An Analysis of the In-Class Oral Feedback Provided by the Teachers of Turkish as a Foreign Language

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An Analysis of the In-Class Oral Feedback Provided by the Teachers of Turkish as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Feedback can be defined as the act of providing information to the student regarding their behavior throughout the learning process as well as how much progress has been achieved as a result of such behavior. In other words, it is the communicative process that explains how successful or unsuccessful a student is at a given topic, by providing them with the opportunity of self-assessment and correction. The aim of this study is to specify the in-class oral feedback elements provided by the teachers of Turkish as a Foreign Language, along with the analysis of these feedback types and offering suggestions to those who work in the field. Employing the specific case study method among the existing qualitative research methods, this study involves the 4-week observation of the courses given by the instructors of Turkish as a Foreign Language at Istanbul University Language Center at A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1 levels. The oral feedback provided by the instructors throughout the observation sessions has been noted down and compiled. These feedback items were then analyzed in accordance with Schimmel’s feedback classification (1988). Accordingly, these feedback items were classified in four groups as confirmation feedback, correct response feedback, explanatory feedback and bug-related feedback. The results of the study have shown that the instructors preferred mostly the confirmation feedback and the correct response feedback, usually used the confirmation feedback and correct response feedback in combination. On the other hand, the frequency of explanatory feedback decreased as the students’ language competence level increased, and the least preferred feedback type was found to be the bug-related feedback.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language, feedback types, oral feedback.

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INTRODUCTION

Feedback can be defined as the act of providing information to the student regarding their behavior throughout the learning process as well as how much progress has been achieved as a result of such behavior. In other words, it is the communicative process that explains how successful or unsuccessful a student is at a given topic, by providing them with the opportunity of self-assessment and correction. There are various definitions of feedback in academic literature. For instance, Peker defines the notion of feedback as "a communicative process providing information about whether a specific human behavior is right or wrong as well as offering us the opportunity of correcting our mistakes and improving our performance (1992: 35). According to Cüceloğlu, feedback is "the reply sent by the target, in response to the message sent by the source" (2013: 71). On the other hand, Slavin defines feedback as "the information an individual gets in relation to their actions or efforts" (2014: 447).

Feedback is the information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way (Ramaprasad, 1983: 4). Feedback provides pupils with information about their responses to learning tasks (Narciss & Huth, 2006). According to Narciss (2012: 1285) feedback is all post-response information which informs the learner on his/her actual state of learning or performance in order to regulate the further process of learning. This information can be provided by external sources of information (i.e., teachers, peers, parents, computer-based trainings), and by internal sources of information (i.e., information perceivable by the learner while task processing). Feedback is information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. A teacher or parent can provide corrective information, a peer can provide an alternative strategy, a book can provide information to clarify ideas, a parent can provide encouragement, and a learner can look up the answer to evaluate the correctness of a response. Feedback thus is a "consequence" of performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007:81).

Bloom mentions giving clues, participation, reinforcement and feedback and correction as four fundamental elements of improving service quality of a teaching process, and considers these elements to be the pillars of achieving educational quality (1979: 10-11). To be able to decide whether s/he should maintain or change a certain type of behavior, it is of utmost importance for a student to realize his/her own learning process and to know whether his/her response was correct, wrong, lacking or perfect. Feedback is considered one of the most powerful factors influencing learning in various instructional contexts (Hattie & Gan, 2011: 249). According to Narciss (2013: 14), feedback can affect the learning process at various levels, and can therefore have numerous different functions. It can for example acknowledge, confirm, or reinforce correct responses or high quality learning outcomes, and
in doing so promote the acquisition of the knowledge and cognitive operations necessary for accomplishing learning tasks.

Informing a student about the outcomes of a specific behavior of his/hers is essential; however, statements that can have an adverse or negative effect on the student's psychology or demotivate him/her should be avoided. In other words, the feedback provided by the teacher should not only be informative; it should also be guiding, motivating, encouraging and reinforcing. The feedbacks that comply with the cognitive and affective characteristics of a student not only facilitate the establishment of good communication between the student and the teacher, but also motivate the learner towards the lesson and the learning objective. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007:86) effective feedback must answer three major questions asked by a teacher and/or by a student: Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?). The answers to these questions enhance learning when there is a discrepancy between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood. It can increase effort, motivation, or engagement to reduce this discrepancy, and/or it can increase cue searching and task processes that lead to understanding.

According to Brookhart (2008:9) feedback can be very powerful if done well. Good feedback gives students information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next—the cognitive factor. Good feedback contains information that a student can use, which means that the student has to be able to hear and understand it. Students can’t hear something that’s beyond their comprehension; nor can they hear something if they are not listening or are feeling like it would be useless to listen. Good feedback should be part of a classroom assessment environment in which students see constructive criticism as a good thing and understand that learning cannot occur without practice. If part of the classroom culture is to always “get things right,” then if something needs improvement, it’s “wrong.” If, instead, the classroom culture values finding and using suggestions for improvement, students will be able to use feedback, plan and execute steps for improvement.

When chosen in accordance with the mental and psychological development level of the student and the nature of the topic to be learned, as well as how and when it is presented to the student, feedback plays a key role on learning and motivation. According to Nicole and Macfarlane-Dick (2006:205), good feedback practice provides the following to the learning environment:

1. helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);

2. facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;

3. delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
4. encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
5. encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
6. provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching.

There are various methods to categorize in-class oral feedback types. For instance, Tunstall and Gipps classify feedback types in two groups as evaluative feedback and descriptive feedback (1996). Evaluative feedback can be defined as the approval or disapproval of a student's response. Descriptive feedback, on the other hand, informs the student about his/her progress and guides the student accordingly. Both of these feedback types can be positive or negative. Tunstall and Gipps categorize feedback types as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Typology of teacher feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Feedback</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm expression of feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive non-verbal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Feedback</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprimands; negative generalizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative non-verbal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the time when feedback is provided, feedback types can be categorized as concurrent feedback and delayed feedback (Shute, 2008; Kangalgil & Demirhan, 2009; Kleij et al., 2011). Concurrent feedback is the feedback provided to the student instantaneously, right after the student has accomplished the learning task. Delayed feedback, on the other hand, is provided after a certain amount of time has passed upon the completion of the learning task. Concurrent and immediate feedback is especially effective in foreign language learning classes, as the student may not be able to remember his/her mistakes, responses or statements after a certain while.

The feedback classification method by Schimmel (1988) has been utilized for the analysis of the data within this study. Schimmel classified in four groups as confirmation feedback, correct...
response feedback, explanatory feedback and bug-related feedback. Confirmation feedback specifies whether a student's response is correct or not. In this type of feedback, students are offered the correct feedback whether the student provided a correct or incorrect answer. The teacher does not provide any explanation. Instead, the teacher only makes feedback statements to inform the student about whether his/her response is correct or not, such as “correct, wrong, yes, no, keep on”. Correct response feedback is usually accompanied by confirmation feedback. For instance, following an incorrect response of student, the teacher makes a statement such as “No, that's incorrect. Here is the correct version…”, Such a statement will involve both confirmation and correct response feedback. Explanatory feedback is the feedback type in which the teacher corrects a student's response, makes reminders about the topic and sometimes summarizes the topic briefly. In explanatory feedback, the teacher supplies certain guiding for helping the student's thinking move towards the desired answer. Bug-related feedback, on the other hand, is the feedback type in which the teacher provides explanations by detecting the source of a mistake that a student makes systematically due to misunderstanding the topic.

**Purpose of the Study**

When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that the feedback provided in accordance with the student’s mental and psychological development level contributes to academic success and fortifies the relationship between the student and the teacher (Brookhart, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kleijj, at al., 2011; Narciss, 2012; Nicol, & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Sadler, 1989). Therefore, teachers are expected to provide effective feedback to their students. The aims of this study are to determine the oral feedback items utilized by the teachers of Turkish as a Foreign Language during the class, to analyze the typology of such feedback and to make suggestions to the teachers working in this field. Schimmel’s feedback classification method (1988) has been appointed for the categorization of the feedback types. The feedback types preferred by the teachers at specific language levels have been specified, and these feedback types have been analyzed in accordance to their functionality.

**Method**

**Research Model**

Among the existing qualitative research methods, the specific case study method has been employed within this study. The case study method bases itself on the questions “how?” and “why?”, and enables the researcher to thoroughly analyze a certain case or a phenomenon that the researcher cannot comprehend or control (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011:277). The reason behind adopting such a method is that the specific case study method allows for a thorough analysis of a certain case by
utilizing various data collection tools and facilitates the process of answering questions such as “what?”, “how?” and “why?”.

**Sampling**

The sampling of this study consists of five language instructors who teach Turkish as a Foreign Language at A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1 levels in Istanbul University Language Center. The information pertaining to the instructors involved in this study are given in the table below.

**Table 2. Features of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Graduate program</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teaching Turkish as a foreign language (MA)</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teaching Turkish as a foreign language (MA)</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Turkish language education (BA)</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Turkish language education (MA)</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Turkish language and literature (MA)</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in the table above, the instructors involved in the study have an experience of teaching for at least five years. Four of the instructors have a graduate degree of Turkish language, whereas one of them has an undergraduate degree in the same field. All of the instructors are native speakers of Turkish, and the number of students in the classes involved in the study ranges from 18 to 22.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

To collect the data of this study, the oral feedback items employed by the instructors have been recorded and compiled during the observation sessions conducted in four weeks. The classes of the participating instructors, who teach Turkish as a Foreign Language at Istanbul University Language Center have been audited for one hour per week. Subsequently, the recorded and compiled feedback data has been evaluated in accordance with the feedback classification method by Schimmel (1988). To achieve consistency, the observed feedback types have been separately classified by each researcher, and the results have been compared. The feedback types preferred by the teachers at specific language levels have been specified, and these feedback types have been analyzed in accordance to their functionality.
Findings

Based on the data obtained from the observation sessions conducted for four hours (four weeks – one hour per week) for each of the five instructors of Turkish as a Foreign Language who teach at A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1 levels, the oral feedback items used by the participant instructors have been classified as follows:

Table 3. The Classification of the Oral Feedback Items Used by the Participating Instructors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Confirmation feedback</th>
<th>Correct feedback</th>
<th>Explanatory feedback</th>
<th>Bug-related feedback</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in Table 3, the instructors preferred to utilize confirmation feedback (210) and correct response feedback (166) the most. On the other hand, bug-related feedback has been found to be the least frequently used feedback type (40). It has also been observed that the instructors preferred to use confirmation feedback and correct response feedback in company. The following statements have been found to be the most frequently used phrases while providing confirmation feedback: “no, it’s wrong, yes, that’s correct, very good, bravo!, that’s it!, are you sure?, think a little bit more…”

The observations have also revealed that the instructors tended to give the correct answer themselves while teaching A1, A2 and B1 level students. While doing this, they combined correct response feedback items with confirmation feedback items, and provided explanations by saying “No, it’s wrong. Here is the correct answer…” However, the instructors teaching B2 and C1 levels avoided providing the answer immediately; instead, they preferred to direct the question to the other students in the classroom.

Another finding of this study is that the frequency of explanatory feedback decreases with an increase in the language level or competence of the students. A1 has been found to be the level where explanatory feedback is most frequently used (32), whereas C1 has been found to be the one where the same type of feedback appeared the least. It has been recorded during the observation sessions that the
instructors opted for offering clues to their students, and if they still can’t find the answer, the instructors provided a short summary of the topic in question. Besides, none of the participating instructors used explanatory feedback solely when there is a wrong answer; instead, they used explanatory feedback even for correct answers in order to explain the rest of the class why the answer was correct.

The least frequently preferred feedback type has been found to be the bug-related feedback. However, bug related feedback directly points at the source of a specific mistake. It has been seen during the observation sessions that the participating instructors used bug-related feedback mostly at A1 and A2 levels, for correcting the mistakes related to the vowels and consonants in Turkish (e.g. vowel harmony, consonant harmony, haplology, epenthesis, consonant mutation, etc.).

When Table 3 is analyzed, it can be seen that A1 is the level where feedback is provided the most frequently, whereas C1 level classes involve feedback less frequently than any other level. This can be explained by the fact that A1 level students need teacher’s correction and guidance the most, while C1 level students are competent and independent users of the language, and therefore need teacher guidance less often. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, A1 and A2 level students are regarded as basic users, whereas B1 and B2 level students are considered to be competent, and C1-C2 level students are regarded as independent users of a specific language. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages mentions the following for C1 level: “Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions…” (Council of Europe, 2001:5). Therefore, it is not surprising to see less feedback, especially less of explanatory feedback and bug-related feedback, in C1 level classes.

Discussions and Conclusion

The following conclusions have been drawn in this study, which has been conducted with the aim of specifying the oral feedback items used by the teachers of Turkish as a Foreign Language and analyzing the typology of such feedback:

1. The teachers preferred to use confirmation feedback and correct response feedback the most frequently at all language levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1). This situation complies with the findings of the studies indicating that confirmation feedback and correct response feedback are two of the most frequently utilized feedback types (Ata, Yakar, Karadağ, 2018; Coşgun & Sari, 2015; Çimer, Bütüner and Yiğit, 2010; Lee, 2010; Lyster, 2004; Yoshida, 2008). Additionally, the instructors participating in this study preferred to combine confirmation feedback and correct response feedback, which signifies that the instructors tended to utilize feedback items for the purpose of stating whether a student’s
response is correct or wrong, of for correcting a student’s mistakes. However, effective feedback should be guiding, explanatory and encouraging, and it should help the student find his/her mistake and evaluate his/her own development process (Brookhart, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Narciss, 2013; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). In-service training sessions aimed at supporting the instructors to provide effective feedback can be organized, and the instructors can be encouraged to realize their own learning process by recording their own classes.

2. It has been seen that the instructors opted for stating the correct answer themselves while providing correct response feedback at A1, A2 and B1 levels. However, at B2 and C1 levels, it has been observed that they preferred to direct the question to the other students in the classroom and expected them to answer it. The correct answer given by the other students was then repeated by the instructor. According to Butler, Godbole and Marsh (2013: 290), including the correct answer in the feedback message substantially increases the efficacy of feedback because it provides the information that learners need to correct their errors.

3. It has been seen that the frequency of explanatory feedback decreased as the students’ language competence level increased. It has also been noted that explanatory feedback was seen most frequently at A1 level, whereas it was seen the least frequently at C1. This situation can be explained by the fact that A1 level students need teacher’s correction and guidance the most, while C1 level students are competent and independent users of the language, and therefore need teacher guidance less often. When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that the explanation provided by the teacher instead of just giving the correct answer has proven to be more effective (Butler, Godbole and Marsh, 2013; Lee, 2010, Narciss, 2013). As a result, the instructors are expected to occasionally repeat a specific subject in accordance with the students’ answers, as well as explaining why a specific answer is correct or wrong.

4. Bug-related have been found within this study to be the least frequently preferred feedback type. However, bug related feedback directly points at the source of a specific mistake; it facilitates future learning procedures and reduces the possibility of repeating an error (Butler and Winne, 1995; Narciss and Huth, 2006; Schimmel, 1988). Therefore, the instructors are expected to involve bug-related feedback more in the classroom.

TALQAC (2014), summarizes the basic principles of providing effective feedback to students: 1. Identifies where students are doing well. 2. Identifies where students’ areas of improvement are, and offers ideas and suggestions about how to approach these. 3. Is clearly related to future assessment tasks, and is designed to help students prepare for them. 4. Wherever possible, is formative and not summative. 5. Is explicit. 6. Is constructive, and treats student learning as a developmental rather than a deficit issue. 7. Is timely enough so that it can be used by students in preparing for future assessment
and in engaging with the subject matter. 8. Is provided in sufficient amount of detail. 9. Is provided in contexts where students can ask questions about the feedback, provide it to each other, and discuss their interpretation of it with each other. 10. Is pitched at an appropriate level. 11. Is stated clearly and, if written, is legible. 12. Explains how and why students received the mark they did in assessment tasks.

When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that the feedback provided in accordance with the student’s mental and psychological development level contributes to academic success and fortifies the relationship between the student and the teacher (Brookhart, 2008; Butler and Winne, 1995; Coşgun and Sarı, 2015; Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Kleij et al., 2011; Lee 2010; Narciss 2012 and 2013; Peker, 1992; Sadler, 1989; Schimmel, 1988; Slavin, 2012). Therefore, the instructors should be informed about how to select the right type of feedback for a specific situation, and they should be professionally supported for self-assessment by realizing the feedback types that they utilize. It should be always be kept in mind that the improvement of educational quality and the acquisition of desirable behavior by students depend on the quality of teacher behavior. Bearing this in mind, it can be said that the findings of this study will contribute to the instructors teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language.

REFERENCES


