

The Effect of Two Types of Feedback on Students Learning Motivation in an English Classroom in China

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Abstract: Teachers' feedback in the classroom is a critical aspect of teaching. It can influence students' interest in learning and their motivation, ultimately impacting their overall learning outcomes. Feedback from teachers prompts students to engage in their learning process. At the same time, learners adjust their language output based on teachers' feedback and comments. This feedback is especially crucial in second language acquisition classrooms, as students of varying proficiency levels often fail to notice or correct their mistakes when speaking or writing. This research was conducted in a Chinese high school English classroom with twenty-six students and one English teacher. The conclusion, derived from classroom recordings and questionnaires, indicates that students are willing to receive feedback from teachers, though teachers should be mindful of the type of feedback they provide. While many researchers have studied the relationship between teacher feedback and learners' motivation, there are still limited studies specifically examining the connection between teacher feedback and students' learning motivation. Consequently, the impact of this interaction is worth investigating.

Keywords: Positive Feedback; Negative Feedback; Interaction; Motivation

1. Introduction

Classroom feedback is a crucial component of teachers' classroom activities, and its importance is self-evident. It can be considered from two perspectives. From the learners' view, classroom feedback provides students with information about their performance on learning tasks. The aim of feedback is to enhance students' classroom achievement^[1]. From a communicative standpoint, Ellis (1997) stated that feedback from teachers to students serves as a form of communication, where teachers respond to students' attempts, including identifying and correcting errors^[2]. Narciss (2008) proposed that in real classroom settings, feedback refers to the information given to learners about their actual learning status, helping them understand whether their performance meets the learning requirements in the current context^[3]. Building on previous study results and teaching experience, this research will examine the positive and negative feedback provided by teachers in the English Second Language Acquisition classroom. From the students' perspective, positive feedback refers to approval of learners' performance, usually in the form of rewards and compliments. Negative feedback indicates that students' classroom performance needs improvement and is often associated with critical comments, sometimes even punishment^[4]. Many learners prefer positive feedback over negative feedback because negative feedback typically involves criticism, which can negatively impact learners' emotions and motivations^[5].

There are various theories in second language acquisition (SLA) regarding corrective feedback. The first, Universal Grammar (UG) based accounts, proposed by Noam Chomsky^[6], claim that people have an innate ability to learn languages, inherited from previous generations^[7]. Overall, negative evidence in UG-based accounts makes only a minor contribution to SLA. The cognitive-interactionist perspective states that corrective feedback (CF) is useful for acquisition when learners are provided with positive evidence of the target language and are encouraged to self-correct their errors^[8]. The socio-cultural theory views repair as a collaborative activity in which participants help each other identify mistakes and make self-corrections, with learning occurring through interaction^[9]. The main types of oral corrective feedback include recasts, explicit corrections, repetitions, metalinguistic comments, clarification requests, and elicitation. There are various types of teaching feedback, and it plays an essential role in students' language learning process. Teachers' feedback not only responds to students' language output but also serves as a source of second language input, promoting further language production. London (2003) believe that teachers' classroom feedback can guide, stimulate, and reinforce effective classroom behavior while reducing or preventing ineffective behavior^[10].

To investigate the impact of both positive and negative feedback from teachers on students' motivation in second language learning, primarily English, three research questions were introduced:

1. What is the common feedback provided by teachers to students?
2. How do students feel after receiving feedback?

3. If students make mistakes during class, what kind of corrective feedback are they likely to receive?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The entire sophomore class of twenty-six students and an English teacher from one high school in Beijing participated in this research. The students' English proficiency levels range from intermediate to pre-advanced. According to the Teaching Syllabus established by the Ministry of Education in China, sophomore high school students should be able to use a dictionary to understand keywords and the main purpose of a passage, recognize patterns of suffixes and prefixes, and read and write over 2000 words. The English teacher involved in this study has more than six years of experience teaching high school students.

2.2 Materials

In this research, observation and questionnaires were used to collect data. Two main types of data were gathered. First, an observation of a 40-minute video recording of an English lesson focused on describing a person was conducted. The teacher began by asking several questions to introduce the topic and then guided students on how to write a short composition describing people. During this process, the total number of instances of positive and negative feedback, particularly the types of corrective feedback, were collected for analysis. Second, a questionnaire was distributed to 14 students (6 males and 8 females) in the class to assess their reactions and attitudes toward various forms of feedback and how they prefer teachers to help them correct mistakes.

3. Result analysis

The following two sections will discuss the positive and negative feedback data collected in the classroom and the questionnaire results from 14 students after the lesson.

3.1 Classroom feedback observation

Table3-1 presents the overall feedback, including both positive and negative, given during the lesson. It can be observed that in this class, which taught students how to describe a person, the teacher was more likely to use positive and encouraging words and phrases to motivate students. The total amount of positive feedback observed was 23 instances, with "very good" being the most frequently used phrase. Additionally, the teacher elaborated on specific details about students' outstanding points to encourage greater participation. Regarding negative feedback, or corrective feedback, the teacher mainly used metalinguistic comments, clarification requests, and repetition instead of explicit correction to address learners' mistakes. These results might vary in different classroom settings, as the aim of this lesson was to teach writing skills. More pronounced differences could be observed in grammar-focused lessons.

Table3-1 Two Types of Feedback Data Collection

Name	Count	Tagged Text
Positive feedback	23	uh-huh, very good. (1) Very good. (1) OK, good, sit down please. (1) Also very reliable. OK, good, very good, sit down please. (1) Good, sit down, please. (1) Uh-huh. Very good description. Very good. (1) Uh-huh. Wonderful idea. Actually, I think I agree with you. (1) Very responsible, or we can say caring, caring, considerate, thoughtful. Right? Uh-huh, I think that's my job---to tell you you need to wear more clothes. OK, good, sit down please. (1) Oh, so you really know him well. (1) OK. I agree with you. (1) Uh-huh. So you see, actually he think you are close to each other, right? You have a close relationship. (1) So stories and jokes can make us laugh. That's the supporting details of humorous. OK? (1) Personalities. Good. (1) People. Yes. (1) You mean you may not believe it, right? (1) Uh-huh. The last to leave, make sure the windows, the lights are off. Very good, sit down please. (1) Uh-huh, humorous and forgiving. Very good. Sit down, please. (1) Chuan pu and te lang pu. Yes. Donald Trump, the next American president, right? (1) Army, yes. (1) Appearance. Good (1) Make you believe and make your description more vivid, right? That's a, that's the usage of supporting details. (1) Make fun of him, but he never gets angry. Very good. (1) Ending. These are ending. (1)

Name	Count	Tagged Text
Negative feedback	7	You have no details for humorous. (1) OK, but, so how about his, her personality? You didn't use a word to describe her. (1) Warm-hearted? Look at the passage. (1) Yes, we can do that? (1) Wang Jianlin. Do you think Wang Jianlin has been military school? (1) Sorry? (1) Still this example? (1)

3.2 Questionnaire Data Collection

The questionnaire, originally from the Wenjuanxing website, was handed out after minor adjustments, with 14 students participating, 6 male and 8 female. The survey contained 13 questions with 12 multiple choice questions and 1 subjective question, covering topics such as students' opinions on the significance of feedback, the type of corrective feedback they prefer to receive, and their attitudes and reactions to different types of feedback. For better analysis, only Question 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 11 are selected for presenting the results.

Table3-2-1 Q2.Do you think it is important for the teacher to give appropriate comments and feedback after you answer the question?

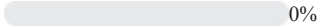
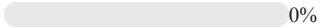
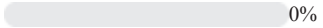
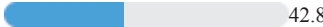

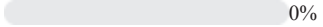
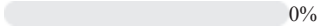
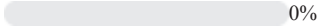

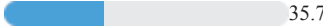
Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Totally disagree	0	 0%
Disagree	0	 0%
No opinion	0	 0%
Agree	6	 42.86%
Totally agree	8	 57.14%
Total	14	

Table3-2-2 Q3.Do you think it's very encouraging for teachers to give words like "good, great, excellent" to students?

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Totally disagree	0	 0%
Disagree	0	 0%
No opinion	0	 0%
Agree	9	 64.29%
Totally agree	5	 35.71%
Total	14	

Question 2 and 3 inquire about students' perceptions of the importance of receiving feedback and the motivating impact of positive affirmations such as "good" and "great". All students express a unanimous desire for responses and praise from teachers after participating in class activities. This finding aligns with Brophy's (1981) observations that learners are more inclined to seek positive feedback over negative feedback^[5].

Table3-2-3 Q4.When you make a mistake in answering a question, you hope that the teacher will not point out your mistake directly, but restate your words in the correct form so that you can find the mistakes yourself.

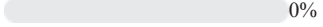
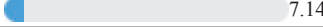

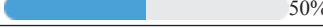
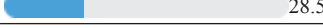

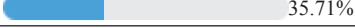


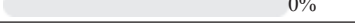
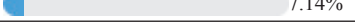
Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Totally disagree	0	 0%
Disagree	1	 7.14%
No opinion	2	 14.29%
Agree	7	 50%
Totally agree	4	 28.57%
Total	14	

Table3-2-4 Q5.Which of the following types of feedback would you prefer when you answered the question incorrectly

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Teacher give answers directly.	3	 21.43%
Teacher repeat your answer, wait for you to discover the error.	5	 35.71%
Teacher propose a question about your answer.	10	 71.43%
Teacher explain in detail about your mistake and help you correct it.	13	 92.86%
Teacher only point out your mistake and will not help you correct it.	0	 0%
Teacher elicit your mistake and let you complement.	1	 7.14%
Total	14	

Question 4 and 5 present students with options for different types of corrective feedback and gauge their preferences. Although Question 4 may seem redundant, it serves as a precursor to Question 5. The six options in Question 5 correspond to the concepts covered in Ellis and Shintani (2013)^[4]. Ranked from most popular to least, they are: explicit correction, clarification requests, repetition, recast, and elicitation. Interestingly, only one student expresses reluctance toward the use of repetition (as per Question 4). However, the majority of students indicate a willingness to have their mistakes pointed out and corrected by teachers. This finding is somewhat unexpected given the limited use of explicit correction in the observed lesson. Therefore, in future lessons, teachers may consider incorporating more explicit correction, while also ensuring that the type of corrective feedback remains varied and flexible to align with the specific objectives of each lesson.

Table3-2-5 Q6. When you answer the question correctly in English class, the teacher's affirmation and praise can improve your study enthusiasm.

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Totally disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
No opinion	1	7.14%
Agree	3	21.43%
Totally agree	10	71.43%
Total	14	

Table3-2-6 Q7. When the teacher adds additional information to your answer, you will communicate and interact with the teacher more actively.

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Totally disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
No opinion	0	0%
Agree	9	64.29%
Totally agree	5	35.71%
Total	14	

Table3-2-7 Q11. When you have finished answering the question, the teacher points out your mistake and this will affect your enthusiasm for answering the question next time.

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Totally disagree	0	0%
Disagree	3	21.43%
No opinion	2	14.29%
Agree	7	50%
Totally agree	2	14.29%
Total	14	

Question 6, 7 and 11 center on students' learning motivation following the receipt of two types of feedback. Students demonstrate a greater inclination toward motivation and engagement in subsequent study processes, as well as increased interaction with teachers, after receiving positive feedback and detailed elaboration. This finding aligns closely with the positive feedback observed in the video recording, where several students displayed heightened participation and responsiveness when teachers provided detailed explanations and affirmed their responses. Conversely, upon receiving negative feedback, 9 out of 14 students reported feeling discouraged and displayed decreased willingness to cooperate with teachers. It's important for students to recognize that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process and should not inhibit their willingness to interact with teachers in the classroom.

4. Discussion and Limitations

Answering the previous research questions based on the collected data reveals several insights. Regarding Question 1, it is evident that in this lesson, the teacher primarily utilized three types of feedback: metalinguistic comments, clarification requests, and repetition, which coincidentally align with the most preferred types of corrective feedback among students. Most students demonstrate a positive response to and are receptive towards teachers' positive feedback. However, a minority of learners express dismay when receiving negative feedback, potentially impacting their learning motivation and outcomes both during and after the lesson. It's crucial for students to cultivate a resilient learning at-

titude, recognizing that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process, and that teachers provide feedback to support rather than criticize. Moreover, teachers should employ a diverse range of corrective feedback strategies tailored to individual student reactions. The most well-received types of corrective feedback by students include explicit correction, clarification requests, repetition, recast, and elicitation.

However, this research is not without limitations. Firstly, the English class observed primarily focused on writing skills, resulting in a limited number of feedback instances during the lesson. Secondly, the sample size of students involved in this study was relatively small, with only 26 students in the class and questionnaires collected from just 14 students.

5. Conclusions and Implications for Teaching

This research underscores several pedagogical suggestions. Firstly, students should adjust their attitudes towards making mistakes. It's essential to recognize that teachers' primary role is to impart knowledge and assist in overcoming difficulties, rather than to humiliate. Active participation in class by answering questions and engaging with teachers can help students overcome this challenge. Additionally, students should reflect on and carefully consider teachers' feedback, as it is tailored to their specific performance and can significantly contribute to their future academic development.

For teachers, it is crucial to provide both positive and negative feedback to students. However, negative feedback should be delivered in a manner that does not undermine students' motivation, utilizing gentle and indirect comments or offering direct corrections when necessary. Furthermore, teachers should be attentive to the emotional responses of students following negative feedback and make appropriate adjustments in subsequent lessons.

Overall, both types of feedback, positive and negative, serve to guide, motivate and reinforce effective classroom behavior. Students generally appreciate receiving feedback from teachers, as it contributes to their learning and growth.

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