and what they actually do in the language classroom, a significant degree of interaction could be found. Johnson (1992) used a multi-dimensional approach involving a theory profile, lesson plan analysis, and

belief inventory to investigate non-native speakers of English during their literacy instruction to identify a relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. Johnson discovered that her dynamic technique strengthened her inferences about the relationship between beliefs and teaching methodologies. Yook (2010) concurred that triangulation is necessary to ensure sufficient qualitative methodology needed for sound inferences. Borg (2003) claimed a lack of triangulation could undercut the validity of any findings. Akbari and Moradkhani (2010) found that experience has a positive impact on English teachers' self-efficacy. However, their study showed no significant relationship between teachers' academic degree and their self-efficacy. As a whole, pedagogy entails not only the act and procedure of teaching but rather encompasses the act "together with its purposes, values, assumptions, theories and beliefs which inform, shape and try to justify it" (Kramer-Dahl, 2007).

1.3 Research Question

In order to investigate the effects of the EFL teachers' follow-up move approach (F-move) in the conversation classes as a way to affect learners' learning positively, the following research question is generated:

RQ. Does teachers' follow-up move approach (F-move) affect learners' conversation quality?

2. Methodology

2.1 Design

The design of the study is a pre and posttest design which is considered as a quasi-experimental study in which the experimental group receive teachers' follow-up move. Sixty EFL learners took part as the participants in two groups of 30 EFL learners. The treatment period lasted 10 sessions. The posttest was conducted to determine the impact of follow-up move approach on conversation quality of the participants.

2.2 Participants

Sixty male students in a senior high school in Poldokhtar, Iran were selected as the subjects of the ongoing study. In fact, the sixty learners were chosen amongst ninety learners through an interview whose scores were between one standard deviation above and below the mean which the test was used as the pretest as well. For better achievement, based on the interview, they were assigned into two equal homogeneous groups of experimental and control (30 in experimental group and 30 in control group).

2.3 Instrumentation

The main sources of data collection for this study were the data obtained after the trend with regard to the pre and posttests. A teacher-made checklist consisting of ten questions was developed to be used for both pretest and posttest.

In the beginning of the study ninety students were questioned using a teacher-made checklist. The scores were used to homogenize the students (sixty out of ninety were selected) and pretest at the same time. Questions were made by the researcher which consisted of questions regarding students' level of proficiency. Each student was given three minutes to answer the questions. The process of testing was recorded in order for another teacher to be able to rate the students' remarks independently and an average number of both teachers' rates was recorded for each student.

After assigning students to two groups and after treatment was finished, a posttest was administered. A checklist similar to pretest was used for posttest. Just the form of some words in pretest questions was changed and the same process followed. The obtained scores of the pre and posttest were analyzed using a Paired Sample T-test. Based on the above-mentioned measures the data were collected and the results were manifested.

2.4 Materials

The textbook used in this curriculum for the experimental group was "Fundamental Top Notch A "written by Joan Saslow, Allen Asher (2007). They benefit from teacher-made activity worksheets, role-plays, listening to music, visualizations and drawings practices in five units of the book. The units were chosen to be compatible with the proficiency level of students. The control group was taught traditionally by the current high school materials.

2.5 Procedure

This study dealt with the visible impact of follow up (F-move) strategy on the quality of language teaching and learning. There were 30 subjects in each class group. What was the overriding importance, however, was examining the intended trend upon the experimental group.

Amongst ninety students, at the outset of this study, sixty students were selected using a teacher-made checklist consisting of ten simple questions. Teachers are either B.A or M.A in TEFL and have taught in various educational places. Each student was given few minutes to answer the questions during an interview. To take inter-rater reliability into account, questioning students was recorded to be rated by another teacher. An average number of the two rates for each student were recorded as his score. In addition to students' homogeneity, this test was also used as the pretest.

After the pretest, students were divided into two equal groups of experimental and control (each group 30 students). Control and experimental groups were under the instruction of different teachers in the same school for ten sessions within five weeks. The experimental group received the treatment which was five units of Top Notch A and was taught under the supervision of the teacher using follow up move (F-move) strategy but the control group was taught in the traditional way. To see the effectiveness of follow up move (F-move) strategy on the quality of

language teaching and learning after ten sessions on working this trend, a posttest was administered for both groups.

Posttest was similar to what was done during the pretest. The interview in pretest was used for posttest using the same function but different form in order for students not to recall or guess the pretest questions. After the data collected, a Paired and Independent Sample t-test was employed to analyze the data.

2.6 Data Analysis

To analyze the data obtained through the pre and the posttest, a Paired and Independent Sample t-test procedure was employed and the results reported. Independent sample t-test was run to compare the conversation ability of control and experimental groups' pre and posttests. The Paired Sample t-test was used to compare the pre and posttests of each group.

3. Results

To answer the research questions sixty EFL learners with the age range of 15-18 studying in high school in Poldokhtar, Iran selected among ninety students were chosen to take part in a pretest to be known as homogeneous. The same rooms were used for both groups during the instructional and testing period and while directions were given. The first t-test calculation showed that the two groups were homogeneous. According to the data in table 1 in pretest, for control group, the calculated mean and the standard deviation were respectively 51.83 and 26.19, and for experimental group, they were respectively 44.40 and 11.43.

Later on, they were taught distinctively one group learning conversation by teachers using follow up moves and the other group was taught in traditional way. In reality, those participating who were in experimental group and were taught under the instruction of the teachers using follow up moves outperformed to their counterpart group. According to the data in Table 3.1 in posttest, for control group, the calculated mean and the standard deviation were respectively 58.36 and 23.38, and for experimental group, they were respectively 68.56 and 14.53.

Table 3.1 *Descriptive Statistics (Pretest)*

Groups		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	0	51.8333	26.19303	4.78217
Experimental	0	44.4000	11.43377	2.08751

Table 3.1 shows the pretest calculated means and the standard deviations of the experimental group, they were respectively 44, 4000 and 11, 43377, and for control group, they were respectively 51, 8333 and 26,319303. To show the

significant difference, independent samples t-test reveals the difference between the experimental and control groups in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 *The Difference Between the Experimental and Control Groups*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	23.205	.000	1.425	58	.160	7.43	5.21	-3.01	17.88
Equal variances not assumed			1.425	39.665	.162	7.43	5.21	-3.11	17.98

Table 3.2 shows the observed t (1.425) is less than the critical t (2.000) with df=58. Thus the difference between the groups is not significant at ($p<0.05$). The results of the posttest descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.3 *Descriptive Statistics (Posttest)*

Groups		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	0	58.3667	23.38801	4.27005
Experimental	0	68.5667	14.19017	2.65299

Table 3.3 shows the posttest calculated means and the standard deviations of the experimental group, they were respectively 68, 5667 and 14, 19017, and for control group, they were respectively 58,3667 and 23,38801. To show the significant difference, independent samples t-test reveals the difference between the experimental and control groups in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 *Independent Samples t-test (Posttest)*

	Levene's Test for	t-test for Equality of Means

	Equality of Variances							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	6.794	.009	-2.029	58	.025	-10.200	5.27	-20.262	-.13718
Equal variances not assumed			-2.029	47.48	.026	-10.200	5.27	-20.305	-.09497

Table 3.4 shows that the observed t (2.029) is greater than the critical t (2.000) with df=58, the difference between the groups is significant at ($p<0.05$). Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of experimental and control groups' posttest.

Table 3.5 *Descriptive Statistics (Control and Experimental Groups' Pre and Posttest)*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Control Pre-test	51.8333	30	26.19303	4.78217
	Control Post-test	58.3667	30	23.38801	4.27005
Pair 2	Experimental Pretest	44.4000	30	11.43377	2.08751
	Experimental Posttest	68.5667	30	14.53102	2.65299

Table 3.5 shows the pre and posttest calculated means and the standard deviations of the experimental and control groups. To show the significant difference, paired samples t-test reveals the difference between the experimental and control groups' pre and posttests in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 *Paired Samples t-test (Control and Experimental Groups' Pre and Posttest)*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Control Pre vs. Posttest	-6.533	28.467	5.197	-17.163	4.096	-1.257	29	.219
Pair2	Experimental Pre vs. Posttest	-24.166	15.274	2.788	-29.870	-18.463	-8.666	29	.000

Table 3.6 shows that the observed t (1.257) is less than the critical t (2.045) with df=29, the difference between the control groups' pre and posttests is not significant at ($p<0.05$). However, the observed t (8.666) is greater than the critical t (2.045) with df=29, the difference between the experimental groups' pre and posttests is significant at ($p<0.05$).

Since the observed t (1.257) is less than the critical t (2.045) with df=29, the difference between the groups is not significant at ($p<0.05$) while the observed t (8.666) is greater than the critical t (2.045) with df=29, the difference between the groups is significant at ($p<0.05$).

Throughout the study two t-tests were administrated. According to Hatch and Farhady (1981) if the t-observed is higher than t-critical, our hypothesis is approved. After there were one dependent variable and one independent variable, a t-test was run.

As the above results show, t- observed is smaller than the t-critical at the $p<0.05$ level of significance for pretest. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the difference between two groups is not meaningful and both groups are nearly homogeneous (see Table 2). Later, both groups were given a similar posttest. During testing administration, both groups favored the similar conditions. As there were one dependent variable and one independent variable, a *t*-test was run; the results are shown in the Table 2. Table 2 indicates the observed *t* (*t*o=1.425) is less than the critical *t* (*t*c.2.000) with df (58); therefore, the difference between the two groups has not been significant at the level ($p<0.05$). This shows the groups' homogeneity at the beginning of the experiment.

The t-test for posttest (Table 4) indicates that the observed *t* (*t*o=2.029) is greater than the critical *t* (*t*c=2.000) with df (58), the difference between the two

groups is significant at the level ($p<0.05$). In other words, F-move trait has been effective in developing participants' conversational ability. Thus, it indicates that students' knowledge of conversation in experimental group improved significantly.

As Table 5 represents, the calculated mean and the standard deviation for control group were respectively 58.36 and 23.38, and for experimental group, they were respectively 68.56 and 14.53.The means for both groups have been illustrated in Table 5. All in all, according to t-test principles if the calculated *t*-test exceeded the critical value (2.000) at the (0.05) level of probability for df =58, the null hypothesis might be rejected; otherwise, it might be contributed to other factors.

More specifically speaking, descriptive statistics including minimums, maximums, means, and then standard deviations of pretest and posttest of all groups were computed. Results indicated that the mean score of control group which had been 51.83 in pretest exam reached to 58.36 in posttest exam. It also indicated that the mean score of experimental group which had been 44.40 in pretest exam promoted to 68.56 in posttest exam.

4. Discussion

The research question is answered in the following section and the result will be discussed thoroughly as follow:

RQ. Does teachers' follow-up move (F move) approach affect learners' conversation quality?

The basic purpose of this research was to clarify the effectiveness of conversation quality by EFL learners confronted with experiencing follow-up move approach (F move) in the classrooms in improving Iranian EFL learners. Since the experimental groups outperformed the control groups in this respect, teaching conversation through follow-up move approach (F move) in the classrooms are supposed to improve conversation quality among Iranian EFL learners. One possible explanation of such a result is that the teaching conversation based on follow up moves in the classrooms may help students to enhance their conversation quality. This explanation is compatible with Yook (2010) and Johnson (1992) examined numerous studies on EFL teachers' beliefs and follow up moves and class practices, concluding that despite inconsistencies between what teachers say they believe and what they actually do in the language classroom, a significant degree of interaction could be found.

Akbari & Moradkhani (2010) found that experience has a positive impact on English teachers' self-efficacy. However, their study showed no significant relationship between teachers' academic degree and their self-efficacy. As a whole, pedagogy entails not only the act and procedure of teaching but rather encompasses the act "together with its purposes, values, assumptions, theories and beliefs which inform, shape and try to justify it" (Kramer-Dahl, 2007).

It was observed that based on the findings of this study, those students being taught by EFL teachers emphasizing follow-up moves and teaching conversation outperformed those being taught in traditional methods. We also saw how the difference between the groups was significant regarding the observed and critical (t). Improving the mean scores of experimental and the control group was another reason that follow-up move approach had been effective. Hence, it is logically claimed that such trend is a good means in teaching and learning. In this study, the researchers intended to use a model namely follow-up move while teaching conversation. It can be concluded that teachers can change the organization of interaction according to the needs of the students and their own pedagogical aims. If teachers prefer to create grounds for more meaningful, genuine conversations, they can do this by manipulating their first and third moves. Nevertheless, this will not change the fact that they are in a classroom for the purpose of teaching and learning.

Maftoon (2013), agreed with the results of the present study and noted that the investigation into the nature of classroom discourse is of great importance because it mediates pedagogical decision-making and the outcomes of language instruction. Classroom is a place where learners are provided with considerable input, interactions of various kind, and opportunities to practice and use language.

5. Conclusion

This study proposed new way of teaching conversation through follow up moves applied by teachers that facilitate learning conversation in EFL contexts. This is considered as an effective tool for carrying out this teaching process. In this respect, EFL learners can be familiar with such tools in enhancing their learning. Finally, it is vital for instructors to choose appropriate teaching strategies, follow up move, and observation tasks to suit their learners' needs in specific context.

The results of the research indicated that resorting to follow up model did affect the EFL learners' two word verbs; however, the difference between the experimental and control groups was significant. In other words experimental group outperformed control group in the post-test with significant difference. Based on the findings, the majority of the learners who were taught under the instruction of teachers resorting to follow up moves might benefit from the treatment. Bringing strategies such as follow up moves might attract students' attention and enhance the quality of conversations. The students may feel bored with the class environment in traditional way. This may cause greater concentration on the learning materials. This atmosphere is supposed to increase learners' relaxation much more than where learners receive instructions through traditional approaches. Finally, the learners seemed more motivated in conversation through follow up moves. In this way, learning may not be any more a difficult activity for EFL learners.

All in all, resorting to follow up moves to teach conversation may improve the speaking skills of EFL students and give them a model of performance not only language through using linguistic expressions, but also the use of pragmatic functions of language.

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