

An Investigation of Teacher Feedback Types and Characteristics in Senior High School Classes

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Abstract

This paper studies types and characteristics of the teacher classroom feedback through the investigation of 22 classes of 22 senior high school English teachers. Non-participatory observation method was adopted to examine types and characteristics of teacher feedback based on the videos of the 11th National Senior High School English Teaching Demonstration. The purpose of this study is to find out existing problems of teacher feedback so as to improve senior high school English teachers' teaching ability. According to classroom observation and data analysis, the types of the teacher feedback include positive feedback, negative feedback and multiple feedback. The characteristics of the teacher feedback are as follows: among 3 feedback types, positive feedback is the most frequently used one and negative feedback is often used with positive feedback. The existing problems in teachers' feedback are: general feedback including matter-of-fact praise and general praise is often given by teachers; students are often interrupted by teacher feedback; the teacher feedback focuses more on form of student language than on meanings of interaction between teachers and students. In terms of the types, characteristics and problems of teacher feedback, this study gives some suggestions for English teachers in senior high schools to develop their teaching ability of giving feedback.

Keywords: teacher feedback, feedback types, feedback characteristics, senior high school English classes

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

With the publication of China's *General Senior High School Curriculum Standards for English* (2017 edition) (hereinafter called 'CS') launched by The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, the importance of feedback is paid much attention by English teachers. According to the CS, in practical teaching, teachers should deal with the relationship between assessment, teaching and learning, and promote integrated implementation of them. Classroom assessment activities should run through the whole process of teaching for testing teaching objectives. Teachers need to identify problems in student learning and provide timely help and feedback to help students learn more effectively. Teacher feedback is one of most important types of assessment which is emphasized in CS. The vital purpose of senior high school English teaching is to improve Chinese students' English subject core competency which involves developing students' higher-order thinking ability. Teacher feedback is a crucial source for guiding students to reflect on their thoughts and action and is a form of social mediation (Ellis, 2009). It offers teachers an opportunity to examine students' learning condition.

In order to improve senior high school English teachers' feedback quality, this research analyzed 22 teachers' feedback in senior high school teaching cases.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis takes 22 classes of 22 senior high school English teachers as research subjects. Non-participatory observation method was adopted to examine types and characteristics of teacher feedback based on the videos of the 11th National Senior High School English Teaching Demonstration. By analyzing teacher feedback in the demonstration, this research aims to provide some suggestions for teachers to give feedback effectively. According to the objective of this research, the research questions are:

1) What are common types of teacher feedback in senior high school EFL classes?

2) What are characteristics of English teacher feedback in senior high schools?

3) What are problems of English teacher feedback in senior schools?

1.3 Research Purpose and Significance

This thesis makes research about 22 English teachers' feedback in 11th National Senior High School English Teaching Demonstration, aiming to find out the types, characteristics and the existing problems in teachers' feedback, and then put forward some suggestions on the improvement of teacher feedback.

As a useful teaching media, teacher feedback is important to promote students learning ability, which offers chances for students to reflect on their ideas to improve their cognitive development. Appropriate feedback helps students discover and correct mistakes in the learning process as well as achieve psychological satisfaction. Therefore, the research on the feedback of English teachers in class is of great importance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Feedback

Based on *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied linguistics* (2010), feedback refers to "any information that provides information on the result of behaviour". In teaching, feedback refers to comments or other information that learners receive concerning their success on learning tasks or tests, either from the teacher or other people.

2.2 Types of Feedback

According to Ellis (2009), there is positive feedback and negative feedback. Positive feedback affirms that a learner response to an activity is correct. It provides affective support to the learner and fosters motivation to continue learning. Negative feedback signals that the learner's utterance lacks veracity or is linguistically deviant.

According to Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2009), feedback can be implicit and explicit. Metalinguistic explanation and recasts constitute the best exemplars of explicit and implicit corrective feedback which are effective in promoting learning.

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), there are seven types of feedback: (1) Explicit correction refers to the explicit provision of the correct form; (2) Recasts refer to teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance; (3) Clarification requests used only after a student error refer to students' problems in comprehensibility or accuracy; (4) Metalinguistic feedback contains comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form; (5) Elicitation refers to teachers' utterance used to directly elicit the correct form from the student; (6) Repetition refers to the teacher's repetition, in isolation, of the student's erroneous utterance; (7) Multiple feedback refers to combinations of more than one type of feedback in one teacher turn.

2.3 Negative Feedback

Ellis (2009) holds that correcting learners' language is negative feedback. In Ellis' opinion, there are six types of corrective feedback: (1) Recast means the corrector incorporates the content words of the immediately preceding incorrect utterance and changes and corrects the utterance; (2) Repetition means the corrector repeats the learner utterance highlighting the error by means of emphatic stress; (3) Clarification request means the corrector indicates that he/she has not understood what the learner said; (4) Explicit correction means the corrector indicates an error has been committed, identifies the error and provides the correction; (5) Elicitation means the corrector repeats part of the learner utterance but not the erroneous part and uses rising intonation to signal the learner should complete it; (6) Paralinguistic signal means the corrector uses a gesture or facial expression to indicate that the learner has made an error.

Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) define corrective feedback as the inclusion of errors in learners' output to respond to a false statement, usually including: (1) indicating the existence of errors; (2) providing the correct target language form; (3) providing meta-linguistic information indicating the nature of the error, and any combination thereof.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Objectives

From the perspective of teachers' feedback, based on the videos of the 11th National Senior High School English Teaching Demonstration, this study aims to draw teachers' attention in feedback, and to offer some suggestions for teachers to give feedback effectively, so as to improve the quality of senior high school English lessons.

3.2 Research Subjects

Twenty-two teaching cases of English teachers of senior high school are regarded as research subjects, who participated in the 11th National Senior High School English Teaching Demonstration. In this study, their videos in the demonstration are collected as the data.

Table 1. Background of the 22 teachers

Teacher Number	Province	Grade	Topic	Lesson Type
T1	Xinjiang	Senior 1	How Life Began on the Earth	Reading Class
T2	Jiangxi	Senior 1	Travel Journal	Reading Class
T3	Guangdong	Senior 1	Great Buildings	Listening and Speaking Class
T4	Hebei	Senior 1	The Olympic Games	Reading Class
T5	Fujian	Senior 1	Friendship	Reading Class
T6	Beijing	Senior 1	Sea of Green	Reading Class
T7	Shaanxi	Senior 1	Wildlife Protection	Reading Class
T8	Yunnan	Senior 1	To be a Better Self	Listening and Speaking Class
T9	Shanghai	Senior 1	Painter With a Pulse	Reading Class
T10	Chongqing	Senior 1	A Trip on “The True North”	Reading Class
T11	Liaoning	Senior 1	Love You Forever	Reading Class
T12	Guizhou	Senior 1	The Internet and Telecommunications	Reading Class
T13	Hunan	Senior 1	Growing Pains	Reading Class
T14	Zhejiang	Senior 1		Reading Class
T15	Shanxi	Senior 2	The Renaissance	Reading Class
T16	Shandong	Senior 2	Waiting for Goldie	Reading Class
T17	Hainan	Senior 3	Breaking Records	Reading Class
T18	Inner Mongolia	Senior 2	Life in The Future	Reading Class
T19	Jilin	Senior 2	Time to Take E-sports More Seriously	Reading Class
T20	Tibet	Senior 1	First Aid for Burns	Reading Class
T21	Gansu	Senior 2	Making The News	Writing Class
T22	Jiangsu	Senior 2	The Old Man and The Sea	Reading Class

3.3 Research Methodology

The purpose of this research is to find out the basic types, characteristics and existing problems of teacher feedback in the classes of the twenty-two teachers in the teaching demonstration.

Therefore, this study designs observation sheet of senior high school English teachers' feedback to record the relevant data. After class observation and data collection, Office Excel is used to draw figures and tables to better perform the data analysis.

3.4 Research Procedure

This research firstly analyzes literature review on teacher feedback. And then it transcribes teacher feedback in teaching videos and designs observation sheets on the types, characteristics and problems of teacher feedback. After collecting the data, this study will use Office Excel 2010 to analyze the statistics and draw some tables and figures. At last, this research would conclude the types, characteristics and the existing problems in teachers'

feedback in senior high school and offer some suggestions to improve the quality of teacher feedback.

4. Data Analysis

After data collection, this part would analyze the data systematically from the types and characteristics of teacher feedback:

4.1 Feedback Types of Teacher Feedback

Teacher's feedback is of great importance in the teaching process, which can be divided into positive feedback and negative feedback. As for positive feedback, teachers usually use general praise, matter-of-fact praise, praise with comments, praise with repetition, and praise with further questioning. The negative feedback teachers used involves explicit correction, elicitation, clarification request and recast.

Table 2. The percentage of feedback types

Items Teacher Number	Feedback Types		Total
	Positive Feedback	Negative Feedback	
T1	101	10	111
T2	51	4	55
T3	59	11	70
T4	88	9	97
T5	60	4	64
T6	71	11	82
T7	80	6	86
T8	95	3	98
T9	85	18	103
T10	62	3	65
T11	41	12	53
T12	68	8	76
T13	114	13	127
T14	101	4	105
T15	85	10	95
T16	78	9	87
T17	52	4	56
T18	110	9	119
T19	76	9	85
T20	89	8	97
T21	61	2	63
T22	61	14	75
Total	1688	181	1869
Percentage	90.3%	9.7%	100%

From the Table 2, it is clear that positive feedback (90.3%) is the most common in the class. Positive feedback can strengthen students' self-confidence and motivation in English learning and promote the teaching process. The proportion of negative feedback accounts for 9.7%. Teachers have responsibilities to point out mistakes

directly or indirectly to students and appropriate negative feedback can let students discover their mistakes and correct them in time. However, teachers are less likely to use it which may not improve students' cognitive development.

Table 3. The percentage of multiple feedback

Teacher Number	Items	Feedback Types		Rate
		Multiple Feedback	Negative Feedback	
T1	6	10	60.0%	
T2	3	4	75.0%	
T3	4	11	36.4%	
T4	3	9	33.3%	
T5	1	4	25.0%	
T6	4	11	36.4%	
T7	2	6	33.3%	
T8	1	3	33.3%	
T9	6	18	33.3%	
T10	2	3	66.7%	
T11	6	12	50.0%	
T12	6	8	75.0%	
T13	10	13	76.9%	
T14	2	4	50.0%	
T15	5	10	50.0%	
T16	6	9	66.7%	
T17	3	4	75.0%	
T18	5	9	55.6%	
T19	2	9	22.2%	
T20	2	8	25.0%	
T21	1	2	50.0%	
T22	2	14	14.3%	
Average	82	181	45.3%	

In this article, multiple feedback refers to the combination of positive feedback and negative feedback which means teachers often give negative feedback after giving positive feedback. It is sometimes used by teachers to avoid hurting students' self-esteem caused by single negative feedback. The proportion of multiple feedback accounts for 45.3% when teachers give negative feedback, which means teachers often give negative feedback after giving positive feedback first. Sometimes, multiple feedback can not only protect students' psychological needs, but also give students more impressive feedback. So when correcting mistakes, teachers can try to use more multiple feedback in class.

4.2 Characteristics of Teacher Feedback

Table 4. The percentage of positive feedback

Teacher Number	Positive Feedback					Total
	General Praise	Matter-of-fact Praise	Praise With Comments	Praise With Repetition	Praise With Further Questioning	
T1	35	44	2	13	7	101
T2	14	18	1	15	3	51
T3	29	9	4	13	4	59
T4	18	50	2	13	5	88
T5	19	10	6	16	9	60
T6	31	20	3	12	5	71
T7	25	26	2	21	6	80
T8	20	28	11	18	18	95
T9	22	30	1	16	16	85
T10	20	22	3	14	3	62
T11	7	24	4	2	4	41
T12	14	20	3	13	18	68
T13	36	38	0	28	12	114
T14	26	34	4	26	11	101
T15	27	28	3	21	6	85
T16	9	27	6	22	14	78
T17	20	15	2	12	3	52
T18	28	41	1	28	12	110
T19	14	38	1	20	3	76
T20	26	28	1	28	6	89
T21	25	13	0	22	1	61
T22	11	20	1	19	10	61
Total	476	583	61	392	176	1688
Percentage	28.3%	34.5%	3.6%	23.2%	10.4%	100%

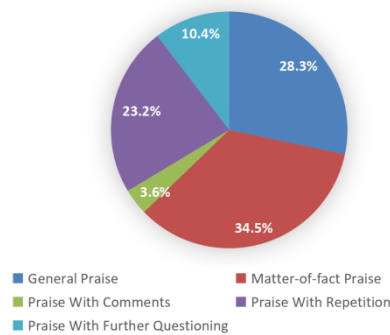


Figure 1. The percentage of positive feedback

According to the transcripts of the videos, five types of positive feedback are found. In this article, general praise refers specifically to teacher utterances that only contain positive terms like thanks, good, very good, excellent, well done, and the like. Matter-of-fact praise refers to teacher utterances including yes, right, okay, correct and the like. Praise with comments refers to teacher utterances involving comment on the content of students' answers such as good sentence, good phrases, and the like. Praise with repetition refers to teachers' repetition or synthesizing of students' correct answers. Praise with further questioning refers to teachers' further questioning based on students' previous answers.

From the Table 4 and Figure 1, we can see the proportion of matter-of-fact praise accounts for 34.5%, which is the highest among the five groups. So the teachers usually give students feedback by using "yes/right/ok". This kind of feedback can give students' confidence by confirming the utterance of students. The proportion of general praise accounts for 28.3%. This kind of positive feedback often refers to mechanically-used praise words, which will not have a significant positive influence on students. Therefore, sometimes the teachers will also repeat(28.1%) or further question (17.4%) or even comment (11%) on what students had said, which is more concrete than general praise and students will be more willing to answer questions and be more confident.

Table 5. The percentage of negative feedback

Items Teacher Number	Negative Feedback				Total
	Explicit correction	Elicitation	Clarification Request	Recast	
T1	1	1	0	8	10
T2	0	2	0	2	4
T3	0	5	2	4	11
T4	1	7	0	1	9
T5	0	3	0	1	4
T6	1	6	0	4	11
T7	1	4	0	1	6
T8	0	1	0	2	3
T9	4	3	1	10	18
T10	1	0	1	1	3
T11	6	2	2	2	12
T12	2	5	0	1	8
T13	3	6	2	2	13
T14	0	1	1	2	4
T15	3	2	3	2	10
T16	6	1	0	2	9
T17	2	0	0	2	4
T18	2	4	0	3	9
T19	1	6	2	0	9
T20	4	2	1	1	8
T21	0	1	1	0	2
T22	0	8	2	4	14
Total	38	70	18	55	181
Percentage	21.0%	38.7%	9.9%	30.4%	100%

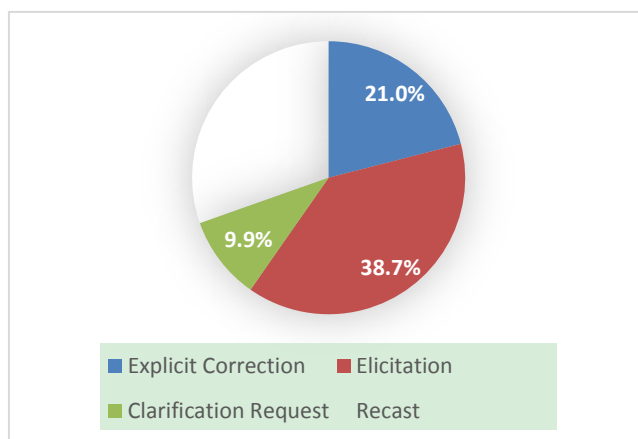


Figure 2. The percentage of negative feedback

From the Table 5 and Figure 2, we can see that the percentage of elicitation accounts for 38.7% which is the highest among the four types of negative feedback. Elicitation means that the teacher repeats part of the learner utterance but not the erroneous part so it is usually used to guide students to think more as well as maintain students' face.

Recast (30.4%) is also used frequently by the teachers, which means that the teacher repeats the students' answers to some extent, but skillfully corrects the small mistakes in the students' answers in the meantime.

Here is an example from Teacher 1 who uses elicitation and recast:

Teacher: How about para D?

Student 1: D (pause).

Teacher: The first sentence. (Elicitation, using rising intonation)

Student 1: Many middle of the years later of universe. (wrong words)

Teacher: Yes. Many millions of years later and how about the last one of universe? (Recast)

Student 1: Last one is about the finally.

Teacher: Yes. Finally. Very good. Thank you. Sit down please.

The next negative feedback is explicit correction (21.0%), which means that the teacher directly points out the students' mistakes. The teachers would tell the students by saying: "That's wrong. We should say...in English". Explicit correction can save some time, but it may lower students' confidence and their interest in engaging in classroom learning and interaction.

The last one is clarification request (9.9%), which refers to that when the students are making some mistakes, such as pronunciation or grammar, the teachers will repeat students' wrong utterance and sometimes give them right answers together to request them to choose or clarify their answers again. This feedback can provide students an opportunity to rethink and reflect on their original answers.

Here is an example from Teacher 18 who uses clarification request and recast:

Student 1: Nervous and uncertain. (wrong pronunciation)

Teacher: Nervous and? (Clarification request)

Student 1: Uncertain (wrong pronunciation).

Teacher: Uncertain. (Recast)

Student 1: Uncertain.

Teacher: Yes. So we can use one word. That is uncertain (speak slowly). Very good

To sum up, teacher feedback including positive feedback or negative feedback or multiple feedback can facilitate learners' learning to some extent. Therefore, teachers should use positive and negative feedback flexibly to encourage students and facilitate their language learning. The main problems of teacher's classroom feedback:

students' utterance is often interrupted by teachers; the feedback is not specific; matter-of-fact and simple praise appear too many times; the positive feedback is short of praise focused on the meaning of students' language like praise with comment.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Research Findings

This research investigated 22 teachers' feedback in senior high school based on national high-quality senior high English classroom teaching cases. On the basis of classroom observation and data analysis, this study examined types and characteristics of teacher feedback, intending to find out the existing problems of feedback in senior high school English teachers. The existing problems in teachers' feedback are: general feedback including matter-of-fact praise and general praise is often given by teachers; students are often interrupted by teacher feedback; the teacher feedback focuses more on forms of student language than on meanings of interaction between teachers and students. The research results show that teachers prefer to use matter-of-fact praise in positive feedback and elicitation in negative feedback. So it is suggested to give students enough time to think and organize the answers after posing a question, offer them more concrete feedback and try to use more logical question chains to inspire students to think more. Sometimes teachers need to be more patient and decide whether to interrupt them or not based on the teaching objectives. For example, if the class focuses on speaking fluency, teachers may better give feedback after students' utterance. The class should be student-centered so teachers should pay more attention to the students' learning should let students think about and discuss those questions. Besides, teachers need to correct students more effectively. If students' answers are wrong, teachers should use some negative feedback like explicit correction, elicitation and recast rather than neglecting them all the time just to maintain students' confidence.

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations

This research only selects twenty-two senior high teachers' teaching cases as subjects and only types and characteristics of teacher feedback are studied, which is not so comprehensive. There are also some other perspectives about teacher feedback can be further analyzed, such as the time between student utterance and teacher feedback and the variety of the content of teacher feedback and interview some students' thoughts about their ideal feedback. In addition, whether corrective feedback is effective needs to solve these questions: (1) What kind of mistakes to correct; (2) who will correct it; (3) What kind of corrective feedback is most effective; (4) What is the best time to correct feedback? Immediate or delayed correction? However, there is no unified solution to these problems. Ellis (2009) suggested that teachers should base themselves on the classroom and seek for methods suitable for their students through empirical research data. Nunan (1991) said that much of the feedback provided by teachers often seems to be rather automatic so its ultimate effect on the learners is doubtful. So teachers need to become a researcher as well so as to use feedback more effectively to promote learners' learning.

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