

Investigating Types and Features of Teacher Feedback in High School English Class

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Abstract: Teacher-verbal feedback represents a significant instructional behavior for students progress. The present study investigates the types and features of the classroom feedback in the high school English classroom and a combination of video-observation and questionnaire approach was applied to systematically identify the frequently-used types and investigate features of teacher feedback in the six public high-quality demonstration classes. The results show that 15 feedback types and four frequently applied types, namely Positive Feedback, Elicitation and Repetition in single type, and positive Feedback & Repetition in mixed feedback. Moreover, the study also reveals that frequency of specific feedback types is different from the two sub-categories and the usage of feedback is divergent among teachers. The present study may provide insightful implication for teachers profession development and contributes to improve their feedback during teaching.

Keywords: Teacher feedback; Feedback type; Feedback features

1. Introduction

Discourse interaction among teacher and students stands for a significant indicator of the quality in second language teaching classroom. The fundamental pattern of classroom interaction “I-R-F” model demonstrating the moves of initiation, student response and teacher feedback, plays an instrumental role in classroom instruction. Among many factors contributing to learning outcomes, teacher feedback represents the most effective tools enhancing student learning performance and achievement, usually the immediate feedback toward response from teacher (Hattie 2007). Students can improve their outcomes by gaining a deeper understanding of their own strengths and weakness in learning through instructors’ feedback. Therefore, a sizable body of research has devoted to explore types and characteristics of teacher feedback. Lyster and Ranta (1997) proposed six types of negative feedback. Based on their classification, Chinese scholars further pointed out another two types and introduced mixed feedback (combination of two or more single feedback) in Chinese English classroom context based on the above classification. Previous study in this field had been primarily descriptive, focusing on the existence of feedback in different conversational settings, especially in L2 English teaching context (Mackey & Gass 2006). The panel of these study revealed that feedback types are significantly diverse for students at different study phrases and in divergent educational backgrounds (Van den Bergh et al. 2012). In spite of much recent study theorize about teacher provision of feedback, relatively fewer studies look at the dynamic relationships between teacher feedback practices in high school education settings. From this perspective, the current study intends to identify the types of teacher’s feedback and to investigate the characteristics of teacher’s feedback in the teacher-student communicative interaction for L2 education.

2. Research Method

2.1 Research Questions

Based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, the naturalistic inquiry and questionnaire were used to investigate the feedback types and features of communicative interaction in the high quality high school classes.

The goal of this investigation is to answer the following two research questions:

- (1) What are the frequently-used feedback in high school English class?
- (2) What are the characteristics of the feedback in high school English class?

2.2. Data Collection

The study randomly selects 6 video recordings of the extraordinary high school English demonstration classes that awarded prize in

the 11th National English Teaching Skills Competition as the samples. Video recordings allow a more detailed and systematic investigation of complex educational situations (Blikstad-Balas, 2017), thus can capture the specific interactive process in the practical teaching context. All these winning classes are well-organized and elaborately designed to demonstrate the teaching skills and competence of the contestants from the whole nation thus their teaching performance represents the first-class teaching standard and quality in China. The average length of each class is about 35 minutes. The quantitative approach of questionnaire is adopted as a complementary device to minimize the problematic contingency or one-sidedness resulting from the relative small recording samples. 84 students from 2 senior high school students in a county of Shaanxi province participated in the quantitation phase of the research, where they were asked to take a questionnaire.

3. Results and Discussion

This section examined types of feedback applied in class. Through the observation of the six 6 demonstration classes, 7 feedback and 8 mixed feedback were identified. The uneven distribution of the feedback types were also revealed in senior high school classroom.

3.1 Types of Teacher Feedback

Through the manual annotation of the transnational version for the six classroom recordings, this study identified 7 types of single feedback and 8 types of mixed feedback. Table 1 presents the frequency and ratio for different types of teacher feedback in the six classes. Statistical data in the two sub-categories: single feedback and mixed feedback data mentioned by six teacher is demonstrated.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Type and Frequency of Teacher Feedback

	Types	Frequency		Ratio	
Single Feedback	Positive Feedback	58	148	19.93%	50.9%
	Explicit Correction	7		2.41%	
	Elicitation	32		10.20%	
	Metalinguistic Feedback	13		4.47%	
	Repetition	36		12.37%	
	Recast	1		0.34%	
	Extension	1		0.34%	
Mixed Feedback	Positive Feedback & Recast	6	143	2.06%	49.1%
	Positive Feedback & Repetition	76		26.17%	
	Positive Feedback & Metalinguistic Feedback	4		1.37%	
	Positive Feedback & Evaluation	10		3.44%	
	Repetition & Metalinguistic Feedback	2		0.69%	
	Repetition & Extension	19		6.53%	
	Repetition & Evaluation	9		3.09%	
	Repetition & Clarification Request	17		5.84%	
Total		291		100	

As Table 1 depicts, the study revealed 291 teacher feedback in total. Among all the feedback given by the distinguished teachers, number of occurrences that single feedback occurs reaches 148, accounting for 50.9%, and mixed feedback was 143 times, accounting for 49.1%. Table 1 summarizes a total of 7 types of teacher feedback in the class of single feedback. Positive Feedback, Elicitation and Repetition are three frequently-occurred types among the category of single feedback. The findings shows an even distribution of mixed feedback and single feedback. Among all types of mixed feedback, Positive Feedback & Repetition are extremely frequently applied, accounting 53.1% in the sub-category mixed feedback, a quarter in all feedback. The statistical comparison between the two sub-categories illustrates no significant difference in employing these two categories of feedback in the senior high school class. Therefore, both single feedback and mixed feedback are frequently-applied for the excellent teachers in the class communicative interaction.

3.2 Characteristics of Teacher Feedback

To respond the second research question, both class observation and questionnaire are used to analyze the features of teacher

feedback. Two striking characteristic patterns are identified in this study.

3.2.1 Frequency of Specific and Sub-category Feedback

The frequency characteristics of specific types of feedback is different from the frequency of two sub-categories. All types of teacher feedback are unevenly distributed while the distribution of single feedback and mixed feedback is similar in the high school English classes.

3.2.2 Feedback among Teachers

The second significant feature is the divergent usage of feedback among different teachers. The result show that the frequency of all feedback varies greatly among teachers ($M=48.5$, $SD<14.60$). The feedback that the teacher applied in class 6 amounts to 60 while in class 3 only 25 times were observed in the class. In addition to the general frequency, the specific types of feedback are also characterized by significant differences, the more frequent and widely used feedback Positive Feedback & Repetition has been calculated to indicate a remarkable difference among all high school teachers.

To investigate the effectiveness of teacher feedback, electronic questionnaires were sent to 100 senior high school students and 84 valid questionnaires were used in the data analysis. The first 10 questions aim to test the students' attitude towards teacher feedback. The results indicate that most students consider teacher feedback an effective teaching instrument. 14 questions are designed to investigate students' preference for different teacher's feedback and results indicates complex mixed feedback are much welcome among high school students.

4. Conclusion

Overall, this research investigates the commonly-applied types of feedback and features of teacher-student communicative interaction in the high quality high school classes based on a combination of classroom recording observation and questionnaire approach. The results of the systematic analysis of six demonstration classes has reported 15 types teacher feedback and four types that occur frequently among all types. In addition, the study also contributed to two striking features of teacher feedback in high school English class through class observation and questionnaire. One factor is that the frequency characteristics of specific types of feedback is different from the frequency of two sub-categories. The divergent usage of feedback among different teachers serves as the second significant characteristics. The findings can be considered as the multiple feedback choices are closely related to teachers' intentions, teaching style, teaching and content as well as their teaching objects. The above-mentioned results indicates that to understand the common types and characteristics of teacher feedback is more conducive to language acquisition and provide implications for high school English teachers to improve their usage of some particular feedback in an attempt to improve the quality in the teaching practices. In fact, the feedback in high school English class tends to be simple and rigid, which is insufficient as the source of students' language input. In addition, classroom observation also indicates the quality of the teacher feedback language varies considerably, some problems such as ungrammatical sentences, inexpressive words, and the features of non-standard English also occurs frequently in teacher's feedback. Moreover, although high school English teachers are good at using a variety of feedback in class, it lacked flexibility. Therefore, much remains to be done in order to facilitate them to give more effective and appropriate feedback to students.

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