

# Study of Excellent English Teachers' Classroom Feedback in Junior High School under the New Curriculum Reform

## -- An Analysis of Three Ministry-level Quality Lessons as an Example

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### Abstract

In this paper, the video lessons of three excellent junior high school English teachers from the National Education Resources Public Service Platform (NERSP) were selected for the study, and the teacher feedback in their classroom discourse was collected and quantitatively analyzed through classroom observation. The results showed that, in general, the excellent English teachers tended to use positive affirmative feedback in classroom feedback, and tended to choose to guide students' responses and thinking when giving positive negative feedback, and negative feedback was almost never used. It is hoped that these findings will provide positive implications for English teachers' effective use of classroom feedback.

### Keywords

Excellent English Teachers; Teacher Feedback Language; Positive Affirmative Feedback.

### 1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2011 Edition) points out that the English curriculum at the compulsory education level is both instrumental and humanistic in nature, and that English learning should be student development-oriented, highlighting students' subjectivity, and that the teaching process must conform to students' cognitive rules and focus on cultivating students' interests. With the continuous advancement and development of educational reform, researchers have increasingly emphasized the leading role of teachers and the main position of students in teaching. The ability of teachers to receive timely information from students' responses, understand their learning status, and give appropriate feedback to improve students' learning performance and interest in language learning is one of the important criteria for measuring teachers' competence. Feedback is an integral part of the teacher's discourse and an indispensable part of teacher-student interaction, and it plays an important role in creating a positive language learning environment. Therefore, it is important for the classroom feedback and research of good English teachers under the new curriculum reform to better grasp students' needs and improve teaching quality to meet the requirements of students' overall development under the core literacy. In the context of the requirements and suggestions for teachers' feedback in the new English curriculum standards for junior high school, the investigation and study of excellent teachers' feedback is exemplary and informative.

## 2. Research Design

### 2.1. Object of Study and Research Questions

In order to understand the characteristics of English teachers' feedback in junior high school classrooms under the new curriculum reform, this study used classroom observation as a research method and selected the videos of three excellent junior high school English teachers' ministerial quality lessons from the 2019 "One Teacher One Excellent Lesson" to analyze and study their classroom feedback used in the classroom. The study was conducted. In this paper, three lessons of these three teachers were observed, one for each teacher (the textbook they used was New Horizons English 1, published by Foreign Studies). Each lesson lasted 45 minutes, so the total time under study was 135 minutes. After the lesson, the recorded audio materials were transcribed into a written corpus as further discourse analysis. Specifically, the following 2 questions were studied: 1) What is the general situation of the classroom feedback discourse of junior high school excellent English teachers? 2) How do junior high school excellent English teachers use different types of classroom feedback discourse in the English classroom and the characteristics that they present?

### 2.2. Research Methodology and Research Process

In order to understand the real situation of the classroom feedback utterances of junior high school excellent English teachers under the new curriculum reform, this study used classroom observation and discourse analysis. Firstly, the relevant corpus was recorded while watching the classroom videos, and secondly, the recorded preponderance was transcribed after watching the videos, while the data related to the resulting classroom feedback utterances were quantified and counted, and then the videos were carefully observed to mark out the non-verbal feedback for corpus conversion and data counting.

## 3. Research Results and Discussion

Teachers' classroom feedback in this study was classified into four types: positive affirmative, positive negative, negative affirmative, and negative negative, with reference to the classification of teachers' feedback proposed by Kang-Ying 2011, and analyzed in terms of both verbal feedback and nonverbal feedback.

### 3.1. Overall Use of Excellent Teachers' Classroom Feedback

**Table 1.** Use of verbal-based feedback by outstanding teachers

Teachers	Positive Affirmative		Positive Negative		Negative affirmative		Negative Negative		Total
	times	Proportion	times	Proportion	times	Proportion	times	Proportion	
T1	90	96%	2	2.1%	1	1%	0	0	93
T2	85	95%	1	1.1%	2	2.2%	1	1.1%	89
T3	97	95%	3	2.9%	2	1.9%	0	0	102
Total	272	95.8%	6	2.1%	5	1.8%	1	0.3%	284

As can be seen from Table 1, the three outstanding teachers' choice of feedback phrases mainly focused on positive affirmative feedback, accounting for an average of 95.5%. Positive-negative type was the second most frequently used, with a ratio of 1.1%-2.9%; negative-affirmative and negative-negative feedback were the least frequently used. However, in general, the three types of feedback, positive-negative, negative-affirmative and negative-negative, occupy a very small percentage, almost none. In addition, as can be seen from the table above, the frequency of use of the four types of feedback in this study was compared with the data obtained from Kang-Ying's (2011) study (55%-64.2%, 15%-16.1%, 13.9%-16.3%, and 3.2%-10.7%), and it was found that the frequency of use of positive affirmative feedback was significantly higher, the

frequency of use of the last three types decreased, and the first and last three types. The difference in the frequency of use between the first and the last three categories increased. The reasons for this are: first, because in the context of the new curriculum reform, teachers are paying more and more attention to students' psychological and emotional factors and focusing on the comprehensive impact of positive feedback on students. Secondly, it is because the overall quality of teachers in this study is higher, and teachers' teaching level and teaching ability are better, so the selection and use of feedback phrases are more appropriate and in line with students' developmental needs.

In the English classroom, teachers' feedback to students is generally positive, taking into account students' psychological factors, their level and receptiveness, their encouraging and soft tone to correct students' mistakes, and their positive feedback.

**Table 2.** Use of non-verbal feedback by outstanding teachers

Teachers	Eyes		Gestures		Facial expressions		Total
	Times	Proportion	times	Proportion	Times	Proportion	
T1	3	15%	8	40%	9	45%	20
T2	6	23%	8	31%	12	46%	26
T3	8	25%	9	28%	15	47%	32

Nonverbal feedback refers to forms of feedback other than words given by the teacher to the content or behavior of students' responses in classroom communicative conversations, including glances, gestures, facial expressions, distance between interlocutors, and body movements [1]. In this study, only a small range of nonverbal feedback, i.e., three types of eyes, gestures, and facial expressions, were studied.

Teachers' nonverbal feedback plays a very important role in students' motivation and self-confidence. For example, teachers' eyes and gestures and expressions are conveying information and emotions to students and influencing their thinking and answers to questions. As can be seen from Table 2, in the English classroom, the excellent teachers all used non-verbal feedback such as expressions, gestures, and body movements to varying degrees. The non-verbal feedback choices of the three excellent teachers in the above table showed small differences. Overall, the proportion of using facial expressions feedback was the highest, and the common facial expressions feedback used by teachers included smiling or laughing, puzzled, and curious. The next highest proportion was gesture feedback, which reached 40%, and gesture feedback was often expressed as teachers applauding, giving thumbs up, demonstrating actions, and so on. Eye feedback had the lowest proportion, and its role included two aspects: firstly, it was suggestive and drew students' attention, and secondly, it had a certain deterrent effect, such as glaring. There are two main reasons for the low proportion of eye feedback from all three teachers: firstly, eye feedback is subtle and not easily perceived by students at all times, and secondly, when students face the teacher's eyes directly, they feel a certain sense of oppression, which can easily affect classroom efficiency.

### 3.2. Specific Use and Characteristics of Different Types of Classroom Feedback by Excellent English Teachers

Table 1 presents the overall situation of excellent teachers' classroom feedback use. It can be seen that in classroom teaching, excellent teachers choose positive affirmative feedback mostly, followed by positive negative feedback. To further explore the specific situation of teachers' feedback, this subsection continues to analyze the specific use of the above two types of feedback, in which positive affirmative feedback includes simple recognition, repetition, explanation, simple review, additional extension, follow-up questions, and thanks; positive-

negative feedback included restatement, implied errors, guided answers, and reassuring encouragement.

**Table 3.** Proportion of the two feedback types used (units/session)

Faculty specific feedback		T1	T2	T3	Total	Proportion
	Simple approval	7	5	8	20	7.19%
	Repeat	18	20	27	65	23.38%
	Explanation	10	7	11	28	10.07%
Active Affirmative	Simple Review	18	21	25	64	23.02%
	Additional extensions	5	6	9	20	7.19%
	Question	15	8	11	34	12.23%
	Thanks	17	18	6	41	14.75%
	Restatement	1	0	0	1	0.36%
Active	Cue error	0	1	0	1	0.36%
Negative type	Guided Answers	1	0	2	3	1%
	Consolation and encouragement	0	0	1	1	0.36%
Total		92	86	100	278	100%

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, simple repetition of students' answers in positive affirmative feedback as well as simple reviews were the most frequently used classroom feedback by the outstanding teachers. A total of 278 instances of feedback including positive affirmative and positive negative types occurred in the three teachers' classrooms, with 65 repetitions and 64 simple comments, respectively, accounting for 23.38% and 23.02%. This was followed by thanking students for their responses and continuing to ask follow-up questions, with 14.75% and 12.3%, respectively. percent; in addition there were equal percentages of additional extensions and simple acknowledgments of students' responses. The highest percentage of positive affirmative feedback with a smaller base occurred three times when the teacher guided students to think about the correct answer on their own. Thus, in general, teachers' classroom feedback was unevenly distributed, with some variation in the frequency of different types of feedback. The best teachers generally tended to use simple repetition and simple comments. The reason for this is twofold. One is that due to the limited time and tight pace of the classroom, simple repetition and simple comments on students' responses can effectively control the time and ensure the class progress while giving positive feedback to students so that more students can participate in the classroom interaction. Secondly, because classroom questions are generally simple or leave enough time for thinking, students have a high rate of correct answers, and simple repetition and review can already meet the interactive needs of students and achieve the classroom purpose.

Finally, it is worth acknowledging that from the above chart we can see that good teachers are to some extent able to consciously follow up and explain students' answers, and in the positive negative type of feedback also guide students to get the correct answers themselves and inspire them to think further.

Example 1:

T: "Next one, please!"

S: "Mad"

T: "Mad! So, what does mad mean?"

S: "Mad means crazy."

T: "So what makes you crazy?"

S: "When I get the best grade in my class, I feel crazy."

T: "You feel crazy and you feel happy right?"

S: "Yes!"

T: "OK! Thank you so much!"

In the above example, T1 asked students to use certain words to describe their moods and feelings when teaching the grammar lesson "make sb do sth. The overall summary is "repetition + follow-up questions + thanks". This student's classroom performance is more lively, and she is able to actively think about the questions asked by the teacher, and can inspire students to think and draw out more ideas when they answer the questions briefly. It can be seen that teachers are able to choose appropriate feedback methods when dealing with different students according to their own learning levels and personality traits.

Example 2.

S: "Scared."

T: "Can you spell sacred?"

S: "S-C-A-R-ED"

T: "S-C-A-R-E-D", scared! So what makes you feel scared?"

S: "When I see some scary movies."

T: "So what kind of scary movie?"

S: "I don't know the name."

T: "Oh, maybe you forget the name now, right? Ok, thank you so much."

In Example 2, T2's follow-up questions to the students' responses were complementary and enlightening, and the students were able to express themselves more through the teacher's follow-up questions, which helped to enhance their self-confidence and produced a better interactive effect. Even if the students were not able to give a specific answer to the teacher's final follow-up question at the end, the teacher was able to handle it well and express her appreciation.

In general, under the new curriculum reform, the best English teachers in junior high school tend to use positive affirmative feedback; when giving positive feedback, they tend to use the two feedback methods of table repetition + thank you and review + thank you; when using positive negative feedback, they tend to use the two feedback methods of guiding students to answer follow-up answers. At the same time, most good teachers can give feedback in a soft tone, with a smile on their face, and accompanied by thanks when answering to ensure a good and harmonious classroom atmosphere.

## 4. Research Findings and Teaching Suggestions

### 4.1. Research Findings

Through the above discussion and analysis we can find that in the context of the promotion and deepening of the new curriculum reform, teachers are also constantly reflecting on and updating their teaching concepts and teaching strategies. The overall use of teachers' feedback and text analysis show that excellent teachers attach great importance to the value and role of teachers' feedback in classroom teaching, and they are basically able to get rid of the traditional teaching model in which only the teacher is the main focus, and do not give feedback by simply determining the rightness or wrongness of the answers, and excellent teachers are able to try

to use feedback to elicit students' discourse output and promote classroom conversation, and the importance of teachers' The importance of classroom discourse is highlighted. Although different feedback phrases have different effects and impacts on learners, teachers will consciously choose appropriate feedback according to the level of the teaching audience, personality traits and teaching environment.

In positive affirmative feedback, teachers are able to give foundational recognition and response to students' responses by simply acknowledging and repeating them. Use specific, creative discourse to evaluate student responses and increase students' enthusiasm for engaging in learning. Explain and add extensions to student responses to help students expand their knowledge and understanding beyond the classroom. Try to facilitate the amount of student discourse output by asking follow-up questions to start a new round of conversation. Finally, use thank-you statements to express recognition of students' efforts to answer questions. In positive-negative feedback, the teacher guides students to rethink the question, self-correct, and break students' inherent thinking by restating, implying errors, and guiding the answer. Good teachers are also good at capturing students' nearest developmental zone. Encouraging and reassuring students who answer incorrectly maintains their self-confidence while ensuring that classroom instruction proceeds smoothly. Negative affirmative feedback and negative negative feedback are gradually replaced, and both types of feedback are used in such a way that objective answers and suggestions are given in response to objective questions, respecting students' ideas and self-confidence.

Teachers' classroom feedback is no longer simply a judgment of whether students' answers are right or wrong; the increase in feedback discourse and the richness of feedback indicate that excellent teachers are consciously trying to create authentic situational dialogues in the classroom. The frequency of thank-you feedback increased significantly, indicating that excellent teachers began to pay attention to the principle of politeness in classroom communication and tried to construct equal communication and dialogue between teachers and students.

## **4.2. Teaching Suggestions**

### **4.2.1. A Combination of Feedback Methods**

Teachers' classroom feedback should be oriented to all students, and teachers should choose different forms of classroom feedback according to the content of classroom teaching, so that the form of supplementary language and feedback content can reach unity, which is the key to good classroom interaction. However, through the above discussion and analysis we can see that excellent teacher feedback is unevenly distributed, with positive affirmative type predominating, using up to 95.5%, and the other three types using less. Although this is a relatively good phenomenon, indicating that teachers have used less denial and criticism in their feedback in the classroom, it is not conducive to students' continuous development in the long run. Encouraging students all the time can give them confidence to some extent and protect their self-esteem, but it also has the potential to make students slacken and not think. Facing students' mistakes and giving them opportunities to correct them is essential in classroom teaching.

### **4.2.2. More Use of Positive Affirmative Feedback to Promote Students' Discourse Output**

The video observation of three outstanding junior high school English teachers' classrooms shows that positive affirmative feedback is the most frequently used approach. This type of feedback meets the requirements of the new curriculum reform for teachers and students, and is conducive to the development of students' core literacy in the English classroom. In education, teachers' praise of students' merits can transform students' potential motivation into positive learning and help students improve their self-approval. Therefore, teachers should use more

positive feedback, mainly praise and encouragement, to motivate students and enhance their self-confidence in learning. Feedback stimulates students' thinking and promotes dialogue between teachers and students.

#### 4.2.3. Non-verbal Feedback Combined with Verbal Feedback

Nonverbal feedback has a very important role in middle school classroom teaching, mainly including other physical actions such as eyes, gestures and facial expressions. However, nonverbal feedback has been a feedback that teachers tend to ignore in actual teaching. Therefore, it is recommended to focus on the combination of non-verbal feedback and verbal feedback when teaching and giving feedback. The teacher should use non-verbal feedback as a hint, encouragement, and a way to get results with words. 1) Non-verbal feedback through gestures and body movements can attract students' attention without interrupting the rhythm of the class. 2) Make eye contact with students to close the distance between teachers and students, and at the same time play a role in monitoring students' classroom behavior. 3) Grasp the actual distance between the teacher and students in the classroom, and if necessary, you can close to the students, but also pay attention to the principle of politeness and leave enough psychological safety zones for the students.

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