A study of how students feed from feedback

An application of speech act and attribution theory within the field of linguistics

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ABSTRACT

This essay provides an analysis of five examples of written feedback on a speech assignment completed for an English as a foreign language (EFL) class by second-year students of upper secondary school. The essay aims to shed light on how feedback is formulated and how it is interpreted as a part of a textual dialogue between teacher and student. The analysis focuses on three separate sources of data: an interview with the students, examples of feedback and a short teacher interview. This dataset provides an insight to the process of the students' reception and interpretation of the feedback and allows an analysis of the correspondence between what the teacher tries to communicate and what the students in their turn understand from the feedback. Two theories applied in this research include 1) attribution theory and 2) speech act theory, which attempt to show how the students reflect on their achievements and apply feedback to their own development. The feedback is interpreted on two different occasions. First, the textual feedback was coded, and an analysis model was developed based on two characteristics of in-text feedback: directive and expressive functions. The findings suggest that more specific feedback should be provided, and a deeper awareness among teachers of how students interpret their feedback would aid the students' learning process.

Keywords: speech act theory, attribution theory, feedback, EFL, pragmatics, motivation

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1. Introduction

My uncle was a great inspiration for this essay. Before becoming a personal trainer for elite athletes, my uncle came across attribution theory during his studies. He competed in the UFC and has, therefore, experienced the importance of mental preparation during times of pressure. Reading about attribution theory myself, I wanted to apply it within the framework of teacher pedagogy. It turned out that, to a certain extent, this had been done, but there remain plenty of additional areas where the theory can be applied. For example, I am convinced that creative efforts are needed in the field of pedagogy to develop forms and templates of feedback so as to assess students in a more conscientious manner. This essay was thus written with the conviction that small changes in teachers' attitudes and expectations of students' performances as well as a better understanding of the potential of feedback would play an operative role in the students' learning process.

Since the start of institutional teaching, there has been a need to confirm, measure and direct learning, and this is often done through different types of testing. For testing to be beneficial for learning, it requires a form of the qualities that students are required to learn and feedback that explains where the learning needs to be developed. The history of language testing dates back almost 100 years. Thorndike first practised testing in 1911, and in 1913, the first formal test of English as a foreign language was developed at the University of Cambridge. The very first language tests were made to determine if an individual had a certain level of English that would allow them to study in the US or the UK. A summative grade followed these tests in the form of passed or not passed (O'Sullivan, 2011, p.259). These grades could be seen as the very beginning of summative feedback. As the motive of testing has changed, as language teaching has developed as a profession, and as research on language learning has increased, more sophisticated testing of language skills have also emerged, demanding in its turn more comprehensive feedback than just grades. Feedback as a field has now been actively studied in the context of language learning since the 1980s (Leng, 2014, p.389).

Feedback is necessary for the teacher to be able to identify the students' zone of proximal development (ZPD), attributed to Vygotsky (Kozulin et al, 2003). The ZPD refers to a student's optimal learning status, whereby a student is able to further learn and develop with content that is unknown and not yet too difficult for the student to grasp. The teacher must decide if the assignment is appropriate to the ZPD and provides feedback on the student's

performance in relation to it. Formative feedback should be formulated in such a way that it is clear, defensible, and promotes progression. The student, in turn, should be able to use the feedback to learn and progress. The conclusions on much of the more comprehensive research done within the field of feedback are unanimous: feedback is generally positive for the learning process and considered an essential part of the teaching profession (Lundahl, 2011, p.65).

This paper attempts to determine to what extent the teacher's intent with the feedback on each student's performance corresponds to the student's reception and interpretation of the same feedback. An analysis of five examples of feedback is compared to the teacher's aim with the same feedback. The assignment observed in the research was an oral speech, where the students got to speak about any subject of choice. The two main requirements were that the delivery should be informative and five minutes long. Further instructions regarding this assignment can be found in Appendix B. The analysis is guided by attribution theory as applied within the field of feedback. While attribution theory is used within different areas of personal development and was first and foremost used within the field of sports science, it has recently become of great interest to the field of education (Dörnyei, 2003, p.8). Specifically, the proposed application of attribution theory concerns how feedback interacts with motivation to activate and improve the learning process. Furthermore, in this essay, speech act theory is also used in order to explore the linguistic characteristics of feedback, which in turn can provide a more in-depth analysis of the intention versus the reception of the communicative content. The unique perspective of the essay lies in its holistic view of the feedback cycle, which includes observation of the assignment to be evaluated, the feedback provided, and the reception of the feedback.

1.1 Aim and research questions

This essay aims to explore a part of the learning process centred around feedback. This essay is twofold in its research approach. First, I will look at feedback as a tool for learning and analyse feedback data within the framework of speech act theory. Second, I will apply attribution theory on interview data, whereby students are asked to reflect on their performance and the feedback they got due to it, in an attempt to determine what they attribute their grade to. The essay is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the linguistic characteristics of the feedback the students received from their teacher?

2. In what way do the linguistic characteristics of feedback correspond to the teacher's intent and the students' interpretations of their grade?

3. When students are provided feedback, what do they attribute their summative feedback (grade) and their formative feedback to?

4. How can the attribution theory help teachers to give feedback that promotes further development in students?

The first two research questions will mainly be answered by applying speech act theory, while the last two will be answered by applying attribution theory. Before these theories can be explored in a literature review and invoked for the data analysis, it is necessary to address concepts common to the field of feedback.

2. Background: Feedback

Feedback not only provides an evaluation but also serves to open the communication between the teacher and the student, thus constituting a central part of the dialogue of the learning process, where the student gets affirmation and recognition. Ramparasad defines feedback as: "Feedback is information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way" (Ramprasad 1983 cited in Lundahl, 2011, p.55). However, different forms of feedback serve different purposes; one of the most common categorisations of feedback is the distinction between summative and formative feedback. Summative feedback is often expressed in the form of a grade; it is completive; it could also be shorter sentences to conclude the students' achievements. Formative feedback, however, can also be expressed in shorter or longer amounts of texts with different levels of detailed comments to enhance the learning process. Formative feedback is recognised by its primary function to enhance learning and promote the learning process, whereas summative feedback was not primarily developed with this aim. As mentioned in the introduction, summative feedback has first and foremost had the diagnostic purpose of approving or disapproving test results and identifying the level or the amount of knowledge practised and learned (Lundahl, 2011, p.58). Here we find a distinction between 'knowledge of result' (summative feedback) and formative feedback. Knowledge of result (for example, via a letter grade) does not necessarily entail any information that constructively

explains how the student could have performed differently, so as to aid the student's learning process (Lundahl, 2011, pp.11-54); this is in contrast to formative feedback, which aims to help the student develop further. This paper thus focuses on the formative feedback in the form of written commentary by the teacher.

There are several ways to provide feedback. One way, which is illustrated by an example in Appendix C, is criteria-based feedback, where the requested abilities are written down and then checked off by the teacher. Feedback can also be oral or written, planned or spontaneous; feedback has a constant presence throughout the process of learning.

The feedback presented in the analysis could be argued to be a supplement to, clarification or interpretation of the summative feedback (in the form of a grade) that is provided at the same time. The dataset illustrates the fact that there are several ways to deliver feedback, including criteria-based feedback, where abilities in focus are written down and then checked off by the teacher, and formative feedback, where individual evaluation is also provided. This essay, however, will focus on written holistic comments that are provided as a supplement to criteria-based feedback.

In the next section, a literature review is initiated by framing some patterns and aims of feedback to give a perspective on the main features of feedback and contemporary research within the field. The scope of this essay is limited and does not claim to cover all present research in the field but aims to provide essential tenets of the discussion.

2.1 Characteristics of feedback

There is an ongoing discussion of what form feedback should have, to be best received and understood. In the field of language learning, feedback should, according to Straub, consist of whole sentences, avoid abstract and technical language to make it feel like a dialogue, and focus on particular features of language learning, with practical examples. Straub has also proposed in his research that feedback should not be too much, but rather concise and solemnly focused on the next step (Straub, 1997, p.112). It has been shown that expressed disapproval is not necessarily harmful if the students understand that the teacher has included a critique for the purpose of assisting or instructing (Leng, 2014, p.394). Straub (1997) shows in his study that if the tone of feedback is highly judgemental or authoritative, it is harmful to the general effect of the feedback.

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) analysed 607 different effect studies based on 12 652 participants and 23 663 observations. Their research emphasised the fact that feedback, more often than not, had a positive influence on the learning process. However, the study also

showed that in 38 of these cases, it had a negative effect. This is interesting in connection to the examples of feedback included in this essay since the goal of feedback is that it should be received and considered helpful in the process of learning (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996). According to Lundahl (2011):

> Feedback had an exclusively positive effect if centred around the following three points:
>   - How the assignment has been performed.
>   - The goal of the assignment was.
>   - How it could have been performed in a more effective way to reach the goal.
>
> (Lundahl, 2011, p.56).

Therefore, when feedback is given, a certain consciousness is required regarding what it is that should be commented on, and why this ability is requested. Another statement that has been made about feedback is that when comments and a grade are given together, they make each other ineffective (Butler, 1988).

(Figure retrieved from Butler, 1988, p.6).
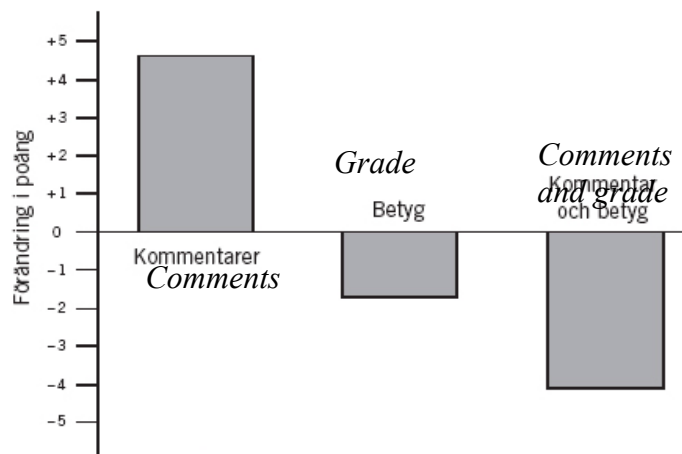
When formative feedback over-emphasizes characteristics of reward, praise, or punishment, it becomes ineffective. Feedback should be directly connected to the purpose of the assignment with specific and instructional comments on the work that has been done. There was a time when carrots, whips, and apples were common ways to motivate students; these are all external motivations, which means actions that are performed to receive some kind of extrinsic reward (such as grades) or avoid some kind of punishment. Intrinsic

motivation is the behaviour motivated by internal rewards, such as the joy of learning or satisfying curiosity (Dörney, 1994, p.276). The focus has lately changed from extrinsically motivated learning, to try to enhance intrinsically motivated learning since, according to the syllabus, less emphasis has been on results but instead on developing the competencies the students should possess. Feedback should, therefore, be provided in a way that strengthens the intrinsic sources of motivation (Elliot and Dweck, 2005, p.6).

In one experiment (Lanzetta and Hannah, 1969), the study created awareness around the fact that teachers often connect achievement with morals and emotions. The study also showed the positive and negative spirals that students create when striving leads to goals being accomplished versus when the students strive and fail. When striving and success are achieved frequently, the subject more often attributes their successes to effort and ability. On the contrary, if striving and failure become the pattern, attribution is more likely to be addressed to the lack of ability only (Lanzetta and Hannah, 1969, p.24). There is a difference in how students receive feedback depending on the self-perception of their abilities. Research has shown that weaker students need more explicit directions regarding right and wrong, and directions, comments, and feedback need to cross-reference the assignment in a clear manner (Brookhart, 2008).

Earlier research has also highlighted the timing of feedback. Feedback should preferably be given often; in this way, feedback helps to maintain the teacher-student dialogue. The best effects have proven to be when there are shorter periods between performance and feedback. The shorter the cycles are, the better. How it affects the students if the cycles become too long is mostly dependent on the capacity of the student. Longer cycles will not affect stronger students as much as they affect weaker students (Lundahl, 2011, p.64).

3. The theoretical framework

In this study, I am using two theories to guide the analyses of different forms of data. One theory focuses on cognitive processes and will be used to analyse the student interviews, while another theory provides an appropriate framework for the qualitative analyses of the written extracts of feedback. Attribution theory has been chosen to shed light on the potential of feedback to create, sustain and induce motivation. Speech act theory has been chosen to investigate the linguistic features that characterise feedback and allow feedback to induce action in its recipient, i.e., how language use in feedback can inspire or bring about action.

3.1 Attribution theory

Attribution theory explains how addressing specific attributions (such as ability, effort or luck) correlates with patterns of results. An attribution theorist investigates the perception of causality of why particular incidents occur. The attribution theory was, from the start, most commonly used in psychological research and began with the work of Fritz Heider in the early 20th century; Harold Kelley and Bernard Weiner later advanced the theory.

Attribution theory concerns the study of cognitive functionalism, and primarily focuses on how individuals in a specific context address their failures versus successes, and how this positioning might affect their future performances. The theory was primarily used within the field of sports. However, Dörney is one of the researchers who has applied the theory within the field of feedback, concluding that,

> [t]he central theme in attribution theory is the study of how causal ascriptions of past failures and successes affect future goal expectancy. For example, a failure that ascribes to low ability or the difficulty of an assignment decreases the expectation of future success more than failure that ascribes to bad luck or a lack of effort. (Dörnyei, 1994, p.276)

In research on attribution theory, a distinction is made between two different types of characteristics that are addressed relative to achievements and defined as stable versus unstable characteristics. A stable characteristic refers to the properties that are harder to affect, for example, ability and intelligence. Unstable features are the things that are more easily changed, like the difficulty of assignment or effort level (Husman and Fishman, 2017).

> If, for example, we ascribe past failure on a particular assignment to low ability on our part, the chances are that we will not try the activity ever again, whereas if we believe that the problem lay in the insufficient effort or unsuitable learning strategies that we applied, we are more likely to give it another try. (Dörnyei, 2003, p.9)

Ability, effort, luck, and difficulty of the assignment are considered the most salient determinants of success and failure (Weiner, 1972, p.207). The students' causal biases when interpreting their success or failure have important implications for achievement in the question of striving. Dörney proposes that it is reasonable to speculate that achievement and strivings are, in part, determined by causal attributions and that individual differences in achievement needs are related systematically to disparities in the perception of causality.

Wiener mentions an example concerning the belief that the concept of a frustrating event might be considered by students to be arbitrarily caused instead of justifiably brought

about, and how the reflection concerning the reason for this event will say something about how they address attribution. This addressing might lead to two very different ways of looking at the experience and will, in turn, affect students' conclusions, which will lead to a specific outcome in future actions in similar situations: "the allocation of responsibility manifestly guides subsequent behaviour" (Weiner, 1972, p.203). Wiener's findings showed that the best results belong to those who tend to assign their good performance to heightened effort and their failure to the lack of effort (Weiner, 1972, p.208).

In analysing the interviews included in this essay, attribution theory will be used as a lens for the material. The attribution theory is included to create the possibility to shed light on one part of the students' cognitive processes. Since the attribution theory is focused on the cognitive process, a complementary theory was requested for the data samples of feedback extracts.

3.2 Speech act theory

Speech acts are a subfield of pragmatics and were first developed by J.L. Austin, a philosopher at Oxford. Speech act research concerns, in the words of Austin, 'how to do things with words'. Speech act theory was then further developed by J.R. Searle. The theory explains how language not only presents information but is also used to carry out actions. Speech acts are defined most often by performative verbs which convey a type of activity that cannot be performed without a particular language, such as to promise or apologise. A speech act could also be any utterance provoking an action, for example, giving directions or expressing a desire (Austin et al., 1986, pp. 94-121). Speech acts can be further divided into the following categories: locutionary acts, an umbrella term for the actual uttering of a speech act; illocutionary acts, the force of the speech act, i.e., the underlying meaning of the locutionary act; and perlocutionary acts, the act that is actually brought about by the locutionary act.

Speech acts can also be categorised according to whether they are direct or indirect. Direct speech acts occur when the form of the utterance matches the function (Yule, 2020); e.g., an instruction is provided in the form of an imperative, "Close the window". In direct speech acts, the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts are in alignment. An indirect speech act is when the form does not match the function (Yule, 2020, p.157), e.g., an observational statement that functions as a command: "It is cold with that window open". In indirect speech acts, the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts do not align. The

intention of a direct speech act is, therefore, more evident than that of an indirect speech act. From a pedagogical perspective, clear instructions could thus be expected to take the form of direct speech acts.

4. Method and Material

The dataset includes two different types of material from three sources in total: student and teacher interviews, as well as feedback extracts. Attribution theory will be applied to the interviews and speech act theory to the feedback material. Two theories are therefore applied in tandem to analyse the different kinds of material, thus making it possible to understand what happens before, during, and after communication between student and teacher in the form of feedback.

4.1 Participants

The present study was conducted at a high school in Sweden located in Stockholm County. The class consisted of 30 students who were in their second year of English (English 6). They were to conduct an oral speech about a personal interest or hobby (Appendix B). Permission to observe the speeches was granted by the teacher and the students. The teacher had asked for volunteers to participate in a subsequent interview, and five students announced themselves as willing. The classroom observation was not further used in the analyses, but the observations provided a more comprehensive picture of the assignment on which feedback was given, and also facilitated the execution of the interviews. The participants of this study thus consisted of five students and one teacher. The students were between sixteen and seventeen years old.

4.2 Data collection

The complete dataset for this study was obtained from three sources: (1) written feedback provided by the teacher after the students' speech performances, (2) interviews with the students, and (3) a short interview with the teacher about her thoughts concerning feedback. These three sources provided information about the students' and the teacher's reflections on the performance, as well as reflections on the feedback. I then coordinated with the students to interview them about their received feedback.

The limited data reflects the limited scope of this essay but lends itself to a qualitative study of feedback that, while not representative, indicates some of the functions of feedback. The data collection resulted in five sets of written feedback, ranging in length from about twenty to forty words each. The feedback provided by the teacher was guided by a feedback-form (which was shared with the students in advance) to explain what she would be paying attention to and what qualities she will base the grading on (Appendix C). The grading scale is from A to F, where A represents the highest grade, and F represents failure. The feedback form consists of two parts: criteria-based feedback and individual comments; this study will, as earlier mentioned focus on the second part. The criteria-based feedback consists of a list of target abilities to be observed and checked off by the teacher according to the student performance. Even though these criteria are relevant to the summative grade, this study focuses on individual comments. The individual comments are presented in section 5.1, where two are transcribed and three are scanned in, showing the actual form of the feedback. The extracts are presented in this manner since two of the students (Denise and Jonathan) did not bring their feedback paper to the interview, so the feedback had to be transcribed from the teacher's notes. Since the scanned versions represent illustrative examples, I chose to include the examples I did receive. An example of the full feedback form is found in Appendix C. These comments are analysed according to speech act theory; meanwhile, attribution theory guides the analysis of the interviews.

4.3 Interviews

The five, semi-structured interviews incorporated twenty-five guiding questions concerning the students' feedback and lasted between ten to twenty minutes each. No oral feedback was given by the teacher, but the students were allowed to discuss their feedback with the teacher if there was any unclarity or other desire to do so.

The interviews took place in a separate room from the English classroom after the students had held their speeches and received feedback. The interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken; all of the interviews were later transcribed. During the interviews, three of five students had their original feedback drafts with them, as requested. It is worth mentioning that the transcribed material in this essay is done to the author's best ability, which means that there was no professional equipment used to transcribe these interviews.

The questions in the interviews aimed to investigate how students understood their feedback and how they view their achievement in light of their grade and the written feedback they received (a full outline of the interview questions is included in Appendix A).

4.3.1 Teacher interview

The teacher interview was brief, focused only on allowing the teacher to comment on her methods and express her view on feedback. This interview was done after the interviews with the students, and the question concerned the teacher's view on feedback. Since the focus was first and foremost on the students and their reception of the feedback, the students' interviews were longer and of a more investigative nature. Input from the teacher is, however, crucial to an analysis of the relationship between the students' understanding of the feedback and the teacher's intention. Some of the questions asked during the interview were; "What is your experience of giving feedback?, Can you see any positive result of it?, Do you have any theories that you follow when it comes to feedback?, Any templates [...]". The full interview is provided in Appendix J.

4.4 Coding

Analysis of the written feedback is mainly guided by speech act theory, but the feedback has also been further categorised according to Leng 2014. While the feedback material Leng categorised was commenting on a written assignment, the categories Leng used are well suited even for oral-assignment feedback because of their general character. For this study, the written feedback was coded according to Leng's (2014, pp.389–397) coding scheme, which included two general functions of feedback: directive and expressive functions. For each of these, Leng identified sub-categories, resulting in the following four categories of feedback function: 1) directive instruction, referring to feedback that both directs and instructs the student; 2) directive clarification, referring to feedback that directs the student to provide clarification; 3) expressive approval, referring to feedback that praises the student's performance or effort; and 4) expressive disapproval, referring to feedback that expresses dissatisfaction or critique. For this study, these categories were supplemented with an additional category: expressive approval with reference, referring to feedback that praises a student's performance or effort and includes a specific reference. With the inclusion of this complementary category, the entirety of the feedback texts could be coded. The texts have been coded with the following abbreviations: Directive Instruction: DI. Directive

Clarification: DC. Expressive Approval: EA. Expressive Disapproval: ED. Expressive Approval with Reference: EAR. Finally, my coding scheme includes the letter P, representing a specific reference to a student's use of Powerpoint, something the teacher frequently noted. An example of how feedback was coded follows:

> Jonathan: *Great PowerPoint! Great that you did it in front of the whole class. Relaxed and professionally done.* ⭐
> Denise: *Good* PowerPoint. Relaxed and *well prepared!* ⭐
> Alex: An *excellent speech, relaxed and well-performed! Good with a powerpoint* ⭐
> Zara: *Very good Zara! Prepare a bit more, so you don't have to use notes to the same extent, A powerpoint as a help might be good. Short notes on a card, also a tip.* ⭐
> Ronyha: *Good content of speech! It was a bit long, and also you have to make sure how to pronounce each word beforehand.*

Translated into coding units:

Jonathan: EAR (P) !, EAR, EAR, EA ⭐
Denise: EAR (P), EAR, EA! ⭐
Alex: EA (EAR, EA!), EAR (P) ⭐
Zarah: EA! DI, ED, DI (P), DI ⭐
Ronyha: EAR !, DI, DI

5. Analysis and discussion

What is being analysed in this essay constitutes a small sample of feedback and interview data and can thus not be said to have representational value. However, the strength of this qualitative research despite the small sample size is as mentioned in the introduction that it includes the whole process, from observation of the oral assignment to feedback distribution via a feedback form to the thoughts of the students via interview. The application of attribution theory calls attention to specific features of the feedback, which may prompt the students to reflect on their performance and trigger motivation for further development which in turn can provide a better understanding of effective feedback.

The examples that follow are the actual feedback the students received; to protect the identity of the study subjects, the teacher and students have been assigned different names. The first two sets of feedback presented below are transcriptions of the text included in the feedback form; the last three sets of feedback are reproductions of the actual feedback form provided by the teacher.

5.1 Examples of feedback

Example 1: Jonathan

Grade: A.
Comment: Great powerpoint! Great that you did it in front of the whole class. Relaxed and professionally done.

Example 2: Denise

Grade: A.
Comment: Good powerpoint. Relaxed and well prepared!

Example 3: Alex

Example 4: Zara

Example 5: Ronyha

5.2 Feedback and speech act theory

The following sections present analyses of the content of the feedback material provided above according to the categories adapted from Leng (2014). The feedback categories will be presented in the following order; Directive Instruction: DI. Directive Clarification: DC. Expressive Approval: EA. Expressive Disapproval: ED. Expressive Approval with Reference: EAR.

5.2.1 Directive instruction

These types of comments only appear in the two cases where the students did not receive the highest grade:

> Zara (B+): Prepare a bit more, so you don't have to use notes to the same extent. A powerpoint as a help might be good. Short notes on a card is also a tip.
> Ronyha (E): It was a bit long, and also you have to make sure how to pronounce each word beforehand.

An interpretation of this could thus be that instructions are provided only in cases where students do not reach the highest grade. Zara, who received the second-highest grade (B+), was the one who received the most instructive comments. This may have to do with the 'high stakes' situation: instructional comments may be given to justify why the higher grade of 'A' was not awarded. In that case, it is reasonable to assume that the gap between B+ and A is so small that directive instructional feedback may be more effective than it would be for a student receiving a low grade, such as Ronyha, where the feedback rather addresses basic criteria as opposed to providing helpful tips.

The directive instructional feedback illustrates both direct ("Prepare a bit more…", "[...] make sure how to pronounce…") and indirect ("A powerpoint as a help might be good.", "It was a bit long…") speech acts. This combination may help the students prioritise the instructions, attending to the direct speech acts as requirements and the indirect speech acts as helpful advice.

5.2.2 Directive clarification

There was no feedback provided that could be categorised as directive clarification. The inclusion of this category in Leng's (2014) study accounted for feedback on longer texts that were meant to be rewritten after the feedback was provided. The lack of this category in this essay's dataset highlights the different purposes of both learning assignments and feedback type.

5.2.3 Expressive approval

All comments are initiated with expressive approval of either a general or referral nature:

> Jonathan (A): Great powerpoint!
>
> Denise (A): Good powerpoint.
>
> Alex (A): An excellent speech!
>
> Zara (B+): Very good, Zara!
>
> Ronyha: Good content of speech!

If the sentence in the feedback is not addressing what was good, it is difficult to make it solely useful in the sense of motivation, according to (Straub, 1997, pp.91-119). It has also been found that if the content of feedback is not explicitly related to the assignment, the feedback is less effective (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996, p.266). Feedback in the category of expressive approval (such as "Very good, Zara!") can thus be considered less motivational than expressive approval that also references a specific quality (Great powerpoint!); see below.

Expressive approval comments, as well as the drawn 'star', are not constructive in their nature, concerning the function as a help to modify future work, but can still constitute a function in the matter of motivation, reward or tone-setting. For this reason, they reflect a similar speech act pattern in that they take the form of compliments, whereby the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts are all in alignment.

5.2.4 Expressive disapproval

The only student to receive feedback with the function of expressive disapproval was Zara, in combination with direct instruction.

> Zara (B+): Prepare a bit more, so you don't have to use notes to the same extent. A powerpoint as a help might be good. Short notes on a card is also a tip.

This comment is the only comment in the extracts that is centred around the student and expressively disapproves the action of an over-reliance on notes. However, as shown in earlier research, expressive disapproval is not necessarily harmful, and especially not so when the speech act is direct, for example, the imperative "prepare a bit more [...]". Such direct disapproval is better received and appreciated by the students than indirect disapproval (Leng, 2014, p.394)

The expressive disapproval comment can be constructive, concerning the function as a help to modify future work. The speech act performed is direct; the locutionary and illocutionary act are in alignment. Whether the perlocutionary act is in alignment is further investigated in the interview, since the perlocutionary act is centred around how the recipients respond to the speech act.

5.2.5 Expressive approval with reference

The majority of the feedback was expressive approval which often included praise of specific features of the students' work:

> Jonathan (A): Great powerpoint!
> Denise (A): Good powerpoint.
> Alex (A): Good with a powerpoint.

In section 2.1, "Characteristics of feedback", it is described how referential feedback makes a difference in what type of experience the students will have while reading their feedback. Research shows that if positive commentary has a reference, it is more likely that it will lead the student to the intended perlocutionary act, to reproduce wished academic behaviour (Yule, 2014, p.128).

Similar to expressive approval feedback, expressive approval with reference feedback is straightforward in nature, reflecting direct speech acts whereby the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts are all in alignment.

5.2.6 Reflection

Based on nineteen coding units, this pie chart shows that just over two-thirds of comments fall into the categories Expressive Approval or Expressive Approval with a reference, which underpins the understanding of the overall positive tone of feedback.

Distribution of feedback comments
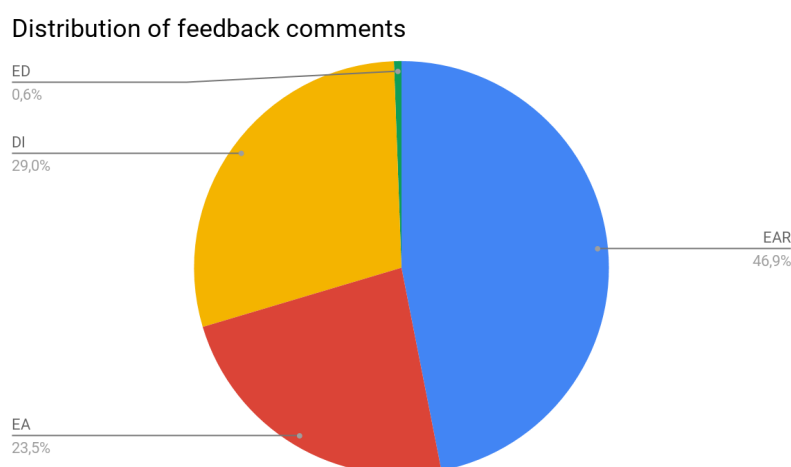
Twice, within the scope of these nineteen units, the teacher references the student's preparation. Zara is encouraged to prepare more, while Denise is credited with having prepared well. The teacher is referring to a time that is quite hard to be fair about since it is outside classroom hours (Appendix E). From a speech act perspective, both comments on preparation constitute direct speech acts: one as a declarative/compliment and the other as an imperative/instruction, suggesting that preparation is a feature that the teacher not only looks for but can evaluate.

The use of Powerpoint is referenced in the feedback for four out of five students: three of whom did use Powerpoint (the 'A' students), and one of whom did not (Zara, B+). However, using Powerpoint was not part of the instructions for the assignment (Appendix B), even though it seems to play a decisive role in setting the grade (according to the feedback given to the 'A' students) and is recommended, via indirect speech act, to the student just falling short of an 'A' grade.

When it comes to investigating the perlocutionary acts of these speech acts, which is explaining the actual outcome of the speech act which, simplified, can be translated into the

reaction and the provoked actions of the students, interviews are required as a tool to make these acts visible.

5.3 Interviews and attribution theory

The questions I chose to give prominence to and bring into this analysis for discussion were those I found to be related to the students' own perceptions of what their grades were caused by, the questions concerning what made them fail or succeed. The theory concerns the cognitive process, and the link between text and thought is not apparent or equal for all students.

Attribution theory on this set of data will serve as a lens, creating a perspective. The following passage contains a selection of questions from the student interviews, that are interesting either from the standpoint of attribution theory or in consideration of the patterns of the feedback mentioned in the literature review.

To take into consideration in this part of the essay is that the feedback is analysed based on attribution theory even though the teacher who gave them feedback was not familiar with the theory at the time. The interview is semi-structured (the full edition of the interviews, including the questions that this hearing was primarily based on, is available to its maximum extent at the end of the essay in the form of several Appendixes).

The purpose was not to tarnish the teacher but to let this review serve as a sample of how feedback can look. The teacher in question has many years of experience, is considered very competent and is appreciated in her field of expertise by both students and colleagues. The chosen extract from the interview serves as a sample to highlight some of the questions at issue, which emphasises phenomena that are relevant to attribution theory. In the following section, an account will be given for the answers of the semi-structured interviews and the coding of the teacher comments.

5.3.1 Jonathan (A)

Jonathan came into the interview, seemingly pumped. He sat down and answered the questions with enthusiasm. Jonathan received an 'A' on his assignment and is described by the teacher as a student who reads his feedback continually and tries to improve according to it. What was interesting about Jonathan's interview was that he seemed satisfied with the feedback even though his feedback lacks directive instruction: it did not give him any further instructions to enable him to develop in his learning process, according to his personal zone of proximal development.

> **-So, you listened to your earlier feedback comments, how do you feel now getting an A?** I have got a dopamine rush, I feel, what more is there to learn? But this is for talking. I could use some feedback on my writing because my grammar is not the best. Honestly, I hope I do not get an A there so she can tell me what I did wrong. And that is why I got a B last time, because of the grammar, and then she showed me precisely what I did wrong in the grammar. I am confident we have an upcoming book analysis, so I think it will go well.
> **What would you address your achievement to?** -Ability and effort, definitely. I am sorry to say this, but if you have a mental disability, it will be a lot harder for you than if you did not have one. So that will affect it a lot, and that leads us to effort, you will have to put in a lot more effort then. But it all boils down to effort. That is the most important thing. The only thing that is changed by the ability is how much harder you will have to work for it (Appendix D).

When I asked why he was able to manage this assignment so well, he explained that he looked at earlier feedback to understand what he needs to practice. He attributed his grade to effort and emphasised it several times.

5.3.2 Denise (A)

Denise seemed contained during the interview. She did not bring her feedback comments, which made the interview take another course than the others. Denise did not remember the comment she got, which, according to Lundahl (2011, p.61) is common when you get your grade and comment at the same time.

> **What kind of feedback did you get?** -I cannot remember.
> **How will the feedback you got for this assignment help you to evolve?** -I do not know, I think I got mostly positive comments this time, and I do not know how this would help me to improve. She should probably have said something like, I could have done that better.. or something like that. But I got an 'A'. If I had got a 'C', she probably would have said something I could have done differently.
> **What do you think is the purpose of feedback?** -I think feedback should always say something you should improve. Telling you about something you should improve is more important than telling your grade (Appendix E).

In Denise's case, we cannot see that the feedback has given rise to any type of perlocutionary act, as it did in Jonathan's case. She addressed her high grade to her effort level (Appendix E), which was also referred to in the commentary she received. Denise herself says that the important thing is to get a comment that says something about what she could have done differently. Denise attributes her success to her efforts and to the time invested. The feedback she got was exclusively positive. The teacher also recognised that Denise had invested the time that the assignment required; moreover, that she was able to do it in a relaxed manner. These two comments address both ability (being relaxed while presenting) and effort (well prepared). However, earlier research has shown that the effectiveness of the written feedback is largely reduced when formative and summative

feedback is given together (Lundahl, 2011) as was the case with Denise, where she does not remember her comment at all, except for the positive tone.

5.3.3 Alex (A)

Alex was happy with his feedback and grade. He attributed his success to effort. Alex said that he always tried to do his best and listen to the feedback he gets; he seemed eager to improve. Alex also attributed his grade to the ability gained in his younger years. Alex saw the comment as an explanation of the summative feedback he got and as an encouraging reward for the hard work.

> **Would you say it is your effort or your ability that gave you the high grade?**
> - I have been playing video games since I was really young, and more often than not, the videogames were in English, so I started to develop my English at a very early age. And I read a lot of articles online. So, I think the internet has helped me a lot, and without effort, you will not come anywhere.
> **Did the feedback motivate you in any way?** -My feedback was an explanation of the grade, but at the same time, it was inspiring. Because most of the comments,.. well it was not that much but. At the same time, it was something that made me feel good. It was a confidence boost. Because next time I will feel that since I have done it once, I can do it again. It was legit feedback. The only thing I might have wanted was some critique maybe because the feedback was very positive (Appendix F)

Alex, as well as some of the other students, petitioned for more constructive feedback. He saw the formative feedback as an explanation of his grade. Alex attributed his grade to his previous interactions with the English language and the information he encounters daily online. Alex addresses developed ability, which is one of the characteristics stably called upon in attribution (Husman and Fishman, 2017). However, Alex also mentions that without effort "you will not come anywhere", which according to Dörney (1994, p.276) in combination with the self-perception of ability, is the most beneficial understanding of achievements, which also his grade accordingly entails. Alex seems to be in what Lanzetta and Hannah (1969) referred to as a "positive spiral".

5.3.4 Zara (B+)

Zara received the most extensive comments. She was satisfied with her grade, actually expecting less than she got. In her oral feedback, she was told that she was allowed to do the presentation again while explaining she did not know that reading from her computer undermined her grade. Zara did not want to redo the assignment. Despite the amount of comments, her feedback does not seem to enhance any perlocutionary acts. She said that her grade was reasonable, considering her effort level.

> **How did you feel when you received your feedback?** -It felt good because I did not expect a B+, but I should have printed my speech, but I did not know that it would affect my grade. **What did she say?** -I told her that I did not know that the computer would affect the grade. She told me it did but that I could do it again without the computer if I wanted to. **Will you do that?** -No. (Appendix G)

The teacher gave her a chance to improve her presentation and do it again to get a higher grade, but Zara lacked the motivation for this. She went to the teacher afterwards to get some additional oral feedback. She told me that she got better than she expected, attributed the success of the effort she had put down to make a great speech in the subject of Swedish, and then translated and used the same text in English class, but as mentioned she would not do it again to try to reach for an 'A'. According to Ramaprasad; "Feedback is information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way" (Ramprasad in Lundahl, 2011, p.55). The goal of feedback as evaluation, explanation, and inspiration might not always be attained. Attribution theory argues that high-achieving students understand that the grade of the complete work is almost entirely dependent on the amount of time and effort they have invested.

5.3.5 Ronyha (E)

Ronyha was satisfied with her feedback, but she said that she seldom receives any. In contrast to the other students, Ronyha did not receive a star. She said she did not put in the effort needed even though she could have done so. In the interview, she said that she used to go for 'A', but it created too much pressure, and now she did not want to do that anymore. She was satisfied with passing. The lack of motivation was evident throughout the interview.

> **Do you usually read your feedback?** -I do not usually get feedback. I usually hand in late, but if I sometimes try to get higher grades, I can ask: Can I get some feedback, and then they say what to write more. For example: if I write about a topic then maybe I have three 'facts' for example, they say, add a year, when did this happen, so then they guide me if I write these, then I can get a little higher grade. So, I think it is really good with feedback. But I do not usually ask for feedback because I do not try so much, but my friend Alex (another of the informants) always wants feedback, and he has an A in all subjects. So because of all the feedback, he got 'A'. He is also good, but he always wants feedback on how he can get better. So feedback still helps pretty much if you want an A as well. **Why don't you go for the higher grades?** -Because it puts pressure on me, I already have problems like that, so I think if I get approved anyway. Sometimes I can get a little higher grades. For example, I had tested just right. I got a 'C'. I was shocked because I did not know if I would get an 'E' or 'F'. So they can go well, but I do not want to try too much because it puts too much pressure on me. Before I used to really try, but I cannot handle it mentally, because then I stopped going to school and that became a really big problem. I do what I have to, to get approved so that I can only graduate rather than try really hard and get a breakdown. **What would you address your grade to?** -I think it is the effort level because I did not try to get an 'A', and that is why I did not put in the effort. That is why I got the grade I got (Appendix H).

Ronyha does not receive feedback often, but she said that this was one of the few times she did since she usually hands in after deadlines. This is concerning since it is harder for the students to convert the feedback into practical effort when it is not received frequently (Lundahl, 2011, p.64). Ronyha addresses her grade to her effort level, which is a positive sign for upcoming assignments, since attribution to effort demonstrates a sound understanding and confidence in ability (Husman and Fishman, 2017). She also shows that she can see the correlation between getting feedback and advancing in grade levels. Concerning, however, is the fact that she finds school too difficult to 'try her best', afraid of a breakdown. In the beginning of the interview, Ronyha said she looked first and foremost at the grade "because that is what counts" and the comments served mostly as an explanation of the grade given. Ronyha explains in the interview that she is focusing on the grade and not the constructive comments, orienting to the small reward as opposed to focusing on development potentialities (Dörney, 1994, p.276). Like the feedback of her classmates, Ronyha's feedback starts with expressive approval. Comparing Zara's and Ronyha's comments (the only two students not awarded an 'A'), there is a clear difference in the addressing of corrections. Zara's comment is much longer, and the instructions are aimed towards fine-tuning meanwhile Ronyha's comment is minimalistic, simple in its form with a few directive instructions addressing the basic features of the oral speech task: content, length and pronunciation.

5.4 The teacher's perspective

The teacher's interview was done to understand the perceptions the teacher had on feedback. The teacher interview was held after the students' interviews. It was held in the context and consideration of this specific assignment, but it also serves to provide an overview of the teacher's understanding of feedback as a didactic tool since the questions are general in character. This extract includes two of the four questions asked during the interview with the teacher.

> **What is your experience of giving feedback? Can you see any positive result of it?** Well, sometimes, often with the more ambitious students, I can see the improvement. Mostly the written things, the grammatical feedback in specific. Some do evolve, not everybody. **Do you have any theories you follow when it comes to feedback? Any rules that you follow?** -Always try to give some positive feedback, not too much negative stuff. Then I take it in portions if it is a lot. It should always be evident, useful and easy to understand. I try to think about how I would like to hear it, and then I try to do the same thing. (Appendix J)

In the comment above, the teacher referred to disapproval within feedback as "negative stuff". Here we find a conflict of expectations between the students and the teachers. The students say that they want constructive feedback so they can develop; meanwhile, the teacher does not want to give "too much of the negative stuff". There might be a common misconception that constructive feedback, for example, requests of clarification on specific points or directive instructions, is considered harmful or too harsh. However, this research has shown that students find this type of feedback helpful and are appreciative towards it, a view on feedback that is supported by the student interviews included in this study (Leng, 2014). When the teacher was asked to specify what meaning she adds into the understanding of negative stuff, she clarified that it was the features (in this case of the presentation) that needed improvement.

What is also shown in the lenses of speech act theory as well as attribution theory is that written feedback is quite open to the students' own interpretation since the feedback is positive in a nonspecific manner without directive references to address their effort further. In these examples of feedback, the perlocutionary acts are to a high extent defined through what the students choose to pay attention to, since the instructions sometimes lack specifics. The positive feeling is addressed towards whatever characteristics the students assume to be the 'good work' in the assignment. If the teacher knows what kind of feedback that is undermining the learning process, the feedback can be formed to foster confidence in ability and effort. The research also shows that 'negative stuff' is not necessarily harmful but actually (as long as centred around the assignment and not the person) constructive and considered helpful by the students.

6. Findings

In this section, the findings will be encapsulated and answered through a revisitation of the research questions.

1. What are the linguistic characteristics of the feedback the students received from their teacher?

The language used in the feedback include both indirect and direct speech acts. The division that can be made between direct and indirect speech acts could suggest a priority of the comments: the most important points (compliments, instructions for improvement) are expressed directly. The different characteristics could be translated into recommended

changes in the form of indirect speech acts, and required changes, in the form of direct speech acts.

The tone is permeated by the positive remark in the introduction of each extract. The chart included in section 5.2.6 illustrates how the feedback in its character was mainly positive and expressive, and it demonstrates how the expressive approval with references is the predominant characteristic in comparison to the other text units. The locutionary and illocutionary acts of feedback and the perlocutionary acts of the students are not always in alignment. This was illustrated in the interview of Zara, where it was shown that the orally pronounced illocutionary acts would not be met with the desired perlocutionary act.

2. In what way do the linguistic characteristics of feedback correspond to the teacher's intent and the students' interpretations of their grade?

It seems like the highest grade functions as a saturated measure of knowledge and is therefore not requesting any act that can move the students into a new level of their zone of proximal development. There seems to be a discord between the teacher's desire not to give the students too much of the instructive feedback (which includes the expressive disapproval and direct instruction); meanwhile, the students' desire to get constructive notes on their assignments becomes apparent in the interviews. It is also unfortunate that the grade and formative feedback are given together which undermines the teacher's desire for the student to remember their feedback and develop through it (Butler, 1988), this was exemplified in the interview with Denise (Appendix E).

3. When students are provided feedback, what do they attribute their summative feedback (grade) and their individual formative feedback to?

All of the students had an understanding that effort determined the outcome of their performance. The one student who got an E did, surprisingly, also attribute her grade to a lack of effort, which shows, according to attribution theory, that she is in a favourable position to improve and do better in her future academic achievements.

In this study, none of the students had aimed for a goal that they did not attain. The students were satisfied and felt content with the feedback that was provided by the teacher. The result showed that the students in this study had an overall sound understanding of their

academic achievements and of how to evolve and advance in their learning process. Future studies may be able to reveal the attribution process among students who do not achieve their goal.

4. How can the attribution theory help teachers to give feedback that promotes further development in students?

Investigating the students' different characteristics of attribution provides the possibility to cater the feedback to become effective in a detailed and direct manner without unnecessary misunderstandings of students' ambitions and self-perceptions. At the moment, however, the assimilation of this knowledge and potential is limited by the hours and ambitions of the teacher. Therefore, continual research is needed, which could result in templates and forms that are easy for teachers to use but nevertheless result in a thorough insight of the potential inhibitions in the students' learning process, in the form of adverse attributions. The developmental potential for attribution theory applied in the field of feedback is unlimited. In this paper, it is shown how the students reflect, based on the feedback given, on their own achievements. Understanding how the students address their own effort is crucial to assessing their assignments in a manner that enhances learning.

7. Conclusion

While this essay addressed only one specific type of feedback extract, which was based on a small dataset, the qualitative analysis nevertheless succeeded in revealing patterns in the feedback which proved the importance of the right content. It showed how feedback could be interpreted, received, and acted upon by students. Making templates and providing feedback comments that are short but filled with useful content can demand a lot of time. However, an awareness of different attribution factors can help teachers to decide which areas to address while giving feedback. Such awareness does not automatically lead to or trigger any form of action, but when teachers understand how students view their own achievements, they can adapt their feedback accordingly. For example, if a student lacks motivation because she/he attributes her/his failure to ability, the teacher could help by addressing the student's potential and ability while giving feedback providing practical examples where the student can display this ability.

In this study, it was shown that the students did not always know nor remember why they got praised for their work. More specific comments could encourage students to understand what they did well, and more directive instruction could motivate and guide them towards improvement, ultimately boosting their beliefs in their own abilities and hence also, their confidence.

According to the students interviewed for this study, the speech assignment was the very first time that they received feedback in a template (Appendix C) with more in-depth information on the different criteria and their results. Usually, they would just get their grade and a short comment. This suggests that providing feedback can be a challenging assignment for teachers which may be facilitated by a template. However, it cannot be emphasised enough how valuable feedback is for the learning process. Further investigation of the relationship between the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts of feedback, that is, the form of feedback, the intention of the teacher, and the subsequent actions of the students, would benefit both educators and students. It would enable teachers to craft and deliver effective and formative feedback that in turn, would more reliably direct students in further learning and development.

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9. Appendixes A-J

Appendix A, Interview questions

-What is your spontaneous feeling about your feedback?
-Why do you think it became like that (either good or bad)?
-How did you feel when you received your feedback?
-What did you look at first, your feedback or your grade?
-Were you surprised?
-Did the feedback motivate or inspired you, to do it again?
-Is there anything you do not understand in your feedback?
-Would you like the feedback to address anything else?
-Something that was not a part of the feedback?
-Could you have done anything differently? Did you know this before you got the feedback?
-If you would have been a teacher, would you have given feedback any differently?
-Feedback generally: Feedback as function
-What do you think about feedback? Do you use to read it?
-Did you deserve this grade? And this feedback?
-In which way did the feedback motivate you?
-What is the purpose of feedback?
-Do you think the feedback you got, fulfil this purpose?
-Will the feedback help you in your language development?
-Did your feeling of what you had achieved change when you receive the feedback?
-What do you think you will you remember from this feedback?
-What will you do differently next time?
-What would you address your grade to?

Appendix B, Instructive notes for the oral speech assignment

Speech courage

Some people do not like to speak in front of a group. People get nervous and sometimes want to give up. Do you feel the same? There are ways to get over it and become a confident speaker. Some advice to help you get started:

1) Practise speaking in smaller groups before taking on a larger audience.
2) Talk about things you are familiar with.
3) Learn your speech by heart so well that you do not really need the small cards with notes.
4) Use your personal experience – your own opinion is always interesting.
5) Remember that pauses always seem longer to you than they do to your audience.
6) Prepare a question to ask in order to establish a relationship with your listeners - if you feel that you need it. Figure out a simple one that everyone can answer, like: "Do you hear me back there? /Have you heard about him before?"
7) Make eye contact without looking at someone in particular. Stare at the wall behind your audience.
8) Use small notepads with keywords.
9) If you get lost, have a sip of water (always in a glass beside you) to get time to get your thoughts back on track.

Appendix C, An example of a full feedback sheet

Speech   Name: ▮

If you...

- ☑ stick to the topic and use 4-6 minutes — too long
- ✗ use a clear language that is easy to understand and has some flow and variation
- ✗ have some structure
- ✗ make some contact with the audience
- ☑ can express yourself with some adaptation to purpose, recipient and situation.

...you have reached the criteria for an E

If you in addition to this...

- ☐ make a well prepared presentation
- ☐ make few language mistakes
- ☐ have good flow in your speech
- ☐ have a good structure
- ☐ make good contact with the audience
- ☐ can adapt to purpose, recipient and situation.

...you have reached the criteria for a C

If you in addition to this...

- ☐ use a varied language
- ☐ make very few mistakes
- ☐ have a very good pronunciation and flow in your speech
- ☐ have a very good structure
- ☐ make very good contact with the audience
- ☐ can express yourself with good precision in ways that are varied and balanced, and with good adaptation to purpose, recipient and situation.

...you have reached the criteria for an A

Grade: Ⓔ

Comments:

Alexion

Good content of speech! It was a bit long and also you have to make sure how to pronounce each word before hand.

▮

Appendix D, Interview Jonathan

Jonathan is reading his feedback to me. Then asks:

-Will the question be in general about feedback or….

Yes, some will be general. And some will be about this specific assignment you got.

-I really like feedback because it tells you what you did, for example. Well, I got an A in this specific case but let us say if I did not get an A or I did not get the grade I wanted, then I would be able to see what I did wrong, because we had a checklist, and I like that. In my written exam, I got a B, I got everything filled out except the last one I think, and when I saw that I thought: Yeah, I need to work on that. So I worked on it, and now I got an A., and I think that is what is so great about feedback because it tells you of your flaws so you can fix them for the future. And also the eye contact thing! I missed that the last time as well, it was also a speech in that assignment as well, we were gonna compare the Swedish schools to the one in the US. So I decided to get it fixed for the next time, and I did it. I used my old grade-paper, and just focused on the two that were not checked in. Because I already checked in the other boxes. But for that assignment, the form was digital. This helps me to not waste time on what I already know.

What was it that made your speech an A-speech?

-Easy! I talked about video games. Video games are my passion. The info just came in, and I wrote that in a day or two, I was serious. When I have a passion for something, it comes naturally. I have a passion for the English language, that is why I have an A in this subject. It is like the only ämne that I have an A on the nine men. Yeah so, that is like my best ämne. It is about your interest really, if it would be Swedish, which I am not interested in, I am happy with a C or something, but in English, I need an A. and videogames too, I can talk about that forever. And there are so many studies that have been made on it. So what is important is: 1. If you are interested in it, 2. If there is a lot of information about it, it is because passion does not matter if there is no Info out there on google. If you have passion and info, it will be a great speech, and I had both.

What would you address your achievement to?

-Ability and effort. Definitely. I am sorry to say this, but if you have a mental disability, it will be a lot harder for you than if you did not have one. So that will affect it a lot, and that leads us to effort, you will have to put in a lot more effort then. But it all boils down to effort. That is the most important thing. The only thing that is changed by the ability is how much harder you will have to work for it. There are some people that have Asperger's or dyslexia,

then they cannot really write, and then you cannot really blame them. You will have to help them out to release their full potential. But if you have an illness, you will have to put in so much more effort. And that isn't fair.so it ends with effort, how much time and effort you are willing to put down. I need to get an A in English. And in Swedish, I will go for a C, that is how much effort I am willing to put in.

Are you very aware of your effort levels?

-Yeah, basically, because I know that to become a teacher (he wants to become a teacher, he told me before the interview) and then you really do not need that high grades. I think C is at the perfect level. I used to get an A before, in almost everything, but that stressed me out. Cause I had almost no free time, and I figured it was not worth it man, like honestly, I am not becoming a pilot, or an attorney, (lawyer) or anything, So I do not need straight A's so yeah, a C is enough. Then I have free time, and I can do anything, you know, just relax.

So you use it to read your feedback when you get it?

-Yeah, of course, that is how I Improve.

Do you think you deserved your grade?

Oh, my God! The thing is if I say yes, I sound like a total Narcissist.

No, you would not.

-You sure?

Yes.

-You know what, I expected to get a B. Yeah, I did. So I was a bit shocked when I got an A. because I normally am very good at criticising myself. I think I am just too hard on myself. I tell myself often that I will fail, but then I get a passing grade, and I am like, Oh, great! So, I think I am just too hard on myself. First, I did not think I would get an A, but now, after what Nina said, I think I did a good job, I think I earned it.

Do you think the feedback you got on this specific assignment fulfils the purpose of feedback?

-Well, yeah, I mean, I got an A on it all, So what is there more to learn basically? But let us say if I did not get an A, or for those who get lower grades, It will help them out a lot.. because they can see very clearly what their flaws are and improve them. They can learn from that system, just like me. I went from B to A because of this type of feedback, so I am grateful for that.

Did the feedback you get inspire you to do it again?

-Yeah definitely, it inspired me to practice in those areas and make it better.

But now, when you have improved in those areas?

-I got a dopamine rush. I feel, what is there more to learn? But this is for talking. I could use some feedback on my writing because my grammar is not the best. Honestly, I hope I do not get an A there so she can tell me what I did wrong. And that is why I got a B last time, because of the grammar, and then she showed me specifically what I did wrong in the grammar. So I am confident we have an upcoming book analysis. I think it will go well.

Even though you got an A, would you have appreciated comment on further development?

-Wait, I got an A, do you want me to go higher? Oh. Yes! I would like feedback even though I got an A, specifically for grammar, I know the university will not be as nice, So yeah the more knowledge, the better. Trust me. I love criticism.im not like most other people that are like, "No! please do not criticise me". It hurts their ego. I understand, I had an ego myself before, but then I understood, you are not gonna improve if you. Because you are not gonna improve if you just push it away and think you are doing perfectly.

Appendix E, Interview Denise

What is your spontaneous feeling about your speech? -My speech was about how your name defines your future, so, I thought my topic was interesting because I learned from it, and I am very happy with my grade.

Were you satisfied when you went off stage? Did you feel you have done well?

-Yeah, yeah, I was satisfied. I was very happy with my speech.

How did your feedback make you feel?

-I was happy because I got an A and I was relieved because I was stressed before.

Were you surprised by your grade?

-No, because I used it for my Swedish class and I got an A.

So you suspected you would get an A?

-Yeah, I suspected it.

Did you get feedback comments?

-Yeah, a bit, I think. I do not remember, but it was probably like something about a good flow, and a good structure and. I made only a few mistakes, and I had good contact with my audience so, yeah, I got some comments.

Okay, so that is what we will focus on, the comments. Take your time and try to remember them. Were there any question marks? Something you did not understand in your feedback comments?

-No, it was all very clear.

Would you say you got an accurate grade?

-yeah

How do you feel about it? Could you have done anything differently?

-Right now, I do not know, I am just happy with my grade. At that moment, though, I would probably be able to say. I wish I had done this or that, I think it went great, though. I was probably shaking a little bit. But I was happy with it.

Do you usually read your feedback?

-Yes, because I want to evolve and do better.

What do you think is the purpose of feedback? What do you think it is supposed to do?

-I think feedback should always say something you should improve. Telling you about something you should improve is more important than telling your grade.

How will the feedback you got for this assignment help you to evolve?

-I do not know, I think I got the most positive comments this time, and I do not know how this would help me to improve. She should probably have said something like that I could have done that better. Or something like that. But I got an A. If I had got a C, she probably would have said something I could have done differently.

Why do you think it went so well? What would you address your success to?

-Uhm, I do not know, I think my effort, I do not know why, But I think my effort because I did really work hard on it, the night before, I practised with myself, and then I got a good grade.

Appendix F, Interview Alex

What is your spontaneous feeling about your feedback?

-It is hard for me to judge my own speech, but I would say it was a pretty good speech, because I did not have to stop and think about what I had to say, and I think I had a good flow.

What do you think made it that good?

-It was because I followed ethos, pathos, logos, authority, facts and relating to the audience. I think the really important part is to create some kind of interest, so people do not lose focus halfway through.

What did you look at first, your feedback or your grade?

-The grade, of course.

Were you surprised?

-I do not want to sound, uhm.. but I think the speech went pretty well so.. yeah, An A or a B. but I would say I was anticipating so….

Did the feedback motivate you in any way?

-My feedback was an explanation of the grade. But at the same time, it was pretty inspiring. Because most of the comments,.. Well, it was not that much but. At the same time, it was something that made me feel good. It was a confidence boost. Because next time I will feel that since I have done it once I can do it again.

Would you like the feedback to address anything else? Something that was not a part of the feedback?

-It was legit feedback. The only thing I might have wanted was some critique maybe. Because the feedback was very positive. Especially when I do speeches, I know that I can look down at the ground, and do some things, that does not fit into the speech, like getting lost in the text and so on. So if she would have said: You have done this and this, I would have considered that and tried to better myself.

What is the purpose of feedback?

-To motivate and to make something perfect. So when you get feedback, it should include both props and some critique. They both give you some kind of feeling that makes you want to go further. Because the comments makes you want to do it again, and the props make you dare to do it again.

Will it help you in your language development?

-Yeah, Indeed! I have always had a phobia for speeches. I prefer texts, the grammar, for example, is way harder when you write.

What would you address your success to?

-Trying to catch their interest, it is not all about the language. It is how interesting your speech is. It is about the audience, choosing the right topic. It makes it really interesting to read about it as well because it is interesting to you as well.

Would you say it is your effort, your ability or your natural interest for the language, which is the strongest?

-I have been playing video games since I was really really young, and more often than not the video games were in English, so I started to develop my English at a very early age. And articles online. So I think the internet has helped me a lot, and without effort, you will not come anywhere. You have to incorporate both hard work and like as a bonus, I have been lucky enough to have the language given to me at an early age.

Appendix G, Interview Zara

What is your spontaneous feeling about your feedback?

-I should have printed my speech instead of reading from the computer.

How did you feel after your performance?

-I was pretty satisfied. I said what I wanted to say.

How did you feel when you received your feedback?

-It felt good because I did not expect a B+, but I should have printed my speech, but I did not know that it would affect my grade.

What did you look at first, your feedback or your grade?

-My grade. I did not read the feedback at first. I read it afterwards.

Were you surprised?

-Yes, I was surprised because I do not like doing presentations.

Did the feedback motivate (inspired you to do it again) you in any way?

-It gave me a little bit more confidence. Also, the last time I did the speech in Swedish, I got an A and that also gave me a bit more confidence to do speeches. Because as I said, I do not like to talk in front of the class.

Are there any question marks or anything you understand in your feedback?

-The feedback was clear. I also spoke to Nina afterwards, and she explained it a little bit more.

What did she say?

-I told her that I did not know that the computer could affect the grade. She told me it did but that I could do it again without the computer if u wanted to.

Will you do that?

-No.

If you were a teacher, would you have given feedback any differently?

-No, this is a very good way of giving feedback. This is the first time I got a paper like this. It is good because I can see exactly what I have done, and what I can improve, like what criteria.

What is the purpose of feedback?

-I think it is meant for the student so they can know why they received a specific grade

What would you address your grade to, your success?

-I have no idea because I did not really expect this grade. Thought I would get a D or a C, I feel like maybe the content was the good part. Yeah, uhm I do not know.

If I would give you some more alternatives, I could ask you if it was either ability, effort, gifting or luck?

-This was my Swedish speech that I had worked very hard on, and I think thanks to this, I did my Swedish speech very well. Such effort.

Appendix I, Interview Ronyha

The student was not comfortable speaking English, so this interview was answered partly in English and partly in Swedish.

Ronyha reads her comments to me.

-Hon skrev att jag borde tränat innan, för jag hade svårt att uttala vissa saker. Jag hade skrivit ner och allt det här, men utan att testa först, och det står ju här hur långt det ska vara, och jag gjorde lite längre och det är ju inte omöjligt att säga vissa ord och så, det stämde ju ändå bra.

Do you think your grade was accurate to your effort?

-Yes.

What is your spontaneous feeling about your feedback?

-Jag blev inte chockad eller så, jag hade förväntat mig de.

What did you look at first, your feedback or your grade?

-The grade, för jag tycker att betyget är det som spelar roll, sen feedback, jag förstår lite mer.

What do you think about this feedback, what will you bring from it?

-The grade.

The feedback explained the grade?

-Yes.

Was there anything specific that you would think about before next time making a speech?

-Yes, I will learn to pronounce some of the words. Before I make the speech and prepare, so I know how long it will be.

Didn't you think about this when you practised for this time?

-No I did not practice. I just wrote down the speech. And then I just presented it, I did it in Swedish class before, so then I just translated it. And then I thought I was done. But there were a lot of words that I knew what they meant, but I had not used them before, so I could not pronounce them.

What do you think about feedback? Do you use to read it?

-Jag brukar inte få feedback. Jag brukar lämna in sent. Men OM jag ibland satsar på högre betyg så kan jag fråga: Kan jag få lite feedback å då säger dom vad jag skall skriva mer. Alltså till exempel: Om jag skriver om ett ämne så kanske jag har tre information till exempel och så säger dom; Bra, men lägg till ett årtal, när hände det här och så vidare, så då vägleder dom och om jag skriver det här, då jag kan få lite högre betyg. Det hjälper mig ändå. Så jag

tycker det är jätte bra med feedback. Men jag brukar inte be så mycket om feedback för jag satsar inte så mycket, men min kompis Adam, han vill alltid ha feedback och han har A i alla ämnen. Så på grund av alla feedback, eller ah, han är duktig också men han vill alltid ha feedback hur han kan bli bättre, så feedback hjälper ändå ganska mycket om man satsar högt och vill ha A liksom.

Why don't you aim for the A? You say Adam tries hard. Why don't you go for the higher grades?

-För att de sätter press på mig. Jag har redan problem och sådär, så jag tänker, om jag får godkänt i alla fall. Ibland jag kan få lite högre. Exempel, jag hade prov precis, jag fick C, jag blev chockad för jag visste inte om jag skulle få E eller F. Så det kan gå bra, men jag vill inte satsa för mycket för de sätter för mycket press på mig. Förut, jag satsade högt, men jag klarar inte av de psykiskt, för då slutade jag gå till skolan och de blev jätte mycket problem. Jag satsar så att jag får godkänt så att jag kan ta examen bara. Liksom hellre det än att satsa högt och få en breakdown.

If you had been a teacher, would you have done the feedback any differently?

-Uhm, asså jag tänker att jag skulle ge alla feedback, kanske även om dom inte vill ha. Så att dom kan bli bättre, så att dom skulle följa min feedback och få bättre. Men det kanske blir jättemycket jobb. Ja, det skulle bli mycket jobb för mig. Även om det är mitt jobb, så tänker jag att det skulle bli lite svårt. För om jag har andra klasser också. Men! De gånger jag har fått feedback från den här skolan tycker jag det har varit jättebra. Till Exempel här (visar på pappret, kunskapskraven, med rutor), jag tycker det var jättebra. Mycket bättre än när man bara måste läsa. Jag fattar inte vad det är dom frågar efter när jag läser direkt i kunskapskraven. Jag fattar inte vad jag måste göra. Det här jag förstår bättre liksom. Det här sättet är mycket bättre så som hon har gjort det nu.

Is this the first time you get a sheet like this?

-Yeah.

What would you address your grade to? Ability or effort?

-I think it is the effort, För att jag satsade inte högt, och därför så kämpa ja inte så mycket. Så därför blev det så**.**

Appendix J, Interview with the teacher

Do you give a lot of oral feedback?

-The plan is always to give it on paper but also be able to complement it with oral feedback if desired. They have to be able to understand their feedback.

What is your experience of giving feedback? Can you see any positive result of it?

-Well, sometimes often with the more ambitious students, I can see the improvement. Mostly the written things, the grammatical feedback in specific. Some do, not everybody.

Do you have any theories you follow when it comes to feedback? Any templates or rules of thumb?

-Always try to give some positive feedback. Not too much of the negative stuff. Then I take it in portions if it is a lot. So they can remember it. It should always be clear, useful and easy to understand. I try to think about how I would like to hear it and then try to do the same thing.

When you say 'negative stuff', what do you mean can you specify?

-I mean things to improve. Sometimes I do an arrow, pointing forward and then I write the things that they have to improve underneath. Usually I do two columns one with the things that need to be improved and one with the thing that was good, in terms of structure and language or other qualities.