Innovations

ISCORE Model: Formative feedback is core in synchronous classes

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Abstract

Despite a number of studies delving into formative feedback in the field of education, many researchers may have failed to bring to the foreground formative feedback in synchronous classes. To fill this void, the researchers intended to examine the forms of formative feedback utilized by senior high school English teachers in synchronous classes in leading private schools in Baguio City, Philippines. The data were consolidated via a multiple synchronous class observations and in-depth interviews with purposefully selected participants and were analyzed through Martin Heidegger's (Interpretive) phenomenology employing the hermeneutic circle technique of analysis. Accordingly, three major themes sprang. These themes are depicted to what is called "ISCORE Formative Feedback Model" which includes (1) Feedback Forms, (2) Timing, and (3) Number. To be specific, the feedback forms are instructive, supportive, corrective, operative, regulative, and evaluative. The timing can be abrupt or abridged, while the number can be individual or collective. The findings entail the utility of the feedback forms taking the timing and the number into account in each synchronous class. Furthermore, the model can serve as a beacon for teachers in various educational institutions and in varying levels in their objectives and delivery of formative feedback in synchronous classes. Besides pedagogical implications, this study also put forward future research directions.

Keywords: 1. Formative Feedback; 2. Synchronous Sessions; 3. English Classes; 4. Senior High School; 5. Interpretive Phenomenology.

Introduction

Feedback is an essential, formative information provided to learners about the quality of their work accompanied by appropriate standards. According to Askew (2000),Boud (2015), Boud and Molloy (2013), Brookhart (2017), Carnell (2002), Earl (2013), Hattie and Clarke (2019), Moss and Brookhart (2019),Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2018), Sackstein (2017), and Shute, (2008), teachers must give feedback against the focused learning objectives of the task, highlighting where success occurred and suggest where improvement might take place against the objectives. Good feedback must provide the students the cognitive factor or information they need to understand where they are in the learning process and what to do. As a motivational factor, when students understand what to do and why they have to do it, they develop the feeling of control over their own learning. Feedback also allows students to detect, correct and reflect on their own errors which fosters learning at a faster rate, (Mamoon-Al-Bashir et al., 2016) but feedback that works for one learner on one occasion may not work for another (Sutton et al., 2011).

After decades of debate, the dispute over the link between formative and summative feedback has gone full circle. For a time, formative feedback, which focuses on providing students with feedback, was marketed as a superior technique than standard summative feedback, whereby its procedures have been panned for being disconnected from the learning process (Houston & Thompson, 2017). Amidst opposing views, this study centers on formative feedback as its focal point. López-Pastor and Sicilia-Camacho (2015) postulated that the technique through which teachers deliver information to students during the learning process in order to improve their understanding and self-regulation is known as formative feedback. Shute (2008) espoused that it comes in a number of formats (e.g., response accuracy verification, explanation of the correct answer, tips, and practical examples) and may be used at any point during the learning process (e.g., immediately following an answer, after some time has elapsed). These have often been used to offer feedback against end-of-course requirements and to prepare students for summative performance evaluations or competency measurements (Kulasegaram& Rangachari, 2018).

The significance of formative feedback is hard to contest and is widely acknowledged in shaping the learning process (Goldin et al., 2017). In support, researchers testify the positive impact of formative feedback towards being more engaged, more driven, and more active in learning, which significantly increases intrinsic motivation to attend classes and overall positive emotions among students (Al Jahromi, 2020; Lam et al., 2017; Nahadi, et al., 2015). Not only that, formative feedback offers a lot of possibilities for teaching and learning in online classes (Planar & Moya, 2016). On another note, it should be viewed as a process that is planned and integrated throughout time, rather than a series of isolated occurrences (Konopasek et al., 2016).

Statement of the problem

The Philippines was the latest country to reopen after a series of lockdowns that resulted in more than eighteen months of school closures (Estrellado, 2021). In order to regain a feeling of normalcy in the midst of the pandemic, Gopez (2021) expressed that the gradual reopening of face-to-face classes becomes necessary, so it is critical to follow school health standards as important in the delivery of face-to-face lessons to mitigate the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic as a public health catastrophe (Sarmiento et al., 2021). Despite the rallying cry of the country to post-pandemic education, synchronous classes still remain in the educational landscape.

Synchronous online education happens when students and faculty members are geographically separated and engage concurrently via the internet at predetermined periods, which is the closest people can come to a real-life experience in the digital realm (Khan et al., 2021; Olt, 2018). In this regard, Kohnke and Moorhouse (2022) construed that educators have used a variety of online synchronous meeting solutions to help students study more effectively.

In the teaching profession, the capacity to provide constructive, useful, and timely feedback is critical (Muñiz-Rodríguez et al., 2018). However, teachers may have a difficulty in providing it. The findings of Sardareh (2016) revealed that teachers are unaware of ways for implementing formative feedback to increase students' learning and apply knowledge in future lessons.The limited use of formative feedback suggests the need for more systematic professional development of teachers. Thereupon, they will require time, support, and understanding to successfully implement formative feedback in their classrooms (Saliu-Abdulahiet al., 2017).

With these in mind, this research has been conceptualized with the knowledge that much research has been conducted on feedback in various forms and levels in the realm of education; yet, there seems to be a dearth of research surrounding feedback in the conduct of synchronous classes in the Philippines. Hence, this research intends to address this gap and to develop a model that may guide English teachers in the use of formative feedback. The chief research query in this study is: What forms of formative feedback are utilized by senior high school English teachers in synchronous classes in leading private schools in Baguio City, Philippines?

Methodology
Research design

This research is anchored on Martin Heidegger's (Interpretive) phenomenology. Heotis (2020) explicated that the goal of interpretive oriented phenomenological research is to investigate the lived experience in which meaning is embedded. As a result, interpretation may be used to understand one's perception of the phenomenon, and how meaning is derived from it. In the case of this study, the researchers investigated the lived experiences of senior high school English teachers in their utility of formative feedback in their synchronous classes. Nonetheless, the researchers, as English teachers themselves who utilize formative feedback in their synchronous classes, could not and should not dismiss their past knowledge and involvement in the issue under investigation (Reiners, 2012).

Site and participants

The setting was drawn from five leading private schools in Baguio City, Philippines. Purposive sampling for the participants was employed with the following set of inclusion criteria: (1) they are senior high school English teachers who teach English-related courses; (2) they conduct synchronous classes; and, (3) they provide formative feedback to their senior high school students. In total, there were 17 recruited senior high school English teachers.

Data explication and analysis

The primary corpus of data was derived from observations of synchronous classes. In this regard, request letters were sent to the research departments of the private schools for the conduct of the study. After the approval, each English teacher's synchronous class was observed twice (either real-time or recorded), one hour per session, which means that a total of 34 hours were devoted in the observation. The researchers were 'complete observers', in which they merely observed (bystander role) and did not participate in the setting at all (Moser &Korstjens, 2018). To add, selective observation was done because the researchers only zoomed in on formative feedback utilized by the senior high school English teachers.

Since Martin Heidegger's (Interpretive) phenomenology is an interpretive hermeneutics, it employs the hermeneutic circle technique of analysis, in which the parts and the total of the text are continuously reviewed and analyzed (Reiners, 2012). In this context, the researchers took down notes during the observations separately following the observation template of Frechette et al. (2020): it included detailed descriptive notes of what was observed (data), which was followed by preliminary understandings of what the data said about the phenomenon, and synthesized via interpretations of the elicited central meanings, until such time that the "ISCORE Formative Feedback Model" was created. The back and forth process ended when an expert validator approved of the framework.

Because hermeneutics entails a dynamic data co-construction between the researcher/s and the participant/s (Frechette et al., 2020), a one-on-one in depth-interview via Zoom video conferencing ensued. The semi-structured interview protocol was validated by a language expert, which was followed by a pilot testing with one senior high school English teacher. Some changes were consequently incorporated. However, the researchers deemed that the responses of the chosen senior high school English teacher in the pilot testing were valuable, so the researchers included them in the analysis. Overall, five senior high school English teachers were invited for the interview for the primary reason that they provided the greatest number of feedback in their respective schools during the observation of their synchronous classes. The interview was conducted and recorded via Zoom video conferencing with the participants' consent, which lasted 40-60 minutes. Thereafter, the recorded interviews were transcribed following the transcription process of Stuckey (2014); these are deidentifying the participants' data, discussing the data with the transcriptionists, and transmitting of meaning to the text.

In a number of ways, member checking helps interpretive research meet its objectives, according to the study of livari(2018), so the researchers sent the transcripts back to the interviewees to verify the accuracy of the contents or whether the answers reflect or resonate with their perspectives. Since there were no comments from the participants, data analysis ensued.

Findings and discussion
Formative feedback forms

The formative feedback forms used and discussed by senior high school English teachers in synchronous classes at eminent private schools in Baguio City, Philippines, are discussed and examined in this section. Three important themes arose from the synchronous sessions and interviews conducted in each participating class, which are (1) Feedback Forms, (2) Timing, and (3) Number. These formative feedbackresults were the bases of the "ISCORE Formative Feedback Model."
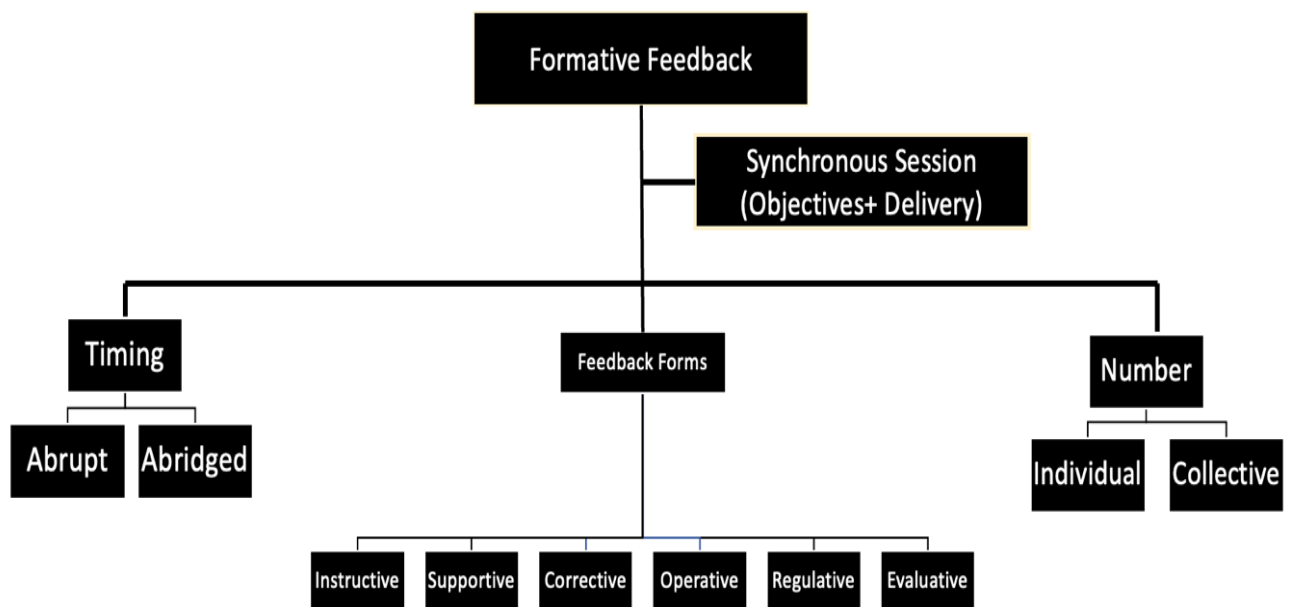
Figure 1. ISCORE Formative Feedback Model

Selvaraj and Azman (2020) accentuated that feedback is crucial in education, learning, and evaluation, as data provided by a teacher concerning facets of the success of understanding of the students' achievement. Mamoon-Al-Bashir et al. (2016) and Manole (2021) additionally stated that the goal of feedback is to increase student learning.

The following formative feedback based on the findings are performance driven messages relative to the classroom learning goals delivered by teachers in different forms with purposes expressed in different parts in synchronous classes, either individually or collectively.

Instructive feedback

In this study, instructive feedback includes explanations and processes of instructions for specific tasks in a class discussion. The findings show that the teacher participants' most frequently used instructive feedback during synchronous classes focused on the need to meet deadlines, quarterly assessments, activities for their asynchronous classes, performance tasks, diagnostic tests, literary readings, presentations, activity mechanics, and grading policies:

Before we start the lesson, I show them the schedule. Once I finish checking activities, and I notice that there are a lot missing, I tellmy class. Some students at the end of the lessons would say "Ma'am, can we still use the grace period?" As a result, I tell them what activities can be submitted and what activities can no longer be submitted. (Teacher 4)

Teachers scaffold this form of transfer for students when they provide feedback on the procedure. This is an effective strategy for meeting all students' requirements and fostering in them the ability to "learn how to learn" (Brookhart, 2017, p. 25). This enables longer educational sessions, higher student involvement, and enhanced learning and performance (Curran, 2021).

Supportive feedback

Based on the findings, supportive feedback is anchored on establishing a positive classroom community,where teachers need to be intentionally inviting and supportive of students. Supportive messages are intended to inform students that they are able, valuable, and responsible; that they have the opportunity to participate in their own development; and that they are warmlycalled to take advantage of these opportunities.

Examples of supportive feedback during the synchronous sessions were verbal expressions like "That's correct, thank you,""Thank you to those who recited,""I like your answer,""That's interesting," "Very wise choice of words," "Excellent example,""I appreciate your effort," among others.There were also non-verbal cues like smiling and nodding while students were answering, and other pleasant facial expressions. Some statements provided by the participants were:

Providing supportive feedback to students helps them to become more inspired to share their thoughts regarding the lesson. Students are able to feel that they are appreciated and supported by the teacher. (Teacher 2)

Teachers need to give students supportive feedback. This form of feedback also creates good atmosphere in the class so that everybody will participate. (Teacher 4)

Teachers in our school see to it that students do not feel afraid in sharing their ideas or thoughts. And so, we always believe in giving positive feedback because we noticed that students are more encouraged and more motivated when they are being praised and when they feel that they are supported. (Teacher 5)

Inviting statements saying that students are capable, useful, and accountable should be used by teachers (Burden, 2021). Curran and the IRIS Center (2003, 2021) also approve that teachers must make sure that positive exchanges and remarks occur regularly and should be tailored for each student in terms of content and delivery.

Corrective feedback

Corrective feedback includes explicit corrections uncovering student's incorrect use of the English language. Some of the corrective feedback delivered during the class observations were "Thank you, but it's not the answer,""I think you are not pronouncing the words correctly," "Again please,""Let us be careful with spelling," and "Say that again in English please."One participant exclaimed:

I think corrective feedback is more often used for English language-related classes. In that case, what I can doisto focus on the mechanics of the language. (Teacher 2)

Alsolami (2019) confirmed that spoken corrective feedback fosters contact between the teacher and the students, which improves learning. It permits objective language education, which has a good effect on the students' learning results. Additionally, teachers who point out students' language errors in addition to activities (Astia, 2018; Fathimah, 2020) are what students preferred in the classroom (Quinto, 2020).

Operative feedback

In this research, operative feedback came out as the use of synchronous class tools, such as live chat, live document sharing, live audio or video conferencing, meetings and white board sharing, which are media-related instructions provided in synchronous classes. Operative feedback expressions observed in the synchronous classes were "Why are you not unmuting your microphone?," "Just let me know when there's no audio," "Can you just type the answer?," "Those who do not have any audio, you may just use the chat box," and "Kindly mute your mic in the meantime." One participant shared:

> These formative feedback are used during our enrichment activities and answering of essential questions to make sure that students can follow and that they can still participate even if there are times that things are not working like the microphone. If their microphones are not working, we find other ways on how they can share their ideas. It is also very important to insert operative feedback from time to time especially in this set-up so that no one is left behind.
> (Teacher 5)

According to Hewett et al. (2015), synchronous operative interactions aid in preventing misunderstandings and resolving issues that may arise as a result of misunderstandings. The usage of a synchronous platform requires both teachers and students to have a particular level of technological proficiency. Consequently, teachers and students must learn how to operate these platforms (Acosta-Tello, 2015).

Regulative feedback

Regulative feedback, as observed in this study,includes interactions between teachers and studentsin a disciplinary climate which moderates student behavior. Examples of regulative feedback statements of the teachers seen during the synchronous classes were "The class is passive today,""I will not accept that reason,""I think nobody read the story,""I think your mind is flying," "Nobody is really attentive,""I guess others are busy doing other things,""I want to hear from you as well," and "We will not proceed if no one answers." Even if the participants used regulative feedback in their synchronous classes, some of them tried to minimize its use:

> Although it is true that this feedback is needed from time to time, it's tough to do so because it tends to be more of a threat to my students in some ways, and you can definitely feel that they are not comfortable when we remark: "You haven't read this?," "You don't know this?," etc. I try to avoid giving those comments, unless they are really needed.(Teacher 5)

Conversely, regulative feedback in class discussions is fundamentally a social cognitive activity that takes place in a classroom and is critical for facilitating the negotiation of meanings, which results in knowledge production (Racheva, 2018).To avoid misunderstandings between students and teachersin an attentive disciplinary atmosphere, teachers' feedback must be expressed as they care and support students' academic and emotional needs (Ma et al., 2022).

Evaluative feedback

In this study, evaluative feedback is the teacher's response to learning based on a student's output. It inspires, stimulates, and encourages students to learn. The evaluative feedback drawn from the synchronous class observations were "Can you provide an explanation?," "Let me try to help you," "Why did you change your answer,""Let's try to be more specific,""I'll give you a hint," "Can you give us an example?," and "That is a comprehensive explanation." The participants shared:

> I use evaluative feedback when I'm giving back the output. I make sure that I don't just give the output with the finalscore, but the most important thing is how they arrive at the final score. (Teacher 1)

> I use evaluative feedback during discussions for them to get my point. I use evaluative feedback in the discussion if I want students to arrive at answers. (Teacher 4)

The teacher-participants shared that they use evaluative feedback to make sure that the students are able to follow the discussions and understand the lessons. According to Omer and Abdularhim(2017), it is essential to provide constructive and evaluativeperformance feedback in order to assist student development.

Timing

The formative feedback forms were observed in different parts of the synchronous sessions:

> Supportive feedback is actually used in the entire part of the lesson or the entire class hours. In my case, I make it a habit that my students feel they are in a safe learning environment, and they can freely express their ideas without judgements. As for the operative feedback, it is used in our enrichment activities, and in answering essential questions to make sure that students can follow and participate. It is also important to insert operative feedback from time to time especially in this set-up so that no one is left behind. (Teacher 5)

Some were abridged which were observed at the end of the sessions like how one participant used instructive feedback:

> At the end of the lesson is the time when we give feedback as reminders for the class.(Teacher 5)

Although the participants provided specific timing in the delivery of some of the formative feedback forms, according to one participant, there is no prescribed timing for each of the feedback forms:

> I personally think that there is no standard timing for the types of feedback to be given. I must say that I give feedbackwhen they are necessary. A teacher can always utilize a certain feedback if there is an urgency to address matters. Sometimes, I forget and always reserve my feedback at the end of our discussions or classes. (Teacher 1)

Masadeh and Elfeky (2017), Grünke et al. (2017), and Fischer and Wagner (2018) emphasized that the time of feedback affects learning outcomes. Based on the findings of this research, timing emphasizes the purpose and function of each feedback form.

Abrupt and Abridged

Abrupt feedback is immediately provided to students in synchronous classesand is the action given when the teacher thinks a behavior needs to be addressed right away. Abridged feedback, on the other hand, is a summarized feedback given after a discussion and interaction in synchronous classes.All teacher-participants believed that immediate feedback is necessary especially when giving instructions:

> I think it is better when you give feedback abruptly. You give the instructions right off the bat, and you try to clarify details that may be confusing to the students. (Teacher 2)

> When questions are not understood, we can rephrase them immediately. (Teacher 5)

Racheva (2018) supports the participants by saying that immediate feedback is helpful when dealing with abstract concepts. Coman et al. (2020) further claimed that it is necessary for teachers to quickly provide feedback on the tasks solved by students, to offer them support, to diversify the tasks offered to them, to use various teaching tools, to provide information in multiple ways, to find strategies to spark their interests, and to keep them focused in their courses.

Although all of the participating teachers believed that abrupt feedback is more commonly employed, they still use abridged feedback:

> I give reminders after the class discussion. (Teacher 4)

> I provide my feedback, which is about their collection of errors, at the end of the period.
> (Teacher 2)

According to Green (2021), abridged or delayed feedback withheld for a period of time is more conducive to learning. With the right feedback given at the right frequency improves educational achievement and learning (Adarkwah, 2021).

Number

Based on the findings, feedback can be given individually to students or done collectively through class discussions, assignments, and other learning experiences. Obilor (2019) argued that feedback exists in all processes, activities, and information that enhance learning. It provides the opportunity for learners to reflect on their performance, understand their strengths, and identify areas requiring improvement. In the study, two types of feedback emergedaccording to number namely individual feedback and collective feedback.

Individual and Collective

The teacher-participants shared that feedback are delivered collectively or individually depending on appropriate timing and requirements:

> If the feedback is done individually, I think the students would feel more important or their answers are given more importance. (Teacher 4)

> Individual feedback is done because students want to be acknowledged. If you acknowledge them, they improve, and they do better in class. Ifstudents do well in their class, collective feedback is better. (Teacher 5)

In some instances, corrective and regulative feedback were given collectively by all the participating teachers:

> For corrective feedback, I do it collectively. (Teacher 4)

> For regulative feedback, I address it to everyone because I really do not want to embarrass students. (Teacher 2)

As observed in the study, giving feedback individually or collectively is done whenever it is necessary andmust be based on its maximum usefulness. Brookhart (2017) stated that feedback can be specific to students' particular learning needs. She also emphasized that group feedback is a regular part of instruction.

All in all, good feedback practices do not only give students meaningful information to enhance their learning but also give teachers good information to enhance the learning environment for students (Mamoon-Al-Bashir et al., 2016). To sum up, all the teacher-participants explained the essence of the formative feedback forms. For instance, one teacher expressed:

> I think that all the six types of feedback would really be essential towards augmented learning and healthy classroom engagement. (Teacher 1)

Conclusions

This interpretive phenomenological study paved the way for the creation of the ISCORE Formative Feedback Model. Based on the data harvested from a series of synchronous class observations and one-on-one in depth interviews with senior high school English teachers, three themes for formative feedback emerged: (1) Feedback Forms, (2) Timing, and (3) Number. The model denotes that formative feedback is imperative in every English synchronous session taking into account the employment of various formative feedback forms. This also means that senior high school English teachers need to provide formative feedback forms in an immediate or delayed fashion intended to the class or individual students, as they deem fit.

Moreover, this research has amplified the necessity of providing formative feedback in the English language classroom tailored in an online platform. Despite the release of the Department of Education (DepEd) Order Number 34, Series of 2022 in the Philippines, which mandates all public and private schools in the basic education to require five days of in-person classes starting on November 02, 2022, this study still has pedagogical implications on a macro level because the implementation of alternative delivery modes and home schooling programs remains open. In the same fashion, the findings can guide teachers in the basic education or higher education in their objectives and delivery of formative feedback in their migration from online to onsite education.

Although the findings of the study are critical in the teaching and learning process, it also bears certain limitations. Methodologically, the study utilized a qualitative approach which means that future researchers can develop a tool to measure the extent of use of the formative feedback forms or experiment on the effectiveness of the formative feedback forms considering the time of employment and the number of students involved. Only private senior high school English teachers who conducted synchronous classes were recruited in the study. Next time, a counterpart can be done in public or private senior high schools in an in-person context.

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