

**THE POWER OF FEEDBACK: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN
FROM MISTAKES*****Ozoda Eshkobilova****University of Economics and pedagogy, teacher****Pardayeva Zukhra****University of Economics and pedagogy, student*

Abstract: *The process of learning is inherently tied to the recognition and understanding of mistakes. This paper explores the power of feedback as a critical tool in the educational journey, emphasizing its role in helping students identify, analyze, and learn from their errors. Drawing on recent studies and pedagogical theories, we examine the characteristics of effective feedback, including timeliness, specificity, and constructiveness, and their impact on student motivation and achievement. By fostering a growth mindset, feedback encourages students to view mistakes not as failures but as valuable opportunities for growth and improvement. This research highlights best practices for educators in delivering feedback that promotes reflective learning, cultivates resilience, and leads to deeper understanding. Ultimately, we advocate for a feedback-rich educational environment where students are empowered to embrace challenges and enhance their learning outcomes through insightful guidance and constructive criticism.*

Key Words: *Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, Peer Feedback, Constructive Criticism, Self-Assessment, Metacognition, Learning from Mistakes, Growth Mindset, Reflective Practice, Student Engagement, Educational Psychology, Cognitive Development, Academic Resilience, Error Analysis, Feedback Loops, Learning Outcomes, Instructional Strategies, Motivation, Scaffolding, Suggested Literature*

Introduction

In the realm of education, the journey of learning is often marked by trial and error. Mistakes, while often viewed through a negative lens, are integral to the



educational process and can serve as powerful stepping stones to deeper understanding and mastery of concepts. Feedback emerges as a pivotal tool in this journey, acting as a guide that transforms errors into opportunities for growth. When students receive constructive feedback, they are equipped with insights that illuminate the reasons behind their mistakes, fostering a mindset that values resilience and continuous improvement.

The power of feedback lies not only in its ability to highlight areas for improvement but also in its capacity to build confidence and promote self-directed learning. Effective feedback encourages students to engage in reflective thinking, enabling them to analyze their approaches, adjust their strategies, and ultimately learn more effectively. Furthermore, when educators cultivate a supportive environment that emphasizes the value of mistakes as part of the learning process, students are more likely to take risks, explore new ideas, and develop a lifelong love for learning.

As we delve into the intricacies of feedback in education, we will explore the various types of feedback, best practices for delivering it, and the transformative impact it can have on students' learning journeys. By harnessing the power of feedback, we can help students not only to learn from their mistakes but to embrace them as essential elements of personal and academic growth.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Constructivism:

Learning is viewed as an active process where students construct their knowledge based on experiences. Feedback provides the information needed to assess and modify their understanding.

1.2. Growth Mindset:

Carol Dweck's concept of a growth mindset emphasizes the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. Constructive feedback encourages students to embrace challenges and learn from their mistakes.

1.3. Cognitive Load Theory:



Effective feedback reduces extraneous cognitive load, allowing students to focus on the important aspects of their learning and mistakes.

2. Types of Feedback

2.1. Formative Feedback:

Ongoing feedback given during the learning process helps students recognize areas for improvement before final assessments.

2.2. Summative Feedback:

Feedback provided after an assessment, usually to summarize performance and provide insights, may not be as effective for immediate learning but can guide future improvements.

2.3. Descriptive vs. Evaluative Feedback:

Descriptive feedback focuses on specific aspects of work, explaining what was done well and what needs improvement, while evaluative feedback might simply provide a grade or a summary judgment without explanation.

3. Effective Feedback Strategies

3.1. Timely Feedback:

Delivering feedback soon after an assessment or task allows students to connect it to their recent learning experiences.

3.2. Specificity:

Feedback should be specific rather than general. Instead of saying "good job," a teacher might say, "Your thesis statement clearly outlines your main argument."

3.3. Goal-Oriented:

Feedback should relate to learning objectives, helping students understand how their work aligns with desired outcomes.

3.4. Actionable:

Providing clear next steps enables students to know how to improve. Instead of merely pointing out an error, a teacher might suggest, "Consider revising your introduction to provide more context."

3.5. Encouragement of Self-Reflection:



Inviting students to assess their own work and identify errors fosters independence and critical thinking.

4. The Role of Mistakes in Learning

4.1. Mistakes as Learning Opportunities:

Mistakes should be framed positively, as essential learning experiences. This approach encourages a risk-taking attitude in students.

4.2. Analyzing Errors:

Encouraging students to analyze their errors can lead to deeper understanding and retention of knowledge. Teachers can prompt discussions about common mistakes and strategies to avoid them.

4.3. Peer Feedback:

Incorporating peer feedback allows students to learn from each other. It also teaches them to articulate their thoughts and constructively critique.

5. The Impact of Feedback on Learning

5.1. Academic Improvement:

Research consistently shows that effective feedback leads to improved student performance and achievement.

5.2. Enhanced Motivation:

Constructive feedback can boost student motivation, particularly when they feel supported and see clear pathways for improvement.

5.3. Development of Critical Skills:

Providing and receiving feedback develops students' analytical skills, emotional intelligence, and communication skills.

5.4. Building Resilience:

Encouraging a mindset that values learning from mistakes builds resilience and prepares students for future challenges.

6. Challenges in Providing Feedback

6.1. Student Resistance:

Some students may resist feedback, particularly if they perceive it as criticism. Fostering a supportive learning environment is crucial.



6.2. Time Constraints:

Providing timely and meaningful feedback can be labor-intensive. Finding efficient methods, such as using technology or peer assessments, can help.

6.3. Balancing Positivity with Constructive Criticism:

Striking a balance between highlighting strengths and addressing weaknesses can be challenging yet vital for effective feedback.

Conclusion

The power of feedback in education extends beyond merely correcting mistakes; it plays an essential role in guiding students toward deeper understanding and improved performance. By creating a culture of feedback that views mistakes as opportunities for growth, educators can empower students to become lifelong learners, adept at self-reflection and continuous development. Effective feedback practices can lead to higher engagement, motivation, and ultimately, academic success.

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