



A Comparative Study of Teachers' Feedback in the Open Classes and Regular Classes in Middle School English Teaching

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Abstract. The 2022 English Curriculum Standards underscore the critical role of teacher feedback within the educational assessment framework, recognizing its profound influence on instructional strategies and student development. Utilizing classroom observations and interviews, this investigation catalogs the prevalence and spectrum of teacher feedback across a sample of eight standard and eight online open English classes at the middle school level, which are aligned in terms of instructional content. The research extends to personal interviews with standard class teachers to elucidate the dynamics and outcomes of classroom feedback. It seeks to identify and contrast the nuances in feedback approaches between open and standard classes in middle school English education, and to derive evidence-based strategies for enhancing the deployment of feedback. The ultimate goal is to scrutinize the practical utilization and educational impact of teacher feedback in middle school settings, thereby equipping educators with informed strategies for its application. The study reveals a marked preference for positive feedback among teachers. Open classes exhibit a modest increase in feedback frequency, favoring concise expressions for both praise and critique, whereas standard classes lean towards corrective feedback to facilitate error rectification among students.

Keywords: teacher feedback, open class, regular class, comparative study.

1 Introduction

The 2022 English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education stipulate that assessment should be an integral part of the entire English teaching and learning process, underscoring the significance of providing timely classroom feedback to students throughout the instructional process. To date, a corpus of research exists on the subject of teacher feedback. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975)[1] initially introduced the seminal concept of the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model. Building upon this foundation, Mehan (1978)[2] further delineated the teacher-student interaction paradigm into three distinct categories: the teacher's initiating and inducing actions, the student's reactive behaviors, and the teacher's evaluative responses contingent upon the student's

input, thereby extending and applying the initial framework. Subsequent studies have explored the concept of feedback across various academic disciplines. Cheng Xiaotang (2009)[3] posited that teachers can utilize feedback to enhance classroom interaction and facilitate meaning negotiation. However, the efficacy of feedback is contingent upon its appropriateness; misapplied, it may impede classroom interaction development and diminish student engagement. A thorough review of the literature reveals a dearth of research examining the current application of classroom feedback across different class settings. This study aims to address this gap by investigating and contrasting the prevalent classroom feedback strategies employed by middle school English teachers in both open and regular classes.

This investigation centers on an analysis of teacher feedback within middle school English classrooms, documenting eight regular lessons taught by three educators at No. 4 Middle School and eight open lessons with equivalent curricular content from the Smart Education platform in China. The study examines the variety, frequency, and efficacy of feedback in these distinct lesson formats. Utilizing statistical analysis, the research identifies patterns and principles in the application of teacher feedback, proposing several strategies to optimize its use in the classroom.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

Informed by a critical comparative analysis, the present study concentrates on the modalities of teacher feedback within the context of middle school English classes. The research is designed to address the following inquiries: Firstly, what are the commonalities and distinctions in the feedback language employed by teachers in open versus regular classes? Secondly, how do students' performance dynamics differ between the open and regular class settings? Thirdly, what strategies can be identified to optimize the delivery and effectiveness of teacher feedback in classroom instruction?

2.2 Participants

For the purposes of this investigation, the researcher has executed a two-pronged experimental approach. In the initial phase, a comprehensive record was made of eight conventional in-person classes instructed by three female educators at Huzhou No. 4 Middle School, as well as eight online open classes sourced from the Smart Education platform in China, which caters to primary and secondary school learners. The selected open class instructional videos were derived exclusively from the esteemed "One Teacher, One Excellent Lesson" educational initiative, ensuring high pedagogical standards. It is noteworthy that the curricular content for both the regular and open classes was maintained uniformly. The fundamental professional details of the aforementioned teachers from the regular classes are presented in Table 1. These educators, all of whom are female, are recognized for their substantial experience in the field of teaching, a characteristic they share with their counterparts delivering the online open courses.

Table 1. Information about regular class teachers.

Name	Age	Teaching age
Wang	55	33
Fei	47	25
Liu	40	18

In the subsequent phase of the study, the author extends an invitation to three educators from the regular classroom setting to participate in a personalized interview. Drawing upon their professional experience, these teachers are prompted to discuss their customary practices and the frequency with which they deploy feedback mechanisms within the open classroom context. Additionally, the interview facilitates an exchange of insights regarding their observations of student responses to the feedback provided.

2.3 Instruments

2.3.1 Classroom Observation.

The classroom observation technique is utilized to address the initial two research questions. The researcher conducted direct observations of eight regular English classes taught by middle school educators at Huzhou No. 4 Middle School and indirectly observed video recordings of open classes taught by nationally recognized English teachers, selected to gather ample comparative data. Observations were focused on capturing students' responses, the feedback provided by teachers, and students' subsequent acceptance and reactions to this feedback. Through the analysis of this comparative data, the researcher categorized the types of feedback and calculated their frequency in both open and regular class settings, identifying notable similarities and differences.

2.3.2 Interview.

The interview process was designed to explore the third research question. Three teachers from the regular classes were invited to participate in an interview, where they were presented with the observational findings and queried about their intent to modify their feedback strategies across different class types. Additionally, they were asked to share their perspectives on the role of feedback and their personal experiences with its use in various classroom contexts. The interview protocol included questions about the teachers' background information, their perceptions of feedback effectiveness, the frequency and types of feedback they employ, and their insights into the disparities between feedback language in open versus regular classes. The final segment of the interview addressed the factors influencing feedback strategies and the diversity of student reactions to feedback in different educational environments.

2.4 Research Procedure

The offline component of this study was conducted at Huzhou No. 4 Middle School, spanning from September to December 2023. The collection of data from online open classes was finalized in January 2024.

The first aspect of the research involved observing regular offline classes. Given the researcher's internship at the school, the most accessible class for observation was that of an English teacher for Grade 2. Consequently, this teacher provided data from three regular classes for the study. To ensure a comprehensive exploration applicable to the entire middle school spectrum, the researcher also observed two additional female teachers who fulfilled the study's criteria. These teachers, who instruct grades 7, 8, and 9 respectively, contributed to the diversity of the eight recorded regular classes across the three grades. The distribution of classes was as follows: three in the seventh grade, three in the eighth grade, and two in the ninth grade. The offline record-keeping of feedback statements aimed to quantify and qualify the feedback types and their prevalence in these classes, as well as to document students' reactions to various forms of feedback.

The second aspect involved documenting online open classes through the Smart Education platform in China, which serves both primary and secondary school students. The researcher accessed full recordings of these classes, allowing for a holistic view of the educational environment. This facilitated the direct recording of teacher-student interactions, including the questions posed by teachers, the students' engagement levels, the feedback provided by teachers, and the students' reactions. The data extracted from these videos were considered as authentic and valid as the recordings themselves.

The third aspect encompassed personal interviews with the three teachers from the regular offline classes. These interviews delved into the teachers' individual interpretations of the differences between public and regular classes, their reflections on the researcher's statistical findings, their awareness of variations in their feedback approaches, and the array of student opinions regarding the two class formats.

3 Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings derived from feedback observation and interviews, providing elucidation for the four research questions posited in the study.

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Results of Classroom Observation.

Here are the results of the total amount and average amount of teacher feedback in regular classes and open classes.

Table 2. Total amount of feedback.

	Class	Total amount
Regular class	Grade 7 1	27
	Grade 7 2	38
	Grade 7 3	35
	Grade 8 1	36
	Grade 8 2	42
	Grade 8 3	30
	Grade 9 1	54
	Grade 9 2	48
	Average:	39
	Open class	Grade 7 1
Grade 7 2		63
Grade 7 3		50
Grade 8 1		37
Grade 8 2		55
Grade 8 3		61
Grade 9 1		56
Grade 9 2		47
Average:		50

Table 2 delineates a comparative analysis of feedback frequency, revealing that instructors provide a greater quantity of feedback in open classes as opposed to regular classes. The mean feedback per session for regular classes stands at 39 instances, in contrast to an average of 50 instances in open classes. This indicates that, within an equivalent duration of class time, educators offer approximately ten additional feedback instances in the open class setting compared to the regular class setting.

Table 3. Distribution of positive feedback and negative feedback.

	Class	Total amount	Positive feedback	Negative feedback
Regular class	Grade 7 1	27	17	10
	Grade 7 2	38	30	8
	Grade 7 3	35	20	15
	Grade 8 1	36	26	10
	Grade 8 2	42	31	11
	Grade 8 3	30	18	12
	Grade 9 1	54	39	15
	Grade 9 2	48	29	19
		310	210 (67.7%)	100 (32.3%)
	Open class	Grade 7 1	27	16
Grade 7 2		63	47	16
Grade 7 3		50	35	15
Grade 8 1		37	32	5
Grade 8 2		55	43	12
Grade 8 3		61	55	6
Grade 9 1		56	41	15
Grade 9 2		47	37	10
		396	306 (77.3%)	90 (22.7%)

Table 3 illustrates a pronounced predominance of positive feedback over negative feedback in both class types. Within the regular class setting, the aggregate positive feedback amounts to 210 instances, contrasted with 100 instances of negative feedback, establishing a ratio of approximately 2:1. In the open class context, the disparity is even more pronounced, with 306 instances of positive feedback and 90 instances of negative feedback, yielding a ratio surpassing 3:1. Furthermore, the prevalence of positive feedback in open classes exceeds that of regular classes by approximately 10%.

Table 4. Distribution of three types of feedback.

Class		Total amount	Encouraging feedback	Corrective feedback	Critical feedback
Regular class	Grade 7 1	27	17	7	3
	Grade 7 2	38	30	5	3
	Grade 7 3	35	20	9	6
	Grade 8 1	36	26	7	3
	Grade 8 2	42	31	6	5
	Grade 8 3	30	18	5	7
	Grade 9 1	54	39	9	6
	Grade 9 2	48	29	11	8
		310	210 (67.7%)	59 (19.1%)	41 (13.2%)
Open class	Grade 7 1	27	16	8	3
	Grade 7 2	63	47	12	4
	Grade 7 3	50	35	13	2
	Grade 8 1	37	32	4	1
	Grade 8 2	55	43	7	5
	Grade 8 3	61	55	4	2
	Grade 9 1	56	41	10	5
	Grade 9 2	47	37	7	3
		396	306 (77.3%)	66 (16.6%)	24 (6.1%)

As depicted in Table 4, when categorized by purpose, the feedback provided in classroom settings is classified into three distinct types by the author.

Upon examination of the classroom records, a consistent pattern emerges where teachers engage in the frequent use of encouraging feedback across both class formats. The data corroborates this observation, highlighting that the proportion of encouraging feedback is substantial, with figures reaching 67.7% in regular classes and an even higher 77.3% in open classes.

Moving to the second category, the analysis reveals that corrective feedback is employed significantly less often than its encouraging counterpart. In the regular classroom setting, the utilization of corrective feedback by teachers constitutes roughly 19% of the total feedback. This percentage decreases to 16% in the context of open classes, indicating that while less common than encouraging feedback, it is more prevalent than critical feedback.

Critical feedback emerges as the least utilized category. Its usage is notably scarce, with teachers resorting to it in only about 13% of cases during regular lessons. This

figure further contracts to a mere 6% in open classes. The data presented in Table 4 underscores the rarity of critical feedback, particularly within the open class environment, suggesting a cautious approach by teachers in employing this type of feedback.

3.1.2 Results of Teacher Interview.

The interview segment of this study comprises a series of ten meticulously crafted questions, aimed at elucidating teachers' foundational information, their perspectives on the role of feedback, and the determinants influencing its application within the classroom.

The participants, three seasoned educators each with over 18 years of teaching experience, were selected for their expertise in the field. Commencing the interview, the teachers unanimously underscored the pivotal role of classroom feedback, acknowledging its fundamental contribution to the overall classroom dynamic. This consensus is reflective of their pedagogical approach, which incorporates extensive use of feedback to engage and instruct their students.

Delving into the nuances of feedback variation between open and regular classes, one teacher revealed a deliberate strategy of increasing the incidence of encouraging feedback in open classes. In contrast, within regular classes, she prioritizes corrective feedback to explicitly address student errors, thereby fostering recognition and rectification of mistakes. Another teacher reported a conscious endeavor to mitigate the impact of negative feedback in open classes, suggesting a nuanced approach to feedback delivery. The final teacher in the group highlighted the instinctive nature of brief praise and criticism, noting that while they are facile to administer, they may lack substantive meaning. In contrast, she emphasized the importance of tailored corrective and critical feedback, which is specifically directed at individual students' responses, contingent upon their unique learning trajectories and attitudes.

Upon inquiring about the influence of feedback on student performance, the teachers concurred that the type of feedback proffered significantly affects student behavior. They observed that students often expect simplistic affirmations such as "good" or "well-done." However, when confronted with errors, students' reactions vary; some may become reticent, while others seek assistance from the teacher or peers. The teachers also discussed the influencing factors of feedback, with two attributing the teaching environment and conditions as pivotal, and one suggesting that the individual personality of the student also plays a crucial role in how feedback is received and utilized.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 The Feedback Comparison in Open Classes and Regular Classes.

Upon examining the influence of feedback on student performance, the interviewed teachers reached a consensus that the nature of feedback significantly influences student behavior. They noted that students commonly anticipate straightforward affirmations, such as "good" or "well-done." However, student reactions diverge when they encounter errors; some students may become reserved, while others actively seek guidance from the teacher or their peers. The educators also deliberated on the factors that

affect feedback efficacy, with two teachers emphasizing the importance of the teaching environment and conditions, and one teacher suggesting that the individual personality of the student significantly affects how feedback is perceived and utilized.

Table 3 demonstrates that the quantity of feedback in open classes slightly exceeds that in regular classes. Teachers exhibit a propensity for providing increased feedback in open classes, a tendency attributed to the more extensive time frames and varied activities characteristic of these settings, which necessitate more student output and teacher evaluation to enhance the learning experience. Conversely, regular classes, with their more condensed nature, tend to incorporate a greater focus on content delivery, resulting in a relatively lower volume of feedback. Additionally, the increased feedback in open classes is posited to invigorate students' interest and foster a more enthusiastic classroom atmosphere.

As on Table 4, positive feedback is administered with greater frequency than negative feedback in both class types. Positive feedback is perceived as enriching students' linguistic repertoires with appropriate language materials, thereby promoting language acquisition (Chaudron, 1988)[4]. In contrast, negative feedback may detract from students' zeal for learning. The daily utilization of positive feedback by teachers across all grade levels was confirmed through the interview data, with a marked preference for its use in open classes to stimulate engagement and classroom participation.

Table 4 also reveals that encouraging feedback constitutes the majority of feedback in both class types, with critical feedback being the least utilized. This distribution is likely due to teachers' concerns that critical feedback could dampen students' motivation and initiative. The encouragements offered are typically broad, applicable to all student responses, whereas specific, individualized encouragements are less common. When students provide correct answers, a simple confirmation from the teacher is deemed sufficient for reinforcing the correct concept or response. Corrective feedback is categorized into three approaches: reiterating students' incorrect answers, posing questions to prompt reflection, and directly indicating mistakes. In open classes, teachers favor the first two methods to foster a supportive environment. In regular classes, where time is a critical factor, teachers are more inclined to adopt the direct approach to expedite the correction process. The use of corrective feedback over critical feedback aims to facilitate students' understanding and retention of accurate knowledge. In instances where critical feedback is employed, teachers ensure to provide comprehensive explanations to ensure full student comprehension. In regular classes, teachers are particularly attentive to the precision of students' understanding, balancing teaching progress with the need to accurately gauge each student's level of mastery.

3.2.2 Students' Classroom Performance in Open Classes and Regular Classes.

In regular class settings, students typically exhibit a more natural demeanor at the onset, swiftly assimilating into the classroom environment. Post the commencement of the lesson, instructors are inclined to employ direct feedback mechanisms, with a particular focus on rectifying student errors to preempt recurrence. For students struggling to match the class pace or prone to distraction, such forthright or critical feedback might potentially diminish their classroom engagement. The intent of educators is to promptly address mistakes and encourage students to demonstrate their grasp of the material.

Nevertheless, for students exhibiting heightened interest and focus, the direct feedback in regular classes can be more motivational than the succinct, encouraging feedback often found in open classes. These students are also resilient in the face of negative feedback, maintaining their composure and continuing their active participation.

Conversely, in open class scenarios, the feedback from teachers is predominantly encouraging, often consisting of brief, single-word affirmations, reflecting a high degree of tolerance towards students who provide incorrect or subpar responses. This approach may stem from the need to maintain a dynamic and positive atmosphere in open classes, where an excess of corrective feedback could potentially detract from student motivation. When corrective feedback is necessary, teachers opt for a more guiding approach, empowering students to identify and amend their errors independently.

3.2.3 The Optimizing Strategies.

Upon contemplation of the third research question, and in conjunction with the analytical outcomes and conclusions drawn from the comparative data within this study, the author discerns that in the context of open class instruction, educators exhibit a propensity for employing a heightened level of encouraging feedback, complemented by corrective feedback that is delivered in a more euphemistic manner. This inclination is attributed to the requirement for an overarching open and inclusive atmosphere in open classes, transcending the focus on intricate details. Echoing the sentiments of Ellis (1990)[5], teacher feedback in this scenario can be perceived as a strategic effort to foster communication with students from a communicative standpoint.

In contrast, within the framework of regular course instruction, the predominant form of feedback received by students is direct and corrective in nature. This approach is linked to the constraints of limited instructional time and the imperative to fulfill specific teaching objectives, rendering it an effective strategy to enhance the efficacy and quality of classroom instruction. While this nature of feedback is instrumental in preserving the general classroom atmosphere and advancing the lesson's progress, it may fall short in providing targeted guidance tailored to the individual developmental needs of students. According to student feedback, targeted corrective feedback emerges as the most efficacious, enabling teachers to assist students in addressing and resolving in-class learning errors, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, when students provide correct responses, teachers are encouraged to offer timely affirmations to reinforce students' memory retention. In instances where students encounter comprehension errors, teachers are advised to guide them towards self-correction. Therefore, in English classrooms, educators are well-positioned to augment the provision of informational feedback and proffer personalized recommendations to students. In instances where criticism is warranted, the utilization of euphemistic corrective feedback can be increased to adeptly identify and address student issues, thereby elevating the quality of classroom assessment without undermining students' enthusiasm for the English subject.

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