ESL Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Classroom Assessment Feedback

Alexis A. López

Educational Testing Service, USA

Abstract

Feedback is integral to classroom assessment. Language development is maximized if teachers and students use feedback more efficiently and effectively (Brown, 2019). This study examined how primary and secondary ESL teachers use classroom assessment feedback effectively to support student learning, actively involve young language learners in the feedback process, and support young language learners in understanding and using classroom assessment feedback. Fifteen ESL teachers were recruited for this study using convenience sampling. All the teachers participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews through a web-based video conferencing platform. I developed an interview protocol, which helped to guide each interview and allowed me to ask follow-up questions as needed. The main aims of the interviews were to get information about the teachers' classroom assessment practices, classroom assessment feedback, self-assessment practices, peer assessment practices, and strategies to help their students make sense of the feedback and make use of it. The findings suggest that teachers perceive classroom assessment feedback as a dialogic process in which teachers and students discuss the feedback to help students understand and use it. The teachers actively engaged students in the feedback process using peer and self-assessment. However, teachers must provide much support to help students understand and use the feedback effectively to promote learning. Some implications for practice and suggestions for future research are also provided.

Keywords: *Classroom Assessment, Feedback, Dialogic Feedback Process, Young Language Learners, Primary and Secondary ESL Teachers*

Introduction

Brown (2013) highlighted an important distinction between teaching and classroom assessment activities. He asserted that the main difference between assessment and regular classroom activities is that classroom assessments provide evidence of student language development and can be used to provide student feedback. According to Brown (2019), feedback is integral to classroom assessment, and he added that without feedback, students could not fully maximize their language development (Brown, 2019). Moreover, Brown (2019) addressed critical issues

related to classroom assessment feedback, including the importance of feedback in classroom assessment, the different forms and modes in which feedback is provided, how teachers provide feedback, and different strategies that teachers use to make feedback more efficient and effective for students.

To honor James Dean Brown's contributions to the area of using classroom assessment feedback to enhance language learning, I completed a study to examine how English as a second language (ESL) teachers in the United States provide feedback to young language learners and how ESL teachers support young language learners in understanding and using feedback. I focused on young language learners because there is not much literature on how to provide effective feedback to young language learners; most of the literature focuses on providing feedback to adult learners. Also, K-12 schools in the United States are tasked with providing support for English language learners to help them succeed academically. To support English language learners in acquiring essential academic English skills, they must receive diagnostic feedback about their learning (Heritage, 2008). Thus, it is critical to find effective ways to provide clear, accurate, timely, and actionable information that teachers and students can use to identify gaps in knowledge and skills and inform subsequent study efforts to enhance and support language acquisition and development. In the present study, I present empirical evidence on some of the issues Brown (2019) introduced in the context of providing classroom assessment feedback to young language learners.

Classroom Assessment Feedback
In the context of classroom assessment, the importance of feedback cannot be overstated. Much research has investigated this issue, with the consensus being that when appropriately administered, feedback can contribute to the improved acquisition of skills and knowledge (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Price et al., 2011). Hattie (2009) asserts that classroom assessment feedback is the most powerful influence on academic achievement. Feedback is essential in classroom assessment because it provides teachers and learners with information about what students know and can do regarding instructional goals (Brown, 2013).

Classroom assessment feedback is a process through which students get information from different sources to promote student learning or improve learning (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless, 2015; Evans, 2013; Richard & Schmidt, 2010; Shute, 2008). Brown (2013) clarified that classroom assessment feedback usually takes many forms, from scores to written or oral comments to teacher-student conferences. Teachers and students can use feedback to guide teaching and learning.

Teachers play a crucial role in helping students develop the ability to understand what feedback is and how they can use it effectively (Gamlem & Smith, 2013). A few scholars refer to students' ability to understand and use feedback as feedback literacy. Sutton (2012) introduced the concept of feedback literacy to describe students' abilities to read, interpret, and use feedback. Carless and Boud (2018) extended the notion of feedback literacy as "the understandings, capacities, and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies" (p. 2). Students' ability to use assessment feedback on their performance and learning concerning the goals and standards they are expected to achieve is an integral part of the learning process (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Previous studies

have also found that students' lower English language proficiency levels could prevent them from understanding the feedback (e.g., Wolf & Lopez, 2022).

Some scholars have highlighted that most of the research on classroom assessment feedback has focused on students as feedback consumers and how they use teacher-led feedback (McConlogue, 2015; Nicol et al., 2014; Van der Kleij et al., 2019). Nonetheless, recent studies have started to focus more on how students can have a more active role in assessing their progress and the progress of their peers (e.g., Brooks et al., 2021; Van der Kleij, 2021). For English language learners, providing feedback in a language they can understand can help them be more active in the feedback process (Wolf & Lopez, 2022). One way to engage students in the feedback process is through peer review (Evans, 2015; McConlogue, 2015; Nicol et al., 2014).

Peer assessment can be defined as a process through which students actively participate in dialogues related to their performance and standards (Falchikov, 2001) and requires students to evaluate and make judgments about the work of their peers based on a criterion for excellence (Falchikov, 2005; Nicol et al., 2014). Peer feedback can encourage collaborative learning through interchange about what constitutes good work. Students can help each other make sense of gaps in their learning and understanding and get a more sophisticated understanding of the learning process.

When students provide peer feedback, it could help them develop their capacity to judge their work more effectively as they compare their work and that of others (McConlogue, 2015). Thus, self-assessment can be enhanced when students interact with their peers and reflect on what has been done (Boud et al., 1999; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006). Self-assessment refers to students' evaluation of their work products or processes, and its goal is to "enable students to be aware of their own learning" (Boud & Soler, 2016, p. 404). It is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify the strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly (Andrade & Du, 2007; Black & Wiliam, 2009). Self- and peer assessment have been included as a critical component in models of self-regulated learning (Butler & Winne, 1995; McDonald & Boud, 2003; Zimmerman, 2002). Self- and peer assessment also enable students to actively manage their learning by requiring them to identify and apply standards and criteria (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). However, it is critical to explicitly teach and model to students how to engage in self- and peer assessment practices (Falchikov, 2001; McDonald & Boud, 2003).

Goals of the Study and Research Questions
Special considerations must be made to ensure that young language learners can interpret and use classroom assessment feedback irrespective of their English language proficiency. Moreover, it is essential to examine how teachers can support young language learners in understanding classroom assessment feedback, and how they can use feedback to support developing and enhancing their English language proficiency and critical academic skills. In this study, I focus on how ESL teachers provide classroom assessment feedback to young language learners, how they support young language learners in understanding and using feedback, and how they engage young language learners in the classroom assessment feedback

process so they can have a more active role in monitoring their learning. I addressed these specific research questions:

RQ1: What perceptions do ESL teachers have of what constitutes effective feedback for young language learners?

RQ2: How do ESL teachers engage young language learners in the feedback process?

RQ3: How do ESL teachers support young language learners to understand and use feedback?

Methods

I employed a qualitative research design for this study because it focused on how teachers provided classroom assessment feedback to young English learners and how they supported them in understanding and using the feedback to support student learning. This exploratory qualitative research design gave me a rich understanding of the teachers' viewpoints using in-depth semi-structured interviews. Below I describe the participants, the interview procedure, data collection, and analysis.

Participants

For this study, I used a convenience sample technique to recruit participants. Initially, I invited ESL teachers in primary and secondary schools that had previously participated in other studies related to using assessment to guide teaching and learning. I also asked some of our partners or consultants to suggest the names of ESL teachers. These teachers also suggested other potential participants. Since I am focusing on how ESL teachers provide effective classroom assessment feedback to young learners, I targeted ESL teachers in grades 3–8 (ages 8–14) who taught in ESL programs in the United States. Schools in the United States offer multiple ESL programs for English learners (ELs). For example, ELs can be in a dedicated ESL class, meaning their ESL class is part of their regular school day. They may also receive pull-out ESL, meaning students are taken out of other classes for ESL instruction. Other ESL programs include content-based ESL, where teachers use content as a medium for building language skills, or sheltered instruction, where instruction focuses on teaching academic content. I chose this grade span because students are already reading independently, meaning they can access the written feedback on their own. Table 1 shows background information on the participating teachers. In terms of gender, most of the teachers were female (13 teachers). Their teaching experiences ranged from two to 22 years ($M = 13.3$). Six of the teachers taught students in middle school grades (grades 6-8), five in primary grades (grades 3-5), and four taught in both levels (grades 3-8). Six of the teachers taught in only one grade; the other nine taught in multiple grades. Twelve of the teachers taught ESL classes with students with different levels of English proficiency; the other three taught more homogenous groups of ELs who had low or advanced proficiency levels. The teachers also varied in terms of the home languages of their students. Eight teachers worked with students who mostly spoke Spanish, while the other seven teachers worked with students from diverse home language backgrounds (e.g., Polish, Portuguese, Vietnamese).

Table 1

Background Information about the Participant Teachers

Teacher	Gender	Grade(s)	State	Years of experience teaching ELs
1	Male	3–8	New Jersey	2
2	Female	7–8	New Jersey	22
3	Female	6–8	New Jersey	18
4	Female	7	New Jersey	10
5	Female	7	New Jersey	15
6	Female	3–8	Illinois	19
7	Female	3	Illinois	10
8	Female	3–5	North Carolina	14
9	Female	3	New Jersey	10
10	Female	8	New Jersey	13
11	Female	5–6	New Jersey	4
12	Female	6	New Jersey	15
13	Female	3–5	Illinois	12
14	Female	3–8	New Jersey	15
15	Female	3–5	New Jersey	20

Procedures

I employed semi-structured interviews through a web-based video conferencing platform to collect data to address the three research questions. I developed an interview protocol, which helped to guide each interview and allowed me to ask follow-up questions as needed (Kvale, 1996). The main aims of the interviews were to get information about the teachers' classroom assessment practices, classroom assessment feedback, self-assessment practices, peer assessment practices, and strategies to help their students make sense of the feedback and how to make use of it. All the participating teachers were asked questions about the following topics: 1) how they used classroom assessment to support student learning, 2) the type of feedback they gave to their students, 3) how they provided feedback to their students, 4) the strategies they used to help their students understand and use feedback, 5) the strategies they used to monitor their students understood and used feedback, 6) how self-assessment was implemented in the classroom, 7) how peer assessment was implemented in the classroom, 8) how they supported their students to generate feedback, and 9) their perceptions of effective classroom assessment feedback. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Analysis

The author and colleague independently coded each interview transcript. We first used structural coding (Saldaña, 2009) to identify categories that indicated how the teachers provided classroom assessment feedback and how they helped their students understand and use feedback. By using structural coding, we were able to use content-based phrases to identify three topics of inquiry. The structural codes were closely aligned with the research questions: ESL teachers' perceptions of effective classroom assessment feedback, how ESL teachers engage young language learners in the feedback process, and how ESL teachers support young language learners to understand and use feedback. Then, we used descriptive coding for each of the structural codes we identified (Saldaña, 2009) to help identify recurring themes. Descriptive coding refers to assigning labels to data to inventory essential issues within each

structural code. After completing all the coding, then we met to compare their ideas and codes to determine if we had arrived at similar data interpretations. We resolved all the disagreements in the coding through discussion to reach a consensus, as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990). An overview of the codes is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Overview of the Coding Scheme

Structural Codes	Descriptive Codes	Number of Participants
Feedback is focused on learning	Connected to learning goals	15
	Connected to assessment criteria	15
Feedback is responsive to students' needs	Linguistically appropriate	12
	Short and simple	15
	Concrete	13
	Motivates students	12
Feedback is ongoing	While completing the assessment task	14
	After completing the assessment task	15
Feedback is provided in multiple ways	Different modes (oral, written)	15
	Different settings (individual, group)	15
	Different sources (teacher, student)	13
Engaging students with the feedback	Helping students engage with the feedback	10
	Helping students understand feedback	15
Helping students use feedback	To correct current work	12
	To apply in future work	10

Findings

All the teachers agreed that classroom assessment feedback is most effective when connected to clear learning goals. To have feedback connected to learning goals means that it provides information that supports students to develop or improve their language skills. Although all the teachers reported introducing the learning goals at the beginning of a unit or lesson, 14 teachers recommended reinforcing the learning goals throughout instruction and the assessment. One of the participants explained how she connected the feedback to the learning goals during the assessment. She stated,

> *"I always keep the learning goals in mind during the assessment and when providing feedback. With the little kids, I have written the goal at the top of the pages they're working on in their journal or in their project or whatever. Or sometimes we use post-it notes and then the goal is written on their post-it notes that is right there so they can remember that this is what they're trying to do"* (Teacher 7 online interview).

Consequently, teachers must have learning goals that are easily accessible and understood by all learners. Most of the teachers, 13 of them, explained that helping learners with very low English proficiency understand the learning goals is challenging. Teachers reported using different strategies or a combination of strategies to help learners understand the learning goals, including modeling the learning goal (12 teachers), demonstrating the learning goal (11 teachers), using can-do statements (12 teachers), or discussing the learning goals (7 teachers).

Similarly, all the teachers stated that classroom assessment feedback is equally effective with clear assessment criteria. Having clear assessment criteria implies that the learners understand what is expected of them, what they need to do to show that they have met the

learning goals, and how their responses are scored and interpreted. Teachers reported using multiple strategies to introduce the assessment criteria to their students, for example, using scoring rubrics (14 teachers), using checklists (8 teachers), or providing sample responses or exemplars (7 teachers). One of the participants talked about the importance of having clear assessment criteria and how she uses a rubric for this purpose. She stated: "I help them [students] understand how we assess them because sometimes they really don't understand why they are getting certain grades or why they are getting certain feedback…I always give them a rubric ahead of time and we discuss the expectations for the task they are going to do" (Teacher 12 online interview).

Feedback is Responsive to Students' Needs
Teachers explained that assessment feedback is also most effective when responsive to students' needs. One need the teachers mentioned is the students' English language proficiency. Thus, providing assessment feedback in a language students can understand is essential. As one of the participants explained, "the way I provide feedback to my students depends on their English language proficiency level" (Teacher 6 online interview). Most participants (14 teachers) commented that they usually simplify the language of the feedback. According to 12 teachers, they use student-friendly language to ensure the feedback is accessible to the students.

Regarding using student-friendly language to provide feedback to young English language learners, one participant commented: "I write the feedback in a friendly way, in a language that the students can relate to…I have to follow the [state English language development] standards, but they are usually written in a very technical way. So, I kind of translate the language of the standards so they can understand it" (Teacher 12 online interview). Similarly, eight teachers stated that depending on the English language proficiency of their students, they also provide feedback in the student's home language. However, only some of the teachers speak their students' home languages, so this is a limitation. Regarding the use of students' home language to provide feedback, one of the teachers commented the following: "The kind of feedback that would be helpful for them [students] needs to be pre-taught and perhaps like really heavily gone over in their first language, to include some visuals if this was going to be a rubric kind of a task for them to do" (Teacher 6 online interview).

The teachers also argued that feedback needs to be focused on being responsive to the student's needs. In this case, the teachers explained that feedback is focused when connected to learning goals. Thus, most teachers (13) said they only provide feedback related to the learning goal at hand, even if the student needs support in other areas. One of these participants talked about the importance of connecting the feedback to learning goals. She stated the following about how she ensures that her students receive focused feedback: "So, if we are focusing on one particular skill, I only provide feedback on that skill. This makes them [the students] a little bit less overwhelmed and I think it releases a lot of pressure from them for the test" (Teacher 5 online interview).

According to all the teachers, effective classroom assessment feedback is usually short and straightforward. Although all the teachers stated that providing detailed feedback to learners is essential, they must keep a balance and provide only a little feedback to young language learners. The teachers explained that the students can feel overwhelmed or confused if they provide too much feedback to young language learners. One of the participants explained what

happens when teachers provide too much feedback to young language learners. He stated, "It's a tricky thing sometimes when you provide too much feedback to young learners, especially English language learners. They tend to get nervous if they see so many mistakes" (Teacher 15 online interview). Teachers also explained that assessment feedback must be concrete to be effective. Concrete means that feedback provides specific actions students can take to improve their language development. Concrete actions include tips, suggestions, or recommendations for what students can do.

Most of the participants (12 teachers) highlighted the sensitive nature of feedback. They explained that their feedback primarily focuses on things the students are doing wrong, so sometimes students can feel demotivated when they receive negative feedback. Thus, teachers must provide feedback that enhances young language learners' self-confidence, motivates them to do well, and improves their language proficiency levels. For this reason, it is vital to recognize the students' efforts by praising them and encouraging them to try again, to try harder, and to use feedback. One of the teachers talked about the importance of using feedback to motivate students. She stated: "In that sense, if they're giving us one or two answers, it's really important for us to praise them and to make them feel like those attempts are understood and that they can communicate with the limited [language] resources they have at their disposal" (Teacher 7 online interview). A few participants (6 teachers) explained that they use game-based feedback to motivate students. For example, one of the teachers commented that she uses a prize system where students get points "to help students feel confident and to motivate them to use the feedback to improve their language" (Teacher 5 online interview). According to the teachers, a prize system might include getting points, stickers, tickets, or certificates.

Feedback is Ongoing

According to the teachers, classroom assessment feedback is also most effective when provided frequently at different moments throughout the learning process. The teachers reported that they usually provide feedback to young language learners at two different moments: while the students are completing the assessment task and immediately after they complete the task. Most of the teachers, 14 of them, explained that they usually provide feedback to their students as they complete the assessment tasks. This type of feedback is informal and is mainly provided orally. For instance, one of the teachers explained that immediate feedback is very effective because students can attend to it right away. She explained the following:

> *"The best feedback I give is almost immediate feedback. Like when we're in the guided reading group, I notice something and then I kind of tackle it right away and I make a note of it to check next time I meet with this group to make sure that they're not making the same mistake or remind them of what I told them the last time" (Teacher 4 online interview).*

Teachers also mentioned providing feedback after students complete the assessment. All the teachers recommended providing feedback as quickly as possible; otherwise, it will be challenging for students to remember what they did on the assessment. One of the participants talked about the impact of not providing immediate feedback to students. She explained: "If

you're not giving feedback close enough to the task at hand, it might be hard for them to take on new learning" (Teacher 6 online interview).

Feedback is Provided in Multiple Ways
All the teachers commented that they provide classroom assessment feedback in multiple ways. I have mentioned earlier that teachers provide feedback using different modes, both oral and written feedback to their students. Additionally, all the teachers reported that they also provide individual and group feedback. The way they provide feedback to their students depends entirely on the specific needs of their students. So, if feedback applies to a few students, they will do one-on-one conferencing. If it is a more significant number of students or the entire class, then they will do group discussions. One of the participants explained how she decides if she needs to provide individual or group feedback. She stated the following:

> *"It is sometimes individual, or it could be to the whole group. If it's something that everyone is struggling with the same thing, I will just address the entire group. If it's something that one student doesn't seem to be getting but others do, then I may talk to them individually. I will sit with each one at a time and given them feedback" (Teacher 8 online interview).*

Although the teachers generate most classroom assessment feedback, 13 teachers also reported that their students actively provide feedback. According to these teachers, peer feedback and self-feedback are the two most common ways to involve students in the feedback process. Teachers noted that students like providing feedback and learning from each other and see this as an opportunity for students to reflect on their English language development process. One of the teachers explained how she involved her students in providing feedback. She commented on the following:

> *"I don't think feedback always needs to be, so teacher led. They would be getting feedback throughout not just from the instructor, but when they're working together with partners. They're getting some feedback from their partner. Kids are really good at giving each other feedback. The expectation would be for the partners to be helping them refine their language use" (Teacher 7 online interview).*

However, all the teachers stated that it is critical to support young language learners in the feedback process and to model how to provide feedback. Teachers use many resources to facilitate the student-led feedback process, including using guiding questions (11 teachers), checklists (6 teachers), rubrics (12 teachers), and sample responses (8 teachers). To highlight how teachers implement peer feedback in the classroom, one of the teachers explained how she supports her students to provide feedback to their peers. She stated: "I use rubrics especially when they're working in pairs or in a group. They'll talk about the task and the rubric. This has worked well all these years for me and they're able to communicate well and use the rubric to provide feedback and have discussions about the assessment" (Teacher 12 online interview).

Teachers also reported using self-assessment to allow students to reflect on their learning process. One of the participants talked about how she uses self-feedback in her classroom. She

commented: "The students would analyze their own work with the rubric that they initially have been given or compare it to the sample that they have been given in the beginning; but I do not allow students to grade themselves. The self-assessment is just to help them reflect about their work" (Teacher 2 online interview). The teachers explained that using rubrics and checklists helps them connect feedback to the learning goals and assessment criteria. Although teachers liked providing student-led feedback using peer assessment, they highlighted the importance of monitoring the type of feedback the students provide to their peers. One of the participants explained how she monitors student-generated feedback in classroom assessments. She commented on the following:

"You also have to look at the feedback the students are providing to each other to make sure they are providing helpful feedback. I'll actually [have one-on-one] conference with the student who gave feedback and the student who got the feedback and ask them questions about the feedback and discuss issues that were not addressed in the feedback. So basically, I make this a teachable moment for both students" (Teacher 13 online interview).

Learners Must Engage with the Feedback and Understand it
So far, I have highlighted the importance of providing effective classroom assessment feedback to students to facilitate learning. However, teachers explained that for students to take advantage of this feedback, they must engage with it. Most teachers, 10 of them, commented that they always create a space in class to allow students to read the feedback at least. After the students read the feedback, teachers must ensure that the students can make sense of the feedback. According to many of the participants (9 teachers), part of helping students understand the feedback is to help them make connections to the learning goals and assessment criteria. One of the participants explained how she connects the feedback to the learning goals and assessment criteria. She stated: "It's a lot of modeling, it's a lot of showing. I'll remind them that this is what they did, and this is how it should look like, or this is how it can look like" (Teacher 13 online interview).

Teachers reported using two common strategies to help students engage with and understand the feedback: giving students time to access the feedback in class and meeting with students to help them understand it. Teachers usually provide written feedback and allow students to read and understand the feedback. Similarly, teachers also used individual conferences or group discussions to allow students to ask questions about the feedback or to clarify what the feedback means. One of the teachers explained how she supports her students to understand the feedback she is providing. She stated,

"I just have like a document that I use and I just write my notes on it and I say what I said to the kid. And then I usually ask them to think of something that they think they did well and then we both have to tell. And then I try to tell them something that I think they could work on. And then I ask them to tell me something that they could work on" (Teacher 7 online interview).

According to twelve teachers, the best way to help young language learners understand the feedback is to discuss it. In these discussions, the teachers review the feedback with the students to explain what they did well, the areas they need to improve, what they can do, and the support they need. Teachers also allow students to ask questions about the feedback or clarify anything unclear. One of the teachers noted the importance of meeting with her students to discuss the feedback to exemplify how teachers support young language learners to access and understand the feedback. She stated the following:

> *"Ultimately, I think the most effective way to help students understand the feedback I give them is to talk to them about it; to get the message across to them about where their lacking is. Like, sit down with them one-on-one or in groups with other kids who have trouble with the same thing" (Teacher 4 online interview).*

Another participant talked about the importance of doing confirmation checks with his students to ensure they understood the feedback. He described the primary goal of meeting with his students to review the feedback. He commented, "The goal of the individual or group conferences is to sit down and make sure that my students understand the feedback. Sometimes in the conferences, I see that some of them may not have fully understood exactly what I was trying to tell them they needed to improve" (Teacher 1 online interview).

Students Must Use the Feedback
All the teachers commented that classroom assessment feedback is most effective when they provide opportunities for their students to use it. However, they all agreed that young language learners need much support to use the feedback, so they suggest discussing next steps with students. Teachers reported using multiple strategies to help students use the feedback. For instance, 12 teachers reported allowing their students to correct their mistakes after they provided feedback. One of the participants explained how she encourages her students to improve their work after getting feedback. She stated the following:

> *"I give my students feedback when we are working on our tasks and always give them an opportunity to go back and check it again. I always try to tell them that it's not about the final product, but rather the process, so they always have time to go back. I want to give my students an opportunity to use the language feedback; I want to give them that repetition and opportunity to use the vocabulary they're learning" (Teacher 11 online interview).*

Similarly, another teacher explained how she provides her students with specific actions they can take to improve their work. She commented on the following:

> *"I will make notes on their papers that they write. I then meet with them to talk about their papers and talk about what they did wrong. Then I give them an opportunity to like to write it again using my tips. I wouldn't like cross thing out and rewrite it. I will have them look for what they think might be wrong based on the problems I found, which I note on the paper." (Teacher 4 online interview).*

Ten teachers also recommended allowing students to use the feedback in future activities or different contexts. These teachers planned special activities to allow their students to use the feedback in different tasks. One of the teachers described how she plans activities to allow her students to use the feedback in other tasks. She explained, "I'll have them reflect back on the last assignment to see what was said and going forward, keeping that in mind when they're doing their next assignment so they can recycle all that knowledge" (Teacher 16 online interview). Another participant talked about how her feedback is not only applicable to the task at hand but also to future tasks. She noted the following: "Let's take that teachable moment where you're giving them that feedback and take a moment to apply that to other settings…your feedback should be something that is going to be useful to them in lots of other settings" (Teacher 7 online interview).

Regardless of their strategy to allow students to use feedback, teachers commented that they must work with students to show them how to use it. Being able to use feedback is a skill they need to instill in young language learners and help them develop the ability to use feedback. Teachers need to work with young language learners to teach them what feedback is and how they can use it. One of the participants explained how she helps her students. She commented the following: "At the beginning of the year, I do a lot of prepping with my students, just talking about feedback; what it is, how to accept it, and how to use it." (Teacher 12 online interview).

Discussion

Many scholars have highlighted the power of classroom assessment and feedback to improve student learning outcomes (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009; Brown, 2013; Brown, 2019; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In this study, I examined ESL teachers' perceptions of effective classroom assessment feedback for young language learners, how they involved young language learners in the feedback process, and how they helped young language learners understand and use feedback.

I found that teachers perceive classroom assessment feedback as a dialogic process in which teachers and students discuss feedback to help students understand and use it rather than a process in which teachers transmit information about what students need to correct or improve. Teachers reported using individual and group discussions with students to engage them with the feedback and help them understand it. Nicol (2010) stated that feedback could be conceptualized as a dialogue and that the student's responses to the dialogue are critical for productive learning. Teachers can also empower students through this dialogic process to give students a much more active role in the feedback process. Teachers reported involving the students in the feedback process by engaging them in peer review sessions. According to the teachers, students become more aware of their learning process by evaluating and judging the work of others. Many scholars have found that peer feedback helps students self-evaluate their work more effectively (e.g., Evans, 2015; McConlogue, 2015).

The first step in a dialogic classroom assessment feedback process is to have clear learning goals and expectations. Teachers must inform students about the language skills that will be assessed to support young language learners in understanding the learning goals and expectations. If teachers use English language development standards to determine learning goals, they must translate them into simple everyday language so all students can understand

them. Also important is explaining to students why it is necessary to develop these language skills and when they can use them (e.g., in a particular context or communicative task). Equally important is activating the students' prior knowledge by allowing them to reflect on what they know about the language skills they are developing, whether they have used them before or whether they are easy or difficult to learn and use. The goal is to spark their motivation and interest. It is also crucial in this stage to provide students with information about the assessment. This information includes the purpose of the assessment, how they will be assessed (e.g., item or task type), how the assessment will be scored, and what is expected of them (criteria or standard of good performance).

To facilitate the process of generating, receiving, understanding, and using assessment feedback, teachers suggested providing two types of feedback: feedback provided while the students are completing the assessment task and feedback provided immediately after the students complete the assessment task. While students complete the assessment tasks, feedback should only be provided when needed depending on how they progress through the tasks. Students who have difficulty completing a task will get different types of feedback to support them. Students should be allowed to progress through the tasks if they perform well.

On the other hand, students must also get feedback at the end of the assessment task. This feedback must be connected to the learning goals and assessment criteria. The teachers also emphasized that feedback must be meaningful and relevant to young language learners so they can make better sense of it. For example, feedback must be provided in a language students can understand based on their English proficiency levels. Teachers could also use their students' home language to provide feedback or use visual representations whenever possible. Feedback should also be short and simple for young language learners and include concrete actions for the students (e.g., tips, recommendations, suggestions). Teachers must also provide feedback that could enhance young language learners' self-confidence and motivation.

According to the teachers, to make the dialogic classroom assessment feedback process more effective, students should receive feedback from varied sources, including feedback generated by teachers, the students themselves, and other sources (e.g., automated assessment systems). Teachers also suggested providing feedback in multiple modes (oral or written) and meeting with students, individually or in groups, to discuss feedback. Although the teachers explained that they generate most of the feedback, students also participate in peer and self-assessment to generate additional feedback. However, young language learners need much support to generate feedback. For this reason, teachers generally model how to generate feedback and use different strategies (e.g., guiding questions, rubrics, checklists, sample responses) to help students provide feedback.

To understand feedback, young language learners must engage with it. Allowing students to engage with feedback means that students should pay attention to the learning goals and expectations. Then, students must compare their performance to a criterion or standard of good performance to make judgments about their learning. To do this, students must understand what the scores or results mean and reflect on what they can do and need to improve. The interviews showed that teachers are critical in supporting young language learners in understanding the feedback. Teachers can use multiple strategies to help their students, including providing written feedback and reading it aloud, providing the feedback in the students' home language whenever possible, using visuals (e.g., pictures, graphs, or tables), or acting out the assessment

information. Teachers can also help their students by discussing their performance and what the scores mean, explaining what a good performance is, showing them students' exemplars, and highlighting what they can do and need to improve. Teachers also allow students to ask questions and clarify doubts in these discussions.

Brown (2019) argued that language learning could be promoted when students use the feedback meaningfully. To help young language learners use the feedback, teachers must provide information about what language skills the students need to improve and what they can do to improve them. After interpreting the feedback, students must develop a course of action to improve their English skills. The course of action requires that students plan specific activities they can do to practice a specific language skill (e.g., tasks, exercises). The course of action also includes making decisions about whether the students need to change their language learning strategies or study methods, make any changes to their study environment (e.g., find a place with fewer distractions), invest more time and effort, or seek help (e.g., from a teacher or peer).

Teachers also play a critical role in helping their students use the feedback. Teachers can help students figure out what they need to focus on next (e.g., a specific language skill) and suggest how to improve or give them additional tasks. Teachers can also guide their students to reflect more on what they are learning and how they are doing. For example, teachers and students can discuss their learning strategies and suggest new or different ones. Students can also use the feedback when they can review or correct things they answered incorrectly. Thus, teachers must give students opportunities to use the feedback.

Implications for Practice

Teachers highlighted the importance of connecting feedback to learning goals and assessment criteria (Shute, 2008). Thus, teachers must have clear learning goals presented in a language appropriate for young language learners. Also important is to revisit the learning goals during instruction and assessment and to emphasize the learning goals in the feedback provided to students (Heritage & Wylie, 2020). Moreover, teachers need to have clear assessment criteria. Having clear assessment criteria implies that students must clearly understand the expectations and what they must do to demonstrate that they meet the learning goals. Teachers can use rubrics, checklists, and exemplars (sample responses) to help young language learners understand the learning goals and assessment expectations.

Moreover, teachers are critical in helping students develop their feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018; Sutton, 2012). Thus, teachers also need to support young language learners to help them understand what feedback is, what the feedback they get means, and how they can use it to improve their language development. Teachers can discuss with students to ensure they understand the feedback, and teachers can model and demonstrate how to use it. Thus, teachers need to monitor that their students are engaging with the feedback, making sense of it, and using it to correct and improve their work. Teachers should also provide opportunities for students to use the feedback in future work to make language learning more relevant and meaningful.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This study had several limitations. For example, the study sample had some restrictions. Only 15 teachers participated in the study, all working in the United States public school system. Moreover, I only collected reported data, did not observe the teachers providing feedback to their students, and did not collect sample feedback comments because the study was conducted during the summer while teachers were on vacation. Despite the limitations, the study's findings yielded evidence to support the use of a dialogic classroom assessment feedback process with young language learners. The teachers provided rich information on supporting young language learners to understand and use the feedback.

Future research studies can be conducted to expand the sample to reflect a broader range of participants (e.g., teachers and students), contexts (e.g., types of schools, grade levels), and locations (e.g., different countries). To collect more empirical evidence to understand better how teachers and students engage in dialogic feedback, I suggest conducting more interviews with teachers and students to examine their feedback practices and their perceptions of the use of classroom assessment feedback. Future research studies can also conduct classroom observations to examine how teachers and students engage with feedback, how students are actively involved in generating feedback, and how teachers support them in developing their feedback literacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of how ESL teachers in primary and secondary schools can use classroom assessment feedback more effectively to promote student learning. The findings from this study can also guide professional development opportunities for ESL teachers. Classroom assessment feedback aims to inform students of what is expected of them, where they are in terms of their English language development, what they need to do to improve, and what they need to do next. Teachers are critical in helping young language learners understand and use feedback through a dialogic process where students are actively involved.

ORCID

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4616-1091

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