



Enhancing Students' Growth in Productive Skills through Standardized Grading Procedures and Customized Constructive Feed-Forward

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Abstract

This research investigated the effects of applying standardized grading procedures and tailored constructive feedback on the development of students' productive skills, with a specific focus on writing and speaking abilities in the Deanship of Preparatory Year students at the University of Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal, Saudi Arabia. The study introduced two programs: a writing portfolio program and a speaking remedial program. These programs aimed to assess students' strengths and weaknesses in these skills before offering individualized feedback from teachers between two assessment points. Pre- and post-program scores were compared, and teachers' reflections were gathered. The results demonstrate that students experienced substantial improvements in their scores, with progress ranging from 29% to 66% following the implementation of these initiatives. Additionally, the study revealed that teachers also benefited from these programs, leading to a reevaluation of the quality and quantity of their feedback and an adjustment in their teaching approaches to better support their students. These findings underscore the significance of providing constructive feedback in higher education institutions. They highlight the necessity of implementing feedback systematically and methodically to cater to the needs of struggling students, enhance the learning experiences of high-achieving students, and professionalize the processes of learning, assessment, and student support.

Keywords: Constructive Feedforward, Remedial Program, Grading Standardization, Productive Skills, Foundation Program

The review of relevant literature in the present paper will focus on key notions surrounding the main ideas studied and analyzed in this research paper. These concepts are alternative and traditional assessment, effective grading, constructive alignment, rubrics design, and feedback/feedforward dichotomy. The review of relevant literature in

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this paper is strategically centered around these key notions, as they form the foundational framework for understanding and enhancing students' development in productive skills. Through exploring these concepts, the research aims to discern effective approaches that bridge standardized grading procedures and tailored constructive feedback, offering insights into the intricacies of assessment, alignment, and feedback mechanisms crucial for fostering students' growth in writing and speaking abilities within the academic setting.

Assessment key notions

Assessment is the regular and continuous operation of gathering, describing, and examining data about students' development and attainment in relation to curriculum outcomes. The main concern of assessment is to advance student knowledge by providing information needed to direct the adjustment and improvement of programs to better cater to the student's needs. Being so, assessment is different from evaluation in the sense that the latter is the process of integrating and synthesizing summative data from various sources and using this information to reach conclusions and judgments about how well students have achieved the curriculum outcomes. It is useful also to determine the relationship between what students have reached and the achievement expected from them after obtaining relevant input.

The assessment cycle is composed of several steps that start with the definition of learning objectives, where the teacher identifies what is expected to be reached in terms of achievement from learners. The following step is the selection and design of learning activities, measures, and criteria. This step is followed by the implementation of activities and measures before gathering evidence, data, and reflections. What follows is an analysis and evaluation of evidence-based on learning outcomes, which precedes the identification of gaps between what was intended and what was achieved. The final step is making decisions, which includes implementing pedagogical and curricular changes.

Literature on the issue describes three types of assessment. Assessment for learning allows teachers to make use of data regarding students' knowledge, comprehension, and performance to be invested in their teaching. In this type, teachers give feedback to students about their performance and ways to improve. As Rhodes (2016) explains:

Assessment is more efficient and effective for institutions because it now can provide students with feedback on defined strengths and weaknesses in formative as well as summative detail not available previously. In this more robust feedback rubric environment, faculty are discovering the power of working and talking with colleagues about student learning improvement and how assessment results can

help them improve assignments and their own sense of efficacy. (Rhodes 2016, p. 112)

Although assessment for learning and assessment of learning are frequently in theory considered distinctive kinds of assessment, in practice the differentiation is more delicate (Bennett, 2011). Some assessment activities can be both formative and summative. For instance, an end-of-unit task or test will have a strong formative part in controlling the content and the way learners learn throughout the unit (Bennett, 2011). Learners can also obtain feedback on summative assessments that they can feed forward into upcoming learning. Normally, summative assessment should assess students' cognitive abilities and comprehension, but should also sustain and feed forward into future learning.

Assessment as learning engages students in the learning operation where they are in control of their own progress, enquire, and prove their abilities. Using this type, students use data gathered from their own assessment of their skills in addition to teacher feedback to think about their process of learning, strengthen their comprehension, and reach learning outcomes.

As far as assessment of learning is concerned, it helps teachers make use of data regarding students' learning to measure their attainment in comparison to learning outcomes and criteria. In discussing possible changes in assessment practice, Medland (2016) states that:

There is now an extensive body of literature that can inform stakeholder understanding of how a shift in culture might be brought about in higher education, from the current dominant discourse of the testing culture, towards an assessment for/as learning culture ... It calls for assessment to be a central aspect of curriculum design and development. (Medland 2016, p. 91)

Assessment, hence, has several aims. It improves and promotes learning by providing students with learning opportunities. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the teaching operation and facilitates development. It also improves the quality of the curriculum in addition to accountability to institutions, accreditation bodies, employers, and the wider community.

Researchers describe also two types of assessment: traditional and alternative. Traditional assessment is generally believed to be easy to create and the aim is to assist students in passing the test (Nasab, 2015). It is a non-continuous process favoring summative over formative assessment. It emphasizes individual work and measures what

the student knows about a particular subject, which makes it partial. It also uses achievement tests to target lower-order thinking skills. In this study, Test 1, which is used to assess students' speaking abilities, is a form of summative assessment.

Alternative assessment, on the contrary, uses higher-order thinking skills and focuses on realistic tasks. It targets what students can do, which makes it comprehensive in measuring progress. It is a continuous process favoring teamwork, which makes it formative rather than summative. It improves the learning process and needs planning and preparation. In the first part of the current study, a writing portfolio is a form of alternative assessment used to help students while learning best practices in writing (Kalra, Sandrarajun & Komintarachat, 2017).

Grading alternative and traditional assessments should then by definition be different. According to Tombari and Borich (1999), teachers face difficulties assigning objective grades to students for three main reasons. The first one is related to linking grade assignments to academic and non-academic performance. The second is linked to teachers' sufferance in managing to report only one grade while they have a multitude of competencies to assess. The third is correlated with a lack of appropriate training for teachers in areas of assessment and evaluation.

Thus, improving grading practices has to take into consideration a number of principles to be guaranteed by educators and institutions. These principles are according to Brookhart et al (2020) related to:

- Purpose clarification: students need to know the purpose of their assessment
- Goals establishment: teachers need to have goals for the assessment operation
- Evidence-based grades: grades need to show performance using clear proofs (evaluation rubrics)
- Current achievement reflection: grades need to be timely and reflect grades at the time of assessment
- Goals and criteria alignment: The interconnection between goals established and criteria used to elicit evidence of achievement has to be sound
- Learning opportunities conditions: teachers have to set conditions for learning to take place
- Separate reporting of achievement: attainment has to report outcomes learned at a given time using a separate task

- Use of fewer gradation scales: fewer gradation scales allow for a relatively exact measurement to take place. For example, a 0-5 gradation scale is clearer than a 0-100 gradation scale.

These criteria aim at keeping grading professional, systematic, to the point, and meaningful. They clearly make it cut with the traditional mode of grading that is believed to be subjective, obscure, and limited while maintaining constructive alignment.

Characteristics of effective grading

In an evidence-based academic sphere, it is highly critical not to provide students, teachers, and institutions proof of exam grades' meaningfulness and objectivity. Grading, which is a method for instructors to assess each student's performance and learning, is of paramount importance not only for students but also for teachers and educational institutions. Literature on the issue has found that many schools are short of a clear and systematic grading policy (O'Connor, 2009). Traditional grading practices are reported to be subjective, especially when they concern language productive skills (Cox, 2011; Guskey & Bailey, 2001; Zoeckler, 2007).

It is crucial also for teachers' grading practices to evolve in order to cater to the changes in learning outcomes, expectations, and processes (Guskey, 2011, 2014; Marzano, 2000; O'Connor, 2009; Reeves, 2008). Additionally, what is expected from schools is changing nowadays; educational institutions are now expected to adopt the 'no student should be left behind' approach through remedial classes and individualized programs (Vatterott, 2015).

For Beatty (2013), grading has to be based on three principles:

- Meaningfulness
- The multitude of opportunities to demonstrate understanding
- Disconnecting academic indicators from non-academic factors

This means that grading has to be professional in the sense that students and observers have to be able to make sense of the grade given be it a letter or a score. Students have also to be given several and varied occasions to prove their understanding of the input given. According to Beatty (2013), grading has also to target only academic tasks not, for example, homework or extracurricular activities. This is contradictory to Vatterott (2015) who believes that

A student can compensate for the low understanding of the content and standards by maintaining perfect attendance, turning in assignments on time, and behaving appropriately in class. A different student may understand content and standards perfectly well but receive a low grade because he or she is late to class, fails to turn in assignments on time, or acts inappropriately (p. 63-64).

Wormeli (2006) defines academic factors as those that are taken into consideration in grading practices i.e. student attainment or performance, which shows mastery of content.

Constructive alignment of outcomes, teaching, and assessment

Constructive alignment happens when learning outcomes, the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, and assessment assignments and tools are all interconnected (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

As Biggs (2003) puts it,

The ‘constructive’ aspect refers to what the learner does, which is to construct meaning through relevant learning activities. The ‘alignment’ aspect refers to what the teacher does, which is to set up a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. The key is that the components in the teaching system, especially the teaching methods used and the assessment tasks are aligned to the learning activities assumed in the intended outcomes. The learner is ‘trapped’, and cannot escape without learning what is intended. (p.27)

Effective assessment happens when these assignments and tools are suitable, pertinent, and concentrate on the provable accomplishment of projected program outcomes. Tam (2014) argues that “outcomes, teaching and learning, and assessment need to be aligned to achieve consistency and coherence in the design process, resulting in instruction and assessment that are designed to address the intended learning outcomes (p. 166).

In a constructively aligned scheme, the projected learning outcomes are properly described to learners. Additionally, it is characterized also by obvious performance standards shared with learners (Biggs, 2003). Moreover, assessment tasks are pertinent and assess learners’ evolution against learning outcomes (Biggs 1996). This alignment guarantees that content in the curriculum is concurrent with the identified learning outcomes of a program, and is mapped to assessment.

Rubrics' development and implementation

In order to reach this level of accurate grading, teachers need to make use of rubrics (Boix Mansilla et al., 2009). Wolf and Stevens (2007) define a rubric as a “multi-purpose scoring guide for assessing student products and performances” (p. 3). They advocate that rubrics have many benefits.

First, rubrics make the learning objective more obvious because when learners recognize their learning target, they realize it in an easier way (Stiggins, 2001). Knowledge of assessment criteria helps learners activate needed cognitive abilities to realize expected outcomes

Second, Wolf and Stevens (2007) assert that rubrics lead to teaching plans and delivery. This means that teachers do better in reaching the learning outcomes as shared with students in the rubrics. This makes the rubric a contract between the learner and the teacher for better learning and effective and relevant attainment.

Third, rubrics increase accuracy and fairness in assessment. They preserve consistency in assessing all students' performance. Grading students' works against the same assessment criteria guarantees fairness as well. This certainly decreases complaints coming from students regarding their work being underestimated as they can see the details of their grades and make sense of them in the rubrics.

Fourth, rubrics allow learners to assess themselves against the criteria shared with them and assess their peers' performance. According to Hafner and Hafner (2004), students understand better when they are given the tools to assess their and others' performance. They internalize criteria and make sure they act according to what is expected from them.

Fifth, rubrics are beneficial for minorities' education as usually criteria are deduced and not communicated directly to learners (Andrade & Ying, 2005), which hinders access of minority groups causing their failure to grasp what is expected from them (Delpit, 1988; Heath, 1983).

Regardless of the degree of learner engagement in assessment and as put by Rhodes (2016),

Assessment is being integrated into the daily activities of faculty and other educational professionals as they teach, construct, and deliver programs, design projects and high-impact practices, and challenge students to become more adept and practiced at exercising higher-order abilities such as analysis, problem-solving, and evaluation. (p. 12)

These practices need to be involved not only in teaching but also in remedial programs as they allow learners to embody outcomes and get prepared for what is expected of them to know, do, and be. However, the use of standards in assessment using criteria in rubrics or making professional judgments concerning the worth of learners' work is an imprecise procedure and needs regular revision. Rubrics' development also takes time and writing the descriptors needs a lot of effort and a detailed conception of the educational operation. Sadler (2014) states that "consensus on the wording of the outcome statements does not necessarily result in consensus on underlying achievement standards" (p. 274). So, critical reflection of standards has to continuously occur, with devoted time and formalized procedures built into an assessment cycle.

In many higher education contexts, decisions on assessment and grading ... are devolved to individual academics, small teams, or program directors. A growing practice has been to develop explicit descriptions of expected standards so they can be used by students (as producers) and academic appraisers ... If all relevant parties work to the same set of specifications, the belief is that appropriate levels of consistency and comparability will result. (Sadler 2014, pp. 273–74)

It is important for students also to be involved in creating standards and desired outcomes' expectations. Engaging students in assessment is highly important because it allows them to increase their assessment literacy as well as have a clear understanding of what is required from them in assignments. As stated by Sambell (1999),

the data show that many students are able to think about assessment in quite sophisticated ways; this suggests that they may be at least as well-informed as some other stakeholders if not better informed ... this is not to suggest that students should be the sole judges of assessment quality since their knowledge and experience is clearly limited, only that their views should be considered alongside others. (p.121)

This highlights that whereas learners should be involved in the identification of assessment standards, they are not the sole participants. Other stakeholders are to participate too. In the present study, students are introduced to the rubrics used to assess their productions in order to realize the engagement of learners in assessment.

Additionally, in the present case study, grading is the final phase in the assessment process as it is preceded by feedforward giving, which is an important element in formative assessment (Basso & Belardinelli, 2006). One of the key components of

formative assessment is constructive feedback. It provides learners with relevant comments on their performance. Constructive feedback is characterized by specificity rather than generality as it has to target specific errors made by learners. Its focus is ideally on the behavior, not the person. This means that what concerns the teacher is the mistake made by the learner, not the learner's personality (Nicol, 2010).

Feedback and feedforward

Constructive feedback has to consider the needs of the receiver of feedback not general lectures on surrounding issues. The behavior targeted to be changed has to be changeable in the sense that it needs to be within the zone of proximal development of learners. Another important characteristic is that it has to be well-timed and provided in relevant amounts. In order to be effective, it has also to be well thought out before being offered (Scott, 2008).

Feedback has several benefits for learners and teachers. It allows learners to understand teachers' expectations and evaluate their knowledge and skills. It allows them also to identify their strengths and weaknesses in addition to addressing deficiencies. Constructive feedback is beneficial also for teachers as it allows them to evaluate and modify teaching materials. Documents, media, and tools utilized by teachers can be assessed in terms of usefulness and the extent to which they are helpful to learners (Wormeli, 2006). Constructive feedback is important also for it allows teachers to think about considering their teaching style in response to the echoes they receive from students. It is beneficial also because it helps teachers recognize students' progress, which is an important phase preceding any potential assessment of course suitability (Nicol, 2010).

Because feedback seems to be justifying grades only, Orsmond et al. (2013) suggested what they termed the new feedback model (p. 244).

Table 1.

Model of new feedback (Orsmond et al., 2013)

New feedback delivery	Standard feedback delivery
Encourages dialogue between giver and receiver of feedback	Monologue is often tutor-directed one-way feedback
Involves peers	Does not involve peers
Explicitly encourages self-assessment/regulation	Does not explicitly encourage self-assessment/regulation

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Feedback on assignment process	Feedback on assignment product
Students encouraged to be <i>proactive</i> in working with feedback	Students encouraged to be <i>reactive</i> in working with feedback

The model suggested by Orsmond et al. (2013) presents a well-designed, consistent, and convincing approach to an innovative kind of feedback giving. It clearly shows the difference between new and traditional conceptions regarding feedback. It shows also the limitations that allowed for the new form of feedback to emerge.

“[F]eed-forward refers to ‘timely and constructive feedback’ that feeds into the next assignment” (Wimshurst & Manning, 2013, p. 451). So, feedforward could be seen as the aspect of feedback that stimulates and permits development. Feedforward is giving guidelines to learners in order to avoid making expected mistakes in future assessment operations based on an analysis of their performance (Basso & Belardinelli, 2006). The difference between it and feedback lies in the fact that feedback is commenting on already made mistakes in the past while feedforward is concerned predominantly with the future. Feedforward then is a kind of informed futuristic remedial effort made by teachers to assist learners in coming assessments (Hirsh, 2017). It can be practiced using several activities such as continuous assessment marking (Hernández, 2012), exemplars (Hendry et al. 2012; Scoles, Huxham & McArthur 2013), peer assessment, and feedback given on drafts.

Feedforward allows learners to feel in control of something: their future performance. Students feel engaged and motivated when they feel what they get will have an impact on their learning and future needs.

Additionally, learners may feel stressed when they receive comments on their previous mistakes for they know they cannot fix the past. That stress may explain the defensive position they take when shown the mistakes they make in their exams. Feedback’s primary concern is ranking or grading learners’ already completed productions.

Instead, feedforward focuses on ways of improving learners’ future attempts and performance. According to Hirsh (2017), feedforward is characterized by six characteristics:

- Regenerating talent: allowing learners to recognize prospects of development.
- Expanding possibilities: working on expanding what is possible rather than pointing out errors
- Particularity: providing learners with specific guidelines on how best to improve

- Authenticity: clear description of the problems then prompting the learner for solutions
- Effectiveness: impacting the way learners develop
- Refining group dynamics: focusing on having learners fix each other's errors

However, feedforward seems to have a number of limits as well. To begin with, it seems that teachers find difficulties understanding the difference between feedback and feedforward. The latter is still blurry and has not probably distinguished itself entirely from feedback. Additionally, as stated by Wimshurst and Manning (2013), “while the theoretical justification for the apparent benefits of feed-forward is strong, the empirical support for such confidence remains slight” (p. 451). Furthermore, according to Ali, Rose & Ahmad (2015), “[a]lthough there are many suggestions within the feedback literature for strategies ... there are few empirical studies which test the effectiveness of these interventions. Evidence of the effectiveness of such interventions is greatly needed” (p. 582). For this reason, the present study attempts to fill this research gap between teacher feedforward and students’ achievement.

The teacher needs to take the time to choose the moments and words that go with the message to be communicated in order to avoid overwhelming the learner with good advice that applies to all situations. If the student does not retain the idea, the teacher must let it go. In this technique, communicating ideas is like giving a gift. Moreover, feedforward does not seem to be useful for giving instructions or for lecturing. It is effective only when it is to the point and targets the specific behavior of a specific learner. Additionally, Feedforward requires preparation and practice. Learning this technique on the job can be underestimated for this reason it has to be part of a bigger plan to assist students’ learning.

This study introduces two novel programs, a writing portfolio program, and a speaking remedial program, aiming to assess students' strengths and weaknesses before offering individualized feedback. The paper not only addresses the outcomes for students, demonstrating substantial score improvements but also sheds light on the overlooked aspect of teacher development, showcasing adjustments in teaching approaches. The findings can contribute to a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of tailored interventions in a specific academic context, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between teaching practices and student outcomes.

Research Questions

- How do standardized grading procedures and tailored constructive feedback impact the development of students' productive skills, specifically in writing and speaking, among the Deanship of Preparatory Year students at the University of Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal, Saudi Arabia?
- What does the comparative analysis of pre-and post-program scores in writing and speaking abilities show, and how do these scores reflect the effectiveness of the implemented initiatives?

Method

Participants

All the Deanship of Preparatory Year students at the University of Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal, Saudi Arabia took part in this study.

Instruments

This research employs a multifaceted approach, utilizing standardized grading procedures, a writing portfolio program, and a speaking remedial program to investigate the impact on the development of students' productive skills, with a specific focus on writing and speaking abilities. The study also incorporates pre- and post-program assessments for these skills, alongside collecting valuable insights from teachers' reflections on students' strengths and weaknesses throughout the implemented interventions. The instruments are then:

- Standardized grading procedures
- Writing portfolio program
- Speaking remedial program
- Pre- and post-program assessments for writing and speaking abilities
- Teachers' reflections on students' strengths and weaknesses

Data Collection

This study explores a thorough assessment of students' writing and speaking abilities by employing pre- and post-program scores, providing a quantitative measure of the impact of interventions. The investigation further scrutinizes strengths and weaknesses through the implementation of the writing portfolio program and speaking remedial program, supplemented by teachers' reflections on individualized feedback offered between two assessment points, culminating in a comparative analysis of scores to gauge

the efficacy of the implemented educational programs. Data collection can be summarized as below-mentioned.

- Pre- and post-program scores for writing and speaking abilities
- Assessment of strengths and weaknesses through the writing portfolio program and speaking remedial program
- Teachers' reflections on individualized feedback provided between two assessment points
- Comparative analysis of scores before and after the implementation of the programs

Data Analysis

This research employs a robust analytical framework, including statistical analysis of pre-and post-program scores to quantify the improvement in students' productive skills. Additionally, a qualitative exploration of teachers' reflections provides insights into the impact of the programs on teaching approaches and feedback quality, facilitating the identification of patterns and trends in the data. The study goes further to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of standardized grading procedures and tailored constructive feedback, ultimately exploring the implications of these findings on students' learning experiences, support systems, and the broader processes of learning, assessment, and student support in higher education institutions. So, the data analysis can be summed up as follows

- Statistical analysis of pre-and post-program scores to measure the extent of improvement in students' productive skills.
- Qualitative analysis of teachers' reflections to understand the impact of the programs on teaching approaches and feedback quality.
- Identification of patterns and trends in the data to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of standardized grading procedures and tailored constructive feedback.
- Exploration of the implications of the findings for the learning experiences of students, the support system, and the overall processes of learning, assessment, and student support in higher education institutions.

Results

This section will describe the procedures and findings of the two case studies presented in this paper. The first sub-section deals with the process of standardizing grading procedures in the writing portfolio and its impact on students' performance and teachers' conceptions. This section will also describe the way constructive feedforward using a remedial program was implemented and its impact on students' speaking skills development.

Standardizing writing portfolio grading procedures: Impact on students and teachers

As assistant department chair for examinations and assessment responsible for the assessment of the general and specific language skills of 6000 students and monitoring feedback giving and grading of 121 teachers, the researcher noticed inflation of grades in online writing portfolio assessments. Students' role was to write an essay, submit it to their teacher, receive feedback, fix the errors, and resubmit a final draft for grading. Teachers' role was to give feedback to students before the final submission and then grade the final draft.

In addition to measuring instances of full and near full marks obtained by each group, the researcher informally and indirectly elicited information from students and teachers regarding this process and found out that some undesired practices have evolved. According to the feedback received from students, they thought that their final submission had to be perfect, error-free, and deserving necessarily a full mark. Teachers in their turn thought their feedback to students had to end up with a perfect essay worthy of a full mark. This actually contradicts the notion of feedback that aims to find out whether students are on the right track, to enable students to learn from their errors and avoid future repetitions of the same mistakes (Nicol, 2010).

This may be related to the partial understanding of the essence of feedback and its best practices. Research shows that feedback is not a process towards perfection. In fact, it is a process of constructive support to students that enhances their effort to develop their skills (Hamid & Mahmoud, 2010; Ovendo, 1994). In order to deal with this problem, the researcher developed a plan and implemented it in all branches of the English department. Such a plan concerned all students and teachers of the department of English language in the preparatory year program.

The researcher invited all 12 exam coordinators of all tracks and locations for a workshop on feedback giving and assignment grading. In this workshop, they benefitted

from training on constructive feedback. The training covered the major issues related to giving and receiving feedback as well as the theoretical foundations underlying them. During the workshop, exam coordinators were informed about the concept, objectives, and importance of feedback and surrounding notions. They also engaged in discussing the difference between feedback and other forms of response. These discussions allowed the team to come across the notion of feedforward, embody the initiative, and actively engage in its implementation. Peer discussions, valorization of location coordinators' ideas, and mutual design of action plans are key to the success of any developmental or reform initiative.

Based on this workshop, teachers were asked to hold mini-workshops in their respective locations with all teachers on the first Tuesday after the students' break (January 2020) to make sure they are all aware of the guidelines communicated to exam coordinators during the workshop on grading writing portfolio assignments. In these meetings, exam coordinators were asked to communicate the ideas discussed and agreed on to all teachers. Particularly they were asked to make sure that every student receives feedback from their teacher on their particular topic of writing portfolio assignment only once for every assignment. Additional tips may be given to students but generally and without commenting in detail on their mistakes and productions again. This aims at encouraging students to rely on themselves and be responsible for their learning by looking for additional sources (peers, support teachers, internet...). It aims also at breaking total and blind reliance of students on their course teachers (Allen & Bentley, 2012).

Exam coordinators were told also to emphasize the fact that feedback giving must not mention every single mistake made by the student. Research on this issue has shown that feedback has to be brief, selective, and relevant (Espasa & Meneses, 2010; Molloy & Boud, 2014). For this reason, teachers were directed to focus each time on three types of mistakes with two or three examples to give for each type of mistake identified as well as three positive points. It is important to give a balanced account to students regarding their productions. Focusing solely on negative points discourages the learner and demotivates them. Adopting the sandwich approach in giving feedback is of paramount importance (Nicol, 2010).

In fact, the researcher devised a number of rules in this regard based on discussions with coordinators, experience teaching and grading productions of the researcher's own students, as well as thorough investigations of students' grades. Teachers were instructed to give zero to every essay that indicates more than 70% plagiarized content. Teachers

were also instructed to discard plagiarism if it is below 30% (as students sometimes use the same titles, collocations, and phrases in the short essays they were asked to write). If plagiarized content is between 30% and 70%, teachers were asked to deduct the plagiarized percentage from the score the student deserves.

For example, if a student deserves 1.5/2 in a particular assignment and the plagiarism detector SafeAssign indicates 50% plagiarized content, teachers deduct 50% of the 1.5. In this case, the student gets only 0.75 out of 2. Another example illustrating this process, if a student deserves 0.9/1 in a particular assignment and SafeAssign indicates 30% plagiarized content, teachers deduct 30% of the 0.9. In this case, the student gets only 0.6 out of 2. Teachers were also urged to provide comments to students about their assignments. A number of exam committee members were in charge of monitoring Blackboard (the platform used for assignments' submission) to verify the completion of grading of all assignments by teachers according to the guidelines given.

Additionally, teachers were asked to give feedback on every single essay they graded after students submitted their assignments too. They had to mention 3 types of mistakes made with 2 clear examples for each in addition to 2-3 positive points. This allows students to make sense of the grade given to them and permits external reviewers to make sense of the grade given. Random investigation of writing portfolio assignments of a selection of students from different locations and groups continued in order to make sure every grade given is accompanied by positive and negative feedback for every assignment, and the grade actually reflects students' productions.

Moreover, teachers were recommended to use rubrics when grading writing portfolio assignments. Additionally, teachers were requested that grades inserted in the detailed rubrics had to reflect the real production of the students in every criterion not random/repeated distribution (series of 8s, 9s, ... for every criterion in the rubric). The rubric developed by the department assessment and evaluation committee below was used to assess students' writing portfolio productions. It has been used as a standardized tool to assess student production. It has witnessed some minor edits every couple of years based on feedback from teachers regarding its practicality.

Table 2.

Writing portfolio rubric

Marks	Content (10 Marks)	Organization (10 Marks)	Sentence Structure / Grammar (10 Marks)	Vocabulary/Idioms (10 Marks) (reference topics in Q Skills books for cross-check)	Spelling/ Mechanics (10 Marks)
TOTAL= 50	5 paragraphs (about 23-32 sentences); 275-350 words				
8-10	<p>On topic; fully addresses test question; reads like original production</p> <p>Introduction contains at least 3-5 sentences; thesis statement controls all subtopics and supporting details</p> <p>3 body paragraphs; each contains at least 6-8 sentences, a clear topic sentence, one controlling idea with supporting details, and a transition</p> <p>Conclusion summarizes essay in at least 2-3 sentences</p> <p>Good transitions between ideas and paragraphs</p>	<p>Contains a clear thesis statement at or near the end of the introduction</p> <p>Each body paragraph consists of: -a clear topic sentence at the beginning -supporting details in form of definition/explanation/detail -a transition/concluding sentence at the end</p> <p>Follows a clear organizational pattern (e.g. chronological order)</p> <p>Conclusion paragraph at end</p>	<p>Errors do not interfere with comprehension</p> <p>S-V errors are minimal</p> <p>Few or no run-ons or other sentence level mistakes</p> <p>Correct use of compound, complex sentences, parallel structure</p>	<p>Must demonstrate familiarity with relevant lesson vocabulary and expressions</p> <p>Does not present primarily memorized or previously—learned material</p>	<p>6 or fewer errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation</p> <p>Each incorrectly-spelled word is counted only once</p>
6-8	<p>Slightly off topic or contains fewer than 20 sentences</p> <p>Thesis statement does not control entire essay</p> <p>Fewer than 3 body paragraphs</p> <p>Supporting details absent or lack relevance</p> <p>Weak transitions and logic</p> <p>Conclusion does not summarize and/or introduces new ideas</p>	<p>Thesis statement not included in introduction</p> <p>Major essay elements are present but lack coherence</p> <p>Body paragraphs lack required elements or are not organized properly</p> <p>Conclusion present</p> <p>Organizational pattern not clear</p>	<p>Comprehensible overall</p> <p>S-V errors are rare</p> <p>Some errors in sentence structure, mostly from incorrect use of conjunctions and resulting errors</p>	<p>Mostly uses level-appropriate vocabulary but without particular inclusion of unit vocabulary</p> <p>Some incorrectly-used words and expressions, but not interfering with overall comprehension</p>	<p>8 or fewer errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation</p>

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4-6	<p>Noticeably off topic and/or contains fewer than 15 sentences overall</p> <p>Lacks logical transitions between ideas</p>	<p>Lacks clear thesis statement and/or controlling idea</p> <p>Lacks topic sentences, and/or conclusion, or such elements are in the wrong place</p> <p>No organizational pattern</p>	<p>Difficult to understand because of grammar errors</p> <p>Extensive S-V errors</p> <p>Extensive errors in relative clauses and complex sentences</p>	<p>Noticeably incorrect usage</p> <p>Incorrect word order</p> <p>Vocabulary is below expected level; noticeably limited</p>	<p>9-12 errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation</p>
0-4	<p>Off topic but demonstrates effort</p> <p>8-10 sentences</p> <p>In this case, no more than 10 total marks and no fewer than 3 total marks should be given for the essay</p> <p>Completely off topic or fewer than 6 sentences: 0 marks for the entire essay</p>	<p>There is no demonstration of basics of essay form, and no paragraph organization</p>	<p>The student is unable to form a correct sentence or produce correct subject-verb agreement</p> <p>Large parts of the essay fail to convey meaning</p>	<p>Uses many words incorrectly</p> <p>Relies on excessively elementary vocabulary</p>	<p>13-16 errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation</p>

The use of rubrics is very much important in assessing students' performance in a structured, fair, and objective way (Arter & McTighe, 2001). Teachers were also asked to inform their students immediately in the first session after the workshop that feedback is not spoon-feeding, and that it must come from different sources (courses, books, revisions, peers...) not only the teacher, and that they shouldn't expect the teacher to correct their assignment till it becomes perfect, error-free, and ready for submission. Best practices in this field emphasize the necessity of using active learning to create independent learners not mere receivers of input.

The responses of teachers were initially negative as they considered the new guidelines a kind of micro-management, which maps with literature on the issue as indicated by Guskey (2001; 2011). In fact, some teachers did not like a detailed intervention from the department regarding the way they assess students' productions. They preferred initially a holistic rubric rather than a detailed one that tasks them with more detailed assessments. Through the researcher's informal discussions with academic coordinators of the whole institution, it was noticed that teachers prefer to help their students get very good grades regardless of the process of doing the task. The researcher

also received emails and phone calls from teachers who were suggesting “more help” to be given to students. There is always resistance to standardizing grading as some perceive it as entirely subjective. In fact, the job of the assessment coordinator is to ensure fair grading and to render the process as objective as possible while investing new findings in the field. The point of clarifying the need for calibrated feedback to be given to students was made a permanent issue in the researcher’s agenda of every meeting with location exam coordinators.

Norming sessions were given to teachers to train them on these new procedures. Eventually, teachers managed to fully understand the rationale behind the plan and discovered that it gives more responsibility to students to be in charge of their own learning. When asked to reflect on this new procedure, the greatest majority of teachers (84%) claimed that the new process relieves them from the irrelevant and impractical effort of commenting on all errors made by students. During a virtual regular meeting with teachers, the researcher asked them to respond to a question about their experience implementing the scheme. Only 16% expressed their discontent mentioning that students reported them to their superiors for lack of sufficient feedback. After collecting these reflections, the researcher provided a presentation to the Board of Directors of the English Department and gained an endorsement of the plan.

It took time for students too to get accustomed to the new approach of receiving feedback. Initially, they complained that teachers were not giving them “all the feedback they need”. In the responses to their complaints, they were informed that these new procedures are for their benefit as they aim at creating independent learners (Harmer, 2004). They were informed that relying on themselves, not entirely on teachers’ feedback, is an important requirement that will help them strategically in their future careers. It was surprising that the total number of Assignment Grade complaints received in the following term was 21% less than in the first term. When asked about it, students claimed that they were convinced as they received 5 to 6 remarks in total commenting on their productions (positive and negative feedback), which was very convincing and allowed them to make sense of the grade received.

The plan had a huge impact on 121 teachers and 6000 students. It revolutionized the grading process initially at place rendering it more objective and fairer. As will be clearly outlined later, thanks to the plan, grades and feedback became really reflective of students’ performance and helped measure and direct their evolution. The scheme also shaped teachers’ conceptions about grading and allowed them to practice new procedures and embody successful and research-based best practices. The second step in the project

was to target students' speaking skills by providing them with relevant feedforward, which is the concern of the following section.

Impact of Individualized Constructive Feed-forward on Students' Speaking Skill Development

Providing constructive feedforward, which is guiding students' learning based on performance data, to students is considered even more important than lecturing. Previous research has shown that its value does not only lie in allowing students to know their mistakes, but also in identifying and rewarding specific qualities in students' work, guiding students on what steps to take to improve, and developing their capability to monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning (Nicol, 2010). In order to give learners the opportunity to realize these goals, the researcher, being the Assistant Department Chair for Examination and Assessment (ADCEA) at a foundation program, developed a remedial plan. Remedial programs are key in the educational operation as they provide solid endorsement for struggling students to collaborate hence in their success (Simonez, 2016). A total of 167 struggling students from different locations, academic tracks, and levels have been selected, contacted, and given multiple individual feedforward sessions on elements of their strengths and areas of improvement by 100 different teachers.

The initiative aimed at:

- Familiarizing teachers with different forms of feedback-giving
- structuring teacher feedforward given to students,
- providing students with relevant, constructive, customized feedforward
- supporting students in their learning

First, the researcher invited the 12 exam coordinators from different locations and tracks for a workshop to sensitize them about the need for the support plan and engage them in setting a scheme for its implementation. The initiative covered all students enrolled in order to provide equal opportunities for learners regardless of the location or logistics available. Then, teachers were asked to filter the speaking grades of students who obtained less than 4 out of 10 in the speaking diagnostic test in each group. They were then asked to add a column on the Excel grade sheet after the score and name it "Presence (YES/NO)", and tell Learning Resources and Support Centre (henceforth LRSC) coordinators that they need to write YES or NO in the cell corresponding to every student each time the students comes for remedial speaking sessions.

Exam coordinators were instructed to hold a meeting with all 100 English language teachers concerned and the LRSC coordinator at their buildings to explain their role in the plan. Teachers were informed to urge these struggling students through in-class face-to-face and blackboard announcements to go to LRSC during their free time in order to benefit from personalized feedforward support. The below figure shows the initiative flowchart.

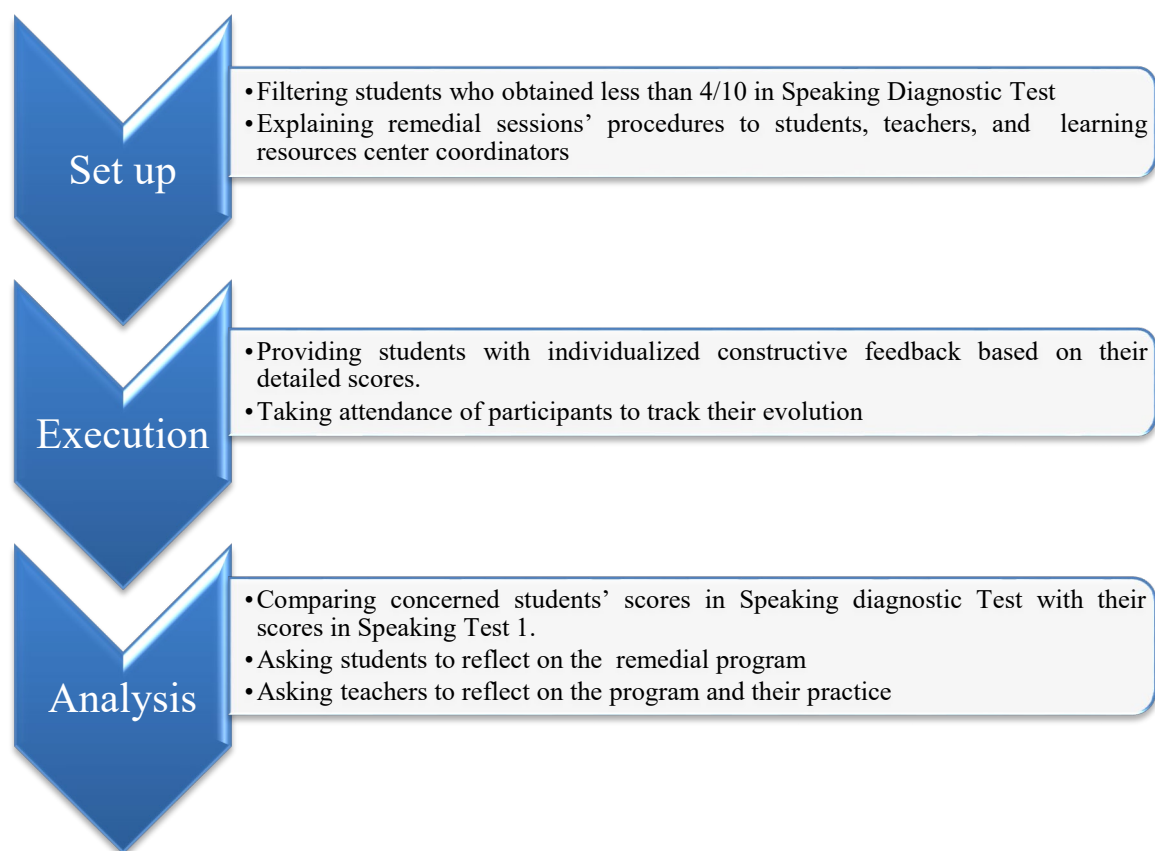


Figure 1. *Initiative flowchart*

Teachers were asked to give additional special attention and care (at least 30 minutes per student each visit) to students concerned with the remedial program in order to ameliorate their speaking skill. They were directed to ask students about the problems they face in this skill, show them how to solve these problems, and train them using book topics on how best to do better in future tests and exams in light of the expected learning

outcomes. Teachers used also WhatsApp to keep sustaining these struggling students in their learning.

Recognizing the value of technology in teaching (Siemens, 2004), the researcher asked teachers to use voice messages to communicate with students who are reluctant to come to LRSC or claim they have no free time to do so. 23 students made use of this tool and reported to have enormously benefitted from it. This might be explained by the fact that they may be introverts and avoid direct contact with the teacher as well as the stress that might accompany it. Using this technological tool aims at respecting these learners' feelings as some of them did not want to appear weak and in need of special support. WhatsApp allowed them to privately voice their needs without going through what they might see as a face-threatening situation (going to LRSC). It is of paramount importance to respect students' feelings and find ways to help them academically.

This remedial speaking session was conducted on a daily basis for 2 weeks: From Sunday, January 19th to Thursday, January 30th, 2020. LRSC coordinators were asked to send the researcher a brief and preliminary report about the attendance of concerned students and the average time spent by teachers with every student by the end of the first week. In order to ensure the quality of implementing the initiative, they were also asked to send the same report to the exam coordinator for follow-up in case concerned students are not benefitting from the remedial program. LRSC coordinators sent the researcher the final Excel workbook containing students' attendance by Sunday, February 2nd, 2020.

Results indicate that comparing students' grades before and after the remedial program, there is a remarkable increase in students' average scores. The findings show the importance of remedial programs and the impact they have on learners.

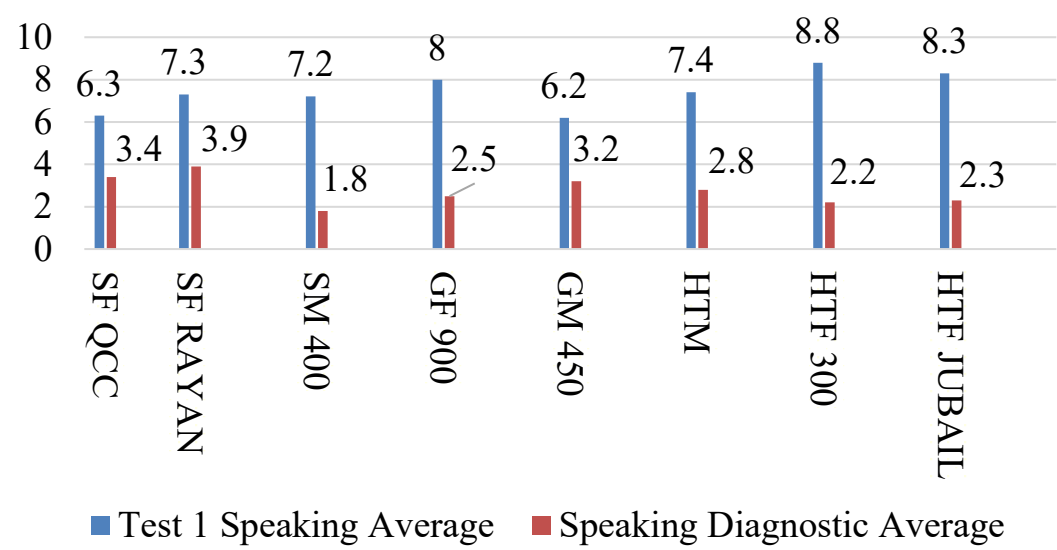


Figure 2. Students' average grades per location and test

The average score of all students concerned with the study increased from 2.8 to 7.4 out of 10. This means that the average progress made is 4.6 out of 10, which definitely shows the impact of the constructive individual feedforward provided by teachers to struggling students who participated in the remedial program. It clearly indicates that personally focused feedforward that is based on students' detailed scores is effective in helping them realize positive aspects of their performance and elements that need improvement.

Comparing the pre and post-tests conducted on students showed a remarkable improvement in the grades of the concerned students. Reflective feedback also gathered from these students showed that they claimed to have enormously benefitted from the speaking remedial sessions. Feedback collected from teachers and resource center coordinators showed that not only students benefitted from the initiative but also instructors themselves who claimed the initiative assisted them in making sure students reached the intended learning outcomes. These results imply that personalized constructive feedforward given to learners is of paramount importance and efficacy in improving students' grades and changing teachers' practice as well as learners' behavior.

They close up the breach between what students know and what they intend to know while allowing them to catch up and reach the same level as their peers. The plan was most helpful to students with gaps in their learning because of recurrent absences or difficulty with concentration. The plan helped also uncover students who did not make a

lot of progress. This could be understood as a sign of a learning disability that requires more specialized and customized instruction to thrive.

The remedial program teacher is the most essential element of the program. The success of the program rests upon their aptitude to maintain communication channels effectively and to create a passion for their sessions. Teachers reported that they have not only learned to prove their ability to deal with all stages of the program but also expressed to students that their first intention is to offer unconditional assistance. However, classroom teachers had also an effect on the success of the program. The classroom teacher for the most part identifies the student's preliminary position toward the program. They can motivate eagerness by expressing self-confidence in their aptitude to assist students. Classroom teachers can collaborate by monitoring the scheduled times a student is required to attend the remedial sessions. They can follow up on any recommendations given by the remedial teacher. They can also show a fascination for any development made, realizing that what seems a little advanced for some students signifies a real triumph.

To ensure the quality of learning, teaching, and assessment 167 struggling students (who scored below 4/10) from different locations, academic tracks, levels, and genders were selected, contacted, and given individual feedforward sessions during weekly learning support hours by different English language teachers on elements of their strengths and areas of improvement by different teachers. The study concerned English for Specific Purposes students at various institutions of Imam Abdulrahman University, Saudi Arabia:

- Science female Qatif Community College
- Science female Rayan Community College
- Science male Building 400
- Engineering male Building 450
- Engineering female Building 900
- Health male Building
- Health female Building 300
- Health female Jubail

Students studied in their English classes basically the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Their progress in Speaking Test 1 has been tracked to objectively and systematically investigate the impact of the remedial sessions. Teachers and students

have reflected on their learning and experience to allow the researcher to get informed about the process and the implementation.

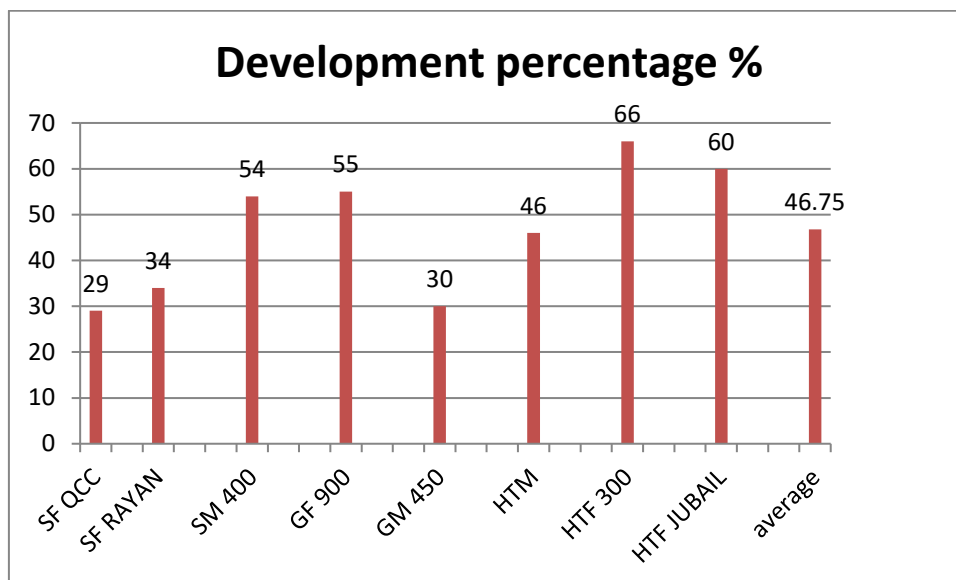


Figure 3. Grade development percentage

The grade development percentage graph shows that the most remarkable progress happened at health track female building 300, whose students made 66% progress between the speaking diagnostic test and speaking test 1. Students at this track were the most brilliant at the deanship and data showed they obtained the best scores in tests. This shows that remedial programs helped even excellent students specializing in medicine at the university level. This indicates that, regardless of the level of the student, remedial programs can be useful for students. This remarkable increase did not concern only health track students but also engineering female students who made a 55% progress between the speaking diagnostic test and speaking test 1.

Students who made the lowest achievement were those studying at Science female Qatif Community College and Engineering male building 450. Yet, the progress made was 29% for science female Qatif Community College and 30% for engineering male building 450, which means a promising increase in their scores considering the reported overall weakness at these two locations.

Generally, the average development reached by remedial students comparing pre and post-program tests is 46.75%. This means about a 50% increase in proficiency, which is

a remarkable development. Clearly, giving the students the chance to discuss their detailed grades with remedial teachers using the rubrics utilized in grading provided them with an opportunity for learning and/from assessment.

The rubric below was shared with students concerned and explained in detail not only to allow students to make sense of their grades but also to help them understand what is recommended from them in future examinations.

Table 3. *Speaking rubric*

Marks	Content (10 Marks)	Vocabulary (10 Marks)	Grammar/Accuracy (10 Marks)	Pronunciation (10 Marks)	Fluency (10 Marks)
8-10	Student response shows complete comprehension of relevant lesson content Directly addresses the test question Able to communicate easily using relevant concepts from the lesson Response fills the time allotted	Uses a wide range of vocabulary appropriate to the theme under discussion All words and expressions used correctly Uses relevant new words, expressions and collocations from textbook	Minimal grammatical errors Speaker self-corrects without hesitation Errors never interfere with communication	Phonetically correct words Pronunciation never interferes with communication	Ideas are expressed with natural pauses and at a natural speed Minimal hesitation Full utterances Easily comprehensible
6-8	Student response shows significant comprehension of relevant lesson content Mostly addresses the test question Shows some limitation in the range of ideas he/she can express on topic	Wide range of appropriate and specific vocabulary Nearly all words and expressions are used correctly Uses many new words and expressions from the textbook	Few minor grammatical errors that rarely interfere with communication Usually self-corrects Very good use of grammatical structures	Phonetically correct words Pronounces most but not all words comprehensibly and appropriately	Ideas are expressed with natural pauses and at a natural speed Speed of utterance rarely distracts the listener Very little hesitation

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Marks	Content (10 Marks)	Vocabulary (10 Marks)	Grammar/Accuracy (10 Marks)	Pronunciation (10 Marks)	Fluency (10 Marks)
	Response shorter than time allotted				
4-6	<p>Student response shows some comprehension of relevant lesson content</p> <p>Addresses some aspects of the test question</p> <p>Main ideas communicated are comprehensible</p> <p>Response under half allotted time</p>	<p>Fairly good range of appropriate vocabulary</p> <p>Some words and expressions are used correctly</p> <p>Uses several new words and expressions from the textbook</p>	<p>Several grammatical errors interfere with communication</p> <p>Sometimes self-corrects</p> <p>Fairly good range of grammatical structures</p>	<p>Pronounces many words comprehensibly and appropriately</p> <p>Pronunciation often interferes with communication</p>	<p>Some hesitation; searches for words</p> <p>Reasonable speed only sometimes distracts the listener</p>
2-4	<p>Student response shows little or no comprehension of relevant lesson content</p> <p>Shows minimal comprehension of the test question</p> <p>Several ideas communicated are incomprehensible</p>	<p>Uses a basic range of appropriate vocabulary</p> <p>Uses few new words from relevant textbook units</p> <p>Uses many vocabulary items incorrectly</p> <p>The language produced never draws on lesson vocabulary</p>	<p>Uses a basic range of grammatical structures</p> <p>Very limited self-correction</p> <p>Many grammatical errors interfere with comprehension</p>	<p>Pronounces appropriately only few words</p> <p>Pronunciation consistently interferes with communication</p>	<p>Frequent hesitation</p> <p>Very slow delivery</p> <p>Incomplete utterances</p>

Marks	Content (10 Marks)	Vocabulary (10 Marks)	Grammar/Accuracy (10 Marks)	Pronunciation (10 Marks)	Fluency (10 Marks)
	Response under 30 sec				
0-2	No attempt, or incomprehensible	No attempt, or limited range of vocabulary makes communication impossible The language produced never draws on lesson vocabulary	No attempt, or incomprehensible Most structures are incorrect	No attempt, or many pronunciation mistakes Many utterances are incomprehensible	No attempt, or constant hesitation Incomprehensible /broken delivery

This kind of formative constructive feedforward is most valuable in improving students’ performance as the feedforward is timely, constructive, and aligned with learning outcomes and assessment criteria (Nicol, 2010). It is timely for it followed the first assessment operation and preceded the first main test (Test 1). It is constructive for it aimed at working on students’ weaknesses as reported by them directly to the remedial teacher and as indicated in their performance as detailed in their evaluation rubric. It is aligned with learning outcomes as the feedforward provided by remedial teachers aimed at preparing students for future assessment operations.

Teachers who helped students realize their strengths and worked on improving their weaknesses between the two tests have expressed their satisfaction with the way, atmosphere, and quality of the feedback they have given to students. Teachers who provided the remedial sessions and coordinators who administered the execution of the program have sent their reflections on the project. Analyzing the content of their emails showed that the initiative allowed teachers to:

- provide students with detailed feedforward based on their needs
- deepen their understanding and practice of giving feedforward

The remedial program is also reported to have helped students in several ways:

- receive tailored and specific feedback based on their actual weaknesses as exemplified in a real test
- develop their speaking skill when practicing during the support sessions with teachers and positively changing their learning habits thanks to the tips they received

This is clearly shown in the reflections received from the exam and LRSC coordinators cited below.

“Students showed a great interest in the innovative idea of the Remedial Program. They considered it as an additional chance to improve their speaking skills. The educational atmosphere which is provided at the LRSC as well as the effective assistance provided by academic advisers are the cornerstone of the Remedial Program's success. The students who are enrolled in this program had the opportunity to practice their language with our professional academic staff and benefited from their instructions efficiently.”

M.S, LRSC coordinator at Health track

“It was a great opportunity for the teachers to spend more time with the affected students and provide them with individual and exclusive time, care, help and attention which could not be possible in a 2-hour class with other students. The students were able to approach the teachers easily and teachers could give one-on-one, elaborated feedback to the students on how to improve and polish their spoken language, and discuss their weak areas which needed that extra dosage.”

A.G, LRSC coordinator at Engineering track

There is no doubt that feedback is very important in learning. However, feedforward is of great importance too as it not only allows learners to reflect on their achievements but also provides them with the opportunity to prepare for future examinations based on real and solid data, forecast of forthcoming tasks, and expected assignments. These implications could be drawn from the current initiative which started from students' examination data and used learners' discussed needs to provide them with adequate and concentrated feedforward, which enabled them to enhance their speaking skills in the following exam.

It is true that other factors may have intervened and contributed in the achievement realized such as classroom training and learners' increased motivation and capability, but it could be said that learners who attended the remedial speaking program and who scored critically below average in the diagnostic test guaranteed reception of customized appropriate input, which enabled them to improve their speaking skills and test scores.

The plan allowed also the teachers to enhance the quality of their teaching. They claimed that this initiative allowed them to recognize urgent areas of improvement for students. It allowed them also to practice different tools for facilitating learning,

especially with struggling students. These experiences were claimed to be important to transfer to the classroom for better learning and teaching experience.

Based on the findings of this study it could be asserted that there are a number of factors that have to exist in order for constructive feedforward to take place. It is necessary to provide feedforward when students still have the learning outcome in mind and when students can further improve their work. Additionally, teachers especially remedial teachers need to provide feedforward that allows students to understand what to do without actually doing all the work for them. It is recommended also to provide a feedforward that addresses specific points. Feedforward is effective when it is given to students who need it in an appropriate way with the intention of letting learners know that their learning is important and that the remedial program is done for their benefit.

Moreover, among the implications of this present study is that remedial teachers need to describe the specific qualities of the writing assignment in relation to the learning outcomes. Furthermore, they should comment on students' learning approaches and strategies to help them improve. Added to this, remedial teachers are to foster self-regulation by making connections between students' work and their conscious efforts to get better. Certainly, teachers have to avoid personal comments in order to avoid demotivating students from attending remedial sessions as a result of considering them face threatening situations.

It is important also while providing feedforward to students to compare their work to previous endeavors and assess them against clear and shared criteria not comparing their work with other students' productions. Positive comments need to be expressed also to students and they should be mixed with suggestions for improvements. An important tip also is to maximize the chances that students will understand feedforward without doing the work for them. Also, it is crucial to give sufficiently precise suggestions so that the student can concretely go through the following steps.

Finally, it is important from the feedback obtained from remedial teachers who participated in the program to communicate a sense of respect to the student as a learner and place the student as an active agent not passive while stimulating reflection, curiosity, and desire to move forward.

Conclusion

The present study focused on best practices to enhance students' productive skills development. It targeted the way learners develop speaking and writing competencies by investigating the impact of constructive feedforward. Results showed that learners,

despite initial resistance, managed to understand the rationale behind the two procedures and this was clearly exemplified in their performance. Teachers too have claimed to have enormously benefitted from the experience as it provided them with an opportunity to assess using alternative ways. They reported that it also contributed in shaping their approach in teaching.

The study has huge implications on the potential of adopting constructive feedforward in higher education institutions especially when teaching and supporting the learning of productive skills. This implies that higher education institutions have to adopt new and alternative ways of assessment and learner support in order to provide students with the best experiences and the most effective opportunities for learning. The bond established between the learner and the teacher during constructive customized feedforward allowed for positive emotions to develop, which explains the development in students' performance. Future research may focus on the process and impact of implementing constructive feedforward on receptive skills development. This focus could give English language teaching practitioners insights into best practices to scaffold the learning of reading and listening skills.

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