



## THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK IN MOTIVATING STUDENTS LEARNING: THE CASE OF ENTOTO AMBA SECONDARY SCHOOL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

**\*Fikremariam Yirgu Wondimtegn**

College of Social Science and Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature,  
Wolkite University, Wolkite-Ethiopia

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#### \*Corresponding author:

**Fikremariam Yirgu Wondimtegn**

### ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of assessment and feedback as a motivational tool in enhancing students' attention in language learning. To accomplish the aim of the research, the closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The targeted population for this research was teachers and students of the Entoto Amba secondary school. In this research, the primary data was used for gathering information. The collected data is analyzed and interpreted qualitatively and quantitatively. The analysis of the data indicated that the use of feedback had a positive role in motivating students learning.

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### INTRODUCTION

Efficiency and satisfaction in education can be improved by providing feedback as a way of sharing information rather than insisting on the right way of doing things. Here, sharing means the student and teacher together study the problems, evaluate various alternatives, and choose the best. This conveys the message to the student as well as the teacher that his/her opinion is contributed and s/he can contribute meaningfully in achieving educational goals. Feedback information allows students to correct their errors, to adjust their goals, to restore their performance levels, and to align themselves with their learning environment (Van der Knaap, 1995; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Morgan, 2006; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Walker, 2013). Feedback plays an important role in the teaching-learning process. Hence, there is a constant need to evolve mechanisms to communicate with students, so that they feel part of the learning process. Feedback is a tool used in this process that helps students to make meaning of their learning journey. Improving learning through assessment requires five factors: providing effective feedback, students' active involvement, adjusting teaching in view of assessment outcomes, recognizing the influence of assessment on students'

motivation and self-esteem- both crucial influences on learning and, ensuring pupils assess themselves and understand how to improve (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2004 cited in Nicki 2015). Feedback is the information about current performance that can be used to improve future performance.' Feedback plays a crucial role in any educational process since it can significantly improve both learner's and teacher's performance and indicate some key aspects of their performance which can be improved. Dignen (2014) argues that feedback is the most important communication skill, both outside and inside the classroom because it is around all the time; it is just another word for effective listening; it is an opportunity to motivate; it is essential to develop performance, and it is a way to keep learning. Teaching and learning are an important element in education. The teacher uses different approaches and substantial to teach their students and their active learning. With the passage of time, altered methods and techniques are entered in the field of education and teacher use different kinds of assessment and feedback methods to make learning more effective. Positive feedbacks arouse the interest of learners and help the teachers to explain the concepts easily. Feedbacks are those instructional aids that are used in the classroom to encourage students learning.

Burnett found that 91% of elementary school students he measured liked to be praised, 69% of those same students preferred not to receive public praise (Burnett, 2002, p. 7). This suggests that students may find public praise to be embarrassing. Hattie and Timperley's (2007) measurements of students found that while elementary students enjoyed being praised for their achievements, older students tended to think the teacher thought they had lower abilities because they were being praised. Feedback and praise produce positive effects on students. Feedback gains the upper hand because it gives students more specifics as to what can be improved, helping them learn the lesson better. Praise, on the other hand, may encourage the student, but may not influence them in other ways. Assessment for learning is not only important for students but also for enhancing teachers' teaching (Black & William, 2009; Black et al., 2004; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2009; Shute, 2008). Feedback which is provided 'here and now' is more meaningful than delayed feedback. If a student has done something inappropriate, it is necessary to tell him/her immediately rather than wait for an opportune moment. By then, s/he might have forgotten the event.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study was to assess the role of assessment and feedback as a motivational tool in enhancing students' attention in language learning.

### Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study was to assess the role of assessment and feedback as a motivational tool in enhancing students' attention in language learning.

**Objectives of the Study:** The specific objectives of the study were to;

- Identify the role of assessment and feedback
- Find out the factors that affect teachers assessment and feedback
- Identify the common assessment and feedback methods used;

### Research Questions

- What are the roles of assessment and feedback?
- What are the factors that affect teachers' assessment and feedback?
- What are the common assessment and feedback methods used?

**Significance of the Study:** As this research attempts the role of assessment and feedback as a motivational tool in enhancing students' attention in language learning, the results of this will have the following benefits. First, it will be helpful in identifying the factors in arousing students' motivation in order to promote the students' language skills. Therefore, it will help the teachers to get insight to shape and use their teaching methodologies in a way that promotes student's motivation. Second, it may serve as a starting point for other researchers to arrive at comparable results in the area.

### Review of Related Literature

**Motivation and Language Learning:** In addition, it is widely agreed that motivation constitutes one of the major factors that influence success or failure in language learning and teaching.

Motivation is an inside state that provokes one's desire for a goal and sustains their efforts in a given direction. A motivating student is one of the greatest challenges that teachers face, teachers always play a vital role to influence the students, indeed teachers instructional choices can make a positive impact on student motivation. Consequently, motivating students encompasses not only leading them to English but also arousing their thirst for knowledge and understanding (Lins, 2006). Unlike other subjects, English language learning has individual attributes that require learners to remember, practice, and communicate more. In this regard, English teachers have a duty to boost their students' willingness to participate actively and get feedback in the language learning process.

The use of a variety of fascinating activities can be an effective way of arousing students' potentialities in learning English. Unlike other subjects, English learning involves learning listening, speaking, reading, and writing capabilities by memorizing a great deal of vocabulary grammar and practicing more in and outside class (Nakata, 2006). Harmer (1998:9) asserts that many different factors affect students' motivation. He emphasized that a strongly motivated student is in a far better position as a learner than a student who is demotivated.

Johnson (1996: 40) in his part says

*Motivation to achieve in school is directly related to whether or not students attribute their school success to their own effort, rather than to those of others or to factors beyond their control. Clearly, academic success and motivation are closely linked to students' perceptions of themselves.* In addition, Lynch (1983) explained the two major factors that hinder the students' language skills are related to attitudinal and motivational reasons. Consequently, have a direct association with the students' academic achievement.

**Efficient feedback strategies:** Feedback on what has been done well is also useful. Feedback must be carefully worded to target key messages and designed to trigger future action. Feedback is more likely to be useful if it links to examples of good work, suggests sources for additional language/ skill support (where necessary), models other ways in which the student might have addressed an issue, and/ or provides specific criticism on one aspect of the work (along with a suggestion for its improvement). As feedback is one of the most time-consuming aspects of assessment, this element offers a rich range of ways to lower the time demand without losing the student benefit. Teachers describe using taped oral feedback, using templates and prewritten formats for the common and predictable messages or structured peer review. Group feedback strategies that identify common themes or shared difficulties can be useful, 'students who scored highly did this...', 'students who scored lower did this...'. Some courses now redirect teacher time to formative feedback only. This means they need only give the [redrafted] summative assignments a grade plus brief justification of the grade for quality assurance purposes. This readjustment of workload has the benefit of offering feedback when students can apply it/learn. EFL learners valued corrective feedback and they believed that it helped a lot to develop their writing skills. Moreover, their learners felt the necessity of accuracy in writing for their academic and professional life. Duhs (2008), in an unpublished review of assessment and students, argues:

*“Feedback is central to the learning of students. A dialogic feedback system ... is helpful, as it puts students at the center of learning, providing them with a series of opportunities to act on feedback. Students write and re-write their work based on self and peer assessment and produce an outline of how they plan to act on tutor feedback. Dialogue ensures that students understand feedback so that it informs future work.”*

Teachers will help their students be successful if they: are aware of differences in students' previous experiences with assessment; provide detailed guidance on what is expected; show examples of how students have tackled or might tackle the task; develop strategies for balancing the relative importance of language and content when grading. These need to be reflected in the stated assessment criteria; create tasks that all students have an equitable chance of achieving; devise alternative or negotiated tasks where possible which allow students to demonstrate their abilities and strengths in a range of areas. Strength of teachers' assessment is that students, in fact, receive feedback during their face-to-face class interaction when the teacher points out some of the common errors students made in their tests, exams, assignments as well as essays and which should be improved. It is important to emphasize here that teachers should not just concentrate on the correction of their students' errors because it could be quite demotivating and discouraging for their students by just seeing their teacher's red-marked corrections. Therefore, because of all the above-mentioned problems, the researcher was inspired to begin this study. The researcher was also attempted to fill these gaps by conducting this study on assessing the role of feedback in motivating students learning at Entoto Amba secondary school. Finally, the researcher pointed out possible, accurate and valuable solutions for the roles, challenges, and strategies about feedback.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**The subjects:** The subjects of the study were ten teachers who were assigned to teach the English language in grade 9 and forty students who were attended grade 9 at Entoto Amba secondary school. Each teacher was teaching three sections. Thus, the researcher took all the available grade 9 English teachers in Entoto Amba secondary school as subjects of the study.

**Sampling design:** To select the sample teachers and students, purposive random selection was used. The sample teachers and students were selected to get helpful and more reliable data. Besides, the school was more accessible for the researcher. Concerning the teachers' selection, all available teachers were taken. Those ten teachers were the only ones assigned to teach the English language in grade 9 in Entoto Amba secondary school. Then, the students were also randomly selected by their seats with the help of their English teachers. That is why it was possible to have ten English teachers from ten different sections.

**Data collection instruments:** So, as to collect the required data for the study, three types of instruments: Document analysis, Questionnaires, and Observation were used. These instruments are effective in generating valid information.

**Data Analysis:** In this section, presentation, and interpretation of the data obtained through a descriptive analysis of the

documents, questionnaires, and observation. It presents the results in four sections: student concerns, teacher concerns, teachers' practices in assessment and feedback and good assessment and feedback practices. The ten items in the second section of the teacher's and student's questionnaire were devised to elicit information about the student's concern on assessment and feedback. Item 1 was intended to find out whether students understand the feedback comments which are given by their teachers. All 86% of teachers and students reported that students can understand the feedback comments. Similarly, for item 2, more than half of the respondents replied that students feel that the feedback does not show them what to do in order to improve their work. For item 3, almost all the students and the teachers reported that students do not understand the purposes of the feedback. Moreover, most of the students replied that they cannot understand the relationship between the comments and the grade. However, a large proportion of the teachers, i.e. 55% and 24% disclosed that their students cannot understand the relationship between the comments and the grade. Likewise, there is too little/too much feedback. is given by their respective teachers, as many of the respondent's teachers, as well as students, revealed that it is not too much feedback. In 60% of the observed sessions, the researcher saw the teachers advocate giving important and constructive feedbacks that were provided by their respective teachers. This is because feedback by its nature it is time-consuming.

Allowing students to discuss the comments or feedbacks in pairs or groups would enable them to use their experience. It is also a good way of integrating different language skills. There is a chance to discuss the feedback which is provided by their respective teachers. At this point, the information elicited from the teachers seems too much with the students' responses and the results of the observation. The teachers made a better attempt to help students have a chance to discuss the feedback given by the teacher. This would enable the students to discuss their feedback, but it may not be enough to create a chance and discuss the feedback well. Similarly, during the observation, the researcher observed the teachers trying to make the feedback helpful even if the feedback is too late to be helpful for anything in 35 observed sessions. This means 5 of the teachers always wrote the students common mistakes on the blackboard and discussed with the students while 3 teachers did it usually. The rest 2 teachers were seen doing sometimes. Item 8, the teacher's feedback tells us what they should have been told before they started the task. For example, 80% of students reported that feedback helps them to shape and correct their comments and also to comprehend the comments before they started the task. Concerning items 9 and 10, which asked if teachers set the criteria for feedbacks are unclear, it has been presented in table 1 that almost all teachers and students explained that students cannot notice the feedback criteria utilized by the teachers were not clear to correct their mistakes. In other words, the teacher should provide criteria that enhance the students learning and create a positive teaching-learning environment for both teachers and students. Besides, most students reported that the teacher's feedback comments are not upsetting. Most of the teachers were also support their students. The observation also generated similar information. This suggests that teachers were trying to integrate the comments associated with the students' real life. Close to 90 percent of the respondents replied that Students do not read feedback comments because they are only interested in the grade.

Moreover, they are also disengaged from the feedback process. This is mainly because of the lack of competence in participating and expressing their ideas orally and in writing. It is widely recognized that feedback is an important part of the learning cycle, but both students and teachers frequently express disappointment and frustration in relation to the conduct of the feedback process. Teachers' ability in writing feedback is too time-consuming for a little tangible benefit, and they don't know the best format for giving feedback; how to get students to understand the criteria; what to focus on in my feedback comments; how much feedback to write.

Feedback promotes dialogue and conversation in developing language competency. Both the teachers and the students revealed that teachers do not emphasize the instructional aspects of feedback but also the correctional dimensions. Besides, do not remember to provide feed forward-indicate what students need to think about in order to bring their task performance closer to the goals; Specify the goals of the assessment task and use feedback to link student performance to the specified assessment goals; engage the students in practical exercises and dialogue to help them to understand the task criteria; design feedback comments that invite self-evaluation and future self-learning management; enlarge the range of participants in the feedback conversation incorporate self and peer feedback, and engage the students in conversation around the purposes of feedback and feed-forward. In short, allowing students to discuss the comments or feedbacks in pairs or groups would enable them to use their experience. It is also a good way of integrating different language skills.

Students in English course have opportunities to engage actively with goals, criteria, and standards, before, during and after an assessment task which help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, and standards). Teachers' tasks encourage regular study in and out of class and deep rather than surface learning which encourages students to manage their time and effort on challenging learning tasks. When the teachers deliver high-quality feedback information that helps learners self-correct. The kind of teacher feedback help students self-assess and self-correct to provide opportunities to act on feedback (to close any gap between current and desired performance). Summative and formative assessments aligned to and supportive of the development of valued qualities, skills, and understanding which ensure that summative assessment has a positive impact on learning. Besides, there are opportunities for feedback dialogues (peer and/or tutor-student) around assessment tasks in their course/subject which encourages interaction and dialogue around learning (peer and teacher-student). There are also formal opportunities for reflection, self-assessment or peer assessment in their course which facilitate the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning. Students have a choice in the topics, methods, criteria, weighting and/or timing of learning and assessment tasks in their course which gives choice in the topic, method, criteria, weighting or timing of assessments. Students in their course kept informed or engaged in consultations regarding assessment policy decisions that involve students in decision-making about assessment policy and practice. Their assessment and feedback processes help encourage social bonding and the development of learning communities that support the development of learning groups and communities. Teachers' assessment and feedback processes enhance their students' motivation to learn and be successful which boosts

positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. Their assessment and feedback processes inform and shape their teaching which provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape their teaching. From the above table, the researcher depicted that both the students and teachers most of the time use group feedback. The teachers' students reported that they sometimes use corrective feedback. On the other hand, they have never employed taped oral feedback, dialogic feedback, structured peer feedback, and templates and prewritten formats. Therefore, teachers are not interested in designing and implementing various feedback strategies in their classrooms. to make the teaching-learning process more effective teachers, as well as students, work together in the efficient feedback methods.

## **Conclusion, Recommendation and Suggestion**

### **Conclusion**

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis and the general discussion of the results was made and the following challenges were recognized: teachers do not set the criteria for feedbacks and they are unclear, lack of knowhow how to use different feedback strategies, and students do not read feedback comments because they are only interested in the grade. There is confusion surrounding its implementation, especially in practice due to the low of students' understanding. Even though the importance of feedback is recognized by teachers and students, it is not utilized as much as it is needed to implement because of the lack of curricular materials. The findings of the study also show that a lack of sufficient commitment and training on how to apply and manage assessment and feedback were the identified problems. Assessment and feedback are more effective as a teaching-learning technique for both teachers and students. Therefore, assessment and feedback is a very effective teaching-learning technique for low achievers. Overall, the analysis of the results reveals that the students in Entoto Amba secondary school, covered by this research, have shown a high level of feedback has a positive impact on students with respect to their teachers. The expressed behavior pertaining to feedback positive influences are also promising. Even though it is hard to be conclusive based just on this study of limited coverage, a high level of feedback literacy of prospective students can be instrumental in the students' future academic achievement for Ethiopia. However, this could be realized only if it is supported by appropriate and more potent policies and actions.

### **Recommendation**

Teachers must also clearly indicate the feedback comments orally and in writing. It is also recommended that teachers build opportunities for repeating and reviewing general rules and key concepts, in order to attract students' attention and develop an understanding of the feedbacks. Teachers would also do well to explain such demanding feedbacks using a variety of media and methods, in order to help students with different learning styles. Within this overall structure, it is recommended that assessment and feedback should be presented in small steps pitched at the students' level, which are then practiced before going on to the next step. This allows students to gain a sense of mastery over the content and will stop them from getting bored or losing the thread of the lesson. Feedback should be presented with a high degree of clarity and

enthusiasm. Teachers need to focus on one point at a time, avoid digressions and avoid using ambiguous phrases or pronouns which can misdirect students. They need to focus also on the various feedback strategies being developed and applied during the lesson and to repeat it regularly during the lesson.

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