A Descriptive Study of Teacher's Oral Feedback In an ESL Young Learner Classroom in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study reports the teacher's oral positive and corrective feedback in a classroom interaction in ESL young learner context in Indonesia. The study was conducted in a primary one class of a newly-established international school where English was used as the medium of instruction not only in English class but also in almost all subjects. It was revealed that the teacher employed more positive feedback than corrective feedback in the interaction, and in employing positive feedback the teacher preferred to utilize non-verbal cues (paralinguistic strategy) and praise markers. However, there was a potential ambiguity in employing praise markers. In employing negative/corrective feedback, the teacher tended to use explicit feedback rather than implicit feedback. Besides the above, corrective feedback was used to expand conversation, scaffold learning and negotiate meaning and form.

Keywords: Positive feedback, corrective feedback, ESL, young learner.

INTRODUCTION

In everyday classroom interaction, teacher's feedback plays a critical role in understanding, creating and sustaining patterns of communication which facilitates second language acquisition (Aisyah & Hidayat, 2010). To maintain learners' affective and motivation, teachers are suggested to give positive feedback (Prabhu, 1992). By motivating and encouraging students to speak more, the teacher provides students with a positive circumstance to improve their fluency. Teachers also need to maintain students' accuracy by focusing on the correctness of their utterance. In this case, teachers may need to give negative feedback or what is commonly known as corrective feedback (see Russell, 2009; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, 2009; Sheen & Ellis, 2011; Panova & Lyster, 2002). Gass (1997) stated that the use of corrective feedback is to let the learners notice the gap between their errors in producing L2 and the form targeted, and this leads to interlanguage adjustment (as cited in Choi and Li, 2012). Cullen (2002) also stated that it can build and clarify the ideas that students express (as cited in Harmer, 2007). In addition, it serves as a valuable input, gives opportunity for learners to stretch their interlanguage to meet targeted output, and functions as noticing tool (see Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Furthermore, sociocultural theory considers corrective feedback as having a facilitative role to assist learners through self-correction to achieve self-regulation

(Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994) as long as the feedback is appropriate to learner's affective, developmental level, and the activity the learners are involved in (Harmer, 2007).

Responding to the use of positive and corrective feedback, Brown (2011) asserted that too much corrective feedback often leads learners to shut off their attempts at communication; on the other hand, too much positive cognitive feedback serves to reinforce the errors of the speaker-learner that may lead to fossilization. Therefore, he suggested that teachers provide a balance of positive feedback to encourage communication and negative feedback to call attention to the crucial errors. Furthermore, Riddell (2001) maintained that teachers should focus their correction only on mistakes involving the target language, repeated common mistakes, and significant mistake. This study focuses on positive and corrective of feedback used in the classroom interaction. Positive feedback confirms that a learner's response is correct and it functions as affective support to maintain or improve the learner's motivation to learn. Negative feedback, on the other hand, signals that an error has occurred, and it is intentionally used to correct the learner's erroneous utterance.

Positive Feedback

Positive feedback has some different definitions. Long (1996) defines positive evidence as providing

the learners with models of what is grammatical and acceptable in the target language (TL) (as cited in Tatawy, 2002, p. 2). Ellis (2009) gives a more specific definition of positive feedback as teacher's response that signs or affirms student utterances' correctness. The term positive feedback used in this study refers to broader definition of oral positive feedback which combines some definitions from previous researchers (Reigel, 2005). By adapting three components of positive feedback from Reigel (2005), this study categorizes positive feedback strategies into three elements (p.32).

Table 1. Categorization of Oral Positive Feedback (Reigel, 2005)

Positive Feedback Strategy	Explanation
1. Paralinguistic strategy	Teacher's nonverbal cues (gesture and facial expression) that show affirmation such as nodding and laughter.
2. Linguistic strategy	Teacher's verbal responses that show affirmation of student's utterance.
3. Praise markers	Teacher's verbal responses of praising student's utterance such as "fine," "good," "excellent". In this case, Reigel (2005, p.32) asserts that praise markers can function as evaluative strategy.

Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback used in this study refers to the definition from Sheen and Ellis (2011), "Corrective feedback (CF) refers to the feedback that learners receive on the linguistic errors they make in their oral or written production in a second language (L2)." This study adopts the categorization from Lyster & Ranta's (1997) error treatment framework, especially corrective feedback types.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) categorized oral corrective feedback into several types: recast, explicit correction, metalinguistic feedback, repetition, clarification request, and elicitation. Paralinguistic strategy is added from Ellis (2009) since teachers who make correction in young learner's classroom are assumed to use a lot of gestures to indicate the error or elicit correct answer by using gesture. Then, the categorized feedback is distributed into explicit and implicit oral corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009). Lyster and Ratna's (1997) category and Ellis's (2009) corrective feedback can be seen in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Categorization of Oral Corrective Feedback (Lyster and Ranta, 1997)

Corrective Feedback Strategy	Explanation
1 Recast	Reformulation of all or part of a learner's erroneous utterance without changing its original meaning.
2 Explicit correction	Provision of the correct form with a clear indication of what is being corrected.
3 Elicitation	Techniques to elicit the correct form from the students without providing the correct form.
4 Metalinguistic feedback	Information on the nature of error of the student's erroneous utterance.
5 Clarification request	Moves that indicate to learners that their utterances were either not understood or were ill-formed such as 'Sorry?' or 'Pardon?'
6 Repetition	A repetition of the student's erroneous utterance.
7 Paralinguistic signal	Teacher's use of gesture or facial expression to indicate the error has taken place.

(The last category was taken from Ellis (2009))

Table 3. Implicit and Explicit Types of Oral Corrective Feedback (Ellis, 2009, p.8)

Implicit	Explicit
Recast	Explicit correction
Repetition	Metalinguistic explanation
Clarification Request	Elicitation
	Paralinguistic signal

(The definition of each type of feedback refers to table 2)

Actually, there have been many studies on teacher's feedback (see Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Diaz, 2009; Khaerunisa, 2002; Nabei, 2005; Surakka, 2007; Sheen, 2004; Choi & Li, 2012). However, most studies on feedback focus on the corrective ones, leaving smaller space for positive feedback in SLA. Therefore, this study is aimed to reveal both types of feedback, the positive and the corrective ones, as they were given by the teacher in the context of young learner ESL classroom in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in a lower primary class in one private school in West Bandung, which is affiliated to one private school in Singapore. This school was established in 2007. In 2009, it was declared to be an international school which adopted Cambridge curriculum without neglecting the national curriculum. In this context, English was regarded

as a second language because it was used in the instruction and daily interaction.

The participant of this study was an English teacher with his twenty-two students in 2012/2013 academic term. The participant was chosen purposefully because the teacher had more than five years of teaching English for young children in multi-variety contexts. His first experience was teaching English to primary students in a public school, then he continued to teach at a national-plus school, and finally in this private school where the research was conducted. Secondly, he was in the process of getting his master's degree in English Education. Having knowledge on theoretical and practical issues regarding second language acquisition and education, he was expected to be a good model of providing feedback to young learners in his class.

The data were collected from 180 minutes of video-audio recording of teacher-students interaction and field notes. During the observation, the teacher reviewed the vocabulary based on its initial sounds. In this case, the students tried to retrieve words with /h/ and /l/ initial sounds. Since the teacher focused on the students' skills to recognize the sounds correctly and pronounce the words precisely, the interaction can be categorized as accuracy-oriented. The video-audio recording was transcribed for detail analysis. Together with the result of field notes, the data were analyzed and interpreted.

DISCUSSION

The analysis showed that positive feedback outnumbered corrective feedback. Of the forty-nine (100%) feedbacks given by the teacher, 34 (69.4%) feedbacks were positive and 15 (30.6%) feedbacks were corrective. Below is the distribution of feedback.

Table 4. The Distribution of Positive and Corrective Feedback

Feedback	Numbers	Percentage
Positive Feedback	34	(69.4%)
Negative/corrective feedback	15	(30.6%)

Observation in the class showed that the young learners enjoyed the interaction in class. It could be seen from the fact that the students participated in question and answer interactively. Every time the teacher gave a question, almost all students raised their hands, competing with each other to be chosen by the teacher to answer the question. Therefore, the teacher chose which student to answer first then distributed the

participation. The classroom was also alive with the students' voice and laughter. It cannot be concluded that the positive circumstance of interaction was the result from the positive feedbacks employed by the teacher. However, the positive feedback utilized by the teacher in the interaction might contribute to the positive learning environment that motivate and encourage students to participate in the interaction (Prabhu, 1992; Reigel, 2005; Tatawy, 2002).

Positive Feedback

The positive feedback given by the teacher was categorized into paralinguistic strategy, linguistic strategy and praise marker. The teacher's positive feedbacks almost always included paralinguistic strategy by nodding, raising thumb, smiling, clapping, and joking. It was possibly the teacher's effort to make the communication more interactive and the feedback clearer for students. Therefore, the categorization did not use the original categorization from Reigel (2005) but it was adapted into some combinations. The distribution of positive feedbacks is displayed in the following Table 5.

Table 5. The Distribution of Positive Feedback

Types of Positive feedback	Number	Percentage
Paralingustic strategy+ praise markers	16	47.1%
Paralinguistic + linguistic strategy	14	41.2%
Paralinguistic+ linguistic strategy + praise marker	3	8.8%
Paralinguistic strategy	1	2.9%
Total	34	100%

The distribution showed that paralinguistic strategy dominated almost all positive feedbacks. In this case, the teacher made his gesture in such a way so young learners could see that the teacher's body language responded to what they said in the interaction. The teacher also optimized his gesture to make his statement and feedback clear for the young learners.

Paralinguistic strategy+ Praise Marker

In utilizing this type of positive feedback, the teacher gave approval to the student's utterance in the form of praising. The praise was supported by paralinguistic signals such as nodding, smiling, raising thumb, acting out and clapping. Below is one of the excerpts of paralinguistic strategy + praise marker:

Example 1:
S1 : Help
T : Help! Wow good! This one is very good. (T claps his hands)

The teacher responded to S1's answer by giving a praise marker and clapped his hands. It was not clear whether the teacher praised S1 because of his effort of answering the question or because he pronounced the word correctly or because the word was good. There was also potential ambiguity of praising since not all correct answers got the teacher's praise. Ambiguity (Ellis, 2009; Tatawy, 2002) might also exist when the two correct answers were responded differently as shown in the following two excerpts:

Example 2:
T : Next, S3
S3 : Hair
T : Hair, all right. (T nods his head)

Example 3:
T : Oke, give me the words beginning with the letter 'h'
S2 : Hand
T : Very good S2, you said 'hand' (T raises his hand)

Example 2 showed that the teacher gave a moderate approval by affirming the student's answer while Example 3 showed that the teacher gave a praise marker that might be perceived as a strong approval. Furthermore, there is a potential problem with the statement that praise marker can be used as an evaluative feedback (Reigel, 2005), because the focus of evaluation of the teacher's praise was sometimes unclear. The use of praise marker might be the teacher's way of appreciating students' answer or it might be just a filler to maintain the flow of communication in the classroom.

Paralinguistic strategy+ linguistic strategy

In utilizing this type of feedback, the teacher affirmed the students' answer and it was also supported by gesture.

Example 4:
T : Ok, the last one for S4…
S4 : Litter
T : Litter. Ok, do not litter, all right? (T waved his hand)

The excerpt shows that the teacher repeated the student's utterance and said "ok", followed by another statement of incorporating the word into a longer sentence. It seems that this type of feedback made the interaction more meaningful and contextual compared to the use of praise marker. By utilizing this type of feedback, the teacher's approval was recognizable in what Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) called as 'accepting' the student's answer (as cited in Diaz, 2009, p. 60). At the same time, the teacher gave the students opportunity to interact in a more natural way.

Paralinguistic strategy + Linguistic strategy + Praise Marker

The teacher also utilized the combination of the three components, as shown in the following excerpt:

Example 5:
T : Yes?
S1 : Landing
T : Landing? Ok. Oh, like an airplane lands for landing (T moves his hand pretending to be an airplane that is landing). Very good, S1 (T nods his head)

In responding to the student's answer, the teacher repeated the student's answer and incorporated the answer into a longer and meaningful sentence, completed by the gesture. In addition, he also nodded his head and praised the student. The use of multiple strategies made the positive feedback stronger.

Paralinguistic strategy

Only one pure paralinguistic component was identified in the positive feedback during the interaction, without other components, as shown in the following excerpt:

Example 6:
T   : Who hasn't got the turn? S12?
S12 : Halloween
T   : Ooww (T widens his eyes and acts out like a ghost)

The teacher shouted 'owww' by widening his eyes and acted out like ghost. Even though the teacher did not praise nor gave linguistic feedback, the effect of the paralinguistic seemed significant. The learner who gave the answer smiled happily and acted out as the ghost which was responded well by the peers in the classroom so the others followed him producing loud voice pretending to be ghosts. In this case, paralinguistic strategy used in the appropriate context enabled the learner to recognize that his answer was acceptable and appreciated.

Corrective Feedback

Even though the number of corrective feedback was less than positive feedback, the teacher utilized various types of corrective feedback that might play a significant role in young learners' interlanguage development (Diaz, 2009). In correcting the learners' errors, the teacher did not only focus on phonological and lexical errors that became the focus in the session, but also covered some grammatical errors in the learners' utterance. The corrective feedback strategies were categorized following Lyster and Ranta's (1997) category system and distributed into implicit and explicit corrective feedback following the framework in Ellis (2009). The occurrence of corrective feedback can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of Corrective Feedback

Explicit Corrective Feedback	Number and Percentage	Implicit Corrective Feedback	Number and Percentage
Explicit correction	3 (20%)	Recast	2 (13, 3%))
Metalinguistic clue	3 (20%)	Repetition	1 (6.7%)
Paralinguistic signal	1 (6.7%)	Clarification	2 (13, 3%))
Repetition+ elicitation	2 (13, 3%)		
Clarification+ explicit feedback	1 (6.7%)		
Total	10 (66.7%)		5 (33.3%)

The table shows that the teacher employed more explicit corrective feedback than implicit feedback. It is in line with a study by Choi and Li (2012) that teachers in young learner classroom preferred explicit feedback. However, 'recast' is said to be the most favorite type of feedback utilized by teachers (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Tatawy, 2002; Panova & Lyster, 2002), but it appeared low in this context. It might be due to its potential ambiguity (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) which was perceived as affirmation in positive feedback.

The teacher's preference of explicit corrective feedback might also relate to the age of the learners. The students were six-to seven-year-olds who still had difficulties in perceiving something abstract. Therefore, the teacher tried to make his corrective feedback as clear as possible to enable them to understand and notice the correct meaning and form. However, it does not mean that the teacher neglected the use of implicit strategy that had benefit of stimulating students to think about the correct answer by using uptake. The various types of corrective feedback strategy can be seen in the following excerpts.

Explicit Corrective Feedback

The use of explicit corrective feedback is shown in the following excerpt:

Example 7:
T : How
Ss : Now
T : Is it 'now'? No, it's not 'now'. It's 'how' (the teacher bolds the 'H', the beginning letter)
Ss : How. How
T : Good. How..

Responding to the student's phonological error, the teacher directly told the students that their pronunciation was erroneous and gave the correct pronunciation for the word. The use of explicit corrective feedback could be effective in terms of time economy and saliency of corrected feature. However, it did not lead to negotiation of meaning or form since the teacher shortened the conversation with the evaluation and the provision of the correct answer.

Implicit Corrective Feedback

The use of implicit type of feedback is shown by the following excerpt.

Example 8:
T : If you lick ten lollipops, what will happen to you?
S6 : Lying
T : Lying? What will happen to you? To your teeth?
S7 : Smash
T : Smash? (Looking at another student) Yes?
S5 : Dirty
T : Yes, your teeth might be dirty and…
S9 : It might be broken
T : Yes, it might be broken, something like that. It's not healthy.

Example 8 shows that S6 used an inappropriate lexical choice "lying" to describe that something wrong would happen to the teeth. Then, the teacher utilized implicit type of oral corrective feedback in the form of repetition and clarification request. S7 tried to give a peer repair by giving another inappropriate lexical alternative "smash". Responding to different error made by S7, the teacher utilized repetition and clarification request. Finally, S5 participated by giving an appropriate answer "dirty".

By utilizing implicit types of corrective feedback, the teacher expanded conversation and gave the students opportunity to notice what was wrong then eliciting

the correct answer. As shown in the excerpt, the use of implicit type of oral corrective feedback provided an opportunity for the teacher and the students to negotiate the meaning (Sheen & Ellis, 2011).

Implicit and Explicit Corrective Feedback

In correcting student's error, the teacher sometimes used several types of oral corrective feedback. In this case, the teacher usually utilized another corrective feedback when a student's uptake following the previous feedback still needed repair.

Example 9:
T : On the pink one?
S6 : Behind the pink paper!
T : Behind? Is it like this in here? (The teacher points to the back of paper   while raising his voice and eyes) (Clarification Request)
Ss : No
T : Before or after? (Elicitation CF)
Ss : Before..
T : yes, before, not behind.

The excerpt showed that clarification request was used as a noticing tool to draw students' attention to the gap between their interlanguage and the target language. It successfully made the students aware that 'behind' was not the correct word and there was 'a word' for that. Unfortunately, 'the word' had not existed in the students' output. Then the teacher gave elicitation by giving the choice of word alternatives 'before or after' and it was successfully responded by the students with the targeted answer.

In this case, the teacher guided the students to find what the student intended to express. Hence, the use of corrective feedback as shown in the excerpt can also function as a tool to scaffold the student's language learning. Furthermore, by utilizing gradual feedback from implicit to explicit one, the teacher tried to follow Gass's (1997) suggestion to let the students notice the gap between their interlanguage and targeted output (as cited in Choi and Li, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to investigate a teacher's oral feedback in an ESL class for young learner in Indonesia. The analysis describes that the teacher utilized both, positive and corrective feedback in the interaction, although he tended to employ more positive feedback than corrective feedback. In employing positive feedback, there is a preference of utilizing paralinguistic feedback. Besides, the teacher prefers the use of praise markers while in the same

time the praising is sometimes ambiguous. In employing corrective feedback, there was a preference of utilizing explicit feedback to make the feedback clear so the students could notice the gap between their interlanguage and target language. It is also shown that implicit corrective feedback can be utilized to expand conversation and negotiate meaning and form; hence, it may contribute to young learners' interlanguage development.

It is expected that this study can encourage language teachers to be aware of the drawbacks of giving praise to student. If this is not appropriately given, it may create the learner's confusion of what being praised. Corrective feedback may give positive contribution to the language learning process as it is viewed from the scaffolding function and its benefit to expand conversation and negotiate meaning and form.

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