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TYPES OF ORAL FEEDBACK: REASONS BEHIND THE CHOICES

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Declaration

“I hereby declare that I have developed and written the enclosed thesis entirely by myself and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text. Any thoughts or quotations which were inferred from these sources are clearly marked as such.”

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study investigates the types of interactional feedback used in an English lesson in a normal Malaysian classroom. The focus is on how many different types of oral feedback, implicit and explicit, are provided and the reasons for choosing a particular type of feedback to use in a context in classroom teaching. The participant is an English language teacher in a secondary school in Batu Gajah. Thirty two 15 year old intermediate English proficiency students whom she teaches were part of the study. Transcripts of 5 video taped classroom observations, 2 semi-structured interviews and remarks from field notes were used to analyse. The findings of the research shows the teacher has used five types; repetition, elicitation, recast, reformulation and explicit correction, during for duration of the five observations. In addition, the interviews and field notes have shown that teacher has chosen diverse types at different junctures for reasons such as persuasion, immediate correction of form and meaning, save time, confirmation of an answer and prompting for answers. The nature of feedback puts forth several implications and considerations to different groups of people while they are within the educational setting. Each group would use the feedback in ways useful to the group.



ABSTRAK

Kajian deskriptif ini adalah untuk mendapatkan maklumbalas interaksional mengenai pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di dalam bilik darjah di Malaysia. Fokus kajian adalah untuk mengetahui jenis perbezaan dari segi maklumbalas lisan, implisit dan eksplisit yang diperolehi dan apakah tujuan khusus jenis maklumbalas yang dipilih untuk digunakan dalam pengajaran. Sampel kajian merupakan seorang guru Bahasa Inggeris di sebuah sekolah menengah di Batu Gajah. Tiga puluh dua pelajar Bahasa Inggeris yang berumur 15 tahun, berkemahiran sederhana juga merupakan sebahagian daripada kajian ini. 5 transkrip video pencerapan bilik darjah, 2 sesi temubual separuh struktur dan catatan dari kajian digunakan untuk dianalisa. Kajian ini menunjukkan guru menggunakan lima cara untuk mendapatkan maklumbalas iaitu pengulangan, elisitasi, 'recast', 'reformulation' dan pembetulan eksplisit semasa lima pencerapan yang dibuat. Tambahan pula sesi temubual dan catatan telah menunjukkan bahawa guru telah memilih untuk mempelbagaikan maklumbalas dalam keadaan yang berbeza seperti pujukan, pembetulan serentak tatabahasa dan makna, untuk menjimatkan masa untuk mendapat kepastian jawapan. Implikasi dari dapatan kajian ini berbeza mengikut kumpulan yang menggunakan data. Warga pendidik serta pelajar dan sekolah boleh menggunakan dapatan mengikut keperluan masing-masing.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL - English as second language

TL - Target Language



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the background of the research. It then addresses the statement of problem. The next two sections discuss the objective and rationale of the research respectively. The research questions are presented, followed by the significance of the present research. The following section states the limitations of the research. The chapter ends with the definition of terms followed by the overview of the research.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Feedback by teachers is by far and wide seen as vital for encouraging and to infuse learning in ESL and EFL classrooms (LI Mi-mi, 2009). The practice of providing feedback has taken a different perspective and changed in line with new discoveries and development in teaching and learning. In the sixties when the approaches used were the Grammar-Translation, Direct Method and Audiolingualism, errors were not tolerated by the teachers and therefore the tolerance levels for errors were at its minimal (Hedge, 2000). Since most teachers pay great attention to form and accuracy (Harmer, 2007) in the traditional English classroom, providing feedback and correction is a common practice. Immediate



feedback, orally or written, would be given. These approaches were derived from the behaviorists who also emphasized on positive reinforcement (Harmer, 2007).

In the current communicative approach, learners learn to interact using the target language. Therefore the focus is on the ability to use the target language in various contexts, with occasional focus on the language (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999).

Feedback builds students' self-confidence in the English language and there are many options available to the teacher in giving feedback, however teachers are not wholly clear about the choices that they make while teaching (Hamed Mohammed, 2009).



It is a difficult decision for teachers to make on how and what kind of feedback are to be provided (Hedge, 2000) to the learners. To teachers giving feedback to learners help them know their performance level and help them improve their performance. On the other hand, teachers' enthusiasm in providing feedback can also dampen the acquisition process and the students' motivation to learn the language (Harmer, 2007). The ways teachers respond to learners with their feedback can have an overriding impact on learners' attitude (Tsui, 1985 as cited in Hamed Mohammed, 2009). Therefore teachers will benefit better with knowledge on the types of feedback and the choice that they have made on the particular feedback.





1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Studies have been carried out over the past decades on classroom discourse with much attention to feedback, corrective and non corrective ones. However in the Malaysian context there is not enough evidence on feedback, types and uses especially at the classroom level. In practice it is clear that teachers provide response yet teachers are not totally clear on the choice of response they use in their ESL classroom (Hamed Mohammed, 2009).

This study aims to first identify the types of feedback teachers provide to their students in an English classroom. Then it will study the reasons for their choices on the teachers' responses. This is to ultimately enable the teachers to provide more constructive feedback to help in students' acquisition of language



1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The finding from this study anticipates in assisting teachers during their teaching and learning process in our Malaysian ESL classrooms. Empirical evidence is necessary to understand how this practice is carried out in ESL classrooms. The description of the type of feedback by ESL teachers can serve as significant answers to the doubts learners have. This research can help teachers be conscious on the types of feedback that will be required at different phases of the teaching and learning process.



1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The intention of this study is to describe the practice of English teachers in providing feedback to learners of the target language, particularly in providing feedback to flawed utterances. This practice refers to the types of feedback used in the teaching and learning process. It would examine the frequency of the different types of feedback provided.

Secondly, the present is to determine the reasons that govern the use of different types of feedback. These reasons could be pedagogical or philosophical. The study is aimed to verify the types of feedback and the reasons for the choice of feedback opted by English teachers.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the types of interactional feedback used by teachers in ESL teaching and learning?
2. Why do ESL teachers use these forms of feedback?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is significant to in service teachers, pre service teachers and students. Teachers could enhance their teaching and learning process in their ESL classrooms. The study would help in the 'communicative effectiveness of the students' in the English language (Stannard, 2008). Teachers also benefit from



feedback because it motivates their students to continue learning and acquire more and more language skills, based on the responses from the instructor. As a result, teachers may be more satisfied in their task of instructing less experienced language users. This study will also benefit other language educators by knowing what types of feedback to be used. The choice of their feedback will depend on their students and personal perspective of the students' needs.

Feedback allows students to progress from one plane to another in language learning. Feedback will provide deeper understanding of their language achievements and areas where they need to progress in. Feedback would teach the social and cultural norms associated with using English to these students. As suggestions are also considered as feedback, it will assist students to use appropriate language variety, register and genre according to context. The students will improve in their social purposes and academic achievement in future.

1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This research faced constraints in three aspects. Firstly, the participant could only be observed for five times. The participant only allowed the researcher to carry out the observation within a few weeks. Moreover, some lessons could not be observed due to other activities that were going on in school.

Secondly, this research only examines feedback given on students' oral production, but not on written work.





Thirdly, this research is a single case study. The participant is not a representative of all ESL teachers in Malaysia to make generalization of the results. However, these results of the research do not aim to be generalized.

Finally, due to time constraint, only one interview was allowed by the participant. The participant's work schedule kept her out of school quite often and this disabled the researcher to carryout according to stipulated plan.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

i Oral feedback – oral feedback entails comments or information learners receive during the process of teaching and learning to accomplish the language task from the teacher or other peers. Feedback is telling learners about their progress and guiding them to areas for improvement and it can be oral or written.

ii Corrective feedback - Negative or corrective feedback serves to change behavior that is inappropriate or ineffective and in this study is the language proficiency. It is a kind of repair done when learners utter or write in the target language inappropriately, both in form and content.

iii Non-corrective – positive or non corrective feedback is feedback on elements and evidences possible to be used in the target language. It is said to be descriptive in nature and is important for second language acquisition (Krashen, 1997).

1.9 SUMMARY

To sum up this chapter, the researcher has stated underlying reasons for the study as well as the significance, scope and organization of the whole paper with a view





to making it easier to access and follow. The participation of the teacher in the use of feedback and its different types together with the choice used during the teaching and learning process is expected to provide information for further use. The lack of studies in this area in the Malaysian secondary school context is the underlying reason for this study. The next chapter discusses the literature review and theoretical framework for this research.

