A Reflection on Interactional Feedback by Students of Sanata Dharma University

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Abstract

Interactional feedback as a means of helping second language (L2) learners to focus on form has received increased attention recently in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Moreover, feedback is also considered as an effective way to help the students improve their ability in learning L2. Subsequently, as teachers encourage use of the target language in their classrooms, they must consider how to provide feedback to their students concerning the accuracy of their utterances. This paper attempts to reveal the answers for the research question which is "what does interactional feedback mean to the students?" There are two participants who were willing to share their lived experiences. The data are in a form of texts and gathered from an in-depth interview in which the data are then extracted to be the themes for the discussion. For the themes, there are two major themes appear in the study namely motivation and self-improvement. Motivation was the first theme that appeared from the study. The comments and feedback could motivate the participants to perform better in their next speaking practices. Additionally, motivation indeed becomes one of the positive effects which could make the participants feel motivated in improving their speaking ability through the feedback from their lecturers. Self-improvement became the second major theme from the study. Self-improvement was derived from the participants' consciousness when they encountered the mistakes that they often committed when speaking. Contextually, the interactional feedback that the participants gained from the lecturer made the participants aware of the mistake that they had committed. Therefore, after gaining the feedbacks from their teacher, they are triggered to improve their performance in the next speaking assignments.

Keywords: Interactional feedback, motivation, self-improvement

A. Introduction

Interactional feedback as a means of helping second language (L2) learners to focus on form has received increased attention recently in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Moreover, Since the 1970s, SLA researchers have investigated the role of interactional feedback in second language (L2) classrooms, based on the premise that

learners benefit from information about the communicative success of their target language use (Long, 1977) and might require feedback on errors when they are not able to discover, through exposure to positive evidence alone, how their interlanguage differs from the target language (White, 1987). Interaction plays a key role in driving L2 development forward because learners rely on semantically contingent speech as a primary source of positive and negative L2 data (Long, 1996) In L2 classrooms, teacher-student interaction provides propitious opportunities for reactive focus on form to occur in relatively unplanned ways that include teacher feedback that targets students' nontarget output.

The role of interaction in L2 acquisition is one such topic that has been examined in depth in recent years. Empirical studies have demonstrated that language learning is facilitated through authentic communication (Long, 1996; Gass&Selinker, 2008). Naturally, many language instructors around the world have adopted a communicative approach to language teaching as a result of this research. Subsequently, as teachers encourage use of the target language in their classrooms, they must consider how to provide feedback to their students concerning the accuracy of their utterances. Researchers have claimed that the provision of oral feedback is integral to L2 acquisition because it

highlights the manner in which a learner's speech either aligns or deviates from target like forms, and enables them to modify their output accordingly (Long, 1996; Gass&Selinker, 2008).

In this paper, the researcher focuses on finding out the reflection of the interactional feedback from the students' point of view. Contextually, the reflection in this paper refers to the lived experience that the students, themselves, feel and experience during the implementation of interactional feedback. The importance of conducting a research on this particular field is both for the development of the theory and for the learning process in the future.

A.1. Interactional Feedback

Interactional feedback, as defined by Nassaji and Fotos, refers to various negotiation and modification strategies such as recast, repetitions, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and the like, which are made by learners or directed to them to facilitate understanding.

Most of the findings in these studies point to the fact that using interactional feedback in L2 classrooms helps in promoting L2 learning. Long's interaction hypothesis (Long, 1983, 1996 and 2006) proposes that second language learning is facilitated through interactional processes because of the role of interaction in connecting input, internal

learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive way's (Long, 1996). Helpful interactional processes include the negotiation of meaning and the provisions of recast, both of which can supply corrective were problematic. A further interactional process that can result from feedback is known as modified output, and has also been claimed by Swain (1995, 1998 and 2005). Recast**,** a type of corrective feedback that is generally defined as involving the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). Although this general definition of recasts exists, there is a considerable amount of variation in researchers more specific definitions of recasts (Ellis and Sheen, 2006; Nicholas *et al.,* 2001 for more discussion). For example, Long (2006) added that a recast is the reformulation of the immediately preceding utterance and that the focus of the interaction should be on meaning.

A.2. Interactional Feedback Types

Most interaction-based research categorizes oral corrective feedback in terms of a dichotomy between prompts and recasts (Lyster&Ranta, 1997). Both of these feedback types are used with the intent of highlighting learner errors as they occur in the course of interaction. There is, however, a fundamental difference in the nature of prompts and recasts. Egi (2010) describes this difference as a distinction between feedback that reformulates learners' utterances by offering L2 models and feedback that elicits or prompts learner-generated responses while withholding such models (p. 3). Recasts are an immediate reformulation of an erroneous L2 utterance which maintains the original meaning (Ammar&Spada, 2006). Essentially, recasts not only highlight that an error has been made, they also provide learners with a corrected version of their utterance. Yang and Lyster (2010) provide the following interaction as an example of the use of recasts (p. 243):

> Student: *And they have a happy life after and many years they have a lot of kid around the…*
> Teacher: *They had…*
> Student: *They had a lot of kids around the palace.*

Some researchers have claimed that recasts "help L2 learners notice the discrepancy between their nonnative like utterance and the target like form" (Amar &Spada, 2006, p.544). Due to their implicit and unobtrusive nature, many researchers consider recasts to be an ideal feedback technique (Amar &Spada, 2006).

Prompts or negotiation, conversely, do not provide learners with a corrected version of their erroneous utterances. Instead, prompts emphasize that an error has been made, and incite learners to reformulate their utterances.

There are a variety of forms of prompts including clarification requests, repetition of learner errors, metalinguistic clues and elicitation (Yang &Lyster, 2010). Yang and Lyster (2010) provide the following dialogues as examples (p. 243-244):

Clarification Request

Student: *Why does he fly to Korea last year?*

Teacher: *Pardon?*

Student: *Why did he fly to Korea last year?*

Repetition

Student: *Mrs. Jones travel a lot last year.*

Teacher: *Mrs. Jones travel a lot last year?*

Student: *Mrs. Jones traveled a lot last year*.

Metalinguistic Clues

Student: *I went to the train station and pick up my aunt*.

Teacher: *Use past tense consistently.*

Student: *I went to the train station and picked up my aunt*

Elicitation

Student: *Once upon a time, there lives a poor girl named Cinderella*.

Teacher: *Once upon a time, there…*

Student: *There lived a girl.*

Gass and Selinker (2008) claim that prompts force L2 learners to analyze and correct their erroneous utterances by producing modified output, which, according to interactionist theory, may be a facilitator of L2 acquisition. In addition, Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) also affirm that prompts are beneficial to L2 learning because they invoke a deeper level of processing "that entails both retrieval and production mechanisms" (p. 483).

A.3. Lived Experience

Lived experience belongs to phenomenology. Van Manen (in Patton, 2002, p. 104; in Barnacle, 2001) illustrates that phenomenology aims at obtaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences and it also aims to describe and interpret lived, or existential, meanings. The meanings here refer to those which occur or exist in our everyday life, which is considered real and important experience to someone.

To Epstein (1997) phenomenology focuses on the meaning of the lived universal life experience at any given moment or instant of its occurrence. Hence, it is also in line with the definition proposed by Van Manen which emphasizes on the existence or occurrence of the meanings. Furthermore, Epstein also points out that the purpose of phenomenological research is to discover

the meaning of the lived experience of phenomena through analyses of subject's description.

Burch (2002) points out that the expression "lived experience" does not derive from English vernacular but enters English language via phenomenology and human science as a deliberate borrowing from philosophical German. Burch, further explains the term lived experience as a meaningful, valuable, and memorable experience of someone that he or she maintains it.

According to Christensen, Johnson, and Turner (2010) phenomenology does not begin with a theory, but, instead, begins with a phenomenon under consideration. Furthermore, the primary objective of a phenomenological study is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence, of the lived experiences of a person, or a group of people, around specific phenomenon. Moreover, they also explain that phenomenological research attempts to look at the human behavior through the eyes of the participants in the study.

Moustakas (1994) provides a greater concept of phenomenological research. He states that research should pay attention on the wholeness of experience and a search for essences of experiences. He then vies experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of phenomenon with the person experiencing phenomenon.

Dilthey (1985) has suggested that in its most basic form lived experience involves our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life: a reflexive or self-given awareness which is, as awareness, unaware of itself.

A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective (p.223).

The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence - in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience.

Furthermore, Dilthey (1985) suggested that lived experience is the soul what breath is to the body: "Just as our body needs to breathe, our soul requires the fulfillment and expansion of its existence in the reverberations of emotional life" (p.59). Lived experience is the breathing of meaning. In the flow of life, consciousness breathes meaning in a to and fro movement: a constant heaving between the inner and the outer. Gadamer

(1975) observed that the word "experience" has a condensing and intensifying meaning: "If something is called or considered an experience its meaning rounds it into the unity of a significant whole" (p.60). "Lived experiences are related to each other like motifs in the andante of a symphony," said Dilthey (1985, p. 227). He talked of "structure" or "structural nexus" as something that belongs to a particular lived experience (something like a pattern or unit of meaning), which becomes part of a system of contextually related experiences, explicated from it through a process of reflection on its meaning.

B. Methodology

This study aims at describing the ELS students' lived experience of interactional feedback. Referring to the aim of this study – describing lived experience, this study belongs to a phenomenological study. Creswell (2007) clearly explains that phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individual of their lived experiences. Patton (2002) also has the same idea as Creswell. He states that phenomenology is keen on how people experience some phenomenon, how to perceive, describe, feel, judge, remember, make sense of it and talk about phenomenon with others.

In accordance with the topic of the study, the research was conducted in the undergraduate program of English Language Education Study Program Studies (ELESP) *Sanata Dharma* University, Yogyakarta. The participants for the study are two students of the undergraduate program of English Language Education Study Program Studies (ELESP) *Sanata Dharma* University, Yogyakarta.

Since this study is about lived experience and it also relates to personal meaning on how people understand something, thus, the main data resources were the in-depth interview. This is in accordance with the research method mentioned in the first section of this chapter –phenomenological study which focuses and describes the meaning of an or several individual's lived experience. Furthermore, the in-depth interview was also applied to answer the research question as stated in the introduction.

The interviews were the main data resources used to describe and interpret the meaning of lived experience of project-based learning. According to Van Manen (1990, p.6) in phenomenological research, the interview serves two specific goals: (1) it may be applied as a tool for exploring and obtaining experiential narrative material which may become a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon, and (2) the interview mat be used as a means to develop a conversational relation with an interviewee about the meaning of an experience. Creswell

(2007, p. 131) also emphasizes the same thing as Manen. He conveys that the process of collecting information involves primarily in-depth interviews. He then explains that the important point is to figure out the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it.

In this research, the researcher described the ELESP students' lived experience in the form of narratives. Van Manen (1990, p.25) states that description of life world contains interpretation. Hence, through interpreting the text the researcher could obtain the essential meaning of the lived experiences towards project-based learning.

As a product of an academic research, the issues of validity and reliability of this thesis are considered very important. During the process of the study checks were done to gather the validity of the data. Participants' check refers to the process of sharing the draft of the interpretation. The comments were found out to which the interpretations are consistent with the experiences, and whether the interpretations assist understanding of the topic being discussed.

C. Interpretation of Lived Experience
Vita's Story

Her full name is YuvitaArdhani, and her nick name is Vita. She was born in Kebumen 24 years ago. During her spare time he likes reading books, watching movies, listening to musics, and cooking Italian food. She lived in Kebumen until her high school. After graduating from high school, she decided to enter the university to pursue a higher degree of education. At the first time, she told me that English was not her interest. Her interest was on communication science. However, because of certain reasons, she decided to follow her parents' decision to enter the English faculty especially education. She is right now a mature woman with so many experiences. Although right now she almost finishes her study in the university, she also spends her time to work in a company to add her personal experience before entering the real working world. To her, working while being a student is challenging yet fun. She enjoys working while studying very much.

She was not that familiar with the interactional feedback. However, when I changed the name into recast and prompt, she nodded and she, herself, said that she knew about that and she was also experiencing both recast and prompt during her study in ELESP. She experienced recast and prompt in speaking courses or subjects. She pointed out that feedback is beneficial to the students as it will improve the students' ability especially in speaking skill. She realized that her speaking skill was not that good, thus, with the help from the lecturer in a form of feedback, she felt that her speaking ability became better time by

time. She usually gained feedback in a form of grammar and also pronunciation of the words that she wanted to say.

To her, mastering speaking skill is very important as in the future she wants to be a professional English teacher. Hence, by acquiring a good speaking skill, she is sure that it will give her many benefits which are useful for her in the future. Realizing that her speaking skill was not that good, she did not only depend on or wait for the lecturers. She practiced her speaking skill day by day through listening to music and watching movies.

In regards to the implementation of the interactional feedback, Vita told me that she was very happy when her lecturer gave her so many feedbacks. She did not feel demotivated, instead she felt that she gained new knowledge from her lecturer. Moreover, she also emphasized that speaking was not an easy thing to do. It took a big effort to master it. Thus, if she felt demotivated because receiving feedback from her lecturer, she would gain nothing in return. Luckily, she also said that she was taught by a good lecturer who was aware of the mistake that she often committed.

Moreover, vita told me that she committed mistakes in speaking because she often forgot the structure of the sentence that she wanted to express. She said that she knew the content that she wanted to say, but she tended to forget the grammatical things such as tenses, and some other related things. After receiving feedback from her lecturer she directly improved her performance in the next meeting. Not only in the class, Vita also told me that she applied what her lecturer had asked her outside the class. She did so in order to be accustomed to the mistakes that she often committed and in order to stop committing the same mistakes again.

Lastly, during the interview with her, she pointed out that interactional feedback is good to be implemented in the teaching learning process. She hoped that all lecturers can use it appropriately because she sometime could not notice whether the advice or suggestion that her lecturer gave was a form of feedback or not. Additionally, she also affirmed that interactional feedback should be given in good way so that the students will not feel demotivated or embarrassed because of committing mistakes. Through the interview with her, I, personally could conclude that interactional feedback for her gave positive impacts such as increasing her knowledge in speaking, and increasing her motivation to learn and to improve her speaking ability.

Eris' Story

Eris is a 19-years-old student who originally comes from Yogyakarta. During her spare time, she likes to spend the time by watching movies, hanging out with friends, and playing with her dogs. What is

interesting from her is that she has an identical twin sister who is also one of the students in ELESP Sanata Dharma University. They always played and studied together too when they have time. Eris was willing to share her experience because she wanted to give contributions to the students especially to her beloved study program.

When the first time I asked her whether she knew interactional feedback or not, she was a bit surprised. She, in fact, did not know what interactional feedback was. However, when I deliberately explained it to her, she started to recall her memories about it. She experiences interactional feedback in her micro teaching class. In micro teaching class, she told me that she was asked not only to create syllabus or materials for the students, but also she had to perform her speaking ability in front of her lecturer and her friends who acted as students. She also mentioned that in teaching the students, speaking is the teacher's weapon. If the teacher does not possess a good speaking skill, then the students will not listen to the teacher. Thus, possessing a more-than-just-enough speaking skill is a must according to her.

During her speaking performance, very often she was being criticized by her friends if she committed some small mistakes. Her concentration could easily be distracted when she gained bad advice or suggestion. Usually, her friends gave comments to grammatical things and also her pronunciation. She also told me that sometimes she was not really happy if she encountered some bad advice or suggestion. She thought that she had performed her speaking appropriately. However, that was not a big matter for her since she thought that feedback from her friends was important.

In accordance to recast and prompt, Eris considered that those types of feedback are beneficial. She felt that recast and prompt are very useful to improve students' speaking skill. Through recast she could directly notice in which part the mistakes appeared. By doing so, she, with her awareness could improve the mistake at the moment. For the prompt she was a bit difficult to improve the mistake since sometimes the lecturer did not give clear clues to her. However, she thought this was challenging since she had to think by her own in order to obtain the answer for the mistake that she committed. She personally felt that prompting sometimes did not work well, yet it could force the students to focus on the mistake.

When her lecturer gave her feedbacks, she felt that she was motivated to improve the mistakes through the feedback from the lecturer. She directly focused on the mistakes that she made and she began to ask herself about how to improve it. She consider herself as an individual who are not interested in

creating mistakes for the second time. That is why she always tries very hard to improve her performance in speaking.

Lastly, from the interview that I conducted with her, I found that she perceived the interactional feedback as a good way to help the students improve their skill especially speaking. Instead of having written feedback, she prefers to have oral feedback since it is more realistic and she can notice where the mistake is. However, she also added that when the teacher gave the feedback, she suggested that the way the lecturer delivered the feedback should as clear as possible and as easy to be understood as possible. By doing so, the students will not become confused about the mistake that they have made.

Interpretations

This part discusses the extracted general themes from the data presented previously. From the in-depth interview I conducted, there are two major points. They are motivation and self-improvement.

Motivation

Motivation becomes the first theme that appeared from the study. As aforementioned, comments and feedbacks from friends could challenge the participants. The comments and feedback also could motivate the participants to perform better in their next speaking practices.

Vita was motivated to be more aware of the mistake that she often committed. She tried not to repeat the mistake again and tried to do better in the next assignments. Moreover, she also stated that when her lecturer gave her feedbacks, she did not feel demotivated, instead, she felt very happy since she could know the mistakes that she committed and she could directly improve it. By receiving feedbacks from the lecturer she also felt that she could minimize the opportunity of repeating the mistakes that she often committed such as grammatical things and pronunciation. Another factor which made her motivated was she realized that her speaking ability is not that good, so she needed to improve her performance day by day. Hence, by having feedback from the lecturer, she felt that she was helped through the feedbacks.

To Eris, she felt that interactional feedback motivated her in certain ways. She previously stated that when her lecturer gave her feedbacks, she felt that she was motivated to improve the mistakes through the feedback from the lecturer. She directly focused on the mistakes that she made and she began to ask herself about how to improve it. Moreover, since she considered that speaking is the teacher's weapon, thus Eris felt that feedbacks from lecturers are very beneficial or useful as to improve the mistakes that she often committed.

In sum, I could conclude that motivation indeed becomes one of the positive effects which could make the participants feel motivated in improving their speaking ability through the feedback from their lecturers. Moreover, by having good motivation will also increase their eagerness to study or to improve the mistakes that they often commit. Hence, it is expected that interactional feedback can still be used to help the students know their weaknesses and how to overcome them appropriately.

Self-improvement

Self-improvement becomes the second theme that appeared in the study. Contextually, the interactional feedback that the participants gained from the lecturer made the participants aware of the mistake that they committed. Hence, it triggered them to improve their performance in the next speaking assignments.

To Vita, interactional feedback, gave her a chance to recognize her weaknesses in speaking. She realized that her weaknesses were on grammatical things and also pronunciations, hence, by gaining feedback from the lecturer as well as her friend, she could improve her ability on grammar as well as pronunciation. I also recognized that by having interactional feedback her lecturer she directly improved her performance in the next meeting. Not only in the class, Vita also told me that she applied what her lecturer had asked her outside the class. She did so in order to be accustomed to the mistakes that she often committed and in order to stop committing the same mistakes again. Looking at what Vita had told in the previous section, I personally conclude that she had a good self-improvement after receiving feedback from her lecturer. Functionally, feedback, for her, is not only a means of improving her performance in the class, but also outside the class as well.

Eris mentioned the same thing as Vita. She also had herself-improvement increased after receiving feedbacks from her lecturer. As stated previously, Eris directly focused on the mistakes that she made and she began to ask herself about how to improve it. Consciously, Eris started to maximize her ability in improving her mistakes in speaking after gaining the feedback from her lecturer. Moreover, she also considered that having feedbacks orally could be more realistic so that she could improve the mistakes directly and can ease her in noticing the mistakes that she had made.

D. Conclusions

This study was aimed at unrevealing what meaning the students have toward the interactional feedback in their speaking classes. There were two major themes found after conducting an in-depth interview with the two participants. The themes were motivation and self-improvement. Each of the themes

has been discussed in the previous section.

Motivation was the first theme that appeared from the study. As mentioned in the previous section, comments and feedbacks from friends could challenge the participants. The comments and feedback also could motivate the participants to perform better in their next speaking practices. Additionally, motivation indeed becomes one of the positive effects which could make the participants feel motivated in improving their speaking ability through the feedback from their lecturers. Moreover, by having good motivation will also increase their eagerness to study or to improve the mistakes that they often commit.

Self-improvement became the second major theme from the study. Contextually, the interactional feedback that the participants gained from the lecturer made the participants aware of the mistake that they had committed. Therefore, after gaining the feedbacks from their teacher, they are triggered to improve their performance in the next speaking assignments. Additionally, self-improvement was derived from the participants' consciousness when they encountered the mistakes that they often committed when speaking.

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