



The Lack of Effective Feedback in IELTS Preparation Courses for Arabic Students

* Omar Mohammed al Shaykhi 

Lecturer - Department of English -Faculty of Education Benghazi-University

omerkroby@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author:

* Omar Mohammed al Shaykhi

Keyword

IELTS, Arabic learners, comment effectiveness, formative and summative comments, learner-centered practices, IELTS assessment criteria, language assessment, technology-supported commenting.

Abstract

This study investigates lack of effective feedbacks in IELTS preparation courses for Arabic trainees and its impact on their language growth and testing preparedness. However, feedbacks represent core elements in language study and are essential for producing the productive skills (writing and speaking) expected through the IELTS exam, feedbacks received have been found to be too vague, inadequate and non-aligned with IELTS band descriptors by many Arabic candidates. The paper reviews the theoretical underpinnings of feedback practices, such as constructivist and sociocultural perspectives while identifying cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical dimensions influencing the way Arabic learners perceive and engage with feedbacks. The data points to various hurdles (e.g., lack of instructor expertise, large class sizes, time constraints, difficulty with listening, reading, writing, and speaking) that adversely impact the effectiveness of feedbacks. The study recommends the development of quality in feedbacks, including evaluation criteria, a learner-focused approach, inclusion of technology tools and professional development improvement of the IELTS instructors. These results highlight the urgent need for formalized, tangible, and culturally salient feedback initiatives in order to facilitate those students in Arabic IELTS more effectively.

Received : 11/01/2026

Accepted : 17/01/2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64943/jkc.2026.040104>

نقص التعليق الفعال في دورات الإعداد لاختبار الأيلتس للطلاب العرب

*عمر محمد علي محمد الشخي ID

محاضر - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - كلية التربية بنغازي

omerkroby@gmail.com

*المخلص	*الباحث المرسل:
تتناول هذه الدراسة مشكلة ضعف جودة التعليق المقدم في دورات الإعداد لاختبار الأيلتس للمتعلمين العرب، وتأثير ذلك على تطوير مهاراتهم اللغوية واستعدادهم للاختبار. وعلى الرغم من أن التعليق يعد عنصراً أساسياً في تعلم اللغة وفي تنمية المهارات الإنتاجية المطلوبة في اختبار الأيلتس، فإن العديد من المتقدمين العرب يرون أن ما يتلقونه من تعليقات غير كافٍ، وغير واضح، ولا يتوافق مع معايير التقييم المعتمدة. وتستعرض الدراسة الأسس النظرية المتعلقة بالتعليق، بما في ذلك المنظورين البنائي والاجتماعي-الثقافي، وتسلط الضوء على العوامل الثقافية واللغوية والتعليمية التي تؤثر في تلقي المتعلمين العرب للتعليقات واستجاباتهم لها. وتشير الأدلة إلى وجود معوقات تحدّ من فعالية التعليق، مثل محدودية خبرة المدرسين، وكبر حجم الصفوف، وضيق الوقت، ونقص الموارد، مما يعيق تحسين مهارات الاستماع والقراءة والكتابة والمحادثة. وتقرح الدراسة مجموعة من الأساليب لتحسين جودة التعليق، من بينها مواءمته مع معايير التقييم، واعتماد ممارسات تتمحور حول المتعلم، واستخدام أدوات تقنية داعمة، إضافة إلى تعزيز التطوير المهني للمدربين. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن تحسين آليات التعليق داخل برامج الإعداد ضرورة ملحة لدعم المتعلمين العرب بشكل أكثر فاعلية نحو النجاح في اختبار الأيلتس.	الأيلتس، المتعلمون العرب، فعالية التعليق، التكويني والختامي، ممارسات تتمحور حول المتعلم، معايير تقييم الأيلتس، اللغة، التعليق المدعوم بالتكنولوجيا

تاريخ القبول: 17/01/2026

تاريخ الإستقبال: 11/01/2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64943/jkc.2026.040104>

1. Introduction

Good feedback is crucial towards the preparation for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) of Arabic learners. Feedback in particular, can help people to understand and adjust their performance: to correct studies', practicing their and to improve their strategies based on their performance, and set targets for future efforts. Yet, the literature shows that the nature and quality of feedback in preparation courses for the IELTS remains under-investigated and the analysis is not yet satisfactory in the Arabic context, however. In order to do so, the present study focuses on the feedback on the IELTS preparation courses of Arabic students and how it affect their learning. It seeks to elucidate the manner in which lack of feedback provided in lessons and practice sessions prevent the participants in this group from making progress in their test preparation. The present study relies on several theoretical approaches to the conceptualization of the

feedback and the quality of feedback in the IELTS. Constructivism, an epistemology of human learning, emphasizes the role that theory assumes that knowledge is constructed rather than being transmitted. The sociocultural perspective focuses on mediation at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and social dimensions. According to this view, learning occurs through social interactions and with the help of others (John Glanville, 2018). Listening, reading, writing, and speaking are the four components of English proficiency that one can measure in the IELTS. The listening and reading components require candidates to answer about 36 questions, which are rated either as right or wrong, and receive a score using the numerical scoring method. Candidates participate in discussion of three parts in the speaking component and earn band scores ranging from 1 (non-user) to 9 (expert user) according to three measures: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy. The writing consists of 2 tasks. Task 1 is to represent visual input (i.e., a line graph, table, or a map). The task requires at least 150 words descriptions while Task 2 requires that you write an argumentative essay with at least 250 words. Aspects such as task achievement as well as grammatical range and accuracy and other criteria are evaluated by the IELTS Writing Band Descriptors. This task requires very different linguistic features than those in the second task, but it often makes preparation for Task 1 more effective. Hence, the instructional strategies focused on the criteria of the IELTS are inserted within these comments for better alignment to the language-learning goals of the courses. However, most of the preparatory feedback in place for these candidates still proves mostly ineffective. Most of these courses take a student-centered interactive and communicative style during English-medium classes without Arabic instruction. The poor ability of many of the students impairs their participation in oral discourse and discussion or at the very least their in-class participation in group projects. Trainer input is thus encouraged in addition to peer comments in order to inspire initiative and sharing of input between learners and to enhance interaction discourses effectiveness. Nonetheless, all of these demands made of instructors (class sizes of up to 18, restricted course duration, lack of resources) further complicate the idea to receive an excellent feedback, and narrow the extent of preparation with respect to IELTS.

2. The Role of Feedback in Language Test Preparation

Feedback is important because it informs students about their level of proficiency and enhances their chances of improvement (Harizaj, 2015). This feedback can be partly formative and partly summative. Formative feedback can be provided before a task is undertaken (diagnostic feedback on existing skills or knowledge deficiencies and gaps), at different stages of the task (feedback on the strategy used), or after the task is completed (performance feedback). In contrast, summative feedback occurs at the very end of the process. Feedback on all rubrics-based IELTS tasks is formative feedback at the task performance level. Feedback on every other IELTS task (writing, speaking, language, listening, reading) also proactively identifies those component gaps, thus serving a diagnostic function. Therefore, feedback can influence (1) performance and (2) coping strategies on perceived gaps that affected a candidate's absolute task score, both of which directly impact task improvement.

3. Nature of IELTS Feedback

Feedback is an essential part of preparing for the IELTS test. Formative feedback enables diachronic consideration of students' growth and development. Indeed, even the temporal dimension of planning has significance: the instructor's provision of productive language functions for Writing, for instance, is not supplied with the text simultaneously. However, early feedback indirectly remains formative in that, as formative feedback properly guides early stages of IELTS listening, reading, and writing preparation, IELTS performance ultimately is improved (Harizaj, 2015). For Writing and Speaking, the IELTS task becomes part of the exam question, reflecting the student's construction of their response (Poverjuc, 2011). Implicitly, the specifics of the second task vary according to long-term educational goals: essays, film scripts, computer code, or doctoral thesis plans, for example, require much more mindful consideration. It suggests more expansive topics or links to ideas students have engaged with before IELTS preparation, yet such guidance is formative within Arabic-language learning paths itself. Lastly, reported advances in task-response, coherence, cohesion, and accuracy of evaluation papers closely correspond to IELTS band descriptors, which in turn supports the notional trace of what happened in preparation for the test.

4. Cultural and Linguistic Factors Considerations for Arabic Learners

Culture and language impact the learning experiences for Arabic IELTS entrants: classroom interactions, peer feedback, language transfer, and power structures. Although many researchers acknowledge that potential biases may influence the perception of feedback, feedback is rarely discussed as the central focus when investigating how Arabic learners respond to English. Variations in communicative style, belief about their

capacity, and openness to feedback are likely to greatly influence how students respond to ideas for intervention to improve, providing reasons for culturally responsive interventions. The classroom learning norms of many Arabic students based on their educational experiences highlight the need for a sense of respect for the instructors, influence the mode in which feedback is provided as well as received, and affect the freedom with which students express their views in educational environments (Saeeda Rehman, 2014). It occurs in the single-language context in which most educational experiences occurring before learning English are more about learning the rules of production (rather than engaging with the language) so English education takes place and many students encounter the language only when they graduate, passing through the English system without receiving feedback about them. Previous selection choices in the past regarding subjects that can focus on maintaining adequate instruction in Arabic, Quranic Arabic, and Islamic studies, led to a general disengagement with English. Standard Arabic being widely recommended, lends the Arabic language an ongoing sense of ownership for those who are learning it even when many other dialects have also been studied. As Arabic and English come from entirely different language families, much of the time is generally devoted to the syntactical levels distinguishing them. And the main tasks usually continue later on: concord contracts or tense agreements that can be considered basic requirements (Yousuf Al-Busaidi, 2012). When it comes to language transfer, students' attitudes about whether or not they understand a particular language are mainly rooted in their previous encounter with learning Arabic. However, there are also many open-ended questions about the level of Arabic address desired between English speakers and other users, as many users move frequently between Arabic levels even when they share one.

5. Empirical Evidence on Feedback Effectiveness for Arabic IELTS Candidates

Empirical research investigating the effects of feedback on Arabic language candidates who prepare for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is limited in numbers despite the increased importance of feedback in developing language skills and test preparation. The very few literatures available emphasize the necessity for further exploration to investigate the relationship between feedback practice and performance in the different IELTS elements (Rasheed Hamzah Alamri, 2018). However, as even for the compliant Arabic groups, a gap still exists on how useful the feedback was to studying the exam. In light of these local constraints, the present review reviews the existing literature for the efficacy of feedback for Arabic IELTS candidates, examines the barriers which curb feedback potential among Arabic learners, and discusses feedback quality improvement strategies. Based on an examination of various Arabic cohorts, we found that feedback mode, intensity, and duration take precedence over and very little is taken into consideration to the effectiveness of the feedback. Feedback continues to be an

important component in preparing for language tests, while literature that investigates its relationship to candidate performance is limited and may result in the need for more prolonged and intensive delivery of this input. There is even an absence of data in the region due to the failure to consider feedback effectiveness by program in various stages. This silence restricts pedagogical choices which may improve the extent to which English for Arabic learners can be prepared.

6. Barriers to effective feedback in IELTS programs

IELTS preparation programs for Arabic students are hindered in certain areas in order to provide proper feedback. Inadequate instructor experience prevent the identification and communication of performance differences in the course work based on the IELTS standards. The large size of the class further restricts individual feedback, and high-stakes testing culture discourages formative feedback approaches. Limited resources limit feedback creation, and access to technology stifles the incorporation of automatic feedback tools. A lack of instructor experience leads to ineffective communication and recognition of performance gaps in assignment with IELTS criteria; these problems are exacerbated if the instructor is not a native English speaker (Ali Alrebish, 2018). A high-stakes testing culture impacts educational priorities and limits formative feedback; in case students feel that their grade will not change on the final report, they lose interest in learning. Large class sizes have a major impact on the quality of instruction and student-centred policy making, reducing the capacity for individualized feedback; when the class sizes grow beyond fifteen–twenty students, one comment from an instructor on each student’s writing task is impractical (Poverjuc, 2011). Inadequate resources influence not only their provision of Arabic-language inputs but also on effective feedback mechanisms in the format of a learning cycle involving diagnosis, remediation, and assessment. Inequalities with the use of technology pose another limitation in feedback design, with the absence of the ability to embed autonomous feedback tools that tailor responses to specific writing features of the learner or labelling based on assessment criteria.

7. Methods to Improve Feedback Quality

Feedback is an essential component of quality learning (John Glanville, 2018; Poverjuc, 2011). It raises confidence, motivation and autonomy and it may have positive effects on examination results. In the case of IELTS, feedback helps in higher exam scores and consequently entrance into the higher education systems. There are no effective feedback mechanisms for IELTS preparatory courses on students studying Arabic. This feedback is critical to help guide candidates through the divergent—and sometimes nonlinear—development paths they take across the four IELTS elements of listening, reading, writing and speaking. Course feedback is also anticipated—and, yes, necessary—given the

structure of the curriculum and the specific learning outcomes. The result of these conditions, are offered suggestions on how to enhance the quality of feedback.

7.1. Aligning Feedback with Assessment Criteria

Having fluency in a language makes it possible to converse easily and fluidly on many topics, including a wide variety of subjects. Fluency in spoken English, i.e., the ability to express thoughts, ideas, sense of self in a coherent and organized manner, is also widely used in language, and it is one of the criteria in speaking English assessment among many countries since it is an important quality characteristic to be measured in formal use of a language, one of the common criteria with regard to the formal use of a language. This study aims to empirically examine the effect of the feedback by such students' teachers, in relation to the language students' speaking fluency of ESL students. Giving feedback based on established criteria is vital as it will show the level of learners where they stand in terms of performance and in what areas they need to improve to obtain the defined outcome or requirements. Feedback should be aligned with the use of the assessment criteria to assess students' speaking performance. The critique for this study follows the criteria for assessment as listed by IELTS band descriptors for speaking. When mapping the language of the feedback package to the IELTS Band Descriptors, we have produced much more than generic, or overlapping feedback language. It may also offer more positive feedback information on any one of the four aspects of speaking (Ahmed & Troudi, 2018). Some of the common features of spoken discourse in the speaking classroom are richness of vocabulary, elaborateness of description and development of ideas, and student use of cohesive constructs. Raters feedback generally concerns control of linguistic features such as increase of grammatical complexity, accuracy, or level of understanding.

7.2. Learner-Centered Feedback Practices

The feedback stage in a learner-centred approach to test preparation is giving feedback about performance and guidance on how to improve, based on reflection about the assessment task and accompanying performance. Autonomy is achieved by prompting students to make realistic learning goals by helping them think about how best to pursue learning outcomes, as well as by prompting students to contribute to writing down what they have learnt in their feedback session (Poverjuc, 2011). Feedback should explicitly specify the basis of any assessment provided to remain the most effective. It may help that when the feedback phase aligns its message, messages related to test-taking goals and preparation will be better communicated (Dabiri, 2018). Encouraging students to pick one or two IELTS band descriptors per week for the different types of IELTS tasks promotes them to report at what stage in their preparations they are. Students are then reminded to use the descriptors with the sample when looking for feedback on example answers. This form of criterion-specific stimulation around self-generated reflection on

the goals for preparation further reinforces for them to stay engaged in the feedback, keeping them mapping and re-mapping their initial assessment of progress.

7.3. Technology-Enhanced Feedback Tools

AI and machine learning based feedback tools have a large potential to enhance the quality of feedback for candidates preparing for the IELTS. Well-known and reliable tools offer students the opportunity to receive feedback/modifications on grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation in writing, including Microsoft Word and Grammarly apps. Less-known applications such as Vocaroo and the Speaking Feedback Checker have features that allow students to upload recordings of their responses and analyze their performance metrics (including accuracy and fluency). Such tools can help language learners with instructional context, as well as immediate access to previously composed texts (Ahmadian Fard Fini et al., 2016). However, many current models must depend on learner self-understanding for close text material or voice data and rely on their ability to identify related topics. As such, accurate criteria reflection is undoubtedly a priority consideration for any further technology tool incorporation. Feedback systems on how far IELTS writing candidates meet the IELTS requirements of the IELTS exam may even be provided using automated essay scoring technologies and databases and preconceptions of the scoring indicators/models/rubrics (Poverjuc, 2011). Automated scoring feedback systems that automate the scoring of students' essays provide feedback on whether they are meeting the criteria related to specific tasks or assignment content, are classified under keyword generation (learner- vs instructor-initiated) or balanced use of modes of articulation (e.g. analysis, exposition, narrative), could then be considered. The inclusion of resources and technology choices makes it possible for them to understand the IELTS feedback needs and thus help Arabic language learners to master it. The branching pathways involving clearly visible range areas (including feedback document constructions, semi-complete essays, and full drafts) also open up the establishment of focused guideline support in any pedagogical framework that supports IELTS-related drafting to be shaped as well as developed in specific pedagogical settings. The proposed pedagogy strategies clearly endorse and consolidate goal reference and learner autonomy for further enhancing the outcomes of a higher level of IELTS preparation. Integrated batch submission in network functions further creates opportunities for students to receive professional level comment opportunities that are

centered on draft simplification and transition the situational context in which they may access these comments towards activated primary personal focus.

7.4. Trainer Professional Development

MENA trainers receive little professional development available through psychometric research available today; accordingly their practice of training, including the types and quality of feedback they provide to candidates preparing for the IELTS test varies between different communities and regions. The role of feedback is quite critical to IELTS preparation as all four parts of the test are communicative tasks that candidates need to complete in accordance with a set of criteria (Rasheed Hamzah Alamri, 2018). Based on Keller and Gassner (2020), feedback for language assessment and evaluation has been described as “information about a learner’s performance that serves as a basis for improvement” (p. 25). This is a pedagogical endeavor that may lead to language learning and self-controlled learning. That kind of training would better orient teaching staff towards providing full and learner-centered feedback of highest quality in IELTS preparation courses.

8. Implications for Curriculum Design and Instructional Policy

Feedback is fundamental in language learning and teaching because it informs students of their performance and indicates ways to improve. Feedback is defined as “information provided to learners regarding the correctness of their responses” (Rasheed Hamzah Alamri, 2018). The feedback received by students after taking an IELTS preparation course greatly influences their IELTS readiness. Constructivist approaches to learning, meanwhile, view assessment and feedback as integral elements of instruction (Ahmed & Troudi, 2018). Feedback is present at every part of the assessment cycle—planning the assessment, carrying out the assessment and evaluation of outcomes—and depends on the syllabus aims and instructional methodology. Feedback is formative or summative. Formative feedback, as described by Evans (2013), involves direct and targeted feedback regarding students' performance so that students can seek to improve before their grade is handed down. For summative feedback, the content of the feedback is less important since the explicit objective is to disseminate a mark or grade which signifies performance based on the established criteria (Boud & Molloy, 2013). Different types of feedback fulfill distinct functions and yield useful diagnostic feedback regarding students' present condition and preparation for the upcoming assessment (which are essential for success) (Wiggins, 2012). Feedback about listening and reading input for practice assignments informs students of their precise strategies for each of the parts. Because time is a concern in the writing tasks of IELTS, the feedback for task one and task two are typically separate (i.e., after the completion of each task) and informative on improvement within the confined criteria for scoring on the official rubric. Speaking feedback, on the other hand, is typically combined, as two activities are often answered consecutively in practice.

Effective feedback or conveying how students can improve is a complex process. Feedback needs to be timely, specific, actionable, and related to the performance criteria set. Feedback is timely if it is given as soon after a performance or task as possible. Without immediate feedback, the chance for influencing more immediate learning and improvement is diminished. Feedback is specific when it focuses on the target goal or other dimensions rather than merely affirming overall performance or achievement. When feedback is actionable, it describes the steps or behaviours needed to improve preparedness and performance. Lastly, feedback is consistent with the predefined or desired criteria when it is derived from the same standards of performance evaluation. The order of these criteria is also important, like Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest that feedback must be timely, specific, actionable, and finally aligned with a rule. Feedback experiences vary widely due to different feedback mechanisms and thus the effectiveness of the feedback varies. Every mechanism also presents its own pros and cons—many of which are enhanced by complexities in second language learning and by the particularities of the IELTS exam. Feedback is an expression of entrenched cultural attitudes, pedagogical methods, and other factors including but not limited to people, events, and the social and cultural context in a place. Therefore, the specific form it is expected to take (feedback), the importance given to the types of feedback, and the attitudes to act on the feedback is affected by what was considered important in the preparation, by the standards implemented by the programme, and by the balance of time spent on practising productive and receptive skills.

9. Conclusion.

The results of this work highlight the importance of improving the quality of feedback in IELTS preparation courses among Arabic learners. Although these environments offer some feedback intermittently, it is not effective or on par with IELTS scoring criteria and fails to affect students' learning outcomes to a large extent. In addition, these challenges are further reinforced by systemic barriers that have been documented including educator expertise, class sizes, time constraints, resource availability, and technology access. Given these circumstances, it is of the utmost importance that we investigate how feedback quality could be enhanced, to enable the students who are about to take the IELTS to prepare better for it. An important starting point for designing a successful feedback plan is to map current feedback practices to learning goals as well as the criteria of IELTS assessment. This mapping may provide information about how, when, and why feedback might be made usable given the contextualized language development and test-preparation requirements of candidates for the Arabic IELTS. It was found through interviews that existing feedback continues to be viewed as low quality and ineffective, lacking the timeliness, specificity, and concrete action required to spark response. Prioritization of feedback and feedback goals considering constructive alignment may be particularly useful in Arabic IELTS preparatory courses, for which such methods of

approach would most likely demonstrate great significance elsewhere. (Rasheed Hamzah Alamri, 2018).

References:

John Glanville, P. (2018). Feedback and Response to Feedback in Teaching Writing to Learners of Arabic or any Second Language: A field report on a pedagogical model.

Harizaj, M. (2015). The Power of Feedback in Improving Student's Foreign Language Proficiency.

Poverjuc, O. (2011). The Experiences of Feedback Practices on Academic Writing Undergone by Students with English as an Additional Language in a Master's Programme: A Multiple Case Study.

Saeeda Rehman, M. (2014). Developing intercultural communicative competence in the Arabic curriculum : a survey of learners at beginner level.

Yousuf Al-Busaidi, F. (2012). Listening Difficulties among Non-Native Speakers of Arabic.

Rasheed Hamzah Alamri, H. (2018). Examining the Perceptions and Preferences of Saudi EFL Student Teachers Concerning Teachers' Feedback Practices.

Ali Alrebish, S. (2018). Barriers to effective feedback in undergraduate medical education: Case study from Saudi Arabia.

Ahmed, A. & Troudi, S. (2018). Exploring EFL Writing Assessment in an Egyptian University Context: Teachers and Students' Perspectives.

Dabiri, A. (2018). A Critical Discourse Analysis on Teachers' Verbal Feedback Patterns in EFL CLT Classrooms.

Ahmadian Fard Fini, A., Akbarnezha, A., & Rashidi, T. H. (2016). A novel real-time detailed feedback collection and interaction tool for large classes.