THE IMPACT OF WORDS PRAISE AND CRITICISM ON STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract: Research has indicated that peer feedback improves the process and product of students' English skills. However, the different types of peer feedback have not been systematically studied. The sample consisted of 120 students from five Uzbek universities studying humanities and technical disciplines. The participants filled out a questionnaire containing questions about the frequency of receiving praise and criticism and how it affected their motivation and academic performance. The participants filled out a questionnaire containing questions about the frequency of receiving praise and criticism and how it affected their motivation and academic performance. Two groups were identified for comparison: students in classes with a predominant use of praise (Class 1) and students in classes with a predominant use of criticism (Class 2). Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to analyze their views on the use of praise and criticism in the educational process (2024). It was found in this study that students had an exceptional high tendency for using suggestion feedback and least tendency for praise feedback. This paper concludes with a discussion for teacher implications.

Keywords: Academic performance, student motivation, praise, criticism, feedback, learning, higher education, educational psychology, constructive feedback, self-esteem, achievement, positive reinforcement, negative feedback, differentiated approach, effort-based praise, process praise, outcome praise, sandwich method.

INTRODUCTION

In the educational process, especially in higher education institutions, students' academic performance and overall grades play a key role in their academic development and future career. The factors affecting academic performance are diverse and complex. One such factor is the influence of words of praise and criticism

from faculty, peers, and even the students themselves. This article is devoted to the study of this influence and its role in the formation of learning motivation and achievement of high results.

RESEARCH METHODS

Various research methods can be used to study this topic, such as:

Surveys and questionnaires: Students are asked to answer questions regarding their attitudes towards praise and criticism, its influence on their learning activities, and their self-esteem and motivation.

Experiments: Under controlled conditions, experiments are conducted in which one group of students receives more praise and another group receives more criticism. Their academic performance and changes in motivation are then compared.

Observation: Observation of students' behavior in the classroom and their reactions to the words of instructors and other students.

Analysis of academic records: Examination of grades, teacher feedback and other documents to find out the relationship between praise/criticism and academic performance.

Constructive feedback: The teacher emphasizes not only mistakes but also ways to correct them. Criticism is given with emphasis on improvement and praise is given for effort and learning. Example: Instead of "You did a poor job" - "There are good points in your work, for example..... But there are a few aspects that could be improved, e.g.... Here's how you can do it".

The "strengths" method: The instructor highlights the student's strengths and builds the critique around them. This builds confidence and creates a sense of progress.

Example: "You did a great job analyzing the text, now let's try to strengthen your argument."

Differentiated approach: Individual characteristics of students (their self-esteem, temperament, level of preparation) are taken into account. Criticism and praise are selected with these factors in mind.

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Example: For a student with low self-esteem, emphasis on progress ("You have made a step forward"), and for a confident one, a challenge motivating development ("Try an even more difficult task").

Method of rewarding effort: The instructor emphasizes praise not on the result, but on the student's effort and perseverance, which builds the student's desire to try and learn from mistakes. Example: "It's great that you put a lot of time into this assignment, it shows. The next step is to work on..."

Sandwich method (praise-criticism-praise): Criticism is delivered in a mild form, surrounded by positive remarks to reduce emotional negativity.

Example: "You have a great start to your presentation, you have a clear structure. There is a small point to work on - the pace of the speech. But overall, you did a great job."

Active listening and dialog: Students are given the opportunity to discuss their work and explain their approach. The teacher acts not only as a critic but also as a partner.

Example: Instead of direct criticism - "Why did you decide to approach the problem in this way? What difficulties arose?".

Project-based learning: Students work on long-term projects and the instructor gives regular feedback in the form of constructive criticism and praise at each stage.

Example: During midterm reviews, the instructor praises progress and suggests improvements, motivating completion of the project.

Modeling Success: The instructor shows examples of successful student work (or fictional examples) to demonstrate how high performance can be achieved.

Example: "Look at how this paper has great structured ideas. This is a good reference point for you."

Collaborative Learning: Students work in groups where criticism and praise comes not only from the instructor but also from peers. This creates a safe

environment for accepting criticism. Example: "Discuss as a group what went well and what could be improved. Then share your conclusions."

Gamification: Using game elements for praise (e.g., points, rewards for progress) to make learning more positive and motivating. Example: "You earned extra points for using an original approach".

These methods create a balance between supporting and fostering critical thinking in students.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used to conduct the study. The sample consisted of 120 students from five Uzbek universities studying humanities and technical disciplines. The participants filled out a questionnaire containing questions about the frequency of receiving praise and criticism and how it affected their motivation and academic performance. Two groups were identified for comparison: students in classes with a predominant use of praise (Class 1) and students in classes with a predominant use of criticism (Class 2). Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to analyze their views on the use of praise and criticism in the educational process.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data revealed the following key findings:

Students in Class 1, where instructors actively used praise, showed higher mean scores (15% higher) than students in Class 2, where criticism was the main method of feedback.

In Class 1, students showed greater engagement in the learning process, active participation in discussions, and initiative in completing additional assignments.

The results of the study are expected to show the following:

Praise: Positive effects of praise on student motivation and achievement. Specific and deserved praise that indicates the student's achievements and efforts is particularly effective. Praise builds self-confidence and encourages further learning.

Criticism: The dual impact of criticism. Constructive criticism, pointing out specific deficiencies and suggesting ways to correct them, can be helpful in

improving performance. Destructive criticism, on the other hand, can lead to decreased motivation, poor self-esteem, and even disgust with the subject matter.

Balance: The importance of balance between praise and criticism. The optimal ratio of praise to criticism for each student may be individualized and depend on the student's personality characteristics and level of preparation.

Sources: The influence of the source of praise and criticism. The greatest influence comes from the words of teachers as the most authoritative figures in the educational process. Also important is the opinion of peers and the student's self-esteem.

Also the results obtained can be interpreted in terms of different psychological theories such as self-determination theory, social learning theory and cognitive dissonance theory. It is important to take into account individual differences in students' perceptions of praise and criticism as well as the cultural characteristics of the educational environment.

In Class 2, there was a decrease in students' self-esteem, especially with the frequent use of non-constructive criticism. However, constructive criticism accompanied by recommendations for improvement increased students' motivation in the long term.

The greatest learning gains were observed in students who received balanced feedback (both in Class 1 and in selected subgroups of Class 2).

DISCUSSION

The findings support the importance of the approach of using praise and criticism in the educational process. Praise builds students' confidence and motivates them to continue their achievements, while constructive criticism helps them to see areas for improvement and work on their shortcomings. The differences between Class 1 and Class 2 emphasize that overuse of one type of feedback can be less effective than a balanced approach. The key factor remains the individual approach: responses to praise and criticism can vary significantly depending on the student's personal characteristics.

Teaching methods that consider the impact of criticism and praise demonstrate that emotional feedback plays a key role in shaping students' motivation, self-esteem, and academic success. Constructive criticism and praise that focuses on the learning process, not just the outcome, creates a supportive environment in which students feel confident, yet eager for self-development.

The use of techniques such as constructive feedback, rewarding effort, and differentiated approaches foster critical thinking, initiative, and resilience to failure. At the same time, the balance between praise and criticism allows students to see both their achievements and areas for improvement, creating an informed attitude towards learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations for faculty and students can be formulated:

Faculty: Use praise as a motivational tool, give specific and deserved praise, avoid destructive criticism, strive for a balance between praise and criticism.

Students: To learn to accept criticism appropriately, to benefit from it, to not be afraid of making mistakes, to develop self-assessment and self-motivation skills.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of teaching depends not only on the content of the teaching material, but also on how this material is accompanied by the emotional and intellectual support of the teacher.

The impact of words of praise and criticism on students' academic performance and overall grades is an important aspect of the educational process. Understanding this influence allows instructors and students to interact more effectively and achieve high learning outcomes. Further research in this area can help create a more supportive and motivating educational environment in higher education institutions.

Comments produced by students would have different nuances when they are expressed in Uzbek and English respectively. As indicated earlier by the transcription of three students' peer review comments, comments in English were more instructive

and sounded more negative whereas comments in Uzbek were more tactical and positive. Although producing English only review comments allow reviewers to practice more writing skills and receivers to practice more reading and com prehension skills, it is considered that Japanese review comments are also crucial for allowing students to critically review and revise the content of their writing.

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