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Éditorial

Écrire en temps de crise, c'est se réinterroger sur soi. Puisque crise et critique sont de la même racine. Alors s'interroger en temps de crise, c'est porter le regard sur ce qui a pu germer de la racine commune. Ce regard critique est difficile quand le tronc commun est menacé par un mal qui s'étend jusqu'aux diverses branches et feuilles de l'arbre généalogique commune. Et c'est une telle crise qu'a vécue et vit encore la grande famille humaine depuis que sévit le/la Covid 19. Déjà, la difficulté de pouvoir en donner un genre précis dit la difficulté qu'éprouve l'humanité pour cerner et contrer ce mal qui la menace depuis fin 2019 ! Et cette difficulté de définition du mal qu'est le/la covid 19 amène l'humanité à redéfinir ses actions. En vue de pouvoir faire face à cette pandémie qui la menace dans ses fondements. Et ce, avec l'espérance qui caractérise les vivants que nous sommes. Puisque, comme le dit le poète allemand F. Hoelderlin : « Là où se manifeste la menace, là croit aussi ce qui sauve » (« Wo aber die Gefahr ist, waechst das Rettende auch »).

Mais comment les enseignants-chercheurs que nous sommes sont-ils censés participer à la quête de ce qui sauve dans cette situation de Covid 19 ? Tout simplement en se confrontant à leur personne intérieure au sein des bibliothèques ou des centres de recherches. Pour en faire lever des petits soleils qui, mis en ensemble, pourraient aider à trouver, explorer et exploiter bien des pistes pour vaincre cet obscur virus qu'est le Corona-virus. Et ce sont des portions de cette confrontation avec sa personne intérieure qui se matérialisent, un tant soit peu, dans les contributions qui se trouvent rassemblées ici, dans ce numéro de Germivoire.

Attention, nous ne disons pas que les contributions ici réunies traitent du Covid 19. Mais plutôt, nous attirons le regard sur le fait que cet ensemble d'articles ici proposés est, d'une manière ou d'une autre, le résultat du retour en soi et sur soi au temps d'une crise, celle de la/du Covid 19. Ce résultat en tant que récolte est si riche ou fertile que nous sommes dans l'obligation d'en publier les fruits en deux saisons, rien que pour ce mois décembre 2020, dont voici le premier tome ! Alors, à la bonne dégustation intellectuelle !

Brahima Diaby

Examining the Impact Quality of Feedback in the EFL Classroom in Benin Republic

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Abstract

This study revolves around two main objectives. It aims at exploring how the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructor provide feedback to his students in the classroom and examining its value on these learners. To collect the outlooks of the various actors involved in the learning of this targeted language about this issue, the study has adopted a mixed research approach (triangulation design). It has selected at random five (05) secondary schools (02 privates and 03 publics) from three (03) different regions of the Republic of Benin. Different data (qualitative and quantitative) were collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and class observations from seven (07) teachers and three hundred and one (301) post-beginner learners who are volunteered for the survey. The analysis of the various data collected indicated that most Beninese EFL teachers only give feedback to their learners when they make mistakes. Besides, they very often fail in providing individual feedback to these learners toward their academic progress. Based on these findings, important suggestions and recommendations were provided.

Keywords: Feedback, EFL post-beginner learners

Résumé

La présente étude s'articule autour de deux objectifs principaux à savoir explorer la manière dont l'enseignant de l'Anglais Langue Étrangère (ALE) procure des remarques (feedback) à ses étudiants en situation de classe et examiner l'efficacité de celles-ci sur ces apprenants. Afin de recueillir l'opinions des différents acteurs impliqués dans l'apprentissage de cette langue ciblée vis-à-vis de cette problématique, une approche de recherche mixte (triangulation) a été adoptée. Cinq (05) établissements scolaires (02 privés et 03 publics) d'enseignements secondaires ont été sélectionnés au hasard dans trois (03) départements de la République du Bénin au cours de cette étude. Différentes données (qualitatives et quantitatives) ont été collectées à travers des interviews semi-structurés, questionnaires et observations de classes à partir de sept (07) enseignants et trois-cent-un (301) apprenants post-débutants qui se sont portés volontaires à l'enquête. L'analyse des différentes données collectées a indiqué que la plupart des enseignants béninois d'ALE ne font des remarques à leurs apprenants seulement lorsque ceux-ci commettent des erreurs. De plus, ils omettent très souvent de fournir des feedbacks individuels à ces apprenants par rapport à leur évolution académique. Sur la base de ces résultats, d'importantes suggestions et recommandations ont été formulées.

Mots-clés : Feedback, apprenants post-débutants d'ALE

1. Introduction

Teaching a foreign language to non-native learners requires many strategies to be able to impart the knowledge of the language in them. Indeed, as discussed by researchers such as Hattie and Timperley (2007, p.88),

effective teaching not only involves imparting information and understanding to students...but also involves assessing and evaluating students' understanding of this information, so that the next teaching act can be matched to the present understanding of the students. This second part is the feedback part.

Of course, this assessment of students does not come without its difficulties. Sometimes, learners do well, and sometimes they do not. In any case, teachers are to constantly provide feedback to their learners whether there are problems or not but, most importantly when students are facing some challenges or are weak in certain areas of the learning process. Mistakes, errors, or misunderstandings on the part of the learners are likely to occur. Making mistakes or committing errors falls inevitably within the process of learning. Learners, irrespective of their age or class, tend to commit quite some mistakes in the classroom. They are likely to make more mistakes than usual in an EFL context. When this happens, it is the teachers' responsibility to provide feedback, which refers to the "information provided by an agent [concerning] one's performance or understanding" (Hattie and Timperly, 2007, p.81 quoted in Petchprasert, 2012, p.1112). The purpose of the feedback is to help learners correct their errors and improve their learning. It also aims at providing students with information on the progress of their work and help them improve. According to Boud (2002), a good feedback should be without any proper judgment or own opinion. He adds that it should be "neutral and objective, constructive and focus on the future" (quoted in Noor et al, 2010, p.7). Depending on how a teacher deals with it, the feedback has both its positive and negative sides.

Providing feedback to learners is crucial in every process of learning. A good teacher must ensure the effectiveness of what he teaches by giving feedback to his students on their performance and weaknesses to allow them to improve. However, in the Beninese context, it is noted that post-beginner students who learn English do not seem to have acquired or developed basic skills in the language, especially the productive skills that is, speaking and writing. Quite all surveys have shown that teachers do not provide adequate and qualitative feedback to students. This has resulted in the students' lack of understanding of the target language as well as their lack of motivation.

This study aims, therefore, at uncovering the way teachers provide feedback to their students, and exploring the effectiveness of this instructional attitude on the overall learning

development of post-EFL beginner learners. To this end, the subsequent research questions have been elaborated:

1. How is feedback provided in the EFL class?
2. Is feedback effective on EFL learners?

How does the way feedbacks are provided in EFL lessons promote their effectiveness on learners?

2. Review of Literature

The purpose of the literature review is to provide a summary of earlier research works related to the problem under investigation. In this part of the present research work, the notion of feedback is defined and the results of some previous studies on this question are discussed. In the broadest sense of the word, *feedback* is, as defined in Merriam-Webster (n.d), “the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling [...]”. In the context of language learning, it is any comment either oral or written provided by a teacher or classmate in a classroom setting concerning the performance or weaknesses of a learner in a particular course or subject. Hattie and Yates (2014, p.46, quoting Sadler, 1989) define feedback as “information allowing a student to reduce the gap between what is evident currently and what could or should be the case.” Feedback is also defined as part of a process in which a learner gets to produce a better performance because he or she has been provided with information concerning his/her current performance. Pechprasert (2012, p.1112 quoted in Winnie and Butler, 1994, p.5740) presented feedback as, “[...] information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies”. In other words, feedback is meant to provide information “[that] specifically relate to the [role] or [system] of learning that [bridges] the gap between what is understood and what [one seeks to understood]” (Sadler, 1989 quoted in Hattie and Timperly, 2007, p.82).

Stiggins et al (2004) believe it is the “quality of feedback rather than its existence or absence that determines its power.” In other words, there can be feedback without the expected result being achieved. When the feedback is not constructive, it is better not to formulate it because it is likely to destroy or affect the emotion of the person or the learner towards whom it is addressed. However, it must be noted that the fact of not giving feedback at all to learners regarding their performance can discourage them by making them feel

useless or mediocre, unlike their classmates who perhaps receive regular feedbacks from one another or the instructor. So, yes for quality feedback, but failing that, priority should be given to ensuring that the learner and the teacher receive at least mere feedback from time to time.

Feedback depending on how it is provided by the teacher is indispensable to the educational development of a learner. It encourages a change of attitude towards learning. A learner will come across challenges in his or her understanding of things, and at that stage, feedback is most useful. When a student receives information on his/her performance and instructions on what to do to correct or improve his/her current performance, it will have a positive effect on his/her learning. Besides, feedback enables learners to set goals for themselves and strive towards achieving them. Though there is much praise for feedback, some researchers believe that providing feedback might be harmful to students and causes demotivation. Hattie and Timperly (2007) mentioned that researchers such as Kulhavy (1977, p.82), proved that *feedback is not used as a support or an extra aid, as it can be accepted, changed, or rejected*. That is, feedback when not carefully given can produce a counter effect that automatically leads to demotivation and a decrease in performance from the student.

Before providing any feedback, teachers are to keep in mind three essential questions that are (Hattie and Timperly, 2007, pp.86-90):

- **What is the goal?**

Knowing the goal or purpose of the course will enable the teacher to channel the feedback correctly to the right path. It will enable teachers to be specific and provide concrete feedback that connects to the learning objectives thus preventing unnecessary comments that could lead to student's demotivation.

- **What progress the student has made?**

Teachers need to keep in mind the level of achievement made by the student to detect whether it is the expected one or below expectations. Feedback is effective "when it consists of information about progress, and/or about how to proceed" (Hattie and Timperly, 2007, p.89) therefore, enabling teachers to provide constructive feedback.

- **What is the next step?**

A teacher has to consider the next step to be taken after finding answers to the first two questions. Knowing what steps to be taken helps the teacher in providing instructions that will correct the defects of the student in his/her learning and provide the correct guidelines for the student to do better next time (2007, pp.89-102)

Brookhart (2008, p.2) stated that “feedback can be powerful if done well, and effective feedback gives students the information that they need so that they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next” (as cited in Hadzic, 2016, p.5). Besides, good feedback should have the following qualities (Benassi et al., 2014, pp.47-54):

- Goal-Oriented: Good feedback should have a clear objective, a purpose. It has to be in line with a particular learning objective for it to be effective.

- Timely and non-judgemental: Feedback has to be provided in such a way it does not demotivate the learners. Teachers are to be conscious of how and when to provide feedback. Should it be immediate or delayed? Reynolds (2019, n.p), in his blog, believes that comments gave immediately after “showing proof of learning,” to help students confidently remember what they have learned. This is not to be generalised because learners have individual personalities and their affective filter should be taken into account. Good feedback should be provided without any bias, mockery, or judgment.

- Specific: Feedback should focus on a particular skill and not on some skills at once. It might make the learner confused, especially for beginners.

Feedback can be classified into various categories such as direct/indirect feedback, corrective/negative/positive feedback, or immediate/delayed feedback. In any case, all the above-stated feedback either can be oral or written therefore the focus here is on the oral and written types of feedback.

▪ **Oral Feedback**

Oral feedback refers to any comment made by a teacher on learners’ performance through word of mouth. This is generally used in the classroom especially when a learner commits an error. Oral feedback can boost a healthy relationship between the student and the teacher depending on how it is provided. Boughazzoula (2016, p.9) stated “questioning and dialogues with students are the keys to oral effective feedback for teachers; through this, they find the weakness of students and try to make them strengthen these weak points.” Oral corrective feedback could be in form of recasts, metalinguistic cues or elicitation, and repetition (Loewen, 2007).

▪ **Written Feedback**

This type of feedback comes in form of written comments or notes regarding task performances. According to Boughazzoula (2016), “written feedback has a positive [effect] on developing the level of proficiency of learners, unlike oral feedback, which can be forgotten easily” (p.9). In other words, “written feedback” is often used during the assessment, and could be an effective form of feedback.

Motivation refers to an inner drive or will to do something. Brown (2001, p.72) states that motivation is the difference between “success and failure.” Additionally, Boughazzoula (2016) cites Weiner (1990) stating, “Feedback is a vital concept in most theories of learning and is closely related to motivation” (p.3). A learner has to be motivated for feedback to work. Gass and Selinker (2001) stated that motivation “is a social psychological factor and a predictor of success in L2 (second language) learning”. They (2001) further stated, “It makes sense that individuals who are motivated will learn another language faster and to a greater degree” (p.349) (as cited in Petchprasert, 2012, p.1113).

3. Research Methodology

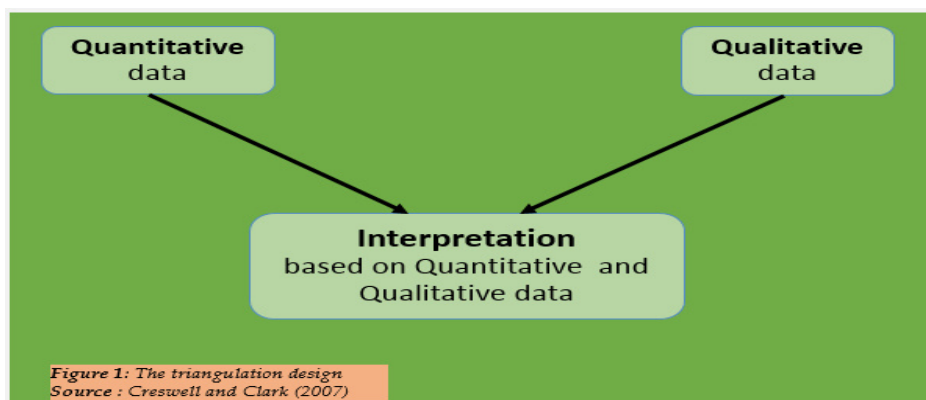
The present study resorts to a mixed-methods research design, including the qualitative and quantitative methodologies, in order to answer the three research questions. Referring to such scholars Ndanu and Syombua (2015, p.48) as well as Muayyad (2015) who argue that the examination and strengthening of the reliability and validity of the outcomes are important; the theoretical approach is the triangulation. It involves the use of “interviews, observation, and field notes (questionnaires)” (Ndanu and Syombua, 2015, p.50). As pointed out by Altrichter et al. (2008, p.147 cited in Ndanu and Syombua, 2015, p.48), this type of mixed method “gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation”. In other words, it is a “method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data” (O’Donoghue and Punch, 2003, p.78 cited in Carugi, 2010, p.2).

3.1 Research design

According to Burns and Grove (2003, p.195), a research design is “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings.” It deals with the different series of decisions or plans adopted by the researcher in a preliminary way when carrying out his/her research work.

To answer the different research questions, the present one-phase study has initially collected concurrently and separately, qualitative and quantitative data. It has then tried to “[...] merge the two data sets, [...] by bringing the separate results together in the interpretation [...] to facilitate [the integration of] the two data types during the analysis” Creswell, (2006, pp.63-64). Therefore, the qualitative data were collected from the semi-structured interview questions administered to the EFL teachers and the classroom

observations. Contrastively, quantitative data were collected from the questionnaires administered to EFL learners. Those different data were crosschecked for interpretation.



In other

words, the qualitative data gathered from the interviews and classroom observations helped to answer respectively the first and the second research question. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires helped to answer the third research question. The crosschecking of the three different data helped to interpret the outcomes.

3.1 Selection of the Research Sites

The present research work was carried out in five (05) randomly selected secondary schools (02 privates and 03 publics) from three (03) regions (Oueme, Atlantique, Mono) of the Republic of Benin. The selection of those three geographical areas for this study is justified by the fact that they cover the places where the researchers have been teaching English within the past 5 years.

3.2 Population

The total population for this study comprises 301 post-beginner learners and 07 EFL teachers who volunteered. The EFL learners recruited were all tenth-grade students (known as “2nd” in the French educational system). The distribution of the different samples of each secondary school (public and private) from the three distinct geographic areas are presented in Table 1 below.

Table N°1: Number of EFL learners and teachers (per gender) Involved in the Survey												
Research Sites											Total	
Geographical Area	OM		AL				MN					
School Names	Pub 1		Pub 2		Priv 1		Priv 2		Pub 3			
Participants	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Learners	65	32	37	42	18	5	12	7	64	19	196	105
Total	97		79		23		19		83		301	
Teachers	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	3
Total	1		1		1		2		2		7	
Code	OM = Oueme AL = Atlantique MN = Mono Pub1 = Public school N°1 (Lycée Toffi) Pub2 = Public school N°2 (CEG Godome Priv1 = Private school N°1 (Félicité) Priv2 = Private school N°2 (Camara Lay Priv3 = Public school N°3 (CEG Come											

3.3 Data collection

To provide an appropriate answer, the three research questions, qualitative and quantitative data have been collected respectively from EFL teachers and post-beginner learners through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation and questionnaires (closed-ended questions). The interviews helped to examine the type of feedback frequently used by the teachers, the way it is provided, and its impact on post-beginner students. Five teachers (04 males and 01 female) out of seven (5/7) selected for this study were interviewed. The interviews were audiotaped and listened again before any transcription was made. Classroom observations were used to confirm the information that teachers have provided during the interview. Three (03) post-beginner classes have been observed, two (02) classes from sampled public schools (Pub2 and Pub3), and one (01) class from a private school (Priv2). These choices have been made to determine whether class size influences the effectiveness of feedback from teachers to students. Since it was not possible to interview each student about their opinions concerning feedback, closed-ended questions were distributed to them through a 5-Point Likert Scale questionnaire form in the absence of their teacher to get random outlooks from them concerning the issue under investigation. Of the 301 questionnaires administered, only 237 were retrieved. In conclusion, permission was received from school authorities and all participants were informed about the purpose of the investigation. It is important to state that there was no resistance whatsoever from participants except for two (02) teachers unavailable for the interview.

4. Results

The data collected with the research instruments (interviews, classroom observation, and questionnaires) are reported as presented below.

4.1 Interviews

The interviewed teachers have been named Teacher A, B, C, D, and E for the sake of anonymity. The information gathered during the interviews is grouped into the following three domains:

+ Types/Frequency of Feedback:

The respondents stated the types of feedback they adopt in their classes and the frequency of this feedback. For example, Teacher A stated he has been handling post-beginner classes for four years and mostly uses oral feedback. In his own words, “oral feedback is easy to adopt because it does not take time, it happens on the spot immediately when my student commits an error”. Teacher A further mentioned that he only provides feedback when his students commit an error, and he makes it immediately and the session continues. This interviewee stated that students could not do without their teachers’ feedback because they have “very limited knowledge.”

Teacher B and Teacher C stated that they provide feedback regarding their students’ errors and their classroom performance as well. Teacher B mentioned that he does not only provide feedback when his learners commit an error but also provide feedback on their current level of performance in the classroom and gives instruction for better output. He stated, “I love good work. I talk to my learners often about their performances.” Interestingly, Teacher C stated that he commended students who have good grades in his class by providing positive feedback but occasionally corrects their errors. He added that when one of his students commits an error, he asks other students to indicate the error and provide the correct form. He argued that peer feedback is “less stressful” and less teacher-centered.

Teacher D, who happens to be a newly employed teacher, stated that he prefers written feedback. He claimed that he rarely provides oral feedback on students’ performance in class. When he is asked about what he does when students commit an error, he stated, “I don’t like dealing with oral correction because it can intimidate students. I use recasts when the error is too serious. I usually correct students’ errors during essay writing and comment on them.” Teacher D revealed that he handles a class of more than fifty students; thus, providing feedback is challenging for him.

Finally, Teacher E, a private secondary school teacher, thinks that both oral and written forms of feedback are essential to students’ effective learning. However, she stated that she frequently uses oral type of feedback. Because she has developed a kind of personal relationship between herself and the students, that makes it easy to provide feedback. She

pointed out “I have few students in my class so, I give feedback effectively”. Teacher E stated that she usually praises her students for good performance. This is contrary to Hattie’s and Timperly’s point of view that states “Feedback at the self or personal level (usually praise), on the other hand, is rarely effective. Praise is rarely directed at addressing the three feedback questions and so is ineffective in enhancing learning” (p.102). Additionally, she pointed out that she uses recasts and peer correction when her learners commit errors. She added again that she provides positive comments on what her students have done right and informs them individually about their performance.

Student’s Attitude towards Feedback:

The interviewed teachers have been asked about their learners’ reactions when they are provided with feedback. Surprisingly enough, three of the interviewed teachers stated that a majority of the post-beginner students often develop a negative attitude towards feedback. Teacher A stated: “whenever I provide feedback, my students do not like it. They keep quiet and do not want to continue with their speech”. Teacher B complained that his students are too playful and do not take his feedback seriously. He said their performances do not get any better even after several calls to order and awareness raising. He revealed that his students are mostly aged 12 to 16 and are ignorant of the importance of the English language. Teacher C, explicitly, stated that some of his students frown at peer feedback because their mates providing the feedback make jest of them later. The teacher concluded that he often reprimands these jesters. Unlike Teacher A, B, and C, Teacher D, and E think that their learners have a positive attitude towards feedback. Teacher D stated that he rarely corrects his students’ errors and provides comments about their academic performance through written feedback. However, Teacher E made the following statement, “My students do not joke with my feedback. We are not many. This allows us to understand each other very well.”

Effectiveness of Feedback:

All the teachers, that is, Teacher A, B, C, D, and E, stated that feedback greatly improves learner’s performance but depending on how the teacher goes about it, feedback might not be well received by the students. The interviewees had various opinions on the conditions for feedback to be effective. Teacher D argued that some students are not willing to learn the target language that is, they are not motivated therefore, “feedback might not work.” Teacher A specifically stated that he is conscious that without feedback, students are weak academically but he cannot provide effective feedback because in his own words, “my learners are too many.” Furthermore, the interview with Teacher B revealed that providing

feedback to students of some age brackets (9-13, 14-16) combined with extrinsic motivation would boost a positive attitude from them concerning feedback.

4.2 Classroom Observations

The purpose of the classroom observations was to discover how teachers provided feedbacks, students' reactions towards feedback, and its effect on their learning. The classroom observations were carried out in two public schools (Pub2 and Pub3) and one private school (Priv2). Each class observation lasted for forty-five (45) minutes. It was conducted during English sessions with post-beginner students. The findings from the classroom observation in the various public schools revealed that the observed teachers mostly provided feedbacks when their learners commit errors. In one of the observed classes (Pub2), the lesson was about grammar, precisely on the teaching of "reported speech". In the beginning, the teacher used immediate feedback when an error was committed and he praised the student for sound production. Nevertheless, later on, he ignored every correction or praise due to time constraints. The researcher observed that most of the students were not motivated and shied away from the activities.

The findings from another class observation (Pub3) during a writing activity showed that the teacher jotted down students' errors and only used recast when there were total confusion in sentences. The teacher could not note down all errors because there were 83 students altogether in the classroom. The students in this particular class were surprisingly calm in the course of the lesson. The students' attitude might be due to the presence of the researchers.

The last classroom observation was conducted in a private secondary school (Priv2). The class size was nineteen (19) students. The lesson was on a reading activity. After some warming up activities, the teacher introduced the topic of the day. As expected, the learner found it difficult to pronounce some of the words. The teacher, in such cases, mostly used peer correction, and there was no mockery whatsoever. Interestingly, at the end of the lesson, the teacher summoned two students to whom she intended to provide feedbacks concerning their progress in the reading activity.

At the end of the various class observations, the discussion with the students in their mother tongue revealed that most post-beginner students are not motivated to learn the English language. A majority stated that concerning their errors, they prefer their teacher's feedback. The students from public schools also pointed out that their teachers do not provide feedback concerning their work progress. However, some of the students of the private

schools have different opinions, most of them complained about their teacher who provides too much feedback. Having reported the results of the field investigation, the next section is concerned with the discussion of the findings.

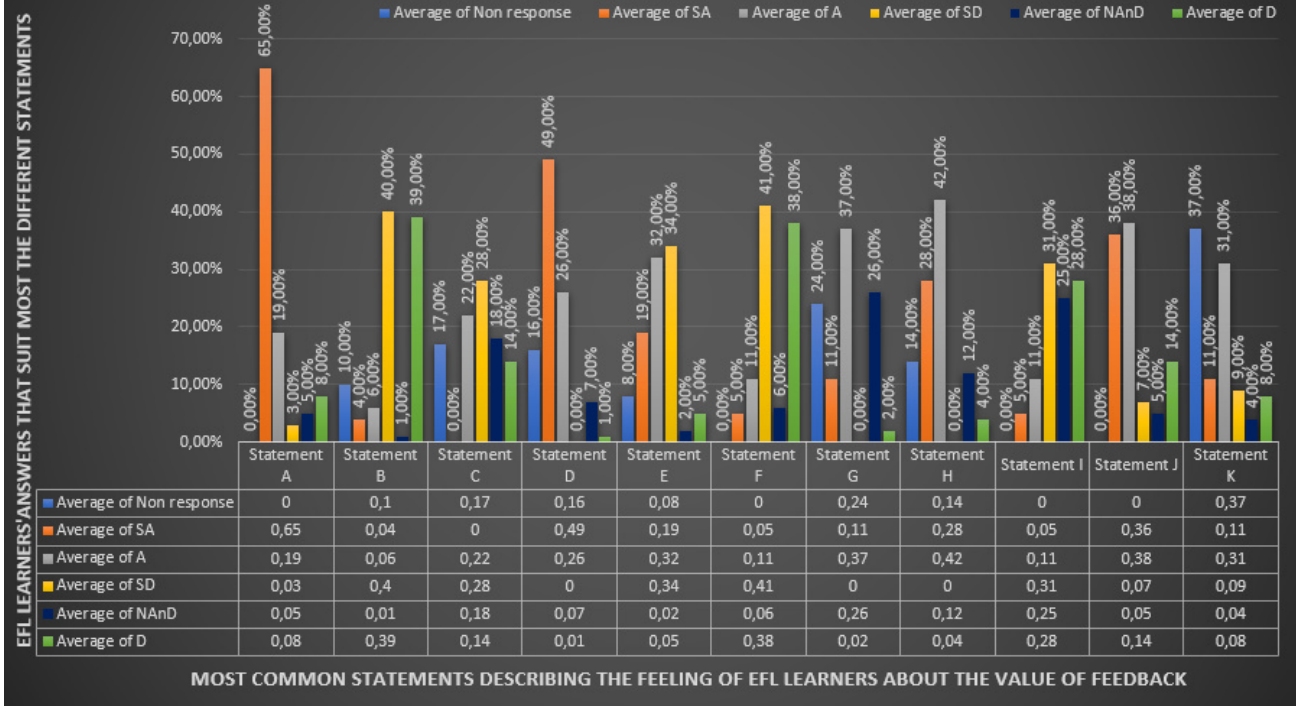
4.3 Questionnaires

The different data collected through the 5 Point Likert Scale questionnaire (Cf. Appendix) administered to the EFL post-beginner learners are presented in the table and graph below.

Table 2. Frequency of entries for Learners' Opinions about the impact of feedback on their EFL learning								
Questionnaire	N	Non response	SD	D	NAnD	A	SA	Total
Statement A	301	0	7	19	11	45	155	237
Statement B	301	23	95	92	3	15	9	237
Statement C	301	40	67	34	43	53	0	237
Statement D	301	39	0	2	17	62	117	237
Statement E	301	18	81	13	5	76	44	237
Statement F	301	0	97	89	14	26	11	237
Statement G	301	57	0	5	61	88	26	237
Statement H	301	33	0	9	29	99	67	237
Statement I	301	0	73	66	60	25	13	237
Statement J	301	0	17	33	11	91	85	237
Statement K	301	87	22	19	9	73	27	237
Total		297	459	381	263	653	554	2607
SD= Strongly Disagree; D= Disagree; NAnD= Neither Agree nor Disagree; A= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree								

Table 2 presents the frequency of the different entries provided by EFL learners regarding their perception of the value and impact of feedback on their learning of English. Based on the information presented in this table, the following graph has been elaborated. It shows that most of the learners (74% of whom 36% Strongly Agree and 38% agree) appreciate receiving feedback from their instructors (Cf. Table 3, descriptive statistics for statement J).

Figure 1: Graph illustrating the perception of post-beginner EFL Learners towards the value of Feedback provided to them by some of their Teachers



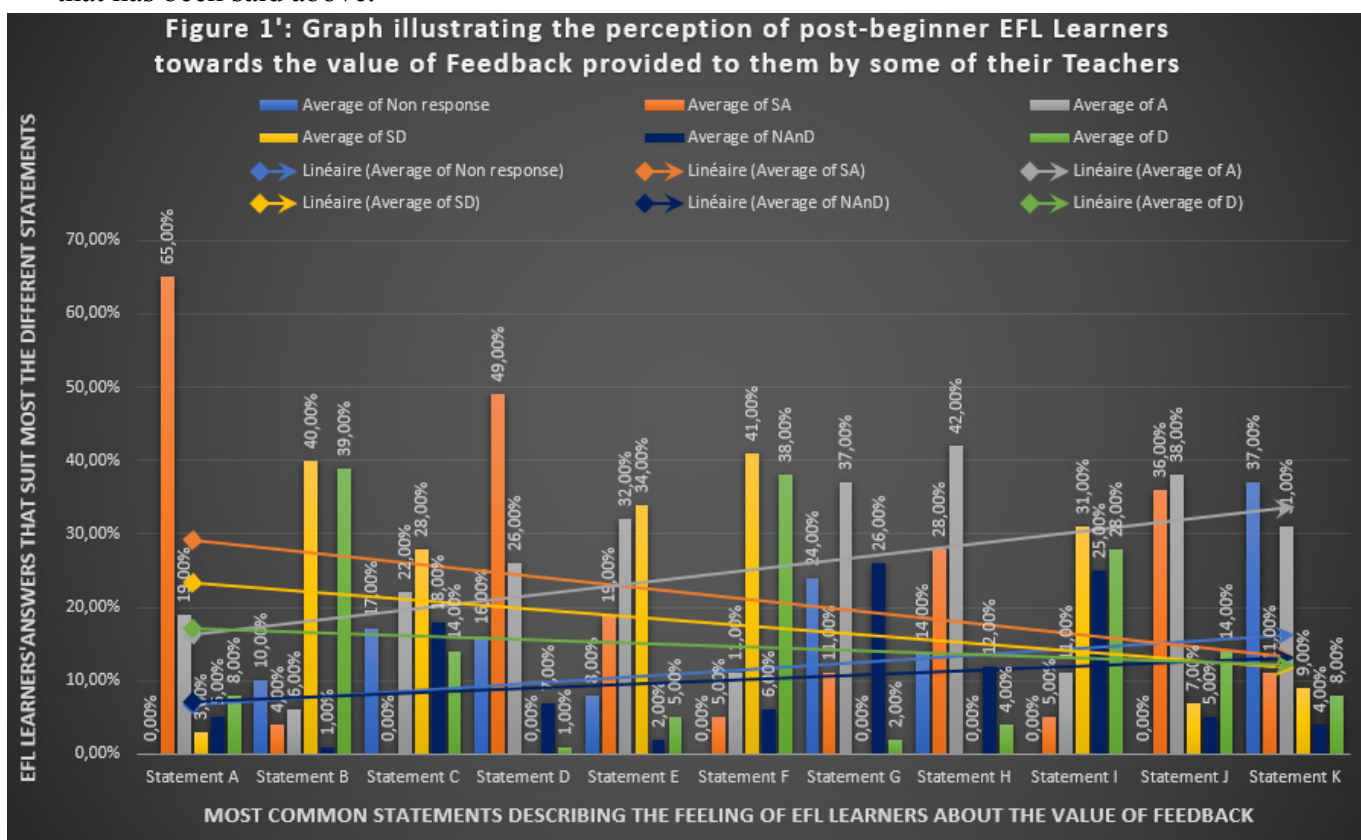
The graph on Figure 1 better illustrates the different views held by the post-beginner EFL learners about the value of feedbacks on their academic performance. As described by the statistics in the chart under the graph that is transposed in table 3 for an in-depth analysis of them, 84% of the learners (of whom 65% SA and 19% A) admitted that their teachers provide them with feedback “only when [they] make errors.” Similarly, 79% of them (40% SD and 39% D) proved they have sometimes received feedback from their teachers. While 22% of them mentioned that “[their teachers] only focus on positive and oral feedback”, 42% of them (28% SD and 14 % D) firmly disagreed with that assertion. Nevertheless, 75 % (49% SA and 26% A) noted, “the way feedback is provided impacts considerably on the learner’s academic performance.” This suggests that feedback plays a considerable role in the learner’s development and prevent them from despondency. Whilst 51% (19% SA and 32% A) of the learners supported that their teachers “only focus on negative but oral and written feedback” 39 % (34% SD and 5% D) of them pretended the contrary. This observation shows that the Beninese EFL teachers usually refer to both oral and written forms of feedback though they sometimes seem to focus more on criticisms than providing their learners with constructive feedback. That is certainly the reason why some learners 16% (11% A and 5% SA) denote that they “[...] do not like feedback because sometimes it is too much over-whelming.” Still, according to the respondents (48% of whom 11% SA and 37% A), it is a fact that “feedback when [used in a constructive way help to] develop motivation among learners.” Even though

some of these informants (16% of whom 5% SA and 11% A) claimed “[...] not [liking] written feedback” because according to them this would be “difficult to understand”, 74% (36% SA and 38 A) of them contended vividly that no matter they are positive or negative “the learner should be provided with [one from time to time]”. Roughly, from the different information provided by the learner participants (42% of whom 11% SA and 31% A), it was proven that Beninese EFL teachers provide their learners with “verbal, non-verbal, and written feedback”.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Learners’ Opinions about the impact of feedback on their EFL learning

Questionnaire Input	Mean of Non response	Mean of SD	Mean of D	Mean of NAnD	Mean of SA	Mean of A	Max	Min	Mean	Sdt Deviation
S tatement A	0%	3%	8%	5%	65%	19%	65%	0%	33%	0,245655585
S tatement B	10%	40%	39%	1%	4%	6%	40%	1%	21%	0,179294915
S tatement C	17%	28%	14%	18%	0%	22%	28%	0%	14%	0,094180677
S tatement D	16%	0%	1%	7%	49%	26%	49%	0%	25%	0,187056141
S tatement E	8%	34%	5%	2%	19%	32%	34%	2%	18%	0,139092295
S tatement F	0%	41%	38%	6%	5%	11%	41%	0%	21%	0,179267026
S tatement G	24%	0%	2%	26%	11%	37%	37%	0%	19%	0,146924017
S tatement H	14%	0%	4%	12%	28%	42%	42%	0%	21%	0,157310733
S tatement I	0%	31%	28%	25%	5%	11%	31%	0%	16%	0,130332907
S tatement J	0%	7%	14%	5%	36%	38%	38%	0%	19%	0,163910545
S tatement K	37%	9%	8%	4%	11%	31%	37%	4%	21%	0,137501515
Grand Total	11%	18%	15%	10%	21%	25%	25%	10%	18%	0,057468401

The graph of figure 1 differently presented below shows the various trends that support all that has been said above.



As illustrated on the graph (Figure1') above and indicated in table 3, the mean score of the answers to the statement A (0.65) is the highest of the different means scores of the answers

provided by the respondents to the various closed-ended questions addressed to them. This suggests that the information in this statement most describes the way feedback is provided by teachers to their learners. When crossing this information with the different data obtained from the individual interviews and classroom observations, it comes out that most Beninese EFL teachers tend to provide their learners with feedback only when they make errors. Similarly, when crossing the other high means scores (0.49, 0.42, 0.41, 0.40, 0.38, 0.37, 0.34, 0.31, 0.28), respectively related to the responses provided to statements D, H, F, B, J, G, K, E, I, C), with the data collected from interviews and classroom observations, the result is significant. It suggests that feedback have a motivational impact on learners and are usually oral, written or non-verbal. This is better described on the graph of figure 1' through the linear trend-lines materializing that the means scores or averages of Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Agree (SA) get decreased from statement A to statement K where they join with approximately the same mean score (0.9). Moreover, contrary to the illustration of these trendlines the one of Agree (A) is increasing from statement A to statement K. This proved that all the participants support the information in this statement.

5. Discussion of Results

5.1 Feedback and its Effectiveness in the EFL Classroom

The three major questions guiding this research work to examine how feedback is provided in the classroom and its effects on EFL learners. The investigation of this study has mainly shown that in Beninese EFL classes, feedback is mostly provided when students commit an error. This is however not the only purpose of feedback. According to Nyiramana (2017, p.17) “constructive feedback is then on-going, open and solution-oriented information provided skilfully by teachers to help their students reduce the gap between their current and desired performances and to reach required competences”.

Apart from error correction, feedback is meant to reveal the learner's actual level and provide instructions for better performances. The findings have revealed that most teachers are ignorant of the fact that feedback goes beyond error correction. Furthermore, teachers frequently use oral feedback because, according to them, it is less time-consuming. Moreover, the findings have shown large class sizes as a major obstacle to providing quality and constructive feedback. Learners mentioned their demotivation and lack of interest in the target language. According to Weiner (1990), feedback is closely related to motivation (as cited in Boughazzoula, 2016, p.3). This issue falls back on teachers because when students are demotivated, they hardly accept feedback. Though some teachers stated that they promise

rewards to their students just to motivate them, their promise tends not to be the the best kind of motivation according to Hattie and Timperly (2007). It can be inferred from the findings that feedback equates only with error correction in most Beninese EFL classes. Teachers are to realise that feedback is essential for both themselves and their students. Therefore, this mentality has to be corrected if constructive feedback is needed to boost students' learning.

Evaluation is crucial to the promotion of the development of education at all levels. Whatever we do, we need others to improve. Thus, constructive observations and criticisms help us to perfect ourselves. The teacher who deprives his learners of this privilege unknowingly maintains a spirit of casualness and discouragement within them. Without feedback, the learner lacks self-confidence. He/she does not believe in himself/herself and then thinks he/she is incapable of achieving his/her goals. The slightest observation by the teacher, however insignificant it may sometimes seem, matters a lot to the learner's success. In addition to the teacher's role of educator, he or she must also be a psychologist to read easily in his/her learners. He or she must be able to find the right words or the right manners each time to provide learners with constructive observations. Failing to do so would be synonymous with developing destructive thoughts within the learner that would certainly be leading him perhaps one day to break the principles of the society. Thus, the teacher is required to equip himself with the necessary tools that can prevent him from bearing such a moral responsibility on his conscience. Feedback loses all its qualities when it used in the bad way (that is to say when is used to criticize or scold) even if this way of making use of it may sometimes be helpful to the person to whom it is addressed. The strength of feedback lies rather in its capacity to encourage learners. The teacher, therefore, must encourage the learner as much as possible.

As Reynolds (2017, n.d) suggests, the following ideas are likely to help any trainer or educator succeed in his role as a motivator. Feedback should:

1. **Be educative in nature.** It has to be related to the teaching or a specific instructional element.
2. **Be given promptly.** There is a time for providing feedback. After this period, it becomes a perishable commodity.
3. **Be sensitive to the individual needs of the student.** Every learner is unique. Not all have the same pace of assimilation. Good feedback must consider this aspect.
4. **Provide answers to questions** that can help to know the ability of the learner in comparison to the aptitude of his/her mates. This is important because it helps to identify the limits of the learner and how to push them back.
5. **Be taught to learners.** They must know how to provide feedback to each other. This will develop among them attitudes such as those of leadership, oral communication,

and self-esteem. The more they learn to provide feedback to each other the better they will develop tolerance towards themselves as well as whoever that will decide to provide them with one no matter its nature.

6. **Be given equally to teachers by their learners.** By so doing learners will develop more self-confidence and trust in their teachers' different comments on their progress or academic performance.

5.2. Recommendations and Suggestions

Following the findings, the subsequent points should be taken into account for change to take place regarding feedback in the EFL classrooms.

- ✓ There is a need to create more classrooms, especially in public schools to accommodate a large number of students in post-beginner classes.
- ✓ Teachers have admitted that they only provide corrective feedback, while this method goes beyond correcting errors. Therefore, teachers should provide students with feedback concerning their overall progress in the target language and provide instructions on how to improve on their current level of learning.
- ✓ The interview with the teachers shows that students are ignorant of the importance of the English Language. Thus, motivation can play a very important role in this case. Teachers need to keep in mind that learners' motivation for the target language is indispensable for effective feedback.

Conclusion

This article has explored how EFL teachers provide feedback to their learners. It has also pointed out the effectiveness of this educational attitude to the overall learning development of post-beginner students in some selected private and public secondary schools in the regions of Oueme, Atlantique, and Mono in Benin. Triangulation research design has been exclusively used for this study. Interviews, class observations, and questionnaires have been utilised to gather qualitative and quantitative data.

The present research work has provided information regarding some pioneers' research on the notion of feedback. Feedback is said to be comments, information, instruction provided by a teacher about the performance of a learner. It is also information providing or correcting wrong notions or misunderstandings of learners. Feedback is important for learners because it helps them correct wrong notions and provide instruction for better performance. It is also essential for teachers to change methods to meet the needs of their students. This paper has also highlighted the qualities of good feedback. Thus, given the various results of this

exploratory study, effective feedback must be objective-oriented, specific, and free from any form of judgment. Besides, this research work has shed light on the main types of feedback that include oral, non-verbal, and written comments.

The field investigation has revealed that feedback is mostly provided to learners when they commit errors or mistakes. The type of feedback most frequently used by teachers is oral. In addition, large class size does not enable teachers provide effectively students with feedback on their overall progress and how to improve on their performances. Moreover, students claim they are not motivated to learn the English-Language.

As for the recommendations, it has been suggested that the government must produce many more classrooms to accommodate a large number of learners in public schools. Teachers should not only provide feedback when there are errors but should also provide students with feedback concerning their overall progress in the target language and provide instructions on how to improve on their current level of learning. Finally, a demotivated student is a threat to effective feedback; teachers have been advised to encourage their students by motivating them regularly for better EFL learning. However, further researcher works should consider different methodologies to uncover more and better strategies to provide constructive feedback to learners.

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Appendix

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE'S FORM ADMINISTERED TO EFL POST-BEGINNER LEARNERS

Dear Learner,

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. The present document will only be seen by your English language Teacher and it is intended to help him/her develop his/her teaching. This comes within the framework of scientific research that we are carrying out in order to know the impact and the importance of **feedback** on the learner that you are. Being able to identify the type of feedback used or not by your teachers and your opinion on this would help to best develop this teaching attitude. *Please do not mention your names on this form in order to remain anonymous on the various information that you would have provided.*

Please just encircle or tick the appropriate option whenever necessary and leave the part indicated Intelligence Framework on the interviewee for the researchers.

We hope to hear from you soon. Thank you very much !

Intelligence Framework on the interviewee (Please leave this part for the researchers)					
1. Number of clusters : _____/		2. Number of the interviewee : _____/			
3. Date of interview : _____/		4. Living environment		Urban	1
				Rural	2
Section One: Background information					
5. Are you male or female?	Male	1	6. How old are you?	12-14	1
	Female	2		14-16	2
16-18				3	
				18 and over	4
7. What is your proficiency level in English? (please encircle one only)		Beginning		Pre-beginner	1
				Post-beginner	2
		Intermediate		Pre-intermediate	3
				Post-intermediate	4
		Advanced		5	
Section Two: Learners' Opinions about the impact of feedback on their EFL learning					
8. This question is designed to examine the way feedbacks are provided in EFL lessons and how the kind of feedbacks adopted by EFL teachers are effective on learners. The following statements describe how you feel about getting feedback or not from your EFL teacher. Based on your real situation, please read each statement carefully and choose the answer that suits you best then indicate whether you are (Please select one for each statement)					
(1) Strongly Disagree					
(2) Disagree					
(3) Neither Agree nor Disagree					
(4) Agree					
(5) Strongly Agree					
Statements	1	2	3	4	5
A The EFL Teacher provides us with feedback only when we make mistakes					
B The Teacher never provides us with any feedback even a vague word like « good »					
C The Teacher only focus on positive and oral feedback. Yet, it helps us a lot					
D The way feedback is provided impacts considerably on the learner's results					
E The EFL Teacher only focus on negative but oral and written feedbacks.					
F I do not like feedback because sometimes it is too much over-whelming.					
G Feedback when it is constructive develop motivation among learners					
H The learner and the Teacher should provide feedback to each other					
I I do not like written feedback. It is difficult to understand it. I prefer oral one					
J The learner should be provided with positive and negative feedback					
K The EFL Teacher provides us with verbal, non-verbal and written feedbacks					
Thank you very much for your cooperation					