The Survey on Teachers' Verbal Feedback on Students' Response in Senior High School

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Abstract

Teachers' verbal feedback as part of classroom discourse plays an important role in the development of students. This paper explores the verbal feedback utilized by a group of senior high school teachers. Data was collected through a questionnaire finished by students. The analysis of the data revealed that there were variations in the feedback given among the teachers: some types of feedback were used more frequently than others. The author hopes that the results will offer implications and suggestions for teachers to give verbal feedback in the classroom.

Keywords: senior high school, verbal feedback, classroom discourse

1. Introduction

Teachers' verbal feedback is an essential part of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. Students can get information about their performance from the feedback, which to a certain extent enhances students' motivation and improves teaching efficiency. However, if the feedback is inappropriate, it will not only undermine classroom interaction but also hinder students' development. Thus, the focus of the paper is to study the teachers' verbal feedback from selected school in China.

2. Literature Review

Feedback was first proposed as the last step in the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model developed by Sinclair and Coulthard in 1975. Although the IRF model has been commonly used, drawbacks of its application have been discussed and one of its drawbacks is that it needs adaptation to truly represent classroom discourse structures. Schartel (2012) believed that feedback can be in the form of correction, repetition, confirmation, etc. Hattie (2007) proposed that feedback was the information provided by the intermediary about the learners' performance, which could be parents, teachers, or peers. In this paper, only teachers' feedback is involved.

Feedback was further divided into different aspects according to different experts. Vigil and Oller (1976) classified feedback into positive feedback and negative feedback. The former refers to the positive responses that teachers give to students such as praising, while the latter means teachers' negative responses to students' incorrect answers. Thus, negative feedback is also called corrective feedback, and it can be further categorized into explicit correction, elicitation, repetition, recasts, requests for clarification and metalinguistic feedback according to Lyster and Ranta (1997). Many experts hold the view that teachers are supposed to give positive feedback so as to lower students' affective filter. This study is conducted based on the classification proposed by Lyster and Ranta.

Much research on feedback in the classroom setting has been conducted. Swinson and Knight (2007) focused on secondary pupils with challenging behaviour to find out the relationship between those pupils' behaviour and teachers' verbal feedback. Noorizah and Idris (2010) explored the verbal feedback utilized by a group of primary

school teacher through classroom observation. Blair and Curtis (2013) undertook a questionnaire to find out the feedback that undergraduate students want so as to offer a range of strategies for improving feedback practices. Bustos and Mora (2020) used questionnaire to identify students' perception of verbal corrective feedback given by teachers in Communicative Approach English courses from an EFL teaching program at a private university. What can be found is that most studies focus on students in the university and seldom investigate the feedback teachers give in the classroom. As a result, this paper is designed to answer the following question: What types of verbal feedback are employed by the teachers in senior high school?

3. Research Design

3.1 Method

Questionnaire was used in this study to figure out the research question, which contains three different situations to investigate how teachers give verbal feedback: When students answer correctly; when students make mistakes; and when students can't answer questions. Given that teachers may use different kinds of verbal feedback, multiple choice items are designed to know the verbal feedback teachers use in the three different situations respectively, so each item has more than one answer.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects for this study are 55 students randomly chosen from the author's teaching practice school in China. They have been taught by different English teachers for a long time, so they can help to investigate teachers' verbal feedback from a more objective perspective. Prior to conducting the research project, permission was attained from the principal of the school.

4. Results of the Questionnaire

The findings and discussion in this study are based on the research question. This study attempts to investigate the types of verbal feedback employed by a group of senior high school teachers. Table 1 below summarizes the types and frequency of verbal feedback used by teachers in their classrooms when students answer correctly. Table 2 and Table 3 below show types and frequency of verbal feedback used by teachers when students make mistakes and when students don't know answers respectively.

Table 1. Feedback for students who answer correctly

Types of feedback	Total	%
Praise	45	82
Giving extra information	5	9
Asking another question	8	14

What can be seen from the Table 1 is that there are three different types of verbal feedback when students' answers are right and the commonly used one is to praise students. According to the data, 45 students from different classes agree that their teachers praise them when they answer correctly. Most teachers use it perhaps because it is the most convenient and time-saving way to give feedback. Besides, sometimes teachers use other verbal feedback, but only 9% teachers choose to give extra information and 14% teachers choose to ask another question.

Table 2. Feedback for students who make mistakes

Types of feedback	Total	%
Explicit correction	41	75
Inviting other students to answer	20	36
Elicitation	32	58
Repetition	35	64
Requests for clarification	28	51
Metalinguistic feedback	12	22
Recasts	6	11
Criticizing	15	27

The data in Table 2 reveals that different forms of corrective feedback are provided by the teachers. Teachers use more than one way to give verbal feedback when students make mistakes, but the widely used way is to give explicit correction. The results, presented in Table 2, are the following. 75% teachers tend to correct mistakes directly, which is direct as well as time-saving. In order to check other students at the same time, 36% teachers choose to invite other students as an indirect feedback to the students who make mistakes. About 58% teachers guide students to the right answers and 22% teachers give metalinguistic feedback. 64% teachers use repetition, and 51% teachers use a rising tone to let students notice mistakes respectively. Only 11% teachers choose to reorganize students' answers with correct form. It can be seen that nearly 27% teachers criticize students when they don't answer correctly, which will hinder the development of students to some extent because students are more willing to be encouraged at that moment.

Table 3. Feedback for students who don't know answers

Types of feedback	Total	%
Encouraging	7	13
Inviting other students to answer	38	69
Elicitation	32	58
Giving answers directly	18	33
Criticizing	11	20

The data shows that the commonly used way to give feedback when students don't know answers is to invite other students to answer questions. 38 students acknowledged that their teachers have used it when they don't know answers. Except for that, elicitation is another popular way for teachers to give verbal feedback. More than half of teachers use it to simplify questions or guide students to answer questions step by step. 13% teachers encourage students when they have difficulties in dealing with questions, compared with 20% teachers criticize students. About 33% teachers directly give answers to students to save time.

5. Conclusion

Teachers' verbal feedback is an effective instructional component in the classroom, which has emerged as an important tool to facilitate the learning process. The objective of this paper is to investigate teachers' verbal feedback in senior high school.

The findings reveal that teachers give different verbal feedback when facing different situations. The commonly used verbal feedback for students who answer correctly is to praise, which can be seen as the most convenient and time-saving way. As for students who make mistakes, there are many ways to give verbal feedback, and explicit correction proves to be the widely used way. When students have difficulty in answering questions, most teachers choose to invite other students to reply. What can be concluded from the three different situations is that teachers tend to choose verbal feedback that is time-saving because of the limited time in each class. It should be noted that some teachers criticize students when they make mistakes or have no idea about answers, but for the development of students, their feelings should be taken into consideration so that this kind of verbal feedback ought to be eliminated.

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