

# The Use of Feedback in Classroom Interaction in Moroccan Primary School

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## Abstract

This study explores the verbal feedback utilized by a group of Moroccan primary school teachers. The intent is to identify feedback types used and how effective they are in building knowledge and scaffolding thinking. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is embedded within the sociocultural perspective that conceptualizes the classroom as a cultural location of meaning in which relationships, functions, regulations, values, and norms are socially constructed. The study draws on observation data in large-class settings. Twenty two teachers from five different schools took part in the study. Twenty two lessons covering a range of subjects and topics were observed. Verbal manuscripts of classroom discourse were analyzed qualitatively. The analysis of the transcripts revealed that although four different types of feedback were identified, there was little variation in teacher provision of feedback. One particular form was preponderant—evaluative feedback. Interactional issues related to encouraging student responses and thinking are also addressed. Findings reveal that teachers infrequently offer the types of feedback interventions categorized as effective in improving learning during typical classroom interactions. These results are important as they provide an awareness of the feedback practices employed in the observed classrooms and the significant effects they have on classroom interaction and student learning. We conclude by highlighting consequences of these findings on professional development, and offer opportunities for future research.

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**Keywords:** Primary School, Feedback, Classroom, Interaction

## Introduction

A central responsibility of teachers within any learning culture is the provision of feedback. Feedback is solidly rooted in the educational process. Given its centrality in learning processes, it is of the essence that we

understand not only the effect on learners of the form and content of feedback but also the wording of that feedback. Feedback provision highlights the demands on teachers if they are to teach effectively. Research has confirmed that the right kind of feedback is crucial for effective teaching and learning (e.g., McMillan, 2007; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Student learning and achievement largely hinge on the type of feedback they receive. In a similar vein, Hattie (2002) stressed that providing quality feedback to students is one of the top five strategies teachers can utilize to enhance student achievement. Thus, teachers are expected to make accurate judgments regarding when, how, and at what stage to provide accurate feedback. Effective teaching entails more than just conveying knowledge and understandings to learners (or introducing constructive tasks, environments, and learning) it also requires evaluating learners' understanding of this knowledge so that the subsequent teaching act can be relevant to the current understanding of the learners.

Hattie (1999), in his analysis of 196 studies of feedback in the classroom, portrayed feedback as one of the most significant aspects in the learning process, as powerful as the quality and quantity of instruction. Feedback is also considered (Shute, 2008) crucial to developing knowledge and skill acquisition; taking this into account, some conclusions a propos the application of feedback are well worth serious consideration. Initially, in their review of 131 studies on the topic, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) concluded that about one-third of feedback interventions decrease learning. In a synthesis of the results of 250 international studies on classroom feedback interventions, Black and Wiliam (1998) demonstrated that two teacher acts afford a more significant influence on learning than any other educational novelty ever acknowledged: (1) students' involvement in evaluation; and (2) prioritizing descriptive feedback over evaluative feedback. Such conclusions have prized assessment *for* learning, as opposed to assessment *of* learning or assessment *as* learning (ibid.). Hattie (1999) affirms that the occurrence of feedback in a classroom is very low. Teachers often ask new questions or offer further explanation without explicitly shedding light on the responses or contributions of students. Hattie added that if feedback was present, it was in most cases non-interactive and non-descriptive and typically took the form of praise such as: "good"; "alright", and "that's right"; other more specific examples of feedback interventions were less common. In relationship with that , a similar research done on the certification system of the American National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Bond, Smith, Baker, & Hattie, 2000) confirmed that the act of feedback was one of the discriminating variables making a distinction between teachers who did and who did not receive verification as 'accomplished' teachers. Nonetheless, the incidence of feedback was very low in both groups. The most recurrent

feedback was praise, for instance, “That’s good” on account of the centrality of feedback in improving learning, it is of particular importance to know which feedback interventions might improve learning, and which are unlikely to achieve that end. In addition, it is of particular concern which of the feedback interventions that are likely to improve learning, are actually being used by teachers in classroom interaction with their students in every day teaching practice, and how often. In this paper, our focus is on the feedback teachers provide during the lessons they give in their regular day-to-day work.

The research questions revolve around feedback interventions that, according to the relevant literature are likely to be either effective or ineffective in improving learning, are actually used by teachers in their interaction with students, and, how often these feedback interventions are employed. With the purpose of answering these questions, we will initially determine and illustrate the concept of ‘feedback’. Most available specifications of the concept in the existing literature underline the disparity between a present level of performance of a given student on the one hand, and an objective or aspired level of performance on the other. This association is what is portrayed as ‘discrepancy-feedback’. Feedback can be conceived as a message conveyed by a teacher concerning aspects of a student performance or understanding. In the same vein, Sadler (1989) expounds that teacher feedback needs to deliver information particularly with respect to the task or process of learning that bridges a gap between what is grasped and what is aimed to be grasped. Accordingly, feedback is a “consequence” of performance, and “arguably the most important part of the assessment process” (Price *et al.*, 2010, p. 277). It is a key electromotive force behind providing educational assessment a capacity not only to gauge but also, and perhaps more significantly, to activate learning. One vital role assessment tasks can and should act upon is the provision of feedback in the form of “information and interpretations about the discrepancy between current status and the learning goals” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 101).

### **Theoretical Background**

Feedback can fulfill diverse functions according to the specific learning outlook through which it is considered and the underpinning assumptions about the learning context upon which research is predicated. This part of the research highlights feedback from a sociocultural perspective that provides a framework for describing learning and the nature of feedback. Socioculturally, education is viewed as occurring through dialogue whereby “the interactions between students and teachers” echo “the historical development, cultural values and social practices of the societies and communities in which educational institutions exist” (Rojas-Drummond &

Mercer, 2003). The socially established cultural practices of the classroom become evident and repeatedly reconstructed in the pedagogical and social life of the classroom, mirrored in the customary ways of participation and communication (Wenger, 1998; Wells, 1999). The interaction patterns in the classroom community can be seen as both fostering and also impeding opportunities for learning to classroom members (Nathan & Knuth, 2003; Castanheira et al., 2001).

From the sociocultural tradition, learning is not seen as an individual undertaking but a social practice of knowledge construction in human activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Knowledge emerges through the network of interaction and is distributed among interactants. Learning is a process that, as stated by Lave and Wenger (1991), takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind. Education is seen as a dialogic process with intellectual development being shared to a large extent through interaction. In educational settings, teacher-student and student-teacher interaction are grounded as being of significance and consequence. Language, Vygotsky (1978), is viewed as a cultural tool for the development and sharing of knowledge and as a psychological tool for structuring the processes and content of individual thought. Vygotsky suggested that there is a close relationship between these two kinds of use which can be briefed in the claim that ‘intermental’ (social, interactional) activity shapes some of the most ‘intramental’ (individual, cognitive) capabilities, with children’s participation in joint activities forming new personal understandings and ways of thinking. Within the socio-cultural perspective, feedback or assessment strategies comprise culturally located arrangements that support student participation, and growth of students’ sense of becoming an insider in their learning practice. It also supports the growth of student’s identities as self-directed and self-sufficient learners. Hence, newer models of assessment for learning require a need for teachers and students to fundamentally transform the roles and behavior encouraged within a behaviorist paradigm. In contemporary education theory, students are no longer reliant on teacher but rather hold the key role in the process of effective learning. Teachers now hold the role of helping students become autonomous and self-regulating.

### **Categorizing Feedback**

There are numerous suggestions on the categorization of feedbacks. They are usually classified as positive or negative. Positive feedback validates a correct response from the learner. In pedagogical practice positive feedback is critical as it gives affective support to the learner and strengthens motivation for learning sustainability (Ellis, 2009). Examples of teacher’s positive feedback consist of, ‘good’, ‘ok’, ‘yes’, and ‘well done’.

Nevertheless, these forms may not constantly be indicative of students' satisfactory response as they could also serve as an introduction to ensuing rectification or adjustment of students' responses. Quite the reverse, negative feedback denotes instantaneous oral feedback which targets mistake correction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Within this framework, a number of researchers have emphasized variations. For instance, a form of negative feedback as corrective feedback can be further categorized into recasts, elicitation, metalinguistic cues, clarification requests and repetitions (Diane, 1998). The categorizations of feedbacks have also been founded on the functions they afford. For instance, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) stress the "evaluative feedback" practiced by the teacher in classroom discourse, which habitually comprises the moves of accepting, evaluating and commenting. Richards and Lockhart's (2007, p. 189) classification involves acknowledging a correct answer, indicating an incorrect answer, praising, expanding or modifying a student's answer, repeating, summarizing and criticizing. While there is panoply of feedback moves to support and construct student learning, the teacher undertakes the responsibility of opting for appropriate feedback types given his/her knowledge of students' needs and instructional activities.

The quality of feedback offered to students has continually been discussed and argued upon. MacDonald (1991, p. 1) contended that teachers' feedback "often lacks thought or depth; students often misunderstand their teachers' feedback...and many students do not attend to teachers' feedback to begin with!" This contention is supported by Weeden and Winter (1999) who scrutinized feedback from the student's standpoint to underscore that much feedback was either nonspecific or of little utility in enhancing learning. They observed multiple forms of feedback that remain beyond students' understanding. They highlighted that younger students were specifically confused between feedback emphasizing effort and achievement. They also noted that all students seek Focused and specific comments on how to improve work. "The variability of feedback reported by students and their sometimes confused perceptions of its intention supports Sadler's (1998) view that it is the quality, not just the quantity of feedback that merits our closest attention" (Weeden & Winter, 1999, p.10). Sadler (1998) mentioned that teachers would often provide comments or feedbacks on students' effort rather than concepts and facts. He cited teachers' lack of content knowledge as being a major influential factor. Hatie & Timperly (2007) similarly discovered that providing more (quantity) feedback can be unfavorable for students' learning. In this study, one group of primary school students was given 'scaffolding'-type feedbacks to support the learners with their answers. Another group was given whole solutions without any prospect for students to interact. The findings disclosed those who were

provided with ‘scaffolded-feedbacks developed better learning skills and could keep hold of learning longer than those with whole support. Thus, the use of appropriate and quality type feedback can be viewed as a major instrument in improving student learning. Different researchers have outlined typical features that comprise the quality of teacher feedback. For instance, Herschell, Greco, Filcheck and McNeil (2002) recommend that the nature of feedback should be planned and precise rather than random and general. Lyster and Ranta (1997) put forward that the effectiveness of different types of feedback is determined by whether or not the feedback results in productive uptake, and if it does, whether it results in successful repair. Uptake refersto “a student’s utterance that immediately follows the teacher’s feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher’s intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student’s initial utterance” (ibid., p. 49). Differently put, uptake demonstrates what the student does with the teacher’s feedback. Mastropieri and Scruggs (1994) illustrate that feedback should be outcome-focused and encouraging. However, feedback should not only center on what students did inaccurately, but also on issues to advance future undertakings (Lenz, Ellis & Scanlon, 1996). Turning attention these forms of feedback would assist teachers in the identification of students’ needs and more likely encourage positive outcomes from them.

### **Purpose of the study**

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the subsequent questions were raised: (i) What types of feedback do teachers use? (ii) What is the frequency of the occurrence of different types of feedback in the discourse of Moroccan primary school teachers? (3) How effective are these types of feedback in promoting students’ engagement and learning?

### **Methodology**

This paper is part of an ongoing research project investigating cultural modes of pedagogy and their manifestations in classroom practice in Moroccan primary schools. This paper is a qualitative examination of how 22 teachers actually employ feedback interventions in classroom. This research is used to analyze the oral feedback that teachers provide students. The design of this research was observational. Service teachers were observed in classes and recordings were made following aspects of classroom interaction. Applying “focused whole-class observation” (Marriott, 2001, p. 12) enabled the researcher to be ‘covert’: not to reveal exactly what he was looking for in the observation to reduce ‘participants bias’ when they try to accommodate to what they assume the researcher was looking for. Additionally, having a checklist of entire criteria to observe helped the researcher to stay focused on aspects he wanted to investigate in

the study. Data were collected in five primary schools in Marrakech, including rural, urban, and suburban sites. All of them were public schools. They were selected to be as representative as possible – geographically, economically, and culturally. The schools operate from grade 1 to 6. The language of instruction is Standard Arabic and French. In practice the language of instruction in the observed classrooms turned out to be a blending of standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic. The numbers of pupils in classrooms ranged from 30 to 45. Most classrooms have relatively impoverished resource settings, in which the “raw materials” of information and ideas were constrained to those found in texts. And the main teaching aids in most classrooms were the chalkboard and textbooks. Data collection took over two months. Methods included eight to twelve hours per week of classroom observation and around four to six hours of audio-taping. The focus was upon teacher feedback in terms of forms and functions in the narrow context of classroom. During classroom observation, I participated most through listening to what was going on in the classroom. In order to identify the types and patterns of feedback in classroom discourse, the researcher tracked the how teachers used feedback posed, the answers that they generated and how the teacher followed up on these answers. I specifically focused on the effect of feedback utterances on subsequent ones, and to what extent teachers’ feedback influenced what students contributed and whether they triggered further thinking. Analysis thus centered on systematically investigating what was observable in terms of turns or moves and then on whether any emerging patterns in the forms and functions of feedback could be discerned, mainly in association with the teachers’ input (Westgate & Hughes, 1997). The discourse analysis system chiefly focused on the three-part Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) structure (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992).

Table 1: Biographical information about the participating teachers

Name	Gender	Teaching experience	School	Teaching level	Number of pupils	Academic background
Fatima	F	12 years	A	1 grade	38	BA
Hassan	M	17	A	1	40	BAC
Samir	M	16	A	5	37	BAC
Nawal	F	21	B	6	38	BAC
Hasna	F	13	B	2	42	BA
Leila	F	14	B	4	45	BA
Bochra	F	20	C	6	37	BAC
Insaf	F	15	C	3	43	BA
Khadija	F	33	C	1	44	BAC
Khalid	M	24	C	2	42	BAC
Rachid	M	21	C	4	41	BAC
Kawtar	F	20	D	5	27	BAC
Omar	M	29	D	3	32	BAC
Fouad	M	27	D	1	31	BAC
Safaa	F	18	E	2	37	BAC

Mohammed	M	22	E	3	35	BAC
Hayat	F	18	E	3	36	BAC
Youssef	M	33	E	5	35	BAC
Fatima	F	35	F	1	40	BAC
Najat	F	29	F	4	37	BAC
Brahim	M	25	F	6	38	BAC
Widad	F	08	F	2	38	BA

**Note:** BAC: Baccalaureate certificate; BA: Bachelor of Arts

### Findings of Study

It is common knowledge that the dynamics of classroom discourse shape students' perceptions and nature of engagement in the activities conducted in the classroom. Looking at teacher-student interaction allowed the researcher to examine the types of discourse practiced within the classrooms and their effect on learning. The analytical framework of classroom discourse (Chin, 2006) focused on four aspects of (that is, content, type of utterance, thinking elicited, and interaction pattern). In the extracts below, the column titled "Move" indicates the form of the utterance (I(initiation), R(response), or F(feedback)) while the column labeled "Purpose of utterance" corresponds to the purpose or function in that discourse move (e.g., elicit, reply, extend). Entries in the column titled "Type of utterance" designates whether the utterance is in the form of a question, answer, statement, comment, or a combination of more than one type. Altogether, these three constituents (specifically, move, purpose, and type of utterance) represent the "interactive" aspect of the discourse. The last column, named "cognitive process", specifies the thinking processes associated with students' utterances. This analysis was inferential in nature, and based on what was known about the classroom context as it was not conceivable to access directly students' minds. Investigation of the connections between the interactive and cognitive features of the discourse facilitated the identification of patterns embedded in classroom discourse, and to pinpoint any definite teacher discourse-moves that ease productive responses in students. So, of particular importance here are the types of feedback made use of and the functions they fulfilled. Data analysis revealed four main types of feedback in the observed classrooms. The table below summarizes the types and frequency of verbal feedbacks (N = 395) used by the observed teachers.

Table 1: Types and frequency of the teachers' Feedback

Types of feedback	Total	%
Evaluative feedback	287	72
Corrective feedback	83	21
Interactive feedback	13	4
Descriptive feedback	12	3



## Types of Feedback

### Evaluative feedback

Evaluative feedback can be defined as a form of “judgment” made on learners’ performance (Nunn, 2001). Teachers making use of this type of feedback usually use words or phrases to indicate that a learner’s response is satisfactory. In most cases, the common signals are ‘good’, ‘very good’, ‘yes’, ‘correct’ and ‘ok’. From data analysis, it was generally revealed that the teachers’ evaluative feedback habitually takes three patterns; (i) the teacher praising the students after providing a correct response; (ii) the teacher repeating the answers offered by the students; (iii) the teacher accepting answers but recasting them. The following extract exemplifies these patterns.

Extract: 1

Speaker	Utterance	Move	Type of utterance	Purpose of utterance	Cognitive process
T	Linuħa:wil tadakkur ma: qara?na:hu sa:biqan...man hijja lalla nammu:la? lalla nammu:la hijja... man yatakkar? Samir <b>We'll try to remember what we read before.... Who is Lalla Nammoula?...Lalla Nammoula is... who can remember?</b>	I	Q	Elicit	-
S1	lalla nammu:la hijja ?imra?atun ?a?u:z Lalla Nammoula is an old woman.	R	A	Reply	Recall
T	ħasan... ?imra?atun ?a?u:z <b>Good ... an old woman.</b>	F	S	Accept/repeat	-
T	ma: huwwa dawruħa: fi lħaj ?... ma:da: taf?alu min ?ajli l?a:xari:n ? <b>What is her role in the neighborhood?...What did she do for others?</b>	I	Q	Elicit/focus	-
S2	tu?allimu l?i:ra:n <b>She teaches the neighbors.</b>	R	A	Reply	Recall
T	s?ħi:h... tu?allimu l?i:ra:n... tu?allimuhum ma:da:? <b>Correct...teaching her neighbors...teaching them what?</b>	F-I	C-Q	Accept/repeat/elicit	-
S3	?at?ħar:z <b>Broidery</b>	R	A	Reply	Explain
T	na?am. ?at?ħar:z ma:da: a:d?an <b>Yes. Broidery. What else? ħsan</b>	F-I	C-Q	Accept/elicit	-
S4	nas? ?az zara:bi: <b>Carpet weaving</b>	R	A	Reply	Recall
T	ħasan. na?am. tu?allimuhunna kajfa yaħikna zzara:bi: <b>Good. Yes. She teaches them how to weave carpets</b>	F	S	Explain	-

*Note:* I, initiation; R, response; F, follow-up; Q, teacher question; A, student answer; C, teacher comment; S, teacher statement (for type of utterance).

### Interactive Feedback

Interactive feedback is specified as an approach to extend or transform a student’s answer (Richard & Lockhart, 1996). In the following example, the

teacher initiated the exchange and assisted students to identify the shape drawn on the board through guiding questions. The teacher provided key information to modify a student's response to the question. Providing such assistance is not considered a negative feedback but rather ensures that students develop the skill to distinguish between geometric shapes through observation and calculation.

### Extract: 2

Speaker	Utterance	Move	Type of utterance	Purpose of utterance	Cognitive process
T	Mada: tarawn?...maha:da ?akl ? <b>What do you see?... What is this shape?</b> mustat?:l	I	Q	Elicit	-
S1	<b>Rectangle</b> hal huwwa mustat?:l?	R	A	Reply	Hypothesize
T	<b>Is it a rectangle?</b> La:	F-I	Q	Refuse/elicit	-
SS	<b>No</b> La:hid'u ha:dajn kbat?:ajn. kifa?n?t?akdu bi?annu ma'i mustat?:l ?	R	A	Reply	Confirm
T	<b>Look at the pairs of lines. How can we make sure that it isn't a rectangle?</b> Na'hsab	F-I	S-Q	Focus/elicit	-
S2	<b>We calculate.</b> ?ajjid. t'ari:qa mazjana. ?a? kanhasbu?	R	A	Reply	Explain
T	<b>Very good. Good way. What do we calculate?</b> l'ad'la:? djalu	F-I	S-Q	Accept/elicit	-
S2	<b>Its lines</b> na?am. kajf?... ?a? katqul lqa?ida?...Rita	R	A	Reply	Specify
T	<b>Yes. How?... What does the rule say?... Rita</b> ?almustat?:l jatakawwan min d'li?a:n mutaqabila:n wa mutaqajisa:n wa ?indahu ?arb?at zzawaja qa?:ima wa mutaqajisa.	F-I	S-Q	Accept/elicit	-
S3	<b>A rectangle is made up of two pairs of parallel lines and has four right angles</b>				

### Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback indicates “any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner utterance” (Chaudron, 1977, p. 31). Corrective feedback takes the form of an answer to a student performance containing an error. The answer is an other-initiated repair and can comprise (1) an indication that an error has been made, (2) provision of the correct target form, (3) metalinguistic information about the nature of the error, or any combination of these (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006). In below exchange, the teacher provides feedback on a student's written word that contains an error. In this extract the teacher disapproves of how the students used the Hamza in the word /bi?r / ‘well’, draws the whole class attention to that, asks another student to suggest the

right form, and finally provides a detailed justification. The following extract is an example of corrective feedback.

**Extract: 3**

Speaker	Utterance	Move	Type of utterance	Purpose of utterance	Cognitive process
T	ʔuktubu: kalimat biʔr ʔala lʔalwaha <b>Write the word 'well' on your slates.</b> [Students write on their slates]	I R	Q -	Elicit -	- Apply
T	ʔufu aʔktʔb hakim waʔhakda tattʔktʔb lhamza <b>Look at what Hakim wrote. Is it the right way to use Hamza?</b>	F-I	C-Q	Refuse/elicit	-
SS	<b>No</b> La: mahijja tʔʔariqa sʔʔahi:ha	R	A	Reply	Disconfirm
T	<b>No. What is the right way?</b> La: naktubuha: ʔala: sʔʔatʔ	F-I	S-Q	Elicit	-
SI	<b>We write it on the line.</b> naʔam huna:ka kasʔra qablaha: ʔalhamzatu tuktabu ʔala sʔʔatʔ ida: sabiqatha: kasʔra	R	A	Reply	Explain
T	<b>Yes. There is Kasrah before it. The Hamza is written on the line when preceded by a Kasrah.</b>	F	S	Explain	-

### Descriptive Feedback

Descriptive Feedback is precise information in the form of conversations or written comments that assist the learner in understanding what she or he needs to do in order to improve (Wiggins, 1998). The focus in descriptive feedback is on process rather than completion of task or learning of specific content. It is essentially relevant to the task students are performing, allows them to re-focus, improve their mastery of the skill, and further engage them in their learning. In this extract the teacher acknowledged that the student was performing well but highlighted a flaw related to proportionality that resulted from faulty measurement. The teacher also drew students' attention to observe a good example for further guidance. The following extract is an example of descriptive feedback.

**Extract: 4**

Speaker	Utterance	Move	Type of utterance	Purpose of utterance	Cognitive process
T	L?an ?ursumu: ba:xira mu?a:biha ?ala ?awra:qikum <b>Now you draw a similar ship on your pieces of paper.</b> [Students start <b>drawing</b> . <b>After some minutes</b> ]	I R	Q -	Elicit written reply	- -
T	hasan. Rakum radi:n mazjan frrasm djal s?ari ...lakin ?ufu hna matalan had lxut?o:t?mafiha? tana:sub ... ..?a? xas?kum ddiru?				
T	<b>Good. You are on track here in trying to draw the ship's mast... But look here for example these lines are not proportional. What should you do?</b> nhaasbu lmur?bba?a:t	F-I	C-Q	Accept/comment /elicit	-
S1	<b>We calculate the squares.</b> mumta:z xas? thasbu lmur?bba?a:t qbal matrasmu: lxut?o:t?..	R	A	Reply	Hypothesize
T	<b>Excellent. Make sure you count the squares before drawing your lines.</b> kabhal hadi	F-I	C-Q	Accept/guide	-
S2	like this? mumta:z. ntiba:h... d?u ?aniban kul ?i...la:hid?o: rasm manal ... la:hid?o: lxut?o:t? mutanasiba ma?a ba?d?ha lba?d?... Kif h?as?ti ?la had nmati?a?	R	A	Reply	Hypothesize
T	<b>Excellent. Your attention...put down everything ... look at Manaf's drawing... look at the lines ...they are in proportion to each other .... How did you do that?</b> hsbabbu lmur?bba?a:t f?llawwal.	F-I	S-Q	Accept/elicit	-
S2	<b>I counted the squares first.</b> hasan. l?an diru nafs ?aj?.	R	A	Reply	Explain
T	<b>Good. Now you do the same thing.</b>	F	S-Q	Accept/elicit	-

**Discussion**

Despite differences in terms of teachers' age, experience and degrees, these differences the teachers' feedback intervention analysis reveals that the most frequent type of verbal feedback employed by the teachers is evaluative feedback. The data reveal that 72% of feedback used in classrooms is evaluative. Purely evaluative feedback points out how good the answer is, but not whether it is the best or the worst answer possible. It provides merely a summative type of assessment. Evaluative feedback leads to students' dependency on teachers' approval. Students expect teachers to evaluate and determine appropriate and inappropriate responses, rather than students forming their own reasoning and judgments. Evaluative feedback frequently takes the form of praise. Furthermore, as can be seen from the extracts above, praise is usually non-specific. This type does not entirely provide support for learning as it lacks specific information that creates the desired learning effect. 'Praises' are essential constituents of classroom interaction as they convey positive feedback. However, if excessively given, as has been

noticed, they lose their motivational and incentive value. Thus, praises and other forms of evaluative feedback need to be symmetrical to the performance demonstrated by students so that they could form influential teaching strategies. Teachers sometimes use praise in the classroom as part of automated discourse patterns and socialized schemas about the roles and expectations of teaching and learning, prompting them to use formulaic phrases that do not help students much. Essentially, “children should be praised for the process of their work (e.g., focusing on the task, using effective strategies, or persisting on challenging problems), rather than for the end product and the ability that produced it” (Mueller & Dweck, 1998, p. 50). In other words, praise needs to separate the action or process from the person or product (Kamins & Dweck, 1999). Moreover, feedback need not be always explicit as this may encourage learners to use their own resources in eliciting self-direction and repair. In this regard, implicit feedback may improve students’ ability to monitor their own thinking, and under the apposite conditions, could be more useful than simply praising or providing them with the correct form.

Corrective feedback comes second, constituting 21%. Unfortunately, interactive and descriptive types of feedback that increase students’ engagement constitute only 4% and 3% respectively. This tendency of utilizing classroom feedback can be partly explained by the demands placed on the teacher to maintain classroom order and to keep the class moving onward all the way through the curriculum, which subtracts time from meaningful attention that needs to be paid to the requirements of students. Moreover, the teachers may not be fully aware of the functions of feedback in constructing or restraining learning. It takes more reflective thinking practice to apply descriptive rather than evaluative feedback. It takes skill and close attention to stimulate students to maintain interest and to continue to strive to develop without being controlled. Quality feedback needs to make reference to students’ output and how to improve it. It is also important to provide constructive feedback on the process of learning, such as offering learners practical ideas of how to improve through the use of different strategies or more effective ways of channeling their time and effort.

Current feedback practices in the observed classrooms are not fit for developing quality learning. The teachers’ feedback is still traditional in the sense that it is often minimal and judgmental rather than informative or descriptive, and in such cases the cognitive potential of exchanges is squandered. Improving feedback process entails viewing feedback not as information transmission, but more as an interactive exchange in which elucidation is shared, meanings are discussed, and expectations are shed light on.

In their responses to student answers, most observed teachers for the most part give evaluative feedback. Such a move by the teachers is short of the elements of reflection, discussion, or interaction. In order for teachers to lengthen student output and engage them, they should adapt their use of the F move of the IRF sequence--initiation, response, and feedback (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992)--by using more probes to ask for elaboration on an answer and more uptakes where they construct their succeeding questions on students' responses. When extending teacher-student interaction, students' communicative and argumentative competences are inevitably enhanced. Their linguistic ability is thus refined, their prior knowledge is put to use, and their learning is scaffolded (Gibbons, 2006). According to Nystrand and Gamoran (1991, p. 269), it is only when teachers disentangle themselves from recitation in pursuance of discussion and conversation that high-level evaluation, authentic questions and uptake become progressively more common, and teacher evaluation is transformed into just another conversant turn.

The teachers' feedback analysis also demonstrates that the teachers' feedback to student responses was predominantly of low quality and comes out to be a straight consequence to the poor questioning techniques. For illustration, some teachers are inclined to just nod their heads as a sign of approving or declining the students' answers. Others restrict their feedback and comments to few words for the sake of speeding up activities in the period. As far as quality is concerned, the teachers' feedback is mostly evaluative marked by the use of short words of acknowledgment. Recasting or repeating student responses is also another recurring practice. Probing students' responses, whether right or wrong, is minimal and is not intended to increase the students' input or unpack the cognitive processes leading to the response. Rather, it is mostly intended to guide students toward pre-determined answers, serving a pre-established frame of reference.

The nature of the teachers' feedback is usually framed by their intent in asking a question. The choice of the feedback act a teacher makes may relate to "the teacher's (implicit) theory of education, as he or she plans what learning opportunities to provide and how the students are to engage with them" (Wells, 1999, p. 171). In brief, the feedback move is an act permanently related to teacher purpose and conceptualization of her role in classroom interaction as a 'tool' for promoting learning. As has been explained earlier, the prevalence of the recitation script—initiation, response, feedback--inescapably leads the establishment of an underlying "didactical contract" (Brousseau as cited in Black, 1999) between teachers and students wherein both parties expect and agree to serve respective interactive roles. Accordingly, the teacher determines the act of questioning (initiation) and feedback, and subsequently the subject content, the turn taking, and the pace

of a lesson (Mroz et al., 2000). Students, in the observed classrooms, utterly operate within the teacher's frame of reference. They are at the receiving end; reactive rather than proactive. This state of affairs is hard to equate with the search for more interactive learning environments where pupils are encouraged to engage actively in knowledge construction.

The practice of feedback in Moroccan primary classroom bears the prints of behaviorist theory of learning. It appears that teachers are influenced by behaviorist analytical approaches that perceive feedback to be a matter of making judgments (Torrance & Pryor, 1998). In this, it was apparent that the observed teachers still have limited knowledge and skill in the process of implementing formative assessment and feedback strategies, which is influenced by their own learning and experience (Shepard, 2000). Feedback is mostly undertaken as a one-way activity in which the teacher is the sole source of information, positioned externally to the learner, as something that has to be transmitted to the learners. In this model, students are viewed as passive recipients in the learning process, with teachers playing the more prominent role. Learning is seen as a process of reinforcing knowledge acquired in a sequenced and hierarchical fashion and learning tasks can be prearranged, ordered, and programmed with specific outcomes defined. The learning task is analyzed to identify the components that must be acquired in order to complete the task and the most appropriate sequence of learning is prescribed based on observable learning outcomes. The teacher holds the expert status, and is the primary source of feedback in the classroom. In short, in a behaviorist model, it is the teachers' task to tell the learners how to learn. Overall, the influence of behaviorist thinking of teacher-centered learning was evident in teacher classroom practice of feedback. This may have come about because teachers were trained under a behaviorist paradigm, while current educational reform advocates for student-centered, facilitative teaching and learning which reflect a socio-cultural understanding of learning.

In most observed classroom interactions the third part in an IRF exchange is predominantly geared toward achieving the teachers' diverse purposes. In so doing, teacher-student interactions act as a heavy prompt or even as a straitjacket upon student learning (Myhill, 2005) as the teachers mostly seek to pursue their own agendas and do what they believed is supposed to be done. However, they severely constrain students' chance to contribute to classroom discourse and hone higher order thinking skills, therefore perceptibly thinning the opportunities for learning. As Wells (1999) observed: "it is not sufficient to repeat or reformulate a pupil's contribution: what is said needs actually to be reflected upon, discussed, or even argued about, and the dialogic element lies partly in getting students themselves to do so". Teachers could capitalize on the F move to engage their students in

additional talk so as to maximize the potential for learning. Distinctively, this extension holds at least four benefits. Initially, it can increase the sum of student contribution. For substantive engagement of students teachers need to offer “high-level evaluation” (Nystrand et al., 2003), which fits in student responses into additional questions. Secondly, the extension can scaffold students into genuine cognitive engagement. Thirdly, the extension can help establish links between the old and the new information, thus broadening students’ thinking and understanding and making it more explicit. Finally, students’ perspectives and experiences can be drawn upon as sources of knowledge. Cazden (1986, p. 128) cautions against using student reply as the only evidence for learning by claiming that “there is a critical difference between helping a child produce a particular answer and helping a child gain some conceptual understanding at a future time.”

Flexibility in the act of questioning in classroom is deemed necessary. Teachers need to fine-tune questioning to incorporate students’ contributions and to act in response to students’ thinking in an impartial rather than evaluative way. Modifying teachers’ questions and feedback naturally improves the interactivity between students and teachers. Effective interactive teaching is not simply about participation and response levels, it entails the cognitive engagement of learners in learning. For instance, the feedback step of the IRF sequence could be in the form of a “reflective toss” (Zee & Minstrell, 1997a), where the teacher shifts the responsibility for thinking back to a student by posing a question in response to a preceding utterance, thereby steering toward more reflective discourse. A reflective toss sequence characteristically consists of a three-part construction: a student statement, a teacher question, and additional student statements. The purpose is increasing students’ engagement in taking more responsibility for their learning.

Zee and Minstrell (1997b, p. 250) found that the use of “reflective tosses” served a series of subgoals. These included using questions to help students (i) make their meanings clear (e.g., clarifying the meaning of what had just been said, bringing student knowledge into public view, prompting articulation of the focal issue by a student, and emphasizing a procedure), (ii) consider a diversity of views, (iii) monitor the discussion and their own thinking, and (iv) provide ‘multiple opportunities for student judgments’. The authors further proposed that this form of questioning may help teachers shift toward more reflective discourse that help students elucidate their meanings, reflect on various points of view, and examine their own thinking.

Practicing teachers need to devote more attention to the manner in which they evaluate student responses so that there is more “high-level evaluation” whereby teachers incorporate students’ answers into ensuing questions (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Through this process teachers can



engage pupils in a probing and extended discussion in which they signal to them their interest in what they believe and not just whether they know and can report what someone else believes or has said. Therefore when “high-level evaluation” occurs, the teacher approves of the significance of students’ responses and permits it to adjust or influence the path of the discussion in some way, intertwining it into the fabric of an unfolding exchange. The third move in an IRF sequence can function to piece together teacher questions and student responses so that the discourse progressively takes on a dialogue-like quality with teacher and students taking turns in speaking and thereby inviting more student-initiated ideas and answers and accordingly sustaining higher-order thinking atmosphere where the authority of the teacher can be relaxed so as to generate opportunities for students to construct, reconstruct and sometimes challenge the knowledge they are acquiring. In this vein, Wells contends that teachers can expand the space of learning by the provision of extending rather than evaluating feedback so that “it is in this third step in the co-construction of meaning that the next cycle of the learning-and-teaching spiral has its point of departure” (Wells, 1993, p. 35). When the teacher uses efficiently the third slot in the triadic sequence, e.g., by posing a follow-up question that involves students in elaborating/expanding, exemplifying, justifying or repairing their contributions, the triadic dialogue fulfills a good pedagogical function through leading to productive co-construction of functional knowledge in the course of participatory discussion, which is mediated by the teacher undertaking the functions of a coaching/facilitating, supervising and initiating. The IRF structure can be effective in serving certain teaching purposes. However, it could seriously hamper students’ engagement when overused as was the case in the observed classrooms where the IRF mode has been empirically revealed to be the *modus operandi* of classroom interaction. In the course of this exchange construction, teachers not only manage and orient the course and content of classroom interaction but also structures of student contributions (Chafi, 2014).

## Conclusion

The conclusions derived from this study have potential in translating research insights into practical guidance for teachers on the subject of strategic moves in classroom discourse. The analysis of classroom discourse data can inform instructional practice, raise awareness of the array of discursive strategies on hand, and function as constructive pointers for teachers during pre-service training and in-service professional development. Teachers need to comprehend the inextricable connection between the nature of classroom interaction and student progress and, more specifically, the vital function feedback fulfills in generating conditions that define both the

substance and direction of student intellectual growth. There should be a shift from regarding feedback as a device by which one evaluates the essentials of learning to conceptualizing feedbacks as a process of making appropriate ‘judgments’ about when, how, and at what level to provide appropriate feedback. The issue of feedback and its effectiveness seems to warrant increased attention from teacher educators and supervisors. The findings of the present study indicate that teacher educators should not only make student teachers and experienced teachers more conscious of the merits and demerits of feedback interventions, but also recommend that it might be crucial to try to change existing classroom habits and practices through extensive training. For this reason, we suggest that more research be carried out to allow the identification of effective approaches in initial teacher education and in in-service-training in order to promote the use of learning enhancing types of feedback. After all, feedback seems to be a basic constituent of effective teaching, but thus far this fact has not been reflected in the attention it has received, whether in pre-service education or in-service professional development, or in research into the actual classroom practice.

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