

# A Study of Middle School English Teachers' Classroom Feedback Discourse: Taking the Classroom Teaching Videos of Five Outstanding English Teachers as Examples

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**Abstract:** In this paper, the author selected the videos of five outstanding teachers from the 13th National Junior High School English Lesson Observation Contest and conducted a quantitative analysis of the teachers' feedback in their classroom discourse through classroom observation. The results of the study showed that the outstanding English teachers tended to use positive feedback; they tended to use “praise + repetition” and “praise + repetition” when giving positive feedback; and they tended to use guided responses and other students' responses when giving negative feedback. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide a reference for English teachers to use classroom feedback effectively.

**Keywords:** Outstanding English Teacher; Classroom Feedback; Positive Feedback; Negative Feedback

## 1. Introduction

As pointed out in the English Curriculum Standards for compulsory Education (2022-year Edition), classroom teaching is a unified activity between teachers' teaching and students' learning, a process of teacher-student interaction, positive interaction and common development. Teacher-student interaction in classroom teaching can promote learners' language acquisition. Among them, teachers' classroom feedback, as an important part of teacher-student interaction, is both a part of students' language input and can promote students' language output.

Appropriate classroom feedback can stimulate students' learning motivation, improve their self-confidence and help them apply their knowledge in a rational way (Chen & Wang, 2017). Currently, scholars at home and abroad have done a lot of research on classroom feedback, and these research results provide a reliable theoretical basis for the reform of basic English teaching in China. Based on the teaching videos of five outstanding junior high school English teachers, this paper further analyzes the selection and handling of classroom feedback by the five outstanding teachers, hoping to optimize English teachers' classroom feedback and improve the efficiency of English classroom teaching.

## 2. Research objectives

In order to understand the use of English teachers' classroom feedback, the author selected the videos of five outstanding teachers from the 13th National Middle School English Lesson Observation Contest and observed their classes. The teachers of these five lessons were from Jiangsu, Fujian, Shandong, Zhejiang, and Jilin provinces, and all of them had at least five years of teaching experience and had won many awards. Through transcribing the classroom discourse of the five lessons, the author calculated all the classroom feedback in the five teachers' classroom discourse, aiming to answer the following three questions: Firstly, what are the types of classroom feedback of junior high school English teachers? Secondly, what is the percentage of each type of feedback?

## 3. The overall situation of teachers' classroom feedback

Regarding the classification of teachers' feedback discourse, different scholars have given different classifications from different perspectives based on their own research purposes. This study classifies teachers' feedback discourse into positive verbal feedback and negative verbal feedback according to their functions. In order to understand the overall situation of the classroom feedback of junior high school outstanding English teachers, the author first conducted quantitative statistics on the data related to the classroom feedback statements obtained from the transcribed corpus, and the specific results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 the overall situation of the five teachers' classroom feedback

Teacher	Positive Verbal Feedback		Negative Verbal Feedback		Total
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number

T1	35	76.09	11	23.91	46
T2	32	68.09	15	31.91	47
T3	26	74.29	9	25.71	35
T4	27	81.82	6	18.18	33
T5	25	78.13	7	21.88	32
Average	27	75.68	10	24.32	39

From Table 1, we can see that the average of the five junior high school English teachers' total classroom feedback was 52 times, among which the average of positive feedback was 41.6 times, accounting for 79.8%; negative feedback was 10.4 times, accounting for 20.2%. This shows that the frequency of positive feedback is significantly higher than that of negative feedback in the five teachers' classrooms. The frequency of positive feedback was significantly higher than that of negative feedback. This shows that compared with the negative feedback, junior high school English teachers tend to use positive feedback more often in their teaching. It is well known that positive emotional states of learners can promote learning. Therefore, compared with negative feedback, positive feedback helps learners to build up their self-confidence, reduce their anxiety in learning English, and develop their motivation to learn English. Therefore, compared with negative feedback, positive feedback helps learners build up self-confidence, reduce their anxiety in learning English, and develop their motivation to learn English, thus promoting better learning. Therefore, it is worthwhile for other teachers to learn from these five outstanding junior high school English teachers who use more positive feedback in their classrooms.

#### 4. Teachers' use of positive feedback in classroom

The author also quantified the three types of positive feedback collected, and found that the five junior high school English teachers used the following three types of positive feedback in descending order: praise + repetition (85 times; 58.62%), praise + review (52 times; 35.86%), and simple praise (8 times; 5.52%). This shows that they prefer to use the combination of praise + repetition and praise + review as positive feedback compared to simple praise.

Although praise is considered an effective way to reinforce good performance, if teachers simply give students simple praise without offering specific feedback, it can lead to a decrease in the effectiveness of positive feedback. Here is one example of the positive feedback collected by the author:

T: Have you all finished your work?

S: Yes.

T: OK, great job!

Here, "OK, great job!" is a simple praise in the context of positive feedback. There is no doubt that simple praise in the junior English classroom can help to improve the effectiveness of task implementation to a certain extent. However, if teachers simply give simple praise to students without providing specific feedback, this can lead to a reduction in the effectiveness of the feedback. Therefore, in order to avoid such problems and improve the quality of feedback, the five teachers used more "praise + repeat" and "praise + review" for students' responses. To avoid such problems and to improve the quality of feedback, the five teachers used more positive feedback in the form of "Praise + Repeat" and "Praise + Review". For an example:

T: What can you see from the video?

S: I see five kind of emotions from the video, they are anger, fear, joy, terror and sadness.

T: Yes, great! You really have a good memory.

In this example, the teacher first praised the student with a simple "Yes, great!" and then praised the student's answer with "You really have a good memory". This type of feedback not only increases the motivation of students who participate in classroom interactions, but also motivates other students to join in the classroom activities.

#### 5. Teachers' use of negative feedback in classroom

Similarly, the author quantified the three types of negative feedback, and found that the five teachers used negative feedback in descending order of total frequency: guiding students to correct their own mistakes (32 times; 66.67%), letting other students answer (9 times; 18.75%), and direct negation (7 times; 14.58%). This shows that among the three types of negative feedback, these five teachers preferred to guide students to correct their own mistakes. In fact, when students answer a question incorrectly, the use of guiding students to self-correct or letting other students to answer is a better way to exercise their independent thinking skills and thus promote meaningful learning. For example:

T: What other qualities does he have?

S: Emm...

T: That's OK, so could you please read the first sentence in paragraph six?

S: Through his hard work, he finally achieved his dream.

T: Yes, so we can say he is?

S: He is hard-working.

T: Well done! Thank you.

In this example, the teacher used "That's OK, so could you please read the first sentence in paragraph six?" to guide students to find the key information for the question. This kind of feedback is to guide students to self-correct. In this way, the teacher does not give students the correct answer directly, but rather guides them to find the answer themselves by giving them key information. This type of feedback helps students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the content. Here is another example:

T: How many competitors were there when Mr. Yang was selected to attend pilot training?

S1: 14.

T: 14 competitors? Do you agree with him and why? How about you?

S2: There were 13 competitors because there were 14 pilots altogether including Yang Liwei.

In this example, S1 did not give the correct answer to the teacher's question, but instead of correcting the mistake, the teacher let S2 continue to answer and explain the reason, which is a negative feedback method of letting other students answer. This kind of feedback can make more students participate in the classroom activities, thus creating a good classroom atmosphere. It increases the chance of interaction among students and reduces students' anxiety when they answer incorrectly.

## 6. Conclusion

By analyzing the videos of the five outstanding English teachers, the author found that: to maximize the effect of positive feedback in the classroom, English teachers should try to avoid using simple praise and instead use more positive feedback in the form of praise + repetition and praise + review. When students answer questions incorrectly, teachers should provide negative feedback by guiding students to self-correct. This provided students with more opportunities for independent thinking and classroom interaction, and realized the concept of "student-centered" teaching.

Teachers' classroom feedback plays an important role in students' English learning. It can help students to correct errors in the target language, improve their motivation and reduce their anxiety. Based on the findings of this study and related theories, the author gives the following suggestions for junior high school English teachers: Firstly, pay attention to classroom feedback, use more positive feedback as well as appropriate negative feedback; Secondly, promote students' output and classroom interaction by using more positive feedback plus elicitation and using a variety of negative feedback appropriately and flexibly; Thirdly, be able to identify errors in students' discourse and decide whether to correct them according to the goals of the instruction or activity; Last but not least, use a variety of language and specificity in teacher feedback. The language used for teacher feedback should be varied and specific. In conclusion, it is hoped that these findings will provide English teachers with useful lessons for their classroom teaching to help them give feedback to their students in a rational and efficient way.

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