Incorporating Meaningful Feedback in Language Classroom

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ABSTRAK

Keberhasilan dalam pembelajaran biasanya ditunjukkan dengan prestasi akademik yang optimal dari para siswa. Tujuan pembelajaran dapat dicapai jika guru dapat menciptakan atmosfir di mana siswa sangat termotivasi untuk belajar. Salah satu cara untuk meningkatkan motivasi siswa adalah dengan memberi mereka umpan balik yang berarti mengenai kinerja mereka dalam belajar. Umpan balik bisa berupa umpan balik guru, umpan balik siswa, dan umpan balik dari rekan sejawat. Makalah ini dimaksudkan untuk membahas bagaimana menggabungkan umpan balik yang berarti di kelas bahasa. Pada prinsipnya, umpan balik dapat diimplementasikan di kelas manapun, namun dalam tulisan ini penulis mencoba untuk berbagi bagaimana penerapannya di tiga kelas yang biasanya dia tangani. Kelasnya adalah Peer Teaching, sebagai bagian integral dari Magang 2, tata bahasa Inggris, dan Terjemahan. Umpan balik dapat diterapkan dalam berbagai teknik dan kategori sesuai dengan tujuan umpan balik. Dalam praktik ini, diberikan dalam bentuk lisan dan tulisan baik langsung maupun tidak langsung. Di kelas peer teaching, misalnya, diberikan secara lisan dan tertulis, sedangkan di kelas Bahasa Inggris dan Terjemahan siswa dan umpan balik rekan sebagian besar dilakukan dalam bentuk tertulis meskipun kadang-kadang juga diberikan secara lisan. Melalui penerapan umpan balik, diamati bahwa motivasi dan prestasi siswa meningkat secara bertahap.

Keywords: Penilaian, umpan balik yang berarti, prestasi siswa

ABSTRACT

The success in learning is usually indicated by an optimum academic achievement of the students. The learning goal can be achieved if teachers can create an atmosphere in which the students are strongly motivated to learn. One of the ways to improve students' motivation is by providing them with meaningful feedback on their performance in learning. The feedback can be in forms of teacher feedback, student feedback, and peer feedback. This paper is intended to discuss how to incorporate meaningful feedback in language classrooms. In principle, feedback can be implemented in any class, but in this paper the writer tries to share how it has been implemented in the three classes he usually handles. The classes are Peer Teaching, as an integral part of Internship 2 (Magang 2), English grammar, and Translation. The feedback can be applied in different techniques and categories according to the purpose the feedback. In this practice, it was provided in both oral and written forms, either direct or indirectly. In peer teaching class, for example, it was given orally and in written form, while in English Grammar and Translation classes the student and peer feedback was done mostly in written form though occasionally it was also provided orally. Through the implementation of feedback, it is observed that both students' motivation and achievements have gradually improved.

Keywords: assessment, meaningful feedback, students' performance

INTRODUCTION

In teaching learning process teachers always try to help their students so that they will be successful in learning. This effort is realized by implementing approaches, methods, and strategies suitable for students and certain learning materials. However, after the teachers give exercises or tests to their students, they often find that the result is not satisfactory. Only some students make progress, while the others do not. What should we do if it also happens to our class? Should we modify the ways we teach our students?

In a conventional way of teaching, teachers tend to transfer their knowledge and skills by presenting the learning materials all the time to students. They would explain the topics and then let their students 'enjoy' the explanation. Then, they would give students exercises intended to measure their comprehension of what they have learnt. For students, this way of teaching is not effective as they tend to be passive. Nowadays, teachers should think of how to empower their students in order to develop their potentials. Students want something new, creative, and challenging in their learning. They also want their teachers to know their learning difficulties and also know that certain methods or techniques do not help them study well. To solve this problem, teachers should always try to monitor the progress made by students and give them information about their strengths and weaknesses. Besides, they should also design an alternative way to make students learn actively, especially when the subject is not only content, but also skill subject like Translation. It is in line with what is stated by Brown (1981) that teaching is showing or helping someone to learn, giving instruction, guiding in the study of something, providing knowledge, and causing to know or understand.

An alternative technique that can be implemented by teachers is providing feedback. As stated by Johnson and Johnson (1994) in Grami (2010), feedback is defined as information that allows individuals to compare their actual performance with the standard of performance. In line with the definition, Kauchack (in Grami, 2010) states that feedback is any information about current behavior that can be used to improve the performance of the students. The feedback is commonly provided by teachers to students to inform the students on their actual state of learning or performance that is called *teacher feedback*. Besides, feedback can also be provided by students to their teacher on his/her ways of teaching including the approaches, methods, or techniques employed - called *student feedback*- and the one that is provided by students to other fellow students on their state of learning or performance – called *peer feedback*. So, the feedback is helpful not only for students who receive it but the literature also suggests that feedback is important

for teachers as well, because it gives them the opportunity to diagnose and assess the problematic issues in learners' writing, and allows them to create a supportive teaching environment (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). In other words, from this feedback teachers can get meaningful information from students about their ways of teaching and how well the students have understood the material or acquired certain skills.

Feedback can be very powerful if done well. The power of formative feedback lies in its double-barreled approach, addressing both cognitive and motivational factors at the same time. 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. Once they feel they understand what to do and why, most students develop a feeling that they have control over their own learning—the motivational factor (Brookhard, 2008). From the statement, it can be infered that feedback works on cognitive and motivational aspect of students. Through feedback the students can get information about how well they have mastered the learning materials given and if they have understood it and know what to do next they will be motivated to do it. The problem is : how to give good or effective feedback to students? Brookhard (2008) added that good feedback should contain 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.

Feedback strategies can vary in several dimensions including: timing, amount, mode, and audience (Brookhard, 2008). The brief expalantion is as follows.

1. Timing : Returning tests and assignments promptly

    The purpose of giving immediate or only slightly delayed feedback is to help students hear it and use it. Feedback needs to come while students are still mindful of the topic, assignment, or performance in question. It needs to come while they still think of the learning goal as a learning goal—that is, something they are still striving for, not something they already did. It *especially* needs to come while they still have some reason to work on the learning target.

2. Amount : Using the Goldilocks principle, "Not too much, not too little, but just right."

    Try to see things from the student's-eye view. On which aspects of the learning target has the student done acceptable work? Which aspects of the learning target would the student benefi t from improving upon next? Are any particular assignments coming up that would make it wiser to emphasize one point over another? Is there any particular point that you and the student have a history about?

3. Mode: Taking advantage of a teachable moment.

   Some kinds of assignments lend themselves better to written feedback (for example, reviewing and writing comments on students' written work); some, to oral feedback (for example, observing and commenting as students do math problems as seatwork); and some, to demonstrations (for example, helping a kindergarten student hold a pencil correctly). Some of the best feedback can result from conversations *with* the student. For example, rather than telling the student all the things you notice about his or her work, you might start by asking questions such as these: "What are you noticing about this?" "Does anything surprise you?"

4. Audience : Know whom you're talking to - and talk to them

   Like all communication, feedback works best when it has a strong and appropriate sense of the audience. Feedback about the specifics of individual work is best addressed to the individual student, in terms the student can understand. That simple act is powerful in itself because, in addition to the information provided, it communicates to the student a sense that you care about his or her individual progress.

   Based on the information above, the feedback will be effective and meaningful for students if it is given in good time, amount, mode, and audience. As its main purpose, the feedback should motivate students and make them aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

   Peer feedback that is referred to under different names, such as peer response, peer review, peer editing, and peer evaluation can be defined as the use of learners as sources of information and interaction for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing (Liu and Hansen, 2002). It benefits not only the students who receive suggestions for improving the writing, but also the providers, as they gain a greater awareness of qualities of good writing through assessing and commenting on peer's writing. Peer feedback also develops students' self-assessment abilities, as they gain experience in using the criteria to read their own writing (Cho & McArthur, 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

   Peer feedback takes many forms and serves many purposes. It can be employed in the form of conferencing, in the form of written as well as oral comments, or both simultaneously. This 'flexibility' is another useful aspect of peer feedback (Mooko, 1996;

Hyland, 2003; Rollinson, 2005). Peer feedback can also take many formats, some of the most common ones are: 1) to assign groups of two, three, or four students and ask them to exchange their first drafts and give comments on each other's drafts before making final versions; 2) to make students read their own essays aloud, or get a colleague to read it instead, while the other students listen and provide feedback, either written or oral, on the work that they have just heard (Hyland, 2003).

From the statements, it can be inferred that the implementation of peer feedback is quite flexible. The teachers can adapt it with the purpose and condition, so it can be really helpful for students.

DISCUSSIONS

The ways how feedback – teacher feedback, student feedback, peer feedback – are implemented in three classes (Peer Teaching, English Grammar, and Translation) are described below.

1. Teacher Feedback

In Peer Teaching class, the feedback was implemented by the writer, in this case he performs as the teacher, in the form of oral and written feedback. The oral feedback was provided, for example, to a student who had just finished performing a teaching practice. As observed by the writer, the student used incorrect expressions when checking student attendance in pre-teaching stage. She said, "*Okay, before we begin the class I will absent you*" and "*Who knows what Desi absent*?" She also used a slide show to present the teaching material, but, unfortunately, there were some incorrect spellings and the font size used was too small, so the students couldn't read the sentences shown easily. The feedback might be like this:

> "It seems that you still need to improve your English, especially the expressions commonly used to check your student attendance. The word 'absent' is an adjective, so you may not use in that way, instead you may use a phrase 'check your attendance or presence'. So, the common expression is "*Okay, before we begin the class I will check your attendance*" (It is not necessary to blame student by saying that her sentence is wrong so as not to discourage her).

In similar way, the next bit of feedback might be:

> *"When asking the reason why something happens, you usually use the word 'why' don't you? So, to ask the reason of the absence of Desi, you'd better say, "Who knows why Desi is absent?"*

Then, commenting on the way the student made use of slide show, the comment would be:

> *"I appreciate your effort to use a slide show in presenting the learning material as it will be more interesting for your students and make them easy to learn. But, how about making the font size larger, say 18 or 24? It will make it easy to read."*

Related to the occurrence of incorrect spellings in the slide show, the meaningful comment might be:

> *"It's great that you have designed an interesting media for your class. As a part of your preparation, please read the sentencesr again before using the media, so the grammatical mistakes and incorrect spellings like '**How long the characters of the text stayed in David and Dellay's house?** and '**Blue Montain'** will not necessarily happen."* "The correct sentence must be '**How long did the characters of the text stay in David and Dellay's house?** and the correct spelling will be '**Blue Mountain'.***

Written feedback was also given by the writer on the mistakes made by students in designing their lesson plans. This feedback was frequently related to students' ways in formulating learning indicators and objectives, designing the teaching procedures/steps, and designing the evaluation. To provide suggestions or comments on their lesson plans, the use of written feedback will be preferable though, later, it can also be communicated orally to the students individually.

In English Grammar class, it is compulsary that the writer discusses the answers to the problems in the mid-term test with the students. It was done in the next meeting after the test administered, as the theory says the feedback should be given immediately; the sooner the feedback given is the better. The feedback provided by the writer can be described below.

Part A. Join the sentences below using the conjunctions provided in the bracket.

1. I went to bed at around 9 p.m. Then, the bomb exploded loudly. (no sooner…than…)
   No sooner did I go to bed at around 9 p.m., than the bomb exploded loudly.
   No sooner had I gone to bed at around 9 p.m., than the bomb exploded loudly.

2. Vika doesn't want to go out with us. She doesn't want to stay at home.
   (neither….nor…)

   Vika neither wants to go out with us, nor stays at home.

3. Dedy works in a hotel. He also studies in this university. (not only…but also….)

   Dedy not only works in a hotel, but he also studies in this university.

   Not only does Dedy work in a hotel, but he also studies in this university.

4. My father doesn't drive a car. He also doesn't ride a motorcycle. (nor)

   My father doesn't drive a car, nor does he ride a motorcycle.

5. ……… etc.

As can be seen in the example above, the sentences in italic are the answers to the problems in the mid-tem test. The students were involved in the discussion, so they would see how to answer the problems and know how well they could do the test. In discussing the answers, the students were allowed confirm the answers, so eventually they really understood.

Besides providing feedback on the students' performance in the test, the writer also did it when discussing the answers of the quizzes given. As an example, it is shown below:
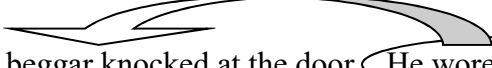
Quiz of Intermediate English Grammar#5

Part 1. Join pairs of the sentences below to form Complex sentences.

1. The truck broke down. It carried the victims to the safe place.

   The truck broke down. It carried the victims to the safe place.

   The truck which/that carried the victims to the safe place broke down.
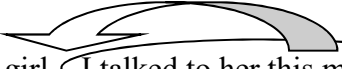
2. The beggar knocked at the door. He wore dirty clothes.

   The beggar knocked at the door. He wore dirty clothes.

   The beggar who/that wore dirty clothes knocked at the door.

3. Do you know my diary? Its cover is dark brown.

   Do you know my diary? Its cover is dark brown.

   Do you know my diary whose cover is dark brown.

4. Ridwan loves the girl. I talked to her this morning.

   Ridwan loves the girl. I talked to her this morning.

   Ridwan loves the girl to whom I talked this morning.

5. ....etc.

The objective of discussing the quiz above is to show the students how to use an adjective clause to modify a noun or pronoun in the main clause. It will be a meaningful feedback for students whether they make correct answers or not because they will realze their strenghs and weaknesses. If they still make one or more mistakes, they will be challenged to improve them later, but if they have made correct answers they will be strongly motivated to make more progress.

Something that is essential in providing feedback, either oral or written, is that the teacher gives meaningful information to his students. The feedback will tell them about their actual state of learning or performance in a particular subject. It is advisable that the teacher do it to make students know their progress and what to do next.

2. Student Feedback

Student feedback is only effective if the follow up of the information provided by students is immediately responded by the teacher. In other words, it is beneficial for students only if the teacher re-explain parts of the lesson that haven't been mastered by students or adapt his teaching approach, method, or technique with students' learning styles.

As the sample of student feedback implemented by the writer in English Grammar class, it was obtained through two ways, student diary and survey. The writer asked students to regularly write the summary of each topic discussed and the problems or difficulties they had. Following is an example taken from one of the students' diaries.
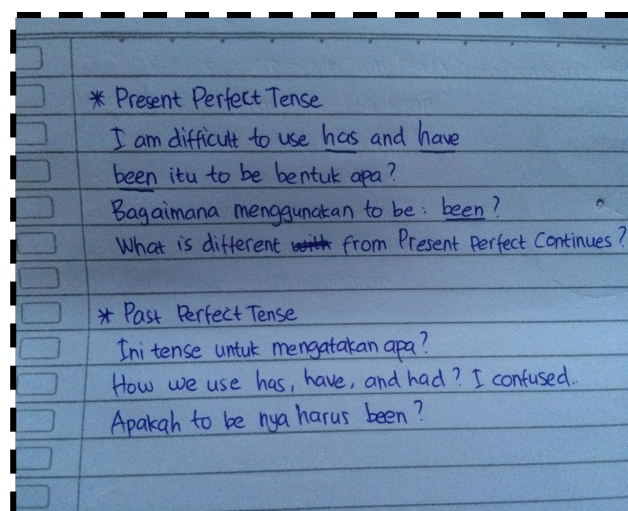
In the sample diary above, it can be seen that the problems faced by the student are related to English tenses - Present Perfect and Past Perfect Tenses. It is infered that

the student was still confused about the differences between the two tenses and how to use auxiliary verbs: *has, have,* and *had* properly. She was also confused about the use of to be: *been*. Then, the writer listed the student's problems among other problems of her classmates. Without delay, in the next meeting, the teacher re-explained the tenses focusing on the functions and the use of auxiliary verbs: *has, have*, and *had* as well as to be: *been*. After the discussion, the problems were resolved and the students followed the discussion of the next topic enthusiastically. Here, the student was motivated to study after she understood the solution of the problems as she wrote in her diary.

The second feedback was obtained from the result of survey to students. The writer asked students to fill in a form that contained a questionnaire and some questions. Here, they were not asked to mention their names, so they felt free to fill in the form. One of the results of the survey is shown below.

From the result of the survey above, it can be seen that the student is not always prepared when she attends the class, nor does he regularly do the assignment given. Then, from the statement he wrote he wanted the teacher to explain the lesson more slowly. The latter opinion is also written by other students. Therefore, as the follow- up, the teacher encouraged him as well as other students to be more serious in learning. The teacher also told them importance of being prepared before attending the class and doing the assignments regularly for the sake of themselves. In response of the feedback, the writer also changed his way of explaining the lesson. He explained the lesson more slowly and always confirmed whether the students understood his explanation or not. He also asked them to ask questions when they found difficulties.

The use of survey to get student feedback is ideally given after the mid-term test. The reason is that the students still have to take the course in the second half of the semester. Therefore, when the teacher understands the difficulties faced by his students, he can encourage them and adapts his way of teaching. In this way, hopefully, the students will make progress.

3. Peer Feedback

Peed feedback is powerful when it is implemented appropriately. Before implementing this technique, the teacher should make sure that the students have had knowledge background to make them competent in providing feedback to their fellow students. It is done by involving them in correcting students' mistakes. If is done frequently it will develop their critical thinking and they will have a greater awareness of correct language use.

As the sample, the writer implemented peer feedback in translation class. He asked the students to give feedback on their friends' translation directly (orally) in class. So, they gave suggestions and comments on the translation discussed. Besides, the writer asked them to revise or give feedback on a translation in written form. First, he assigned the students to translate a text. After that, he selected one of their works and sent it to the students through their E-mail. Having received the assignment, the students revised or gave it feedback based on their opinion. Then, they sent it back to the writer. Following is the sample of the feedback sent by students.

__Peer Feedback__
Instruction:
1. Give revision/suggestion to the translation below in the brackets (.....). Put a strikethrough (~~abc~~) on the words or phrases revised.
2. Give your conclusion in the box provided below the original translation.
3. Use the English version of the translation given below it to give the feedback.
4. Send your feedback back to me not later than Thursday, 6 April 20017, at 23:59 p.m.

MAGNETIK

Magnetik merupakan pemaksaan arus listrik mengerahkan pada arus lainnya.
magnet dapat dibuat dengan gerak elektron dalam bahan atom tertentu yand disebut gaya magnet atau magnetik . kekuatan magnet juga dapat diproduksi oleh arus listrik biasa yang mengalir melalui kumparan kawat yang disebut elektromagnet. Kekuatan magnet dapat disebabkan oleh tarik gaya menarik atau tolak menolak yang mana dapat menarik magnet bersamaan atau mendorong bagiannya.
.... etc.

Name: IS

MAGNETIK (Gaya Magnetik)

~~Magnetik~~ (Gaya magnetik) merupakan ~~pemaksaan~~ (daya) arus listrik ~~mengerahkan~~ (yang mengalir) pada arus … (listrik) lainnya. ~~Magnet~~ (daya magnet) dapat ~~dibuat~~ (tercipta) dengan (oleh) gerak (gerakan) elektron (elektron-elektron) dalam ~~bahan~~ atom (pada material-material) tertentu yand disebut gaya magnet atau magnetik . ~~ke~~kuatan magnet juga dapat diproduksi oleh arus listrik biasa yang mengalir melalui kumparan kawat yang disebut elektromagnet. Kekuatan magnet dapat ~~disebabkan~~ (menyebabkan) ~~oleh tarik gaya menarik~~ (gaya tarik-menarik) atau (gaya) tolak menolak yang mana dapat menarik magnet ~~bersamaan~~ (bersatu) atau mendorong

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From the sample feedback above, it can be seen that the student has tried to provide her revision based on her competence though the revised version is not quite perfect. However, it is part of a long process to become a competent translator. In writing her feedback she suggested certain words that she thought would be suitable with the context.

To see the progress made by students in their translation competence, following are some examples in the ways they provide feedbacks.

English version   : *Magnetism may be created by the motion of electrons in the atoms of certain materials, which are called magnets.*

A sentence to revise   : *Magnet dapat dibuat dengan gerak elektron dalam bahan atom tertentu yang disebut gaya magnet atau magnetik.*

Revisions proposed by students:

AL : *Gaya magnet adalah pergerakan elektron di dalam atom tertentu yang dapat membentuk magnet.*

FU : *Kemagnetan dapat dibuat oleh gerakan elektron pada atom-atom dalam bahan tertentu.*

LV : *Gaya magnet dapat dibuat dengan gerakan elektron dalam atom bahan-bahan tertentu yang disebut magnet*

From the short discussion above, we can see that learning is a process. It takes time for students to acquire both knowledge and skill in translating. Therefore, the use of peer feedback will enable them to gradually improve their competence.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of feedback is central in learning. The feedback, whether it is teacher feedback, student feedback, or peer feedback, will be meaningful if it is provided properly and efficiently. It can be done either orally or written according to the purpose and condition. It provides information about students' state of learning or performance or information for teachers about their ways of teaching. Besides, peer feedback can be used as an alternative assessment done by students to the works of their peers. More

importantly, it has a strong theoretical and pedagogical basis for students to develop their critical thinking, autonomy, and social interaction among students as well as their awareness of correct language use. In principle, the feedback can be implemented in any class as a part of teaching strategies. It can be in the form of discussion about the answer of test or quiz, the actual performance of students in speaking or writing, and assigning students to give comments or suggestions to the works of others.

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