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### **Providing feedback: English language teachers' practices at secondary level**

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#### **Abstract**

*Feedback is one of the key factors in language learning which may encourage or discourage learners in order to overcome mistakes and errors. The aim of the study is to examine the secondary level English teacher's feedback practices on student's work and student's perception to the type of feedback they receive. This research is based on the response to questionnaire and checklist from forty students of secondary level and ten English teachers at different secondary schools. Major findings of the study include that for the correction work, most of the teachers frequently follow teacher correction and some of the teachers frequently follow self-correction techniques. Ninety per cent of the students got motivated by positive especially teacher's praise and encouragement. The study shows most of the students need teacher's guidance in correcting their mistakes while learning English where teachers sometimes preferred their students to realize the mistakes themselves.*

**Keywords:** Feedback, teacher, students, positive feedback, written feedback

#### **Introduction**

The problem in using the target language to express their ideas in writing is common among English as Second Language (ESL) learners. Throughout the decades, teachers have been trying to find ways to improve second language writing instruction so that students can be proficient in their writing. One of them is by giving feedback with the assumption that students would understand the feedback and they would use the teachers' commentaries to improve their writing. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is an "information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 82). Teachers should not just encourage but say which aspects are good and why, successes as well as failures should be reported and diagnosed. Ur (1996) defines feedback as "the information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of learning task usually with the objectives of improving this performance" (p. 242). The way teacher corrects students work depends on the kind of mistakes being made and the type of activities they are talking part in, for example, the oral work, the written work, major mistakes and minor mistakes.

To be very specific, the term feedback in teaching and learning is the response given to students' mistakes and the response given to them after the evaluation of their work. The purpose of feedback provision is to aid the learners with correcting mistakes and improving

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their understanding, fluency, and accuracy in an L2 (Fallah & Nazari, 2019). Khairani and Refnaldi (2020) have said that "feedback plays an important role in the teaching-learning process, especially for the students and its aim is to encourage the students to learn actively (p. 377). Moreover, feedback has two main distinguishable components: assessment and correction. In assessment, the learner is simply informed of how well or badly he/she has performed whereas in correction, some specific information is provided on aspects of learners' performance through explanation or provision of better or other alternatives or through elicitation of these forms to the learners.

In the context of Nepal, English has been taught and learned as a foreign language. No doubt, learning a foreign or second language is not an easy task. It is a problem for the Nepalese students to learn English language both in speaking and writing. In this situation teacher's practice of providing feedback to students is essential to study. This study tried to explore the ways of giving feedback by the English teachers and student's perception on the teachers' practice of giving feedback in English language learning classroom. This study oriented to find out answers of the following research questions:

- How do teachers provide feedback to students while teaching English?
- How do the students perceive their teacher's feedback in learning English?

The findings of the study will be beneficial to those who are involved and interested in teaching and learning English as a second/foreign language directly and indirectly.

### Review of Literature

Feedback has emerged as a means to facilitate both the learning process and teaching performance. Keh (1989) has asserted that feedback is "any input from reader to writer that provides information for revision" (p. 18). Likewise, Ur. (1996) has said that "Feedback is information that is given to the learners about his/her performance" (p. 242). Feedback is any comments given by listeners, readers or viewers for the improvement and betterment of the writers or speakers output. Cohen (1985) defines feedback as "one of the more instructionally powerful and least understood features in instructional design". Feedback in general can be defined as the procedures that are used to inform a learner whether his/her instructional response is right or wrong. Winne and Butler (1994) have claimed that "feedback is information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies" (p. 5740). They have further talked about 'internal feedback' which is performed by the students themselves and 'external feedback' which is generated by the teacher in teaching learning process. It is considered that feedback is a key factor in second language teaching and learning which assists the students in learning the second language by correcting, suggesting and indicating their mistakes in oral or written form.

Moreover, feedback plays pivotal role to monitor students' learning processes in a learner-centered education system for their efficient learning. It is a very powerful tool to motivate students to learn correctly. Nicol and Macfarlane (2006) have highlighted the importance of feedback, as "it provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape their teaching" (pp.207-214). Feedback is very significant to the students to make

progress in their learning. However, it needs especially careful handling because the teachers should not embarrass a learner in front of peers or appear to favor some rather than others.

Feedback can be categorized into different types either oral or written on the basis of medium and either positive or negative. Gattullo (2000) and Harmer(2001) (as cited in AL-Fahdi, 2006) divided feedback into corrective, evaluative and strategic. Corrective feedback is one which focuses on helping learning notice and correct responses which are wrong. Evaluative feedback is related with the performance of the learners which is dominant in second and foreign language classroom. And, strategic feedback aims to offer learners and advice on what to do to improve their performance. In the same vein, positive feedback helps the students to build confidence, motivation and pleasure for improving their learning outcomes. It can be referred as verbal praise, such as 'I like it', or nonverbal cues and reinforcement from cognitive feedback, or affirmation, such as 'I understand it'. The positive feedback may take the form of praise markers such as 'ok', 'fine', 'good' and 'excellent' as well as a positive personal response. Audia and Locke (2003) have mentioned that negative feedback is not as readily available as positive feedback and most people do not want it because it threatens their self-esteem and sense of competence. Teachers' positive feedback inspires students to work on their language and set chances for themselves to practice, oppositely, the negative feedback that challenges students' involvement and participation within classroom activities.

Feedback is given to the learners through correction during oral work or written work (Ur, 1996). Harmer (2001) has talked about written feedback which include the teacher's written comments not only indicate the strength and weakness of the learner's writing but they may also assist learners in monitoring their own writing skills and specific language areas to develop further. Similarly, feedback on oral work is given orally. Written feedback is delayed whereas oral feedback occurs immediately after an error has been committed. On the other hand, a teacher's provision of oral feedback typically draws learner's attention to their erroneous utterances as they arise in communicative activities. The learner may be demotivated if they are reacted at every mistake, for that teacher should correct them without offending them for effective feedback, the teacher should consider frequency and type of correction during oral work. The teacher should take care of time while giving feedback, whether correction facilitates the language learning or disturbs it. There should be considerable time to give them feedback. Thomas and Sondergeld (2015) have suggested that feedback should be given timely or it misplaces its efficiency. Likewise, Feedback needs to be provided timely in order to make it beneficial (Richards, Bell and Dwyer, 2017).

Many scholars have carried out researches on feedback at international and national level. Fallah and Nazari (2019) have investigated L2 teachers' beliefs about different types of feedback and the potential role of experience in shaping their beliefs and have advocated self-correction is also labeled as self-revision or self-feedback, when students are asked to self-correct their writing. In a study Lamichhane (2009) has concluded that majority of teachers were found careful while using feedback so they less frequently used the negative feedback and most of the students wanted to get feedback at end of the exercise rather than on the margin. Bhandari (2007) has found that the tenth grade English teachers take feedback as means of motivation and encouraging the students. Mostly they gave positive feedback to the students and sometimes depending upon the circumstances they could not discard the role of negative feedback. The grade tenth students take any kinds of feedback positively and a way

to obtain success in learning the English language. Concerning on positive feedback in a study Reigel (2008) has found that "a student receiving a unit increase of positive feedback per minute enjoys a marked increase in the odds of achieving promotion" (p.92).

Al-Fahdi (2006) has carried out a research on "Teachers' use of Oral Feedback" to find out the types of oral feedback used by them. From this research it has been found that strategic feedback is not used very often by the teachers. Such feedback helps learners to develop skills which allow them to avoid errors in future by monitoring and checking their own performance. Dung (2004) has conducted a research to find out teacher's written feedback on the writings by the second year students at the English Department, College of Foreign Language, Vietnam National University and revealed that there existed a lot of problems concerning teacher's responding methods, their feedback focus, their frequent types and forms of feedback as well as what they have actually done to help their students process of feedback successfully. Meanwhile, the students report opinions and preferences for more effective teacher feedback, which clearly reveals the mismatch between what the teachers often give and what the students would like to get.

#### **Methods and Procedures**

This is a quantitative study which is objective in nature and it has adopted the survey method. Kerlinger (1978) has mentioned that survey research is a kind of research which studies large and small population by selecting and studying sample chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and inter relationship of social and psychological variables. In survey research, the information is collected by asking a set of pre-formulated questions in a pre-determined sequence in a structured questionnaire to a sample of individuals so as to be representative of the defined population. Glasow (2005) has stated that surveys are capable of obtaining information from a large sample of population. The survey method refers to a research method which emphasize quantitative analysis, where data are collected through questionnaire, checklist, interview methods and these data are analyzed using statistical techniques (Gable, 1994, p. 2).

The researcher applied judgmental sampling procedure of non-random sampling method to select the schools and the informants in the study for data analysis. Sample data of the study were forty students and ten teachers of secondary level English teachers of different schools in Sindhuli district. In this study, the researcher collected required data from the informants visiting the fields. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to accomplish the objectives of this study. The researcher made use of set of classroom observation checklist to measure the frequency of practices for providing feedback. The major tools of data collection from primary source were questionnaire and non-participant observation checklist. Questionnaire was designed for the students including both open-ended and close-ended questions and a check list for the teacher's observation. The data was analyzed and interpreted using statistical tools.

#### **Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

This section deals with the analysis of data in tables and charts for clear outcomes. The collected raw data are converted into percentage to analyze and interpret descriptively to derive the findings.

**Response from the students**Table 1. *Response from the Students*

Responses	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Ask them to check once again	80%	20%	-	-
Point their mistakes	90%	10%	-	-
Scold	-	30%	40%	10%
Write suggestions on the margin	50%	30%	-	-

The table 1 shows that 80% of the teachers frequently asked the students to check their mistakes once again and 20% of them asked sometimes only. Similarly, in 90% of the classes, the teachers frequently pointed the students' mistakes, 10% teachers pointed out their mistakes only sometimes. Likewise, 30% of the teachers were found to scold the students sometimes and 40% of them rarely scolded the students for their mistakes and 10% of the teachers never scolded the students. Table 1 similarly shows that 50% of the teachers responded the students' mistakes by writing the suggestions on the margin frequently and 30% of them only sometimes wrote suggestions on the margin. This shows that almost all of the teachers realized that giving feedback is important part of learning.

**Techniques Used by Teachers**Table 2. *Response to the students*

Techniques Used by Teachers	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Teacher correction	70%	30%	-	-
Self correction	40%	50%	10%	-
Peer correction	20%	60%	20%	-

The table 2 demonstrates that in 70% classes, teachers themselves frequently corrected their students' mistakes. Similarly, in 50% classes, teachers sometimes asked the students to correct themselves whereas in 20% classes the teachers rarely asked the students to take help with their friends. However, the statistics shows that majority of the teachers use both teacher correction and peer correction.

**Teacher's Responses to Mistakes**Table 3. *Teacher's Responses to mistakes*

Teacher's responses to mistakes	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Does not react at all	-	30%	10%	40%
Indicates there is mistake but does not provide further information	10%	10%	50%	10%
Says what is wrong and provides a model of acceptable version	60%	30%	-	10%
Provides an explanation of why the mistake was made and how to avoid it	60%	30%	-	-

The table 3 indicates that in 40% classes the teachers reacted on student's mistakes, in 10% classes they rarely did not react, in 30% classes they sometimes did not react. Similarly, in 50% classes, the teachers rarely indicated student's mistakes and did not provide further information. It reveals that in 60% classes the teachers frequently told about student's mistakes

and provided models of acceptable versions. Regarding the situation, it is found that in 60% classes the teacher provided explanation of mistake frequently.

**Types of Feedback Used by Teachers**

Table 4. *Types of Feedback Used by Teachers*

Types of feedback used by teachers		Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Positive feedback		100%	-	-	-
Negative feedback		-	30%	20%	30%
Oral feedback	In oral work	80%	10%	-	-
	In written work	60%	40%	-	-
Written Feedback (in written work)		40%	20%	-	-

The table 4 displays that the teacher used positive feedback frequently in 100% classes. Similarly, in 20% classes rarely and in 30% classes, teachers sometimes used negative feedback. Concerning on oral feedback and written feedback it shows that in 80% classes they frequently used oral feedback in oral work, and there were no teachers who never used oral feedback in written work. Similarly, in 60% classes the teachers frequently used oral feedback in written work; in 40% classes they sometimes used oral feedback in written work. Similarly, in 40% classes teachers frequently used written feedback in written work.

**Analysis of the Students' Views**

The student's views towards the feedback they receive are shown in different sections and sub-sections which are mentioned below:

**Techniques to Correct Mistakes**

Here, students were asked which technique you liked to be followed to correct your mistakes. The responses of the students are given in the table below.

Table 5. *Techniques to Correct Mistakes*

S.N.	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1	Teacher- correction	21	52.5
2	Self-correction	13	32.5
3	Peer-correction	6	15

The table 5 illustrates that majority of the informants i.e. 52.5 percent liked teacher-correction techniques whereas only 32.50 percent students wanted to use self-correction techniques and 6 percent students wanted peer-correction. This maintains that almost all of the students want teacher's guidance in correcting their mistakes while learning English.

**Location to Write Feedback**

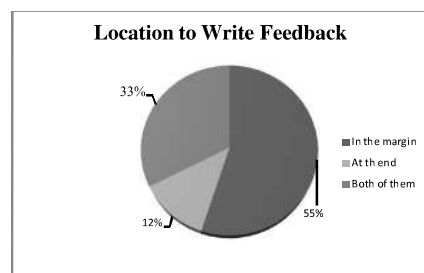


Figure 1. Location to Write Feedback

Figure 1 represents that the students like to receive feedback in the margin than at the end. But, 13 percent of them said that they preferred both according to the error they committed.

**Student's Response in Understanding Teacher's Feedback**

Table6. *Student's Responses to Understand Teacher's Feedback*

S.N.	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	34	85
2	No	6	15

The table 6 shows that 85 percent of the students replied that they understand the feedback given by their teachers easily whereas 15 percent of them said that they do not understand it easily.

**Ways of Giving Feedback**

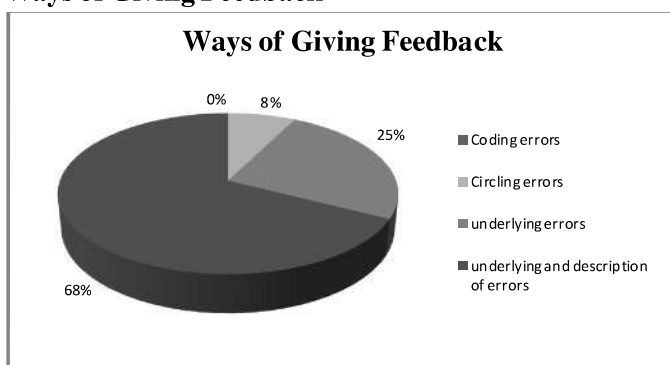


Figure 2. Ways of Giving Feedback

The figure 2 illustrates that 7 percent of the students receive feedback by circling the errors, 25 per cent got it by under lying. 68 percent of the students get feedback in both ways by under lying and describing errors.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

**Conclusion**

The finding shows that a large number of the teachers frequently asked the students to check their mistakes once again and 40% of them rarely scold the students for their mistakes. Likewise, half numbers of the teachers respond the students' mistakes by writing the suggestions on the margin frequently, and almost all of the teachers realize that giving feedback is important part of learning English. Almost all the English teachers answer the student's query politely and are alert on student's mistakes so that they react their mistakes, either verbally or non-verbally. While reacting to their mistakes, a few teachers do not provide explanation frequently. Only in some of the cases they provide explanation and acceptable version of the mistakes. Most of the students are motivated in learning English by the teacher's praises, encouragements, complements, positive gestures, remarks, etc. 30 per cent of the teachers could not completely discard the role of negative feedback which ought to be provided mildly and indirectly in some circumstances. For example, 'no', 'not good', 'wrong answer', 'incorrect'. Sixty percent of the teachers frequently underlined the errors of the students in their written work. Eighty per cent of the teachers gave oral feedback in oral work but they sometimes gave oral feedback

in written work too. On the student's opinion it is found that the teachers should correct their mistakes and provide feedback to improve their writing and to enhance their level of knowledge. They mentioned that 68 percent of them get feedback in both ways by under lying and describing errors.

### Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations have been made for providing feedback while teaching English language.

- Teachers can provide students effective feedback, which should be fast, focused, relevant to assessment criteria, developmental and personal to the student.
- It can help the student identify where they might focus their efforts for future development and assessment; to identify where they might get further help.
- The school administration can utilize the findings of the study to provide feedback to their students by orienting the teachers about it.
- This might be helpful in minimizing student's mistake in learning English language, teachers should follow both teacher and self-correction techniques.
- Teachers are recommended to explain their responding strategies before applying them because many students have problem with understanding what teachers actually say.
- Negative feedback though cannot be as productive as positive feedback, has some role in teaching and learning English language. Teachers should use negative feedback indirectly depending upon the situation.
- The findings may be applicable to motivate and reward the students for teaching English.
- Further, the researcher can study feedback as a tool to make the students have deep approach to learning English. Is recommendation part better to be put before conclusion?

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