Effects of English Teachers' Classroom Feedback on Students

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Abstract

The feedback in the English and other classrooms may not be the same as there is more to do in English language teaching (ELT) classes. The students need to practice speaking English and learn to use it in their daily lives. The teachers use different feedback in different situations in the class which may have different impacts on the students' behaviour. The effect of the feedback differs according to the familiarity of the teacher among the students, classroom culture and environment, the students' levels as well as the type of feedback. This study is based on the narrative inquiry method and the qualitative data were collected from seven well-experienced English teachers teaching in the secondary schools in Rupandehi. The teachers suggested different ways of managing feedback in the English classes and strategies for solving problems due to negative feedback in the classes. The results may be useful to all the teachers to be skillful in making positive feedback and managing good classroom environment even if the negative impact of feedback is seen in the class to make teaching learning environment better.

Keywords: feedback, motivation, formative and summative feedback, constructive feedback

Introduction

The term 'feedback' refers to the process of providing information to individuals about their performance to improve their understanding, skills, or behavior. In education, feedback serves as a bridge between current performance and desired outcomes, enabling learners to identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Effective feedback is often characterized by being specific, actionable, timely, and focused on guiding learners toward achieving their goals (Brookhart, 2017). In the context of learning, feedback can take various forms, including verbal, written, formative and summative. The formative feedback is given during the learning process to promote growth and the summative feedback occurs after the completion of a task, providing an evaluation of overall performance. For feedback to be meaningful, it must not only address what went wrong but also offer constructive suggestions for improvement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

In education and teaching the feedback is normally called teacher feedback which is a specific type of feedback provided by educators to students to guide and enhance their

learning. In English language teaching (ELT), teacher feedback plays a critical role in helping students improve language proficiency, address errors, and gain confidence in using the language (Ellis, 2009). Effective teacher feedback is not limited to correcting mistakes; it also involves highlighting what students have done well and providing actionable steps for their improvement in language performance. Dweck (2006) writes that the type and quality of teacher feedback significantly influence students' motivation and academic performance. For instance, feedback that focuses on students' efforts and strategies rather than their innate abilities fosters a growth mindset, encouraging them to view challenges as opportunities to learn. Horwitz et al. (1986) are in the view that in the classrooms where students face linguistic barriers, such as in Nepal, teacher feedback needs to be particularly sensitive, balancing constructive criticism with encouragement to build students' confidence and reduce anxiety. In the words of Hattie and Timperley (2007), teacher feedback plays a crucial role in the learning process of students in English classes in Nepal. Studies have shown that effective feedback can improve student motivation, engagement, and academic performance.

 In Nepal, teachers provide feedback to students in the form of written comments on assignments, oral feedback during class discussions, and individual conferences very frequently. However, the quality and effectiveness of their feedback can vary significantly. Some teachers provide detailed and specific feedback that helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses, while others provide generic feedback that is not particularly helpful. There is a growing body of research on effective feedback practices in Nepal and around the world. A study by Black and Wiliam (1998) suggest that effective feedback should be specific, timely, actionable, and focused on the learning process rather than the student's personality. The English language Teaching (ELT) teachers in Nepal can improve the quality of their students' learning by providing effective feedback that can help students improve their English language skills and achieve their academic goals.

Traditionally, in Nepal, some several practices and beliefs influence how classroom feedback is given and received. The teachers should be aware of these cultural norms to ensure that their feedback is effective and well-received. Culturally in Nepalese classes, the teachers hold a high status and they are valued figures in Nepali society. Students may hesitate to question or disagree with their feedback and no one can directly challenge or contradict with teachers, as it may be perceived as disrespectful. The students are expected to use respectful language and acknowledge the teacher's authority when providing or receiving feedback. In the classrooms, the non-verbal cues like facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice can convey more than words and making eye contact demonstrates respect and engagement during feedback exchange and the smile, nod, and use encouraging gestures to create a supportive environment in the class. The teachers are aware of not making direct criticism which can be perceived as harsh or offensive and normally they focus on providing constructive feedback that emphasizes areas for improvement. Acknowledge such beliefs while emphasizing the importance of effort and self-improvement. By understanding and respecting these traditional practices and beliefs, teachers can create a feedback environment that aligns

with cultural expectations and promotes positive learning outcomes for their students. The cultural awareness is an ongoing journey that requires continuous learning and adaptation to ensure successful communication and feedback exchange in the classroom.

In recent years, teacher feedback in English language teaching (ELT) classes has gained considerable attention in Nepal as it plays a pivotal role in shaping students' learning experiences and academic progress. Several research studies have explored this area, offering insights into both teachers' and students' perspectives. Shrestha (2020) conducted a study at Achham Multiple Campus, which explored students' perceptions of teachers' feedback in English language classrooms. The research emphasized that constructive feedback was instrumental in improving students' academic performance, boosting their confidence, and fostering a better understanding of the subject matter. The study also highlighted challenges, including the need for teachers to balance feedback on content, language accuracy, and overall delivery. In the same way, Pandey and Adhikari (2019) conducted a qualitative study focusing on feedback practices among English teachers in urban and rural schools in Nepal. Their findings indicated that while urban teachers utilized a range of strategies, including written and verbal feedback, rural teachers were constrained by limited resources and training. Students appreciated feedback that was specific, actionable, and delivered promptly. Likewise, the study by Karki (2021) investigated the role of formative feedback in enhancing academic writing skills among undergraduate students in Nepal. The study demonstrated that structured feedback not only improved students' ability to organize their ideas but also reduced errors in grammar and vocabulary. The research called for more professional development opportunities for teachers to provide effective feedback. Paudel, (2018), in this regard, examined the influence of teachers' feedback on students' motivation to learn English. The study revealed that positive reinforcement and constructive criticism encouraged students to engage more actively in classroom activities. However, it also noted that overly critical feedback could discourage participation, especially among weaker students. These studies collectively underscore the importance of feedback in fostering a supportive learning environment in Nepalese ELT classrooms. They also highlight the challenges faced by teachers, including a lack of training in feedback techniques and limited resources, particularly in rural areas.

There are many studies found in the area of feedback to the students and their natures and the ways of improving the students' learning. However the studies to investigate the role of feedback of teachers in improving the English of the students are not common which we did not find. Thus, the present study to investigate the impact of teacher feedback in improving students' English is an important area of study and can play an important role in suggesting that teachers provide effective feedback to improve their students' English in the Nepali classes.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on the narrative inquiry approach. For the present study, we purposively selected seven secondary level well-experienced English teachers teaching

in different schools of Butwal Sub-metropolitan city and Tilottama municipality. Only two of the informants were females and five were male teachers. The qualitative data were gathered by the interview with the teachers about their experiences of their feedback in the English classes and the impact on the students as well as the role of their feedback in improving the students' English performance. Various cases and issues related to the feedback in ELT classes were discussed in the interview and the ideas from the teachers' experiences were categorized and discussed in the different themes that can be useful in the present context.

Classroom Feedback and the Learning Theories

The role of feedback in English language teaching (ELT) is critical for improving student learning outcomes. Positive feedback, in particular, is supported by multiple educational learning theories and frameworks that emphasize its ability to motivate students, reinforce learning, and foster a supportive classroom environment. These theories and their application are highly relevant in Nepal, where socioeconomic and educational challenges often impact teaching and learning processes. The behaviorist theories, particularly those advanced by B.F. Skinner, underline the importance of reinforcement in learning. Positive feedback acts as a form of positive reinforcement, strengthening desired behaviors such as active participation, accurate responses, and persistence in learning. When students receive constructive and affirming feedback, they are more likely to repeat desirable behaviors and sustain their efforts in learning English (Skinner, 1957). In Nepalese classrooms, where student motivation can be low due to external challenges (e.g., resource scarcity and linguistic barriers), using positive reinforcement helps create a conducive environment for language acquisition. In the same way, the constructivist theories, as articulated by scholars such as Vygotsky, emphasize the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through interaction and feedback. Positive feedback aligns with this approach by guiding students within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the area where learners can achieve success with appropriate support (Vygotsky, 1978). In Nepal, the English teachers' use of positive feedback can scaffold learning, especially for students transitioning from vernacular languages to English. By focusing on what students do well while gently addressing areas for improvement, teachers can build confidence and encourage incremental progress. On the other hand, positive feedback is grounded in motivational theories such as Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT). According to SDT, intrinsic motivation is enhanced when learners feel competent, autonomous, and connected to their learning environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Positive feedback fosters a sense of competence, making students more motivated to engage in learning activities. In our English classrooms, where English is often perceived as challenging, using praise and constructive remarks can reduce anxiety and promote a sense of achievement, thereby sustaining students' interest and effort in language learning. Thus we can link up the feedback used in the English classrooms with different theories of learning; traditional and modern theories of learning and the theory of motivation as well.

Findings and Discussions

There were a lot of ideas gathered from the interviews with the teachers who have taught long in secondary level schools as they were purposively selected for the study. Their ideas were gathered and processed by creating themes and the following major themes were common among the teachers and are presented here

The Effect of Positive Feedback

The basic idea related to the use of positive feedback in the English classes has many effective roles in improving the classroom environment and students' learning. Dermato et al. (2023) also claimed that the use of feedback is strongly crucial in learning English as a second or foreign language. It is crucial because it can motivate and support the students in learning English. In our study, all the informants were in the view that applying positive feedback can have some very important and transformative effects listed below:

- Many students, especially in rural areas, lack exposure to English and feel intimidated by the subject. Positive feedback can build their confidence to engage actively in class.
- By acknowledging small successes, teachers can motivate students to continue learning despite difficulties.
- Positive feedback ensures that all students, regardless of their proficiency levels, feel valued and supported.

- Encouraging and supportive feedback helps bridge the gap between teachers and students,   making the classroom a more inclusive space.

Thus the informant teachers were in the view that, positive feedback in English classrooms is not only an effective pedagogical strategy but also a powerful tool for addressing the unique challenges of Nepalese ELT classroom settings. It aligns with foundational educational theories and has the potential to foster a more engaging and empowering learning environment.

Challenges for Effective Feedback in Nepali English Classes

 In the discussion related to teacher feedback in English classes, the teachers were also asked to present the challenges of using effective feedback in English classes. Most of the informant teachers were in the idea that teacher feedback is crucial for student progress in English classes. But several challenges hinder its effectiveness in Nepal's educational landscape such as:

Large Classes Sizes: Nepal's high student-teacher ratio makes it difficult for individualized feedback. The teachers suggested to explore alternative feedback methods like peer feedback or online platforms.

Lack of Resources: Lack of resources like computers, printers, and internet access restricts effective feedback methods. Solutions include utilizing low-tech options like written feedback or collaborating with other schools for resource sharing.

Cultural Factors: The teachers were of the view that the cultural norms in Nepal may discourage critical feedback. Building a positive classroom environment and emphasizing the importance of constructive criticism can help overcome this as they suggested.

Assessment Practices: Traditional assessments prioritize memorization, making feedback on higher-order thinking skills difficult. The teachers suggested in implementing diverse assessments like projects or presentations to address this which are now used in the Nepali classes as well.

 In this issue the teachers also recommended some ways to effectively use positive feedback in the ELT classes which include providing clear, actionable feedback tailored to individual student needs which will be more effective than generic comments, giving feedback focusing on helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses, not just judging their performance, providing timely feedback promptly after students complete the work to maximize its bad impact and teaching students how to reflect on their work and identify areas for improvement can empower them to learn from feedback. By addressing the challenges and implementing effective strategies, teachers in Nepal can create a learning environment where feedback becomes a powerful tool for student success in English classes. The teachers were also of the view that effective feedback is a continuous process that requires ongoing reflection and adaptation to maximize its impact on student learning.

 Creating a Feedback-Friendly Classroom Environment in Nepal

With the changing times, there are many cultural changes in the Nepali school cultures and traditions. In the past when we were students in the schools, most of the teachers used to appear in the class with a stick to control us in the class and we were unable to speak even a single word if the teachers slapped us for nothing bad. But the situation has changed now even in Nepal. The students do not entertain the feedback of the teachers and they feel insulted if the teacher provides them negative feedback. Thus, the important idea the teachers suggested was to create a classroom environment that fosters effective feedback for English language learning in Nepal. some strategies the informant teachers recommended were as below:

Establish a Positive Classroom Culture: It is very important to build a foundation of mutual respect and trust where students feel comfortable receiving and giving feedback. Normalize making mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. Encourage students to view feedback as a tool for improvement, not criticism. Encourage students to work together and share their ideas, creating a safe space for feedback exchange.

- Foster Open Communication: Communicate clear expectations about feedback, including its purpose, frequency, and format, and create opportunities for students to ask questions, express their understanding, and share their perspectives. It is also important to practice active listening when providing and receiving feedback, demonstrating attentiveness and understanding and offering diverse ways to provide and receive feedback, such as verbal, written, or online platforms.

- Utilize Technology Effectively: The use of technology like online platforms such as Google Docs, Padlet, or Flipgrid to provide written or video feedback can be very important and the use of text messaging or email for quick feedback exchanges or reminders.

- Promote Self-Assessment: It is really important to guide students on how to reflect on their own work and identify areas for improvement by offering rubrics, checklists, or other self-assessment tools to help students evaluate their progress as well as encouraging peer feedback activities where students provide constructive feedback to each other.

The informant English teachers suggested that by implementing these strategies, teachers can create a classroom environment in Nepal where feedback becomes an integral part of the learning process, empowering students to improve their English language skills and achieve their full potential. Thus every teacher needs to, create a feedback-friendly environment in their classes which will be an ongoing process that requires continuous adaptation and reflection to ensure its effectiveness.

The Impact of Feedback on English Language Learning in Nepal

The informant teachers had their ideas related to the impact of teacher feedback in the ELT classrooms. But the common things among many of their ideas were brought up together and discussed here with the ideas reflected in many of the research works accomplished in Nepal. Feedback plays a crucial role in enhancing English language learning in Nepal. Recent research works also suggest that effective feedback can significantly improve students' language proficiency, motivation, and overall academic performance. However, cultural considerations and specific strategies are essential to maximize the effectiveness of feedback in this context.

Positive Effects of Teachers' Feedback:

- **Improved Language Proficiency:** The most important effect of teacher feedback in the classrooms is the improved language proficiency of the students. The studies by Khanal and Poudel (2023), Bhattarai and Bhattarai (2022) have shown that targeted and specific feedback can lead to significant improvements in students' grammatical accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency.
- **Enhanced Motivation and Engagement:** Bista and Ghimire (2022), Bhattarai and Bhattarai (2021) claimed that when students receive personalized and supportive feedback, they are more likely to feel motivated and engaged in their learning, leading to increased participation and effort. The informant English teachers in the present study also suggested that the personalized supportive feedback may be beneficial to motivate the students and increase their engagement in learning English.
- **Improved Academic Performance:** The informant teachers in the present study claimed that positive feedback can improve the academic performance of the

students, which is also supported by the research works accomplished by Giri and Bhattarai (2022), Khanal and Bhattarai, (2021). This indicates that effective feedback can positively impact students' academic performance, as measured by test scores and overall grades in English language courses.

Cultural Considerations for Effective Feedback

The teachers informed that the feedback used in the ELT classrooms should be culturally suitable to create a positive environment and effect the students to be motivated in learning. For this, the teachers suggested to create an environment where there is respect for the teachers and where the students may hesitate to question or disagree with feedback as the authority as Bhattarai and Bhattarai (2022) suggested in their research paper. The teachers also recommended that the classroom feedback should emphasize collaborative learning and group success rather than individual competition as Giri and Bhattarai (2022) concluded in their research. The importance of indirect communication in place of direct criticism is very crucial for the students. The teachers need to use indirect language and focus on providing constructive suggestions to the students which aligns with the findings and conclusions of Khanal and Poudel (2023).

Strategies for Effective Feedback in Nepal

The informant teachers also suggested some strategies for applying effective classroom feedback which will have a good impact on the students. The strategies include offering frequent and specific feedback that targets students' individual needs and areas for improvement may be effective for the students and can have lasting good effects as Bista and Ghimire (2022) concluded. They have also suggested utilizing a combination of written, verbal, and peer feedback to cater to different learning styles and preferences of the varieties of kinds of students that can have an effective impact on the students like the conclusions made by Giri and Bhattarai, (2022). In the same way, encouraging students to reflect on their work and identify areas for improvement and fostering a classroom environment where feedback is seen as a valuable tool for learning and improvement like the conclusions of Khanal and Poudel, (2023) can be very useful strategies for the ELT teachers. Thus, providing effective feedback is crucial for enhancing English language learning in Nepal. By understanding the cultural context, implementing appropriate strategies, and fostering a positive feedback culture, teachers can maximize the impact of feedback on students' language proficiency, motivation, and academic performance. Ongoing research and collaboration among educators are essential to further refine and adapt feedback practices to the specific needs and cultural nuances of the Nepalese education system.

Effects of Negative Feedback in English Classes

There were discussions about the negative feedback often given in the ELT classes by the teachers. The teachers have their own experiences of the effects of their negative feedback in their teaching tenures. They were of the view that negative feedback from teachers can have profound effects on students, particularly in contexts like Nepal,

where socio-economic challenges and a lack of resources already hinder the learning process. In this regard, Bourne and Foster (2024) also describe that providing feedback in teaching and learning or communication is more than a simple response to an issue; it must be targeted, information-given, help address the inadequacies identified, and not be abusive or belittling to the recipients. The adverse effects of negative feedback and suggestions to solve such effects grounded in research and theory suggested by the informant teachers have been presented here.

Decreased Motivation and Self-Esteem

The worst effect of negative feedback can be the lack of motivation and self-esteem in students which can cause up to drop the situation as the teachers claimed with their experiences. Ellis (2009) claims that negative feedback, particularly when overly critical or vague, can demotivate students and harm their self-esteem. In English language classes, where students often struggle with limited proficiency, harsh feedback can lead to a sense of failure and reduce their willingness to engage in classroom activities. In Nepalese classrooms, where many students lack exposure to English outside the classroom, negative feedback may exacerbate existing insecurities, causing students to disengage altogether.

Increased Anxiety and Fear of Participation

Studies have shown that negative feedback can induce classroom anxiety, making students reluctant to participate in discussions or answer questions as concluded by Horwitz et al., (1986). In collectivist societies like Nepal, where students often fear public embarrassment, receiving negative feedback in front of peers can create a long-lasting fear of participation as the teachers concluded on the basis of their experiences.

Reduced Academic Performance

The negative feedback that focuses solely on errors without providing constructive guidance can lead to confusion and frustration among students which demotivates the students in learning. Like the conclusion of Hyland and Hyland (2006), the students may become fixated on their mistakes without understanding how to improve, ultimately hindering their academic performance. In Nepal, where English is often a third or fourth language, students require supportive feedback to navigate linguistic complexities effectively.

Strained Teacher-Student Relationships

The informant teachers claimed that the negative feedback can create a barrier between teachers and students, making students perceive their teachers as unsupportive or overly critical fellow coming to their class and the relationship with the teacher may be worsening day by day. Such strained relationship reduces trust and can negatively impact the classroom environment as Carless (2006) concludes. A teacher stated that once he had used negative feedback to some students in his class there was some problem with the students as the relationship between the teacher and the students was not good which made the teacher feel bad whenever he had to go to that class. He said that he felt demoralized as he was compelled to go to that class. It is not a good situation.

The negative feedback can harm students' motivation, confidence, and academic progress in English classes, especially in countries like Nepal. However, by using constructive approaches, fostering a positive mindset, and creating supportive classrooms, teachers can turn feedback into a powerful tool for learning and growth.

After discussing the negative effects of the negative feedback of the teachers in the ELT classrooms the informant teachers came in the conclusion to suggest other teachers to solve these problems which include the following ideas.

Give Constructive Feedback

Teachers should focus on what students are doing well before pointing out areas for improvement. For example, instead of saying, "This is wrong," they can say, "You've made a good start here. Let's fix this part to make it even better."

Train Teachers in Effective Feedback

Workshops and training programs can help teachers learn how to give feedback that motivates and guides students rather than discouraging them.

Encourage a Positive Mindset

Teachers can help students see mistakes as part of the learning process. Encouraging them to keep trying can build their confidence and willingness to improve.

Create a Safe Learning Environment

A classroom where students feel respected and supported makes it easier for them to accept feedback without fear. Teachers can encourage peer support and group work to reduce anxiety.

Make Feedback a Conversation

The teachers should talk with students about their feedback to ensure they understand it. Asking questions like, "What do you think about this suggestion?" helps students feel involved in their learning.

Conclusions

Thus the feedback used in the classroom can have varieties of kinds of usages and there can be different kinds of effects of feedback in students that can last their whole life in them. The teachers need to be aware of the fact that the feedback they provide in the classrooms should be appropriate according to the cultural, ethnic, and personal values of the students so that there is no bad impact on the students and the teacher and learner relationship will remain normal. The informant teachers have given different examples of positive and negative effects of feedback to the students based on their experiences of teaching and giving feedback in the ELT classes. There are suggestions for making feedback useful and positive for the students as well as the teachers themselves. The teachers also suggested some ways to make the situation normal when there is any negative effect of feedback occurs so that the situation does not get worsen and the teacher-student relation remains good. This ensures a good learning environment and the teachers and students feel better in teaching and learning English in Nepal.

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