THE IMPACT OF FEEDBACK IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: A WAY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyze the impact of feedback in the EFL classroom as a tool to enhance students' motivation. The study also examines how praise can affect students' motivation and to what extent it impacts on the students' learning progress. The participants of this study are 27 students from 1st of ESO and their English teachers from a secondary school in l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. The methodology has been mixed and both qualitative (interviews and classroom observation diary) and quantitative methodology (questionnaire) was used to gather the data. The results demonstrate that praise boosts students' motivation to learn English in the classroom. Nevertheless, the results do not show a great impact in the long term. At the same time, specific and positive feedback seems to influence students' learning and motivation.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, motivation, feedback, praise, positive feedback, specific feedback, classroom observation diary, interviews, questionnaires

Resum

Aquest estudi pretén analitzar l'impacte del feedback a l'assignatura de Llengua Anglesa com a eina per potenciar la motivació dels estudiants. Aquest estudi també examina com els elogis afecten la motivació de l'alumnat a l'aula i fins a quin punt impacta en el procés d'aprenentatge dels estudiants. Els participants d'aquesta investigació són 27 estudiants de primer d'ESO i els seus professors d'anglès d'un institut a l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. La metodologia que s'ha emprat per recollir les dades ha estat mixta, s'han utilitzat eines de la metodologia qualitativa (entrevistes i un diari d'observació d'aula) i eines de la metodologia quantitativa (qüestionari). Els resultats obtinguts demostren que els elogis augmenten la motivació dels estudiants a l'hora d'aprendre anglès a classe. Tanmateix, els resultats no demostren un gran impacte a llarg termini. Alhora, el feedback específic i positiu sí sembla influir en la motivació i l'aprenentatge dels estudiants.

Paraules clau: L'Anglès com a Llengua Estrangera, motivació, retroacció, elogis, retroacció positiva, retroacció específica, diari d'observació d'aula, entrevistes, qüestionaris

1. Introduction

Cultivating motivation is crucial to a language learner's success (Dörnyei, Z., Ushioda, E., 2021). Language teachers frequently use the word "motivation" when describing successful or unsuccessful learners in their subject (Dörnyei, 2010). However, each student is different, and so is their motivation to learn foreign languages. Dörnyei (2001, p.25) acknowledges "it is highly unlikely that everybody can be motivated to learn everything, and even generally motivated students are not equally keen on every subject matter". This also reflects the intuitive belief that during the lengthy and often tedious process of mastering a foreign/second language (L2), the learner's enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence are key determinants of success or failure. Dörnyei (2010) also states that without sufficient motivation, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to have a good command of any language.

From a teacher's point of view, it is sometimes difficult to maintain the students' motivation during a lengthy period. In education research, motivation has been extensively researched and analyzed. However, it has not been until recently that motivational researchers and educational psychologists have drawn their attention to its classroom applications (Dörnyei, 2001). Although rewards and punishments are often the only methods implemented by many educators, teachers can use a wide range of motivational strategies in their lessons.

During my academic years, I have been aware of how important to our well-being is to receive positive reinforcement while learning. As a student, I felt reassured when I received feedback from teachers, especially when they congratulated me for my efforts, even if the mark was not what I had expected. As a teacher, even if I do not have much experience, I have realized that providing positive feedback to our students may increase their ability to focus in class, may boost their motivation, and may also contribute to their resilience during their learning process.

I believe that praise can be a powerful motivating tool because when you give students positive feedback on their work, they feel reassured and usually want to participate more during the lessons. However, I know that students do not always feel motivated when teachers praise them, as there is some evidence that praise statements about general ability can reduce student appetite for risk-taking (Burnett, 2001). Praise is sometimes used infrequently, without contingency, specificity, or credibility in the classroom.

Therefore, the present case study aims to investigate how feedback can boost students' motivation in EFL classes within the specific context of first-grade students in a high school in

l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. It also aims to identify how praise can affect students' motivation and to what extent it has an impact on students' learning progress.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Motivation

The emotional dimension of language teaching and learning has recently gained momentum among researchers after pioneering works in positive psychology. Currently, teachers' and students' emotions seem to play an important role in the learning process (Liu, 2021). In the same vein, Pavičić Takač and Berka (2014) mention that students' motivation has often been underscored as one of the most important psychological factors that have an impact on foreign language learning (FLL). Without motivation, the purpose of learning is somehow harder to achieve (Purnama et al., 2019). When learners are motivated in their learning process, they will enjoy and understand more about what they are learning, especially when it comes to English as a foreign language (EFL).

Motivation is defined in many ways. APA (American Psychological Association, 2015) defines *motivation* as "the impetus that gives purpose or direction to behavior and operates in humans at a conscious or unconscious level". It also emphasizes the distinction between internal motivating forces and external factors, such as rewards or punishments, that can encourage or discourage certain behaviors. Intrinsic motivation is defined as "an incentive to engage in a specific activity that derives from pleasure in the activity itself (e.g., a genuine interest in a subject studied) rather than because of any external benefits that might be obtained (e.g., money, course credits)". As mentioned previously in this study, the term *motivation* is often to describe success or failure in the language learning process. However, Dörnyei (2001) claims that:

> Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as 'motivation'. [...] 'motivation' is an abstract, hypothetical concept that we use to explain why people think and behave as they do. [...] Thus, 'motivation' is best seen as a broad umbrella term that covers a variety of meanings (p.1)

2.2.1. Motivation in the language classroom

Understanding L2 motivation thus entails examining it in the context of a changing, interconnected, and multifaceted context. In a globalized world, students are aware that they need to learn English, and this sometimes could lead to frustration and demotivation, as they might feel bound to study it. Therefore, the motivation for language learning cannot be separated from social, political, and technological realities (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021). L2 motivation researchers have always stated that a foreign language is more than a mere communication code that can be learned similarly to other academic subjects and has thus typically adopted paradigms that linked the L2 to the individual's personal 'core', as an important part of one's identity (Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2009).

In English as a Foreign Language classes, students' motivation has a crucial role in developing their learning skills. Motivating EFL students to develop language competence in the target language is quite complex. In many cases, students face difficulties in learning English and are often demotivated to learn. Classroom motivation research has found that certain strategies such praise, positive feedback or a grateful atmosphere can help these students adopt more positive attitudes and become more motivated in the learning process (Bahous et al., 2011). Teachers can motivate students in many ways by using different motivational strategies, that is to say, techniques that promote goal-related individual behaviour and deal with those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve a positive, systematic, long-term effect (Dörnyei, 2001).

Regarding the different motivational strategies that can be used in a classroom to foster foreign language learning, we should consider them with an integral approach. Dörnyei (2001) observed the motivation process as a whole and identified various steps. Firstly, teachers should create basic motivational conditions. Secondly, they should build an initial motivation that must be maintained and protected during the language-learning process. Finally, it is essential to encourage positive retrospective self-evaluation. Teachers should also consider that not all motivational strategies will work in every classroom. These are suggestions that can give better results to some teachers or student groups than to others.
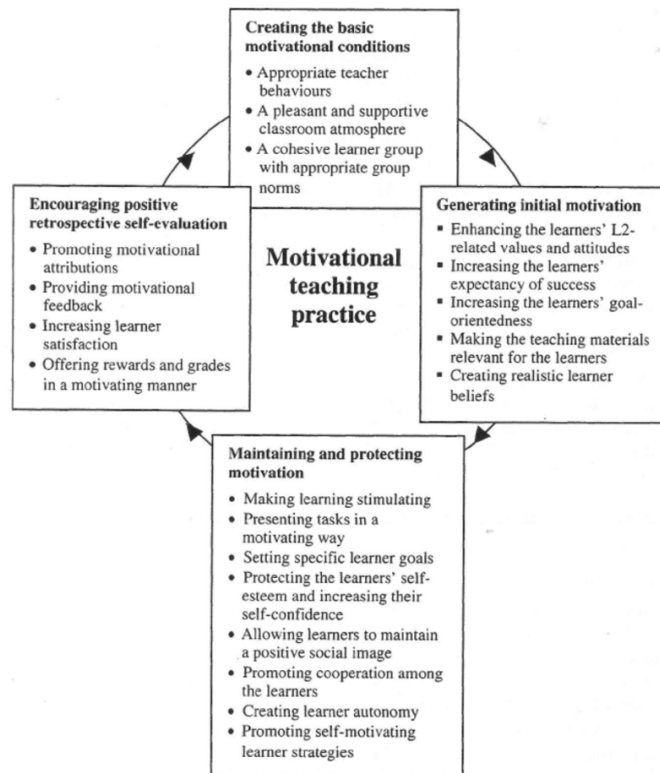
Figure 1. The components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 29)

Another important aspect to create basic motivational conditions in EFL classes is by considering linguistic anxiety. Learners take a risk when they utter a sentence, and it is easy to make mistakes (pronunciation, grammar, intonation, etc.). These mistakes may be embarrassing so it is essential to create a pleasant and supportive environment in the classroom (Dörnyei, 2001). One of the strategies to create this atmosphere may be practicing gratitude.

Gratitude is typically expressed towards someone or for something. Academically speaking, it can help students be more aware of their learning environment and increase their understanding and focus on their studies (Kukulska et al., 2021). Applying gratitude as a pedagogy in the classroom may also improve students' and teachers' mental health and well-being. Kukulska et al. (2021) also concluded that encouraging self-awareness and reflection on learning can improve students' experience and appreciation for learning. Students sometimes feel demotivated because they have a predetermined negative attitude toward certain activities that may lead to poor school performance and dissatisfaction with their learning. A practical approach to implementing gratitude in learning is to create a positive predisposition among students and teachers before starting a particular activity. By creating a state of preparedness

before and during learning activities, students and educators can be encouraged to be more aware of the learning taking place and those involved in the process (Kukulska et al., 2021). This was proven by a study (Wilson, 2016) in which 50 US university students were invited to reflect upon their learning experiences and consider gratitude over three months. Students who were encouraged to try this approach concluded that they had been more focused, less distracted, and more eager to learn and better understood the concepts.

Another study carried out by Park and Peterson (2006) also sustained that there is a correlation between gratitude and the academic performance of high school students. Better academic performance increases gratitude. When students feel their teachers appreciate their behavior and attitudes in class, their marks improve meaningfully. Thus, the more grateful their environment is, the better their grades are. However, there are relatively fewer studies showing the links between gratitude and academic-related outcomes in high school students, and the evidence on the role of gratitude in engagement was mixed, with some studies showing the positive impacts of gratitude (Park and Peterson, 2006) whereas others (Ouweneel et al., 2014) demonstrated its non-significant effects (Valdez et al., 2022).

After creating the basic motivational conditions and generating initial motivation, teachers should also maintain and protect students' motivation. For example, by making learning stimulating, presenting tasks in a motivating manner, promoting self-motivating learner strategies, or protecting the learners' self-esteem and increasing their self-confidence. If we consider this last strategy, teachers, as external but significant factors in L2 motivation should be able to give appropriate praise and feedback. Figure 2 shows a whole process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom. In this study, we specifically focused on motivational retrospection, paying attention to the main motivational influences, such as received feedback, praise, or grades.

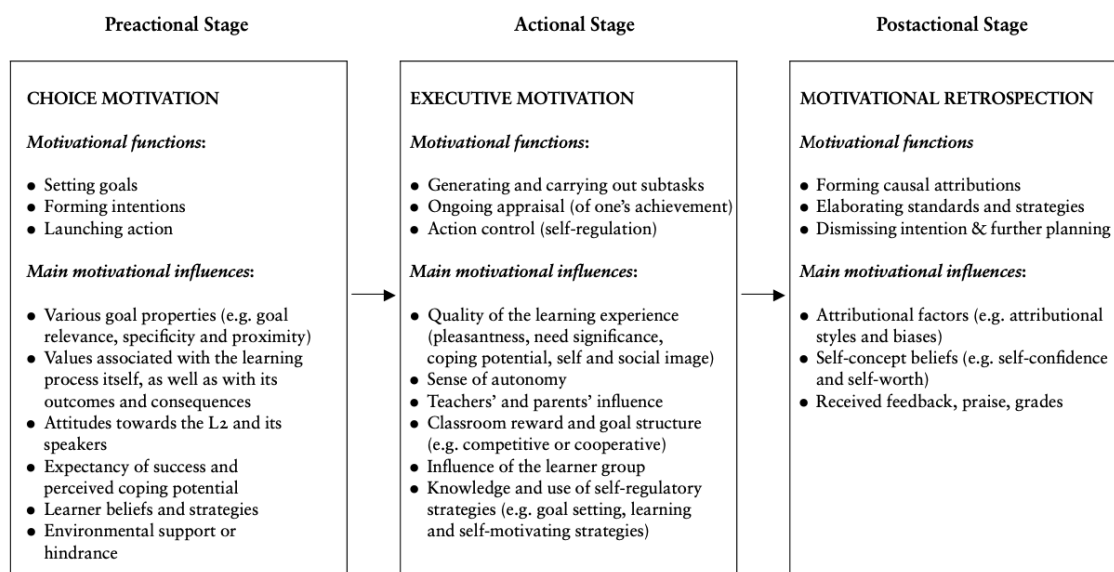| Preactional Stage	Actional Stage	Postactional Stage
CHOICE MOTIVATION	**EXECUTIVE MOTIVATION**	**MOTIVATIONAL RETROSPECTION**
Motivational functions:	*Motivational functions*:	*Motivational functions*
• Setting goals • Forming intentions • Launching action	• Generating and carrying out subtasks • Ongoing appraisal (of one's achievement) • Action control (self-regulation)	• Forming causal attributions • Elaborating standards and strategies • Dismissing intention & further planning
Main motivational influences:	*Main motivational influences*:	*Main motivational influences*:
• Various goal properties (e.g. goal relevance, specificity and proximity) • Values associated with the learning process itself, as well as with its outcomes and consequences • Attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers • Expectancy of success and perceived coping potential • Learner beliefs and strategies • Environmental support or hindrance	• Quality of the learning experience (pleasantness, need significance, coping potential, self and social image) • Sense of autonomy • Teachers' and parents' influence • Classroom reward and goal structure (e.g. competitive or cooperative) • Influence of the learner group • Knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies (e.g. goal setting, learning and self-motivating strategies)	• Attributional factors (e.g. attributional styles and biases) • Self-concept beliefs (e.g. self-confidence and self-worth) • Received feedback, praise, grades

Figure 2. A process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 22)

2.2.Feedback

In education research, feedback is generally seen as an important tool to enhance learning (Voerman et al., 2012). Feedback is defined as "information regarding one's performance or understanding, given by an agent-teacher, peer, computer, book, parent, self, or experience". Moreno (2004, p.100). Indeed, this author regarded feedback as crucial to improving knowledge and skill acquisition. But is positive feedback enough to improve students' motivation to learn English?

On the one hand, if we have a look at what other authors have sustained, positive feedback would be enough to improve students' motivation. Shaaban and Ghaith (2008) examined the motivation of 180 university-bound Lebanese students to learn English as a foreign language (EFL). Their findings revealed that integrative motivation, effort, valence, expectancy, and self-estimation of ability were internally related determinants of motivation for learning EFL. However, Burnett (2001) mentions that positive feedback improves students' motivation when teachers praise effort and accomplishment, not ability. Praise should instead focus on specific examples of student effort or accomplishment (e.g., "It's obvious from your grade that you worked hard to prepare for this quiz. Great work!"). That way, students can see a direct link between the effort they invest in a task and improved academic or behavioral performance.

On the other hand, some conclusions about the application of feedback are alarming. For example, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that one-third of feedback interventions served to

decrease learning. Even if there is not a lot of research investigating the frequency of feedback in the classroom, Hattie (1999) concluded that the incidence of feedback in a classroom is very low. Pauli (2010) also found a low frequency of feedback interventions. If feedback was present, it was in most cases non-specific and had the form of praise (e.g., "good", or "that's right"). Feedback that is not effective in enhancing learning is either non-specific or takes the form of praise (Voerman et al., 2012).

2.2.1. Praise

Teachers regularly use praise as an instructional strategy to increase the occurrence of students' positive social and academic behaviors (Conroy et al., 2009). On the surface, praise seems to be a simple strategy that the teacher alone can implement. However, the effectiveness of a teacher's use of praise is influenced by the student's individual and cultural differences, the conditions under which praise has been previously provided to them, and the characteristics of the praise that is given. Undoubtedly, identifying the essential characteristics of praise that make it more effective can help teachers use praise in a more efficient way in the classroom. Conroy et al. (2009) stated that praise should include specific statements (e.g., "You did a great job counting numbers!"), and it should be provided immediately following the students' behavior or answer, as praising students later can diminish the effectiveness of praise. It is also crucial to provide sincere praise, which should be delivered with an affirmative and natural voice and avoid competition among students at all costs.

Teachers are aware of the benefits that providing effective praise has on their students. However, they do not always have enough strategies to implement it in the classroom. For example, Conroy et al. (2009) suggested making a list of effective praise statements that can be provided to the students (e.g., Your handwriting has improved. It is clear and neat here."). It is also crucial to self-evaluate our praise as teachers and observe the influence it has on our student's performance. The use of effective praise is an important teaching strategy that can facilitate positive interactions between teachers and students in our classrooms. Along with the use of effective praise, providing feedback to students in an effective manner is also needed in the EFL classroom.

2.2.2. Positive and negative feedback

Voerman et al. (2012) defined *positive feedback* as showing support, encouragement, or appreciation, and *negative feedback* as showing disapproval, or even sarcasm. Table 1 provides examples of both positive and negative feedback. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) stated that both positive and negative feedback can enhance learning, provided that the feedback contains enough information to allow the student to acknowledge what is right or wrong in their performance or understanding. Hattie and Timperley (2007) noted that, when learners are committed to a goal, they are more likely to learn as a function of positive feedback, for example, "That is a thoughtful question!". On the contrary, when learners are forced to perform tasks, they are more likely to learn because of negative feedback, for example, "You have written this word incorrectly". So it is important to mention that positive and negative feedback do not have an equal impact on learning (Voerman et al., 2012). Negative feedback has been found to have little impact on language learning or to be potentially harmful to learning and the motivation to learn (Kim, 2004). Hattie and Timperley (2007) also warned researchers of the short-term effect of negative feedback interventions, making mention of the increased likelihood of task avoidance as a result of frequent negative feedback. However, other research has shown that negative feedback can be effective. So, this relates to the variability of the impact of feedback.

Feedback intervention	Example
Non-specific positive feedback	Good job! All right! (examples from Pauli, 2010)
Specific positive feedback	"Well done, you have shown the way you arrived at the solution." "You're learning to do the steps! ", and, "You're doing well, because you followed the steps in order". (Schunk & Swartz, 1993) "Last week you didn't know that many words, this week you know them all!" (*progress feedback*) "You've got some direct speech here, direct speech using thoughts. Excellent." (Parr & Limbrick, 2009)
Non-specific negative feedback	"That's incorrect." "That doesn't sound right."
Specific negative feedback	"Your answer is too long. In your exam your answer needs to be short." (*discrepancy feedback*) "You do not know the conjugations of the irregular verbs. This is really necessary to get a good mark in your test." (*discrepancy feedback*)

Table 1. Feedback interventions and examples. The examples come from multiple studies conducted on the use of feedback by teachers, including Voerman et al. (2012) study.

Positive and negative feedback can help improve learning if used in a specific way. Shute (2008) described specific feedback as information pertaining to the accuracy of particular responses or behaviors. An important aim of feedback is the reduction of discrepancies between

a current level of performance or understanding and a goal. Feedback should also provide information about this discrepancy and be used to clarify goals and reduce or remove uncertainty in relation to how well learners are performing a task (Voerman et al., 2012). In addition to this, studies such as those from Schunk and Swartz (1993) concluded that students who received specific feedback on the difference between an initial level of performance and their actual level learned better and more quickly than the students who received only information about the overall goal of the task.

2.2.3. Teachers' feedback in EFL classes

Teachers' feedback has an important function in students' motivation in EFL classes. Klimova (2015) states that feedback plays a crucial role in any educational process since it can significantly improve both learners' and teachers' performance and indicate some key aspects of their performance which can be improved. Dignen (2014) argues that feedback is the most important communication skill, it is also an opportunity to motivate students and a way to keep learning. In fact, feedback should be an inseparable part of any assessment and course evaluation. Feedback can be provided formally or informally. Klimova (2015) defines formal and informal feedback in the following way:

Formal feedback is sought by a teacher's institution to discover the quality of education at a given institution, while informal feedback is usually collected by a course teacher to detect students' difficulties in the process of learning and simultaneously reflect on his teaching practices and approaches. Both can be done either continuously or at the end of the semester (p.173).

Teachers can employ various feedback strategies such as assessment of students' work, peer review, self-reflection, course evaluation questionnaires, or focus interviews with students. All these feedback strategies can undoubtedly contribute to an overall students' and teachers' picture of their performance (Klimova, 2015). Thus, the more frequent and constructive the feedback is, the more performance improvement can be done. It is already proven (Klimova, 2015) that teachers should first emphasize the positive features and then specify in detail those areas which need further improvement. Klimova (2015) also concluded that any kind of feedback which can promote the personal and professional growth of an individual and help him identify and realize his strength and weakness, assets, and limitations, can lead to a better understanding and development of his skills in the future. Moreover, providing constructive feedback can contribute to students' motivation to work on the development of their language skills regularly.

2.2.4. Study's main goals

The main goal of this study is to investigate students' motivation to learn English as a Foreign Language. Anyhow, because of the complexity of the topic, it focuses solely on the factors that boost high school students' motivation to learn English as a Foreign Language and the impact their teacher's feedback has on this motivation. This piece of research also aims to shed light on the impact of positive feedback on students' motivation and have a look at students' and teachers' beliefs about feedback.

The following research questions have been considered:

1. Which are the facts that motivate high school students to learn English?
2. Has feedback a real impact on students' motivation?
3. Is positive feedback enough to improve students' motivation in EFL classes?

The hypotheses of the study are that students are motivated to learn English because of the importance English has in our daily life (work, studies, etc.), but also due to the social pressure attached to it. This study hypothesizes that feedback is one of the best tools to motivate students. It also considers that positive feedback significantly improves students' motivation to learn English.

3. Methodology
3.1. General methodology

This study mainly follows a mixed-method approach, that includes quantitative (27 students and 2 teachers) and qualitative data (interviews and surveys). Nonetheless, since it is a case study based on a reduced sample of students, we do not aim to generalize the results, although they could be replicated in other similar secondary classes.

I define my work plan as research on a classroom situation (Action Research) since this study plans to give some insight into a specific teaching context. This piece of research is based on three different data collection tools that are explained in more detail in section 3.3. Firstly, an observation diary was carried out for four weeks while I was implementing my learning scenario. In this observation, students' motivation in class was analyzed, considering aspects such as participation, receptivity to feedback and praise, and behavior. Secondly, students answered a questionnaire about their motivation to learn English and positive feedback. Finally, their English teachers were interviewed.

3.2. Participants

My research is a case study in which the participants are 27 students from class B of 1st of ESO (12-13 years old) in a high school located in l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. These specific students were selected as they were the group whom I spent more hours with when I did my internship. The students' age is crucial as they are transitioning between primary and secondary education. I do not consider students' gender to be important in this study. Most students in this secondary school come from local families of middle socioeconomic status. There are also some students that come from South America and Eastern Europe. Almost all the participants in the study speak Spanish as a first language (L1) and Catalan as a second language (L2), which places English as their third language (L3). They all study English 3 hours per week as a compulsory subject, and in 2 of these 3 hours, they have co-teaching. They also attend Science Lab, which is entirely taught in English. Besides the students, their 2 English teachers were interviewed. It is also relevant to mention that their main English teacher is also their tutor.

3.3. Data collection tools

The data collected in this study is fully obtained from the same 27 students and their 2 English teachers. As mentioned above, three research instruments have been used in this study to obtain data: a classroom observation diary (1), a questionnaire (2), and an interview (3). The instruments are presented in the order in which they were carried out.

Classroom observation diary: During the classroom observation, data related to the student's particular reactions to positive feedback was gathered. Feedback and praise were introduced throughout the learning scenario *Around the House!*, which was designed by the trainee teacher. For the data collection, Voerman et al. (2012) study conclusions were considered and implemented. The feedback offered by the teacher during the activities was specific, whether positive or negative. As the classroom observation was carried out during a short period of time (4 weeks), feedback was specially provided during the assessment of the learning scenario. In this case, students received feedback about the work they have done during the unit. Students' learning progress was graded using two different assessment instruments. First, they took an exam (formal assessment) about the contents we had previously worked on. In this test, 4 competencies were evaluated (Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, and Listening). Due to time constraints, the trainee teacher could not provide feedback about the test to students as they did the exam on the day before the end of the internship.

However, it was possible to give feedback on the second instrument used to assess the students' learning. During the 4 weeks of the internship, the trainee teacher provided continuous feedback to students to check at the end of the unit if it was enough to motivate them to learn English. On the same day of the test, students presented the teacher their notebooks with all the contents and materials. The notebook mark was informal assessment, as we considered students' performance during the unit (participation, homework, behavior, etc.), and we checked if all the work we had done previously was in their notebooks. Students received this feedback on the last day of placement, we brought them back their notebooks so they could have a look at the comments we wrote. As mentioned previously in this study, the feedback provided was specific, remarking on the strengths of the work done, and giving some tips to the students to improve on the following units.

Questionnaire (to students): Concerning the questionnaire, the participants had the questions written in their L1 (Spanish or Catalan) to guarantee that all the questions were clear enough and they would not misunderstand any of them. Before being administered to the students, they were informed that the findings would be used only for research purposes and that their responses would remain anonymous. They also were asked to be as honest as possible in their answers. It was also essential that students had different English levels and that English was their first or second foreign language. This aspect was not possible to achieve for all the students, as some of them came from other countries and were learning Spanish and Catalan foremost, which would position English as their third foreign language.

The questionnaire contained questions to approach the two main topics of the study: First, concerning students' motivation toward English as a Foreign Language, the following aspects were considered: the reasons that motivated them to learn English, as well as what activities motivated them the most to learn it, why they considered English important in their daily life, and the factors that motivated them while learning English. Secondly, and related to feedback and praise, students also had to rate from 1 to 10 different statements about positive feedback.

Interview (to teachers): The interviews contained questions to reflect on their teachers' opinions about giving feedback to their students. Teachers were asked about what type of feedback they use in their lessons, whether they think it has a real impact on their students' motivation to learn EFL, and if they consider positive feedback an efficient way to boost students' learning.

3.4. Data collection

The classroom observation diary was divided into two parts, and it was carried out for five weeks (20th February 2023 to 24th March 2023) during the 1st ESO B English lessons. The first part was done in February, three sessions were observed when students were still with their regular teacher, and then the second part lasted three weeks, simultaneously with the learning scenario taught by the practicum teacher. During the first part of the observation, special attention was paid to the feedback given by the main teacher. During the second part, students received feedback on their work during the first three weeks, especially when correcting homework or doing writing or speaking activities. As mentioned in section 3.3, more specific feedback was provided during the last week of the learning scenario, when students were evaluated on their work. Students were not aware of the observation, as we did not want them to change their motivation in the classroom because of the study.

The questionnaire was completed by the students in May. Before they answered it, the researcher told the students the purpose of the survey to avoid any possible misunderstandings, and they were reassured that their responses would be only used for research purposes and were anonymous. As any image or personal information of the students was required, it was not necessary to sign any permission for this research study. Finally, the teachers' interviews were done in May.

3.5. Data analysis

Regarding the classroom observation diary, the students' reactions to feedback were noted and analyzed to identify the students' type of motivation, the activities in which they showed more interest, and their attitude when feedback was provided. This analysis was carried out twice, as students experienced feedback from two different teachers. Students' answers to the questionnaire were pooled and compared to identify if there were any group tendencies. Concerning the interviews with the teachers, both answers were analyzed to prove if there existed a general tendency within them. In the following section, the data collection results are presented.

4. Results

The results of the classroom observation, the questionnaire, and the interviews are presented in this section.

Classroom observation diary: The results from the classroom observation showed that students responded favorably to the positive feedback given by the trainee teacher. During the first part of the observation, students were not very involved in the writing activities as they did not receive specific feedback on their work due to time constraints and the limitation of having only their usual teacher during the lessons. However, once they started receiving positive feedback on their writing tasks, they showed more motivation in class, and their marks improved. On the one hand, I observed that students did not pay a lot of attention when they corrected general mistakes with their EFL teacher, as they considered that if their mistakes were not on the list, their performance in the activities was good. On the other hand, when the didactic unit of the trainee teacher started, and more specific feedback was given (we should mention that they have three teachers who gave them individualized feedback) students seemed to be more motivated in the class and their results improved. As for positive feedback, students showed gratitude to their teachers when they received this type of feedback (e.g., Last week you did not participate that much in class, you are doing great!) and stated to feel more engaged than before. Their exam marks did not vary a lot from unit 3, but more effort during the review sessions was observed.

Questionnaire: First, students answered an open-ended question about how studying English would help them in their life. Most of them argued that learning English would be useful to communicate with people from other countries, they also considered English to be important for traveling around the world. Some students noted that knowing English would help them to find a good job once they finish their studies.

With regards to the most motivating way to learn English, 74,1% of the students chose the type of activity followed by the teacher (40,7%).

Quins factors creus que són els que més et motiven a l'hora d'aprendre anglès? (¿Qué factores crees que son los que más te motivan a aprender inglés?)
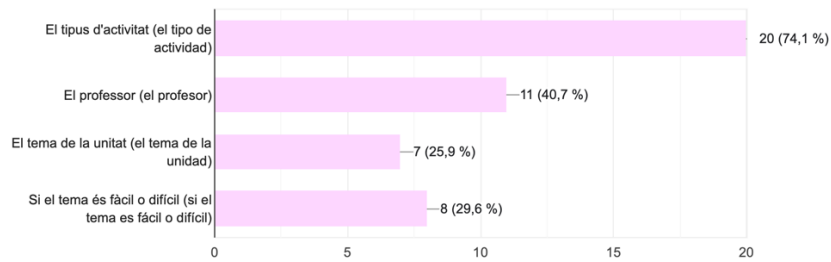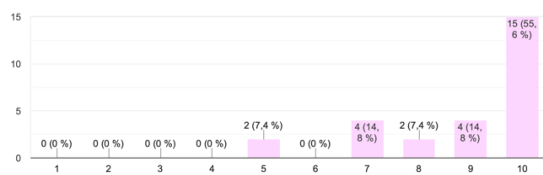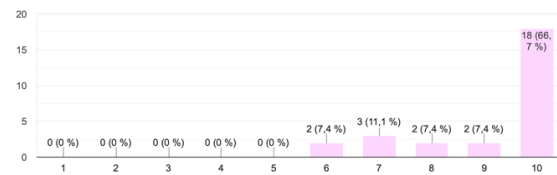27 respostes

Figure 3. Facts that motivate students to learn English.

Concerning the impact of praise on students' motivation to learn English, 55,6% answered that they felt great when they received praise from their teachers after handing out an assignment or an exam. They also responded that when teachers value their effort, they are more willing to learn (66,7%).

Figures 4 and 5. Students' answers about the impact of praise on students' motivation.

Regarding feedback, 48,1% of the students valued the fact of receiving feedback (either positive or negative) when taking an exam or submitting an assignment. However, only 29,6% stated that they carefully read their teachers' comments.

4. M'agrada saber què he fet bé i què no quan faig un examen o entrego un treball. (Me gusta saber lo que hice bien y lo que no cuando hago un examen o entrego un trabajo)
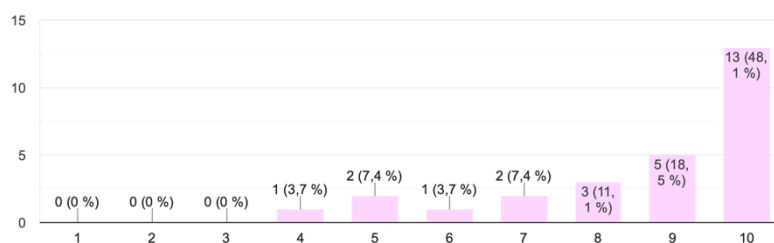27 respostes

5. Llegeixo detingudament les correccions dels meus professors. (Leo detenidamente las correcciones de mis profesores)
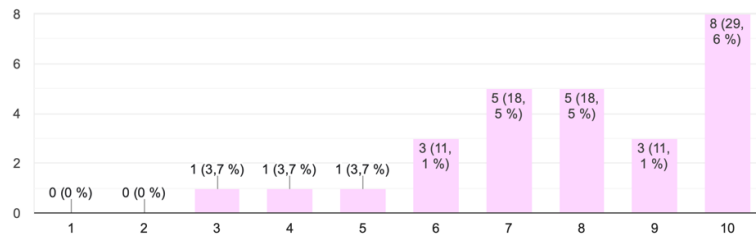
27 respostes

Figure 7. Students' answers about feedback.

Students were also asked about the importance of the feedback they received from the teachers, and if they take it into account for the following assessment tasks. 33,3% of the students considered it very important whereas 29,6% of the students valued it as important.

6. Tinc en compte els comentaris dels professors i intento millorar en la propera avaluació. (Tengo en cuenta los comentarios de los profesores e intento mejorar en la próxima evaluación)
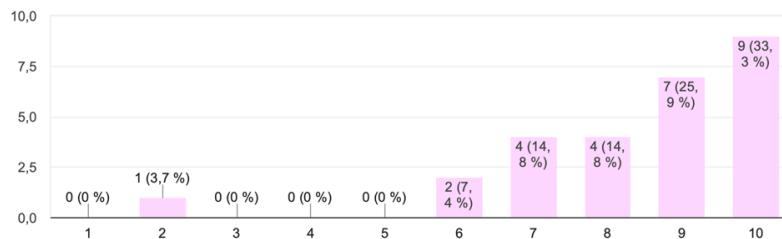
27 respostes

Figure 8. Students' answers about feedback.

Students also rated from 1 to 10 if they valued positively the corrections and feedback provided by their teachers. 29,6% of the students scored it with an 8 and only 5 students rated it with a 10.
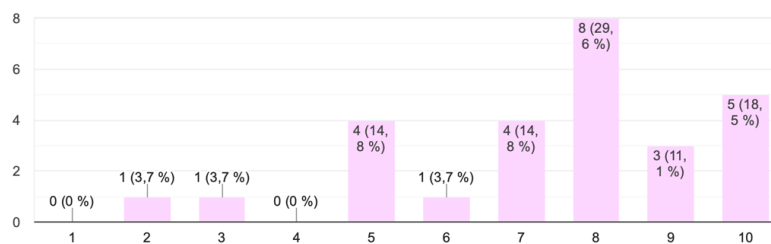
Figure 9. Students' answers about feedback.

Interviews: In relation to the first question (What type of feedback do you use in your lessons?), both teachers answered that they try to give positive feedback when students answer correctly, and when they do not, they try to be more neutral and instead of giving them negative feedback, they try to recommend things to improve or ways to answer properly next time. Regarding the relationship between feedback and their students' motivation to learn English, they both believe that feedback has a real impact on their students' motivation to learn English, but not only English, every subject they do. Students feel more confident because teachers encourage them with feedback. It is also important for the relationship that you build with the students. They both consider feedback as an effective way to boost students' learning. They also comment that when they hand in assignments that students have done, they write notes about what students have answered, especially about the strengths of their work. They praise them, and when something is wrong or could be improved, instead of remarking on these mistakes, they recommend what to do to improve on the following task in their written feedback next to the mark. For example: "It would be great to argue more on exercise 1", "It would be even better if...".

Regarding praise, teachers explained that sometimes it is quite difficult to praise students each time they answer because they have a lot of students in the classroom and only a one-hour class. However, they always try to give them specific feedback and comments to motivate and enhance their learning.

5. Discussion

Going back to the objectives and research questions of the study, the results shown above lead us to think that feedback appears to have a positive impact on students' motivation. The results obtained from the questionnaire helped us answer research question 1, which dealt with higher motivation to learn English. Firstly, students considered English a helpful way to communicate with people from other countries and travel around the world. They also pointed out that English would help them to find a good job and achieve their goals. Some of them remarked that they were learning English because they know they must pass the subject to continue their studies. The results of the study are similar to those obtained from other studies in other contexts, such as Purnama, Rahayu, and Yugafiati (2019), because students also considered that studying English was essential since it would enable them to communicate with people from different parts of the world. This study also showed that English was important for them because they might need it later (for jobs, studies).

As we had foreseen in the first hypothesis, students are motivated to learn English because of the importance English has in our daily life (work, studies, etc.). The results also displayed that they might feel pressure to learn it due to its relevance in global communication. Therefore, we should consider the facts that motivate students to learn English in our EFL instructional time. For example, creating real activities based on communication to travel or to prepare for a job interview might boost the students' involvement. Participants were also asked about the activities that motivate them to learn English. The data obtained from the questionnaire states that group games and vocabulary activities are the ones they prefer, so teachers might consider using them as well.

Regarding hypothesis 2, —feedback is one of the best tools to motivate students— the students' beliefs on the impact of teachers' feedback might slightly differ from the hypothesis. Initially, students were asked only about praise (see Figure 4). The data from the questionnaire showed that praise makes them feel good when they hand in an assignment or an exam, but it might not be enough to motivate students' learning for a long period of time. Nevertheless, Figure 5 shows that when teachers value their effort, they are more willing to learn.

Their teachers were also asked about praise, and they argued that they usually praise their students during the lessons. However, they mentioned that they prefer to give specific feedback to boost students' motivation instead of providing general praise. Similar studies on feedback interventions in the classroom such as Voerman et al. (2012) concluded that the feedback

interventions offered by the teachers were mostly non-specific. This contrasts with the results obtained in this research, as teachers' feedback interventions in class were specific. However, it is important to mention that the results can differ depending on the context.

During the classroom observation diary, students received feedback from their usual teacher and the trainee teacher. The first part of the study showed that students were not too involved in the activities as the feedback they received was general and had the form of praise. This would make us think that praise is not a good tool to motivate students. Nevertheless, during the second part of the study, students were provided with praise as well, but it included specific statements, and it was delivered immediately after the behavior. It is essential to mention that individualized praise was easily provided because students had three teachers in the classroom. The implementation of Conroy et al.'s strategies (2009) in our praise statements showed different impacts on our students' motivation. On the one hand, some students appreciated receiving specific feedback on their work as they stated to be more eager to improve the skills they needed to work more on. On the other hand, considering the results of the questionnaire (see Figure 8), only 9 students stated to consider their teachers' comments on future assignments. These results show that feedback can be a good tool to boost students' motivation, but it might not have the same impact on all students. We should consider the students' context when deciding which type of feedback to provide, as well as the statements used and how frequently we give them.

Another crucial aspect to discuss would be the importance of providing immediate feedback to our students. As mentioned before, praising the students later can diminish the effectiveness of praise. During the classroom observation, providing this type of feedback was quite easy as we were giving feedback on speaking activities in class. Nevertheless, the feedback given on the writing task was not immediate, as the teacher needed more time to assess it. Once their essays were corrected and we distributed their notebooks, they could check the mark and the feedback on the unit cover. Most students only paid attention to their grades and did not read the comments they had. This result is similar to the one obtained in the questionnaire (Figure 7), as only 8 students carefully read their teachers' comments. Teachers might consider this aspect and, for example, set a list of effective praise (Conroy et al., 2009), or give this feedback orally to each student instead of leaving each student read their own feedback. This solution has its own limitations, as sometimes it is difficult to give individual and specific feedback due to time constraints.

Regarding hypothesis 3 —positive feedback significantly improves students' motivation to learn English—, data obtained from the students' questionnaire did not show a significant improvement in students' motivation to learn English because of positive feedback. For example, Figure 9 shows that students do not always appreciate their positive teachers' feedback. Nevertheless, regarding the in-situ reactions that students displayed toward positive feedback in EFL class, they were more attentive and got more involved after receiving positive feedback. This result leads us to believe that when the positive feedback is immediate, students are more motivated to learn and participate in class and it has a great impact on students' attitude. Nonetheless, it might not be enough to motivate them in the long run.

Considering teachers' answers about positive feedback and its relationship with students' motivation to learn English, both teachers believe that positive feedback is a good tool to enhance their students' learning. They stated that they give positive feedback when students answer correctly, and when they do not, they try to avoid negative feedback and provide students with recommendations to answer properly next time. Other studies on positive and negative feedback frequency such as Voerman et al. (2012), also showed that specific positive feedback was more used in classroom interventions than negative feedback. This type of feedback is commonly implemented in secondary education. However, the results obtained from this study do not show a real improvement in students' motivation to learn English. It might be useful for teachers to have a closer look at the way they give feedback to their students, not only focusing on the type itself but considering other aspects such as students' context or the feedback frequency in the classroom.

6. Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate how feedback can enhance students' motivation in EFL classes. It also intended to identify how praise can affect students' motivation and to what extent it has an impact on students' learning progress. Moreover, this study also focused on the effectiveness of positive feedback in the classroom.

Teachers should first consider the facts that motivate students to learn English in their EFL instructional time, as students showed more interest and motivation towards the activities that will help them communicate in English in the future. These results are consistent with findings published by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), who mentioned that understanding L2 motivation entails examining it from a global perspective because students know the importance of

learning English. Students might feel pressured to learn it and, hence be demotivated to study it. Our study showed that students feel compelled to learn English because they might need it later to find a job or study abroad. Students also consider that the type of activity and the teacher were the factors that motivated them the most to learn English. Thus, teachers might need to work on motivating their students through dynamic but handy activities to boost students' attention in class. It is also important to consider feedback when preparing and doing these activities with our students, as it has an important role in student's learning process.

Students received feedback on their work all through the research process. During the first part of the study, the frequency of teacher feedback was low. The interventions were also general and non-specific, and they had the form of praise. This observation correlates to the results obtained by Voerman et al. (2012), as they also found that teachers did not frequently use feedback to influence students' learning. However, this general feedback or praise enhanced students' class participation, and learners felt reassured and more eager to participate. Students also stated to feel great when they received compliments on their work. Praise can then be a good tool to boost students' motivation. It is also important to consider that it might not have the same impact on all students. The results obtained from the questionnaire, and the classroom observation diary, displayed that some students were not more motivated to participate in the activities after receiving general praise. Students appreciated this type of feedback, but praise did not show a great effect in the long term, as their marks did not improve significantly.

During the didactic unit taught by the trainee teacher, students received specific feedback as they had three English teachers simultaneously. This feedback was positive, and they received it right after their interventions or during the following session if the activities were not assessed right away. On the one hand, students showed great interest in the activities when positive feedback was provided right after the intervention. On the other hand, students did not pay a lot of attention to their teachers' comments, especially when the feedback was not immediate. Therefore, the results obtained on the effectiveness of positive feedback did not show significant improvement in students' motivation to learn English. However, they demonstrated that when specific information is given about their performance, students are more motivated to improve their skills. This conclusion is similar to what Voerman et al. (2012) sustained previously: teachers should provide specific feedback more frequently to the students to enhance their motivation and maintain it long-term.

In conclusion, students were more motivated to learn and participate in class when they received positive feedback. However, it might not be enough to motivate them in the long term. Teachers should consider that not only feedback (praise, positive and negative feedback, etc.) will boost students' motivation to learn English. There are other factors that influence students' motivation, such as the importance English has nowadays, their personal and social context, or the type of activity done in the classroom.

Even though this research has obtained interesting results on students' motivation toward English, it also faced some limitations that might be solved in future investigations. Firstly, not all forms of feedback have been employed due to time constraints and the high number of students in the class. Secondly, limitations were also found in terms of the number of participants since the data was gathered from a reduced number of students and teachers. This means that the results obtained in this study cannot be generalized, because the specific school context and the linguistic, personal, and social characteristics of the students have conditioned the results.

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