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THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENTIATED FEEDBACK ON ACCURACY AND FLUENCY IN SPOKEN ENGLISH IN PREPARATION FOR IELTS SPEAKING

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Abstract: This article examines a differentiated corrective feedback methodology for academic lyceum students preparing for the IELTS Speaking test. It proposes criteria for selecting the timing, form, and focus of correction depending on the type of task, the learner's individual error profile, and the stability of the learner's speaking skills. Measures of linguistic accuracy and fluency are distinguished, and a reproducible design for the pedagogical evaluation of the proposed methodology is presented. The article is theoretical and methodological in nature and does not report unverified experimental findings.

Keywords: IELTS Speaking; spoken English; corrective feedback; differentiation; linguistic accuracy; fluency; academic lyceum.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada IELTS Speaking imtihoniga tayyorlanayotgan akademik litsey o‘quvchilari uchun differensial korreksion qayta aloqa metodikasi ko‘rib chiqiladi. Topshiriq turi, o‘quvchining individual xatolar profili hamda uning og‘zaki nutq ko‘nikmalarining barqarorlik darajasiga qarab, xatolarni tuzatish vaqti, shakli va yo‘nalishini tanlash mezonlari taklif etiladi. Nutqning lingvistik aniqligi va ravonligini baholash ko‘rsatkichlari farqlanadi hamda taklif etilayotgan metodikani pedagogik jihatdan baholash uchun takroran qo‘llash mumkin bo‘lgan tadqiqot dizayni taqdim etiladi. Maqola nazariy-metodik xususiyatga ega bo‘lib, unda tasdiqlanmagan eksperimental natijalar keltirilmaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar: IELTS Speaking, ingliz tilidagi og‘zaki nutq, korreksion qayta aloqa, differensial yondashuv, lingvistik aniqlik, nutq ravonligi, akademik litsey.

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается методика дифференцированной корректирующей обратной связи для учащихся академических лицеев, готовящихся к IELTS Speaking. Предлагаются критерии выбора времени, формы и направленности коррекции в зависимости от типа задания, индивидуального профиля ошибок учащегося и степени сформированности его навыков устной речи. Разграничиваются показатели языковой точности и беглости речи, а также представляется воспроизводимый дизайн педагогической оценки предлагаемой методики. Статья носит теоретико-методический характер и не содержит неподтверждённых экспериментальных результатов.

Ключевые слова: IELTS Speaking, устная английская речь, корректирующая обратная связь, дифференцированный подход, языковая точность, беглость речи, академический лицей.

Introduction

Preparation for IELTS Speaking involves developing the ability to respond coherently, with sufficient accuracy, and in a manner that is comprehensible to the interlocutor under time constraints. The

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official assessment criteria identify four areas: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation [1]. Therefore, error correction cannot be reduced to a mere list of incorrect forms; the teacher must also consider how corrective intervention affects the length and logical development of the learner's response.

This problem is particularly evident when working with students at academic lyceums, who often know a grammatical rule and can apply it in written exercises but fail to use it quickly enough in spontaneous speech. If the teacher interrupts every utterance, the learner receives useful guidance regarding linguistic form but may lose the thread of the response. If correction is completely postponed, recurrent errors may remain unnoticed. The choice of feedback should therefore be determined by the objective of the specific task rather than by a single rule applied to all situations.

The aim of this article is to substantiate and describe a differentiated feedback methodology designed to promote the simultaneous development of accuracy and fluency in spoken English during preparation for IELTS Speaking. The research question is formulated as follows: under what conditions can differentiation in the focus, method, and timing of correction improve linguistic accuracy without impairing the continuity of speech? The novelty of the proposed approach lies in integrating an individual error profile, the stages of the examination task, and the separate monitoring of the two indicators.

Theoretical Foundations

In the study by R. Lyster and L. Ranta, corrective feedback is described as a sequence involving an erroneous utterance, the teacher's response, and the learner's possible subsequent reaction, or uptake [2]. The authors distinguish, among other techniques, recasts, clarification requests, and prompts encouraging learners to self-correct. An immediate learner response demonstrates that the feedback has been noticed; however, this alone does not prove long-term acquisition.

R. Ellis draws attention to pedagogical decisions concerning which errors should be corrected, when feedback should be provided, and how explicit and implicit correction should be matched to the learner's abilities [3]. In examination preparation, this principle implies that the focus of each speaking task should be determined in advance. For example, practising the past tense in a narrative task may allow a brief interruption followed by repetition of the correct form, whereas a mock interview requires the natural flow of communication to be maintained.

Accuracy and fluency represent different dimensions of spoken performance. P. Skehan considers them in relation to attentional limitations during task performance, alongside complexity and lexical choice [4]. In the present article, accuracy is understood as the proportion of appropriate grammatical and lexical forms used in preselected contexts, while fluency is understood as the continuity and productivity of speech while meaning is maintained. Speed alone is not a sufficient indicator of a high-quality response: the rapid reproduction of a memorised template may fail to address the question being asked.

The works of N. D. Galskova and N. I. Gez, as well as E. I. Passov, provide a methodological framework for foreign-language teaching through speech activity and communicative tasks [5; 6]. Within the Uzbek methodological tradition, the work of J. Jalolov addresses the organisation of foreign-language teaching in educational institutions [7]. These sources help substantiate the transition from correction within isolated exercises to the sequence "speaking task — observation — targeted correction — new attempt"; however, they do not in themselves constitute evidence of the effectiveness of the model proposed in this article.

The Concept of Differentiated Feedback and the Basis for Its Differentiation

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Differentiated feedback is understood as a corrective system in which the teacher varies the focus, timing, degree of explicitness, and source of assistance according to the observed error and the objective of the task. Differentiation does not mean designing a separate course for every learner. Rather, it requires brief diagnostic records, clear rules governing the choice of intervention, and subsequent reassessment of the outcome.

The first criterion is communicative significance. An error that prevents the question or response from being understood should be clarified immediately. An error of form that does not impede comprehension may be recorded and discussed after the learner has completed the utterance. The second criterion is recurrence: an occasional slip requires less intervention than a systematic problem involving agreement, tense selection, or collocation.

The third criterion is the stage of the task. In Part 1, short answers make it possible to practise precise formulations quickly and subsequently expand the learner's ideas. In Part 2, an extended individual response requires protection of the narrative flow: the teacher identifies two or three priority errors and discusses them after the response has been completed. In Part 3, the learner is required to explain and develop an argument; here, feedback on coherence, paraphrasing, and grammatical structures expressing cause-and-effect relationships can be particularly useful. The IELTS Speaking test consists of three parts [8].

The fourth criterion is the learner's readiness for self-correction. If the form is familiar and the learner can correct it in response to a signal, a clarification request or a prompt without providing the correct answer may be appropriate. If the structure has not yet been acquired, a brief explanation and a model are required. In the case of a pronunciation error that affects intelligibility, listening to the relevant segment and repeating it with attention to stress and phrase segmentation can be helpful. When correcting a lexical error, the discussion should address not only the replacement of the word but also the appropriateness of its meaning in the given context.

The practical unit of feedback is not a list of every weakness identified but an individual "priority map" comprising one recurrent grammatical error, one lexical or phonetic target, and one objective related to response organisation. During the following lesson, the teacher checks whether the improvement has been retained without prompting.

Methodology for Implementation Within the Learning Cycle

The cycle begins with an initial diagnostic assessment: the learner completes comparable tasks representing all three parts of IELTS Speaking, and the responses are recorded with the participant's consent. The teacher records the types of errors, pauses, and the extent to which ideas are completed. Two short responses on the same topic produced on different days are more informative than a single recording because one unsuccessful attempt may reflect anxiety or unfamiliarity with the topic.

During the first lesson, two objectives are selected, for example, the correct use of the past simple in a narrative and a reduction in the number of pauses caused by searching for simple words. During the preparation stage, the learner receives linguistic support in the form of a small set of structures and a model of an extended response. During the first attempt, the teacher does not interrupt a coherent utterance unless an error interferes with comprehension. After the response, the teacher plays a short segment of the recording, asks the learner to identify the error, and only then, if necessary, provides direct correction.

The next attempt is completed on a related but not identical topic. This variation makes it possible to assess transfer of the skill rather than memorisation of the corrected phrase. The learner compares the two responses according to predetermined indicators: whether the idea has been maintained, whether the number of target errors has decreased, and whether the response has become less fragmented. The

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teacher briefly identifies one improvement and one next step. Immediate correction may be used when practising an individual structure, whereas delayed correction is preferable during a complete mock interview.

For example, a learner says: “Last year I go to Samarkand and visit my relatives.” After the learner finishes the sentence, the teacher plays the recording and asks: “Which verbs refer to last year?” The learner corrects go to went and visit to visited and then repeats the narrative with an additional detail. If the learner becomes silent during the second attempt while searching for the correct form, the teacher separately practises short narrative sequences; accuracy should not be achieved at the cost of a complete breakdown in fluency.

For independent study, a brief learning log can be used containing the following elements: date, task, recorded sentence, corrected version, reason for the correction, and a repeated attempt one week later. The log should not be turned into a complete transcription of every speaking performance, as this would reduce the time available for actual speaking practice. During pair work, learners may assess the comprehensibility and structure of each other’s responses, but the final explanation of a disputed linguistic form remains the responsibility of the teacher.

Empirical Evaluation Design and Measures

The effectiveness of the proposed methodology requires a separate pedagogical evaluation. A possible research design could include two comparable groups of academic lyceum students, the same duration of preparation, common topics, and both initial and final diagnostic assessments. The experimental group would receive differentiated correction according to the algorithm described above, while the comparison group would work with the teacher’s usual feedback procedures. Group allocation and baseline differences should be documented before instruction begins. If random allocation is not possible, conclusions regarding causal effects should be made cautiously.

The principal measure of accuracy is the number of correctly produced target forms divided by the total number of obligatory contexts in which those forms should be used. For each selected grammatical structure, the contexts to be included in the calculation should be defined in advance. An additional measure is the number of errors per 100 words; however, this indicator should not be interpreted without considering speech complexity, because avoidance of complex structures may artificially reduce the observed error rate.

Fluency is assessed separately according to speech rate excluding long pauses, the number and duration of pauses, the frequency of self-repetition, and the learner’s ability to develop the response to a complete thought. Ideally, comparable tasks and identical time limits should be used. To establish a connection with the examination format, two independent raters may additionally apply the official IELTS Speaking descriptors [1]. However, the overall examination band score should not be equated with a single quantitative measure of fluency.

Before analysis, rules should be established for transcribing pauses, self-corrections, and incomplete utterances. A proportion of the recordings should be coded independently by two raters, and disagreements should be discussed after inter-rater agreement has been calculated. The main comparison should examine changes in each indicator within the groups and differences in those changes between the groups. Sample size, class attendance, baseline proficiency level, and the amount of independent practice should be reported in any publication presenting empirical findings.

Ambiguous outcomes are possible. An increase in accuracy accompanied by an increase in pauses would indicate the need to reduce the amount of immediate correction. An increase in speech rate

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while recurrent errors remain would require a narrower focus on linguistic form. Improvement in both measures would provide a basis for further investigation of the durability of the effect, but it would not in itself demonstrate an increase in the overall IELTS band score without independent examination-based assessment.

Discussion and Limitations

The proposed approach is consistent with the understanding of corrective feedback as an interaction in which the learner's subsequent response and a new speaking attempt are important [2; 3]. Differentiation helps the teacher address a practical question: when should the learner be interrupted, and when should the flow of ideas be preserved so that the error can be revisited after the response? For academic lyceums, an advantage of the model is the possibility of maintaining concise records of learner progress without increasing the number of formal assessments.

The methodology also has limitations. Frequent listening to recordings of one's own speech may increase anxiety in some learners; therefore, the teacher should explain the purpose of recording, obtain consent, and allow learners to work with short segments. Pauses may result not only from linguistic difficulties but also from the content of the question; they cannot be diagnosed appropriately without considering the topic. Finally, accuracy is measured in relation to preselected linguistic features and therefore does not represent the overall quality of spoken performance.

The influence of individual differences—including initial proficiency level, familiarity with self-assessment, and experience of examination interviews—also requires separate investigation. Teachers may apply different thresholds for intervention, and a common protocol is therefore necessary for research purposes. Without an empirical study of the proposed methodology, it cannot be claimed that this particular procedure has already increased IELTS band scores among students in Uzbekistan. The present article proposes a testable methodology rather than reporting a completed experiment.

Conclusion

Differentiated feedback integrates the diagnosis of typical errors, the selection of a limited number of priorities, correction according to the stage of the task, and repeated performance of a related speaking task. For accuracy, targeted work on recurrent forms is particularly useful; for fluency, it is important to preserve the continuity of a complete response and analyse the recording after the performance. The practical value of the model lies in monitoring these outcomes separately so that improvement in one indicator does not conceal deterioration in the other.

The next stage of the research is to conduct comparative instruction in academic lyceums, present actual pre- and post-intervention data, examine inter-rater agreement, and investigate whether corrected forms transfer to new IELTS Speaking topics. Publication of such findings would help determine which types of feedback are most effective for different learner profiles.

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