

*Teachers' positive and negative oral feedback patterns
and their discursal realization:
The case of four communicative EFL classes*

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Abstract

Language teaching research has substantiated the significance of feedback provision for the process of second language acquisition (SLA). This case study was an attempt to sketch four Iranian university English language instructors' most frequently applied patterns of positive and negative oral feedback and their discursal realizations in four BA-level communicative classes (two "Reading comprehension" and two "Speaking and Listening"). Transcripts totaling 10.16 hours of classroom interaction were analyzed using a corpus analysis approach. Coding was conducted manually from initial coding involving feedback moves' detection, through axial coding involving second-order categorization, to selective coding involving positive and negative feedback moves' designation. Codes were assigned with reference to the existing literature on teacher feedback types as well as the data's idiosyncratic features, yielding a categorization exclusive to the present study. The results present the model as well as the frequency, distribution, and discursal realization features of the 13 detected positive and negative feedback strategies. The findings indicated an overwhelming tendency for teachers to apply *recast* in the corrective feedback category, and *acceptance* in the positive feedback category; however, the teacher participants used a limited discursive repertoire to realize the various positive and negative feedback categories. The study has important implications regarding the necessity to distinguish between teacher oral feedback functions and their realization patterns in discourse.

Keywords: discursal realization; interaction; oral feedback; positive feedback; negative feedback

1. Introduction

The study of various aspects of classroom interaction, teacher feedback included, can be thought of as the first step in investigating the nature and effectiveness of the interactive processes at work in the language classroom. According to Walsh (2006), classroom discourse can, to a large extent, determine the learning outcome, which makes its investigation an important endeavor. Given this, the study of teacher feedback has gained salience over the last two decades both in theory and in practice, though the distribution of the related studies is skewed toward the error treatment rather than the positive feedback end of the continuum.

Theoretically, the role of negative feedback in interlanguage (IL) restructuring and enhancing metalinguistic awareness has been acknowledged in Swain's (1985) comprehensible output hypothesis, Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis, and Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis, among others. Postulating in essence that mere exposure to the target language is not sufficient for the development of L2 communicative competence, such hypotheses place a premium on interlocutors' explicit or implicit feedback and learners' internal feedback as a means of enhancing L2 learning. Practically, many a research project has attempted to capture the nature of EFL and ESL teachers' classroom error treatment and positive feedback, both oral and written, in terms of the frequency and distribution of implicit and explicit negative feedback (e.g., Maolida, 2013), modeling and pattern-finding through observational studies (e.g., Ellis, 2010; Irawan & Salija, 2017; Lyster & Ranta, 1997, 2013; Reigel, 2005), and the acquisitional significance of different feedback types, both short-term by studying learner uptake and long-term through the longitudinal study of learner intake and IL structural changes (e.g., Muhsin, 2016). Feedback, as operationalized in the present study, refers to the teacher's implicit or explicit response to learners' utterances, indicating either approval of content or form, termed "positive feedback," or disapproval of content or form, termed "negative feedback."

The existing literature on teacher feedback has generally failed to demarcate the functions of different feedback types from their discursal realizations. To exemplify the point, some categorizations (see Lyster & Ranta, 1997) include repetition as a feedback type, for which Walsh (2006) enumerates three so-called "functions:" "reiteration of the student's contribution for the benefit of the rest of the class; remodeling with more appropriate intonation or sentence stress; a confirmation check" (p. 47). Upon closer scrutiny, however, one would realize that the first and the third of these are feedback functions, while the second is related to the discursal features of the feedback strategy. In an attempt to address this research gap, the present study was designed to provide a frequency account of different positive and negative feedback strategies employed

by the teacher participants in relation to the total number of teacher feedback moves, and sketch their discursal realizations. Accordingly, three research questions were formulated:

1. What are the main types of feedback provided by instructors in communicatively-oriented university English language classes?
2. Is there a significant difference between the frequencies of occurrence of the different positive and negative feedback types provided?
3. What are the main discursal features of the different feedback types provided?

2. Background

The study of classroom interaction “where the teacher is the only proficient speaker and interacts with a large number of learners” (Spada & Lightbown, 2009, p. 159) contributes to the understanding of L2 classroom processes, teacher feedback included. Theoretically, the study of classroom interaction in the context of meaning-focused communicative activities finds support in “transfer appropriate hypothesis,” which posits an enhanced transferability to spontaneous oral production for contextualized language use (see Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013). The classic epitome of interaction patterns based on classroom discourse analysis is Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) three-move initiation – response – follow-up (IRF) model, though it has been criticized for failing to capture the variance of classroom interaction patterns. The present study is a fine-grained analysis of the follow-up or feedback move, though not necessarily as part of IRF patterns.

Teacher feedback research can be traced back to the 1970s. Such research has mainly addressed types and effects of written corrective feedback on language learners’ writing (e.g., Kao & Reynolds, 2020; Niu & You, 2020; Rouhi, Dibah, & Mohebbi, 2020), rather than on L2 learners’ oral communication attempts (see Li, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006 for a review). This is while oral corrective feedback, particularly of the elicitive type, has been shown to have a significant effect on language learners’ willingness to communicate (Zare, Gooniband Shooshtari, & Jalilifar, 2020). This finding accrues to the significance of investigating teacher feedback moves in communicative language classes. Moreover, models of teacher feedback have mainly targeted negative feedback, and there are only few which have sketched positive feedback types, as well (e.g., Coca, 2020; Reigel, 2005). The predominance of corrective, rather than positive, feedback can be attributed to initially serious, though gradually waning, controversy over the acquisitional significance of such feedback moves and the taken-for-granted benefits of positive feedback for both

L1 and L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2010; Li, 2010). While there is much more research evidence for the learning significance of error correction and corrective feedback than against it (e.g., Ellis, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 2013; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004), counterarguments have been rotating around ELT's growing concern with learners' affect since the 1970s, with some claiming that errors should not be corrected at all, and that the only legitimate teacher feedback type is positive feedback (e.g., Truscott, 1999, 2007). Along the same lines, Schwartz (1993) stated that it is only positive evidence or modeling (as opposed to corrective feedback) that would contribute to the formation and restructuring of L2 grammars. This viewpoint has not always been endorsed by research evidence. For one, Wong and Waring's (2009) study of teachers' use of explicit positive assessments such as "very good" showed such assessments to be more of an inhibitive than a facilitative role in learners' ongoing language learning efforts. Taking a moderate position, Brown (2001) suggested a balance between positive and negative feedback, as, according to him, too much corrective feedback can inhibit learners' communication attempts, and too much positive feedback can lead to fossilization of errors.

Classifications of teacher feedback moves have been mainly functionally oriented. As a classic, not very systematic, attempt at categorizing corrective feedback, Fanselow (1977) identified sixteen error correction techniques including: no treatment; acceptance of response containing error; setting the task again with no new information provided; provision of correct response orally; repeating of the incorrect utterance with rising intonation; and saying "no" or "uh-uh," among others. An inspection of the feedback categories brings to light the model's failure to distinguish between feedback types (the first four) and their discursal realizations (the last two).

A more frequently cited study is Lyster and Ranta's (1997) investigation of corrective feedback and learner uptake in four French immersion classrooms in Canada. The study yielded two general categories of teacher feedback: reformulations and prompts, with the former subsuming recast and explicit correction, and the latter including elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and repetition. Prompts had earlier been termed "negotiation of form" in Lyster (1998). Sheen and Ellis (2011) further distinguished reformulations and prompts in terms of their being implicit or explicit, though this distinction is stated to be continual rather than dichotomous. Conversational recasts are put forth as implicit reformulations, and repetitions and clarification requests as implicit prompts. On the other hand, didactic recasts and explicit corrections are designated in the model as explicit reformulations, and metalinguistic clues, elicitation and paralinguistic clues as explicit prompts.

Corrective feedback can provide negative evidence (an indication of the learner's language problem), positive evidence (a model of the target language),

or both. To exemplify, recasts, if perceived by learners as corrective feedback, can be thought of as providing both negative and positive evidence, which is very much the case with didactic recasts addressing the form of language learners' utterances. On the other hand, positive feedback, as defined in the present study in the tradition of Reigel (2005), is an indication of the acceptability and correctness of learners' utterances both form- and content-wise. It is positive feedback, rather than positive evidence, that the study investigated.

Reigel (2005) categorized positive oral feedback in the L2 classroom into (a) paralinguistic strategy (i.e., teachers' confirmatory nonverbal cues), (b) linguistic strategy (i.e., teachers' confirmatory verbal responses), and (c) praise markers, such as "fine" and "good." Reigel further asserted that praise markers can have an evaluative function as well. Accordingly, both praise and evaluation can be linguistically encoded in the same way. This makes a case for positing a distinction between linguistic (rather than non- or paralinguistic) feedback types and their linguistic and discursal realizations. Adapting Reigel's (2005) classification of positive feedback strategies, Maolida's (2013) categorization marries feedback functions and their associated discursal moves. Positive feedback strategies, in his study, fall into five groups: (a) paralinguistic strategy, (b) praise markers, (c) paralinguistic strategy + linguistic strategy, (d) paralinguistic strategy + praise marker, and (e) paralinguistic strategy + linguistic strategy + praise marker.

As for the frequency of occurrence of different feedback types, research has majorly focused on corrective feedback. Recasts, both conversational and didactic, have been reported to be most frequent, and explicit corrections least frequent. Frequency, however, is mediated by the peculiarities of different instructional settings and learning targets (Izumi, 1998; Iwashita, 2003; Li, 2010; Lyster & Mori, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 2013). As an example, Lyster (1998) found recasts to be more common with grammatical and phonological errors, whereas lexical errors tended to invite more negotiation of form episodes.

Given the reliance of feedback literature on corrective feedback and the context-dependency of the occurrence of various feedback strategies, this study investigated the nature of English language teachers' positive and negative oral feedback during communicative activities to determine the main feedback strategies and their discursal (linguistic) realizations.

3. Methodology

This case study employed a sequential exploratory design, involving an initial qualitative phase and a subsequent quantitative phase. The initial qualitative phase involved the qualitative analysis of teacher feedback moves in an attempt to build them up into a model of positive and negative oral feedback types in

four communicative classes. Coding and categorization was followed by the quantitative analysis of the frequency distribution of the thirteen posited feedback types. This section provides an account of the participants, corpus, and procedure of the study.

3.1. Participants

To answer the research questions, four male university English language instructors, running "Speaking and Listening" ($N = 2$) and "Reading Comprehension" ($N = 2$) courses with BA English-major students ($N = 123$) at a state university in Iran took part in the study. They were all PhD candidates of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), ranging in age from 26 to 34. Moreover, they had all taught General English and BA-level English-major subject courses at different language schools and universities for more than 5 years.

3.2. Corpus of the study

To meet the purpose of the study, an audio-recorded corpus of 10.16 hours of eight mid-semester class sessions of two "listening and speaking" (LS) and two "reading comprehension" (RC) courses was collected and transcribed by the researcher (LS1: 2.45 hours; LS2: 2.40 hours; RC1: 2.35 hours; RC2: 2.16 hours). These four courses were selected subsequent to (a) an initial informal survey with the instructors of seven such courses, (b) an analysis of their syllabi, and (c) a one-session observation by the researcher to make sure they met the following criteria:

1. Teachers promoted a positive collaborative attitude in the class.
2. The majority of students were collaborative.
3. Instruction was task-based.
4. Tasks were majorly meaning-focused with occasional focus on form.

These conditions were derived from Lightbown and Spada (2006), and set out to make sure the corpus would contain ample oral feedback moves, targeting the phonological, lexical, syntactic and content-related aspects of students' utterances.

3.3. Procedure

Upon the consent of the four instructors, a total of 10.16 hours of classroom interaction was recorded with each of the teacher participants carrying an MP4 player with him in the designated class session. They were totally unaware of the purpose of the study until after the recording so as to cancel out reactivity

effect. The data were then fully transcribed by the researcher, and initially coded for "teacher feedback" moves in general. In a subsequent axial coding phase, different positive and negative feedback categories were detected and labeled. Progressive axial coding also revealed that the data were saturated in terms of feedback types, and no further data collection was necessary. Finally, selective coding involved the designation of the assigned axial codes to "positive feedback" and "negative feedback" categories constituting the model. In order to ensure inter-coder agreement, transcriptions of the first three hours of the data were coded by a second rater, following the explication of the model. A statistically significant Cohen's Kappa value of .78 indicated a high inter-coder agreement.

The study involved both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the former to answer the first and third research questions (i.e., to sketch a model of teacher feedback and determine how teachers realized its different constituents in discourse), and the latter to answer the second research question (i.e., to find out if there were any significant differences in the frequencies of occurrence of the constituents of the model). Having come up with a model comprising thirteen positive and negative feedback types, the number of teacher turns, teacher feedback moves and instances of each of the feedback categories was determined. In some cases, a teacher turn consisted of more than one (and sometimes a succession of) feedback instance(s). The frequencies of each of the feedback categories were then subjected to three chi-square analyses: one for positive feedback categories, one for negative feedback categories, and one for both positive and negative feedback categories to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between them in terms of frequency. The next step was the qualitative analysis in the form of the fine-grained analysis of the different discourse strategies teachers drew upon in their articulation of each of the feedback types, where it applied.

3.4. Results

To answer the first research question, classroom interactions were transcribed and coded for the different feedback categories the teacher participants provided orally in response to the students' utterances, targeting four aspects of such utterances: phonological, lexical, grammatical and content (the fourth being particularly applicable to the two reading comprehension classes). Following the basics of conversation analysis (Flowerdew, 2012), the researcher did not rely on an analytical feedback model in the analysis of the interactions. However, it must be admitted that the analytical feedback categories, when applicable, were labeled after the existing literature, and those occurring exclusively in the present study's corpus (e.g., comprehension demonstration) were labeled

by the researcher as such. Figure 1 shows the teacher feedback model exclusive to the present study. Following the categorization of teacher feedback types, the teacher participant turns were counted, using grammar, context and prosody or intonation as the three determinant factors (Sidnell, 2010). Moreover, those teacher turns, comprising more than one turn completion unit (TCU) and involving more than one feedback type were coded for the different feedback categories they included. Taking these criteria into account, the number of teacher turns in the dataset totaled 1339. Out of these, 403 were identified as teacher feedback

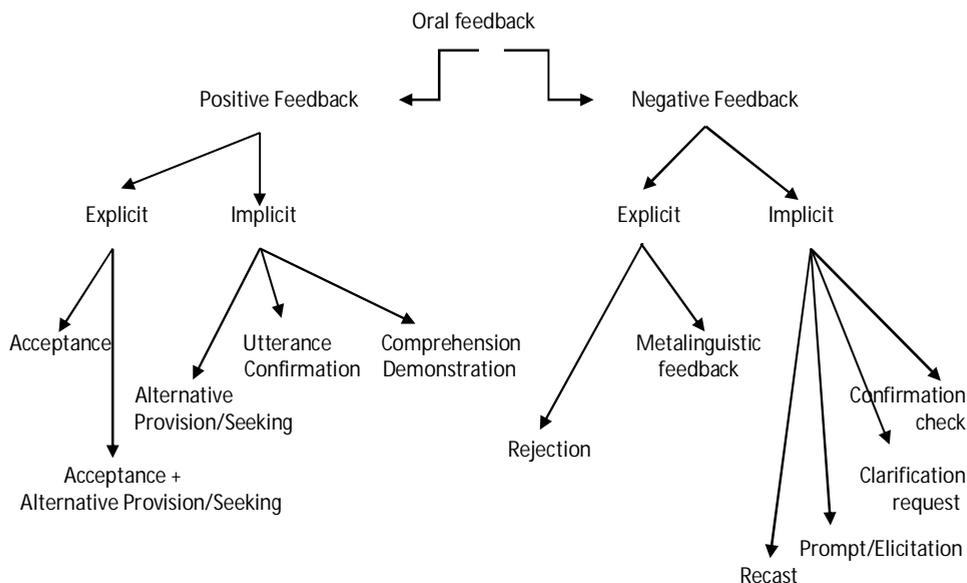


Figure 1 Categorization of teacher participants' oral feedback in communicative classes

turns, with some including more than one feedback type, thus the 516 teacher feedback moves in the data set. Examples of the different feedback types constituted in the model as well as a short definition of each are provided in this section (with T denoting "teacher" and S denoting "student:")

(A) *Positive: Explicit*

- a. *Acceptance*. The teacher shows explicit approval of the student's utterance, mainly when the utterance is totally acceptable:

T: What is Sonata?

S: a composition of music that is written in a paper

T: Aha, right.

- b. *Acceptance + Alternative provision.* Explicit approval of the student's utterance is followed by a teacher-provided alternative, regarding the form or content of the utterance; this strategy is employed when the utterance is fairly acceptable:

S: ... and also it says it's like an ape.

T: Yeah, very good. It resembles an ape.

- c. *Acceptance + Alternative seeking.* Explicit approval of the student's utterance is followed by the teacher seeking an alternative from other students; this strategy is employed when the utterance is only fairly acceptable:

T: What about the word "purported?"

S1: artificial

T: Artificial, right. (turning to other students) What else can we say?

S2: fake

(B) Positive: Implicit

- a. *Alternative provision.* The teacher shows his approval implicitly by providing an alternative, regarding the form or content of the student's utterance. This is usually accompanied by the teacher's approval nod:

T: What about "massacre?"

S: To kill a lot of people who are not defended.

T: to attack, massacre, to assault

- b. *Alternative seeking.* The teacher shows his approval implicitly by seeking an alternative from other students addressing the whole class, regarding the form or content of the student's utterance:

T: What does "germinate" mean?

S1: It means to grow.

T: Or to?

S2: to increase

- c. *Utterance confirmation.* The teacher confirms his/her utterance implicitly, mainly through repeating it and nodding as approval at the same time:

T: ... Answer the next question, please.

S: The word "Sapiens" is closest in meaning to: "human."

T: human

- d. *Comprehension demonstration.* The teacher shows comprehension of the student's utterance, especially when he himself is not sure about the answer; this feedback strategy is exclusive to reading classes where students explain part of the text or their answers:

T: Is it H? Why is it H? Why not B? What is H? (The teacher reads the sentence)

S: ... B says what is stated before that.

T: Aha. This one happened previously, ha? You mean this.

(C) Negative: Explicit

- a. *Rejection.* The teacher explicitly rejects the form or content of the student's utterance:

T: Yes, your baby, yes, could be a baby...

S: Because of its intelligence.

T: No, no, because it is filled with so many applications.

- b. *Rejection + Metalinguistic feedback.* The teacher's explicit rejection of the student's utterance is followed by some metalinguistic comment; this feedback strategy is only provided when "form," rather than "content," is concerned:

S: (The student is reading) ... it is housed /hɑust/ in

T: No, no, housed /hɑuzd/. The noun is /hɑus/, and the verb is /hɑuz/.

(D) Negative: Implicit

- a. *Recast.* The teacher provides a corrective reformulation of the student's utterance in the course of interaction, regarding either form or content:

(on pronunciation)

S: perfectionism (with the primary stress on "tion")

T: perfectionism, perfectionism (with the primary stress on "fec")

(on word choice)

S: ... in near alleys, there are lots of malls...

T: nearby alleys

- b. *Prompt.* The teacher tries to attract the student's attention to the erroneous part of his/her utterance to elicit the correct alternative from him/her:

S: I told to everyone ...

T: You told TO everyone?

S: I told everyone.

- c. *Clarification request.* The teacher asks the student to elaborate on his/her utterance when it is not satisfying either form-wise or content-wise:

T: What does the paragraph imply about the plan?

S: It is something like a blueprint that has physical particples, chemical particples.

T: Can you elaborate on that?

- d. *Confirmation check.* The teacher restates the student's utterance in his own words and checks it with the student:

S: *It's talking about job, about the attractivity of the job.*

T: *"Attraction," you mean?*

S: *Yes, attraction.*

Having categorized the teachers' oral feedback types, the quantitative phase of data analysis was carried out to answer the second research question as to whether there was a significant difference between the frequencies of occurrence of the different feedback types constituting the model. This step was also taken as a validity check of the model. To this end, instances of each of the feedback categories were counted (see Table 1) and subjected to three chi-square analyses to test variables' independence: one for positive feedback, one for negative feedback, and one for all the feedback categories, both positive and negative. Table 2 contains the output of these three analyses. The results indicated that in all three cases there were significant differences between the frequencies of occurrence of the feedback categories spelled out in the model (*chi-square* = 129.06; $p < .05$ for negative feedback; *chi-square* = 205.75; $p < .05$ for positive feedback; *chi-square* = 378.93; $p < .05$ for all the 13 feedback strategies). Therefore, the second question as to whether there are any significant differences between the frequencies of occurrence of the different feedback types contained in the model is answered in the positive.

Table 1 Simple frequencies of oral feedback strategies

Feedback type	Positive						
	Explicit			Implicit			
	e	Acceptance +Alternative provision	Acceptance +Alternative Seeking	Alternative seeking	Alternative provision	Utterance confirmation	Comprehension Demonstration
Frequency (out of 516)	69	13	7	10	17	61	47
Feedback type	Negative						
	Explicit			Implicit			
	Rejection	Metalinguistic feedback	Recast	Prompt /elicitation	Clarification request	Confirmation check	
Frequency (out of 516)	12	13	127	74	41	25	

Table 2 Chi-squares for positive and negative oral feedback strategies

Feedback strategies	Positive and negative feedback strategies	Positive feedback strategies	Negative feedback strategies
<i>Chi-Square</i>	378.93	129.06	205.75
<i>df</i>	12	6	5
<i>Asymp. Sig.</i>	.00	.00	.00

Table 3 contains the observed and expected frequencies as well as the residuals of the thirteen feedback categories, subjected to *chi*-square analyses. As displayed in the table, *recast* has the highest positive residual. That is to say, this type of feedback has been used more than expected. This is followed by *prompt*, *acceptance*, *utterance confirmation*, *comprehension demonstration*, *clarification request*.

Table 3 Observed and expected frequencies and residuals for positive and negative oral feedback strategies

Teacher feedback strategy	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Acceptance	69	39.7	29.3
Acceptance + Alternative provision	13	39.7	-26.7
Acceptance + Alternative seeking	7	39.7	-32.7
Alternative provision	10	39.7	-29.7
Alternative seeking	17	39.7	-22.7
Utterance confirmation	61	39.7	21.3
Comprehension demonstration	47	39.7	7.3
Rejection	12	39.7	-27.7
Rejection +Metalinguistic feedback	13	39.7	-26.7
Recast	127	39.7	87.3
Prompt	74	39.7	34.3
Clarification request	41	39.7	1.3
Confirmation check	25	39.7	-14.7

The other seven feedback categories have negative residuals, meaning that they occurred less frequently than expected. Among them, *acceptance + alternative seeking* has the highest negative residual. In other words, it has the least observed frequency relative to its expected frequency. This is followed by *alternative provision*, *rejection*, *rejection + metalinguistic feedback* and *acceptance + alternative provision*, *alternative seeking*, *confirmation check*.

Based on the results, the thirteen identified feedback types can be structured along a continuum, with *acceptance + alternative seeking* at one end as the least frequently employed feedback strategy and *recast* at the other as the most frequently employed feedback strategy.

Having answered the first two research questions, the next step was the qualitative analysis of the instances of each of the feedback categories to work out their discursal features. Tables 4 and 5 provide a sketch of the discursal realization of each of the feedback types together with comments on each where applicable. The comments are based on follow-up informal inquiries with the teacher participants where ambiguities arose. This was done through a stimulated recall procedure, playing the related audio recording section for the teacher and asking him to provide further explanations.

Table 4 Discursal realizations of positive oral feedback categories

Positive feedback category	Discursal realization(s)	Comment
Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Aha</i>. (expressed with a falling intonation) ➤ <i>Aha, Right. / All right. / That's right.</i> ➤ <i>Ok.</i> ➤ <i>Great.</i> ➤ <i>Yeah, very good.</i> ➤ <i>Yes, perfect.</i> ➤ <i>That's it.</i> 	Any of these can be used as "pre-sequences" in the next two explicit positive feedback categories.
Acceptance + Alternative provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pre-sequence+ ➤ One or more alternatives; ➤ <i>Or</i> + an alternative; ➤ <i>Or we can/might say</i> + an alternative; and ➤ <i>It is also possible to say</i> + an alternative 	
Alternative provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One or more alternatives; ➤ <i>Or</i> + an alternative; ➤ <i>One can/might also say</i> + an alternative; ➤ <i>We might as well say</i> + an alternative; and ➤ <i>What about</i> + an alternative? 	In the absence of acceptance pre-sequences, it was the teacher's gestures (e.g., an approval nod) and tone of voice which conveyed an impression of approval to the learner.
Alternative seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What else?</i> ➤ <i>Any other ideas/synonyms/comments?</i> ➤ <i>Anybody else?</i> 	
Utterance confirmation	Partial or exact repetition of the student's utterance	This strategy was employed to reassure the learner who expressed it of its acceptability, and on behalf of other students who might not have heard it.
Comprehension demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Aha!</i> (Expressed with a rising intonation) ➤ <i>I see.</i> ➤ Repetition of the student's utterance with a rising intonation + <i>I see.</i> ➤ <i>Oh, yeah? I see.</i> 	

Table 5 Discursal realizations of negative oral feedback categories

Negative feedback category	Discursal realization(s)	Comment
Rejection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No, no. ➤ <i>No, not that.</i> ➤ <i>That's not the right answer/choice/pronunciation/etc.</i> ➤ <i>I don't think so.</i> ➤ <i>I have my doubts.</i> ➤ <i>I think otherwise</i> (when there are two possible answers). ➤ Repetition of the student's utterance with a rising intonation + one of the above; 	
Rejection + Metalinguistic feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, no! / No! as pre-sequences + ➤ Provision of the correct answer + <i>not</i> + repetition of the student's utterance + explanation (particularly applicable to pronunciation errors) ➤ Provision of the correct answer + explanation (particularly applicable to lexical and grammatical errors) 	
Recast	➤ Reformulation of the student's utterance, providing the correct form or content, with the reformulated part stressed;	Recasts drew the student's attention to the needs-repair part of his/her utterance,

		though they remained “conversational,” rather than “didactic,” as the teacher did not spare time for learner uptake.
Prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>I'm sorry?</i> ➤ <i>Pardon me?</i> ➤ <i>What?</i> ➤ Repetition of the whole or the erroneous part of the student's utterance with a rising intonation; ➤ Repetition of the student's utterance up to the erroneous part with a rising intonation, trying to get the student to engage in self-repair; 	The first three options are sometimes interpreted by the learner as the teacher's failure to hear him/her.
Clarification request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Would you please elaborate on it? ➤ What do you mean by ...?/ What does that mean?/ ➤ Can/Could you explain? ➤ Repetition of the student's utterance with a falling intonation + any of the above 	
Confirmation check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reformulation of the student's utterance + <i>Is that what you mean?</i> ➤ <i>You mean</i> + reformulation of the student's utterance? ➤ <i>Do you mean/ Does it mean</i> + reformulation of the student's utterance? ➤ Reformulation of the student's utterance (Particularly short utterances) + <i>you mean?</i> 	The first three were mostly, but not always, used when the main focus was on “content” rather than “form.”

4. Discussion

Contributing to the line of research focusing on teacher feedback in language classes, the present study was carried out to construct a model of teacher oral feedback in communicatively oriented English language classes, and to work out how this feedback is realized in discourse in its various forms. The analysis of 10.16 hours of classroom interaction in two “Speaking and Listening” and two “Reading Comprehension” classes yielded a model comprising thirteen feedback types: seven within the positive feedback category, and six within the negative feedback category. Within the positive feedback category, *alternative seeking*, and *alternative provision* with or without an *acceptance* pre-sequence are strategies not referred to elsewhere in the related literature. This is because these sound more like error treatment moves; however, though employed least frequently, they were identified as positive feedback categories in the dataset. Moreover, they were used only by two of the four teacher participants. *Recast* is the most frequently used type of feedback, a result which is in line with the results of similar studies, like those of Lyster and Ranta (1997, 2013). Next in line are implicit negative, explicit positive, and implicit positive feedback strategies. None of these belong to the explicit error correction category. This is indicative of the participants' preference for more implicit ways of error correction and also their strong tendency to show their explicit approval of the learner's utterance, preferences which are in keeping with the basics of humanistic and communicative approaches to teaching and learning.

One of the teacher participants stated that he used this type of feedback only when the learner's utterance was acceptable but not satisfactory enough. Within the negative feedback category, on the other hand, all the feedback types have already been identified by previous researchers (see Lyster & Ranta, 2013 for a review). As for *metalinguistic feedback*, it never occurred in the absence of a rejection pre-sequence, hence its placement under the explicit negative feedback category. In addition, *prompt* and *elicitation* were considered as one and the same type of feedback (termed *prompt*), since they have the same function in practice provided that elicitation is directed at the student who has made the erroneous utterance in the first place.

In their frequent use of implicit error treatment, teachers run the risk of not being interpreted as providing negative feedback at all, a point which has been reiterated in the relevant literature regarding recasts (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). They seem to be concerned more about the flow of communication and the feeling that their learners might get following their error treatment moves than about accuracy. This is true since the two explicit error treatment categories occupy the ninth and tenth positions (along the thirteen-point continuum structured in a descending order of use frequency). The postulation is further supported by the fact that the teacher participants left a fairly large number of lexical, grammatical and pronunciation errors untreated (about 60 percent of all errors) in order not to interrupt their learners, as stated by one of the "Listening and Speaking" instructors in follow-up inquiries. As far as feedback on form, rather than content, is concerned, teachers seem to adhere to the underpinnings of the communicative approach while at the same time realizing the significance of a meaning-focused and task-embedded focus on form. Omaggio-Hadley (2001) cogently has a point when he states that within the communicative language teaching approach, even when the focus is on accuracy, error treatment is contextualized. This might account for the highly frequent use of recasts, but whether learners perceive them as negative feedback or repetition is a moot point (Russell, 2009). A number of studies have been conducted on the learners' perceptions of teacher feedback moves. Of note is Mackey, Gass and McDonough's (2000) study in which they postulate that the greater the potential of teacher feedback to engage the learner in participation, the greater the likelihood that he or she will notice the erroneous form, and that because recasts do not require participation and uptake by the learner, they may not be noticed as such.

Finally, the qualitative analysis of the data regarding the discursal features of the thirteen feedback types showed that the number of ways the four teachers realized them in discourse does not exceed seven for each feedback type. Moreover, repetition of part or the whole of the learner's utterance, either with a rising or a falling intonation can serve a number of functions and can be

taken as the discursual realization of six feedback types: *utterance confirmation*, *comprehension demonstration*, *rejection*, *rejection + metalinguistic feedback*, *prompt*, and *clarification request*. This means that models which include *repetition* as a feedback type alongside elicitation, confirmation check, and other feedback strategies fail to distinguish between feedback types and their realization strategies in discourse.

5. Conclusion

The oral feedback model put forth in the present study includes both positive and negative form- and content-directed feedback categories. While statistical analyses showed the distinctiveness of the feedback strategies constituting the model, its locality and specificity to the context and corpus of the study needs to be admitted. Teacher feedback should be thought of as a context-specific concept. The strategies employed and their frequency of use can be mediated by instructional objectives, affective concerns, student needs and epistemological beliefs about the nature of language learning as well as teacher and student roles, and other multitudinous factors which shape the microcosm of the classroom and the curriculum.

The implications of the study are two-fold. First, the model can be of use in teacher education programs, providing would-be English language teachers with a sketch of the variety of positive and negative feedback types and their idiosyncratic discursual features, reminding them of the context-specificity of teacher feedback moves. Lyster and Ranta (1997) push the issue when they state that “the neophyte second language (L2) teacher finds so little in the research literature to help deal with the very practical issue of what to do when students make errors in classrooms that are intended to lead to communicative competence” (p. 38). The value of the model for this purpose lies in its being locally nested in the experience of instructors. Another implication of the study relates to the discursual realization of the different feedback categories. The teacher participants tended to employ a limited number of discourse strategies to verbalize each feedback type, rendering the teacher-student interactions rather monotonous. To exemplify the point, they used *repetition* to realize six of the feedback types, among other ways, as indicated in the discussion section. Broadening the range of the discursual features of each feedback type can make such interactions more engaging and possibly enhance their potential to induce learning.

In the end, it should be admitted that the results would have been more tenable if the data had been collected in one, rather than two, courses, since the nature of the course can act as a determinant factor regarding the type of feedback provided by the instructor. In addition, the fact that all the instructors were male can be a downside since the gender of the instructor might have an

effect as well, though this postulation stands in need of research; however, what the two courses had in common was their communicative focus over other courses available for investigation at the time the study was done. Further research may seek to unearth the idiosyncratic features of positive and negative oral feedback in different settings (e.g., high school) and different courses (e.g., general English), and at different proficiency levels.

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