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From Pedagogy to Politeness: Aspects Regarding Feedback in Online Learning Context

Alina TURCULEȚ[1]

Abstract

The online learning environment has challenged the educational relationships over the last years. The medical safety has hidden us behind some monitors, devices or platforms that allowed us to continue our studies and our professional activities. From faces with or without associated names, we turned into names that accompany empty icons on the wall. Most often, we had to keep our cameras off. When we turned them on and shared our faces with the audience, we offered and received feedback much easier. The feedback has an important role in any human communication. More than that, in the educational field, the feedback contributes to the adjustments of the teaching – learning – evaluating process. On the positive side, the teacher gives feedback in order to reinforce the appropriate learning behaviour of the student and the student offers feedback to ensure the proper adjustment of the teaching behaviour. The pattern of giving and receiving feedback is simple and visible in all face-to-face communication that develops an educational activity. What happens in the online mediated education? What happens when faces see no faces?
Our study investigates the feedback from the perspective of the online mediated educational relationships. Thus, we analyzed the responses of the students to some seminar tasks regarding the use of educational platforms and the role of feedback in the learning process. The target population consisted in 135 students enrolled in the certification program for teaching career. Our findings show that feedback as reinforcement communicative behaviour upgrades the politeness strategy and feedback as a pedagogical principle helps to replace the missing face-to-face interaction in online mediated learning.

Keywords: *Feedback; process-feedback, politeness; online mediated learning.*

1. Introduction

The online mediated education experienced during the last two years contributed to the deep transformation of the teaching-learning-evaluating process. First, the pedagogical principles that lead the construction of the activity were adapted to the new learning environment. At the beginning, this adjustment was based on action and reaction rather than on a serious theoretical and methodological foundation. The pedagogical principles that guide an onsite activity were translated in the online interface. Among these, the feedback was produced in

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the condition of limited occasions for teacher and student to see and analyze their behaviour. Thus, the specific educational principle that ensures the adjustment of the teacher's action in accordance to student's reaction was transformed.

Beyond the behaviourist approach, the model of feedback as information about the acquisition of the student from his learning experience does not consider feedback to be a reinforcer (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Previous analysis enhance that audio-, video- and computer-assisted feedback are most effective and provide reinforcements to learners (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback is considered the process that helps learners to understand information provided by different agents about their learning and to improve it (Carless & Boud, 2018). The agents can be teachers, peers, family, friends, computer-based systems that support self-evaluation. In higher education area, feedback is misunderstood, difficult to apply and do not significantly influence students learning processes (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Evans, 2013). Feedback literacy helps students to uptake feedback and adjusts their strategies in order to enhance learning. Feedback literacy was defined as the ability to read, interpret and use written feedback (Sutton, 2012) and extended as the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies (Carless & Boud, 2018). Carless and Boud (2018) argued that feedback literacy depends on the fact that shared and individual interpretations are developed through dialogue, sense-making and through co-construction between participants (Price et al., 2011; Rust et al., 2005) and on tacit knowledge that emerges through observation, imitation, participation and dialogue (Bloxham & Campbell, 2010).

The principle of reversed connection should be analyzed in its specific relation with the types of reinforcements and the reinforcement programmes promoted by the learning theories. Some authors consider that the self-regulated learning depends on the productive social relationships from the learning environment (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001; Schunk, 2012). The authentic learning enhance the attainment of the students in higher education (Iucu & Marin, 2014) and it is embedded in the characteristics of the learning environment, including the educational relationships. Regarding the educational relationships, the new educational medium of activity impacts the patterns of interactions between teachers and students. The reinforcement behaviour as a component of the politeness strategies differs depending on the presentation of self (Goffman, 1990) in the new type of everyday life, according to the new medium of communication, the internet. The human behaviour is strongly influenced by the features of the interactions, which are significantly different in internet communication (Carr, 2020; Kember & Zylinska, 2012) and online mediated education. Overall, the relations between the participants and the co-constructed norms of online interactions are firmly embedded in the context of the computer mediated communication (Angouri & Tseliga, 2010). Nevertheless, the particularities of the communication channel impacts the interaction, from the message encoding by the sender to the message decoding by the receiver. They also influence the strategies of politeness chosen by the students trapped in online education.

The focus of feedback addresses four levels: tasks or products; processes to solve tasks or create products; self-regulation, including self-evaluation or confidence; personal level when feedback is directed to the self, unrelated to the performance on the task as Hattie and Timperley (2007) argued. Some findings show that process-oriented feedback is perceived as more useful than grade-oriented feedback and has a greater positive indirect effect on achievements and interest for a subject due to its perceived usefulness (Harks et al., 2012). The framework for feedback literacy includes four features: appreciating feedback, making judgements, managing affect, taking action (Carless & Boud, 2018). Hattie et al. (2017) stated that there is a need to reconsider feedback in terms of how it is received by learners rather than how it is given by teachers

The focus of this paper is to address feedback as an indicator of positive politeness strategy used to diminish the distance between the asymmetric roles of teachers and students, to personalize the educational relationship and to provide individualized learning.

2. Research questions

The research questions that guided our study were the following:

1. What is the pattern of giving and receiving feedback in online mediated learning?

2. How online education influences the politeness strategies in higher education?

3. Methods

3.1. Procedure

The study was developed in the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021. The leading idea was to identify the link between the feedback as a pedagogical principle and as a part of the strategies of politeness in higher education.

3.2. Participants

The target population of our study consisted in 135 students enrolled in the certification program for teaching career. They were students in the second year of studies in Bachelor Degree, from several faculties at Transilvania University of Braşov.

3.3. Measures

In order to analyze student perception about process-feedback we developed an analysis grid to record the necessary data. The qualitative approach of our investigation took the form of a case-study regarding the perspective of students about two related meanings of the concept of feedback in education.

4. Findings and discussions

Recent research investigated feedback in classrooms and its effect on teaching and learning. The feedback provides information about specific task and the process of learning and also about the affective processes like increased effort, motivation and engagement. Feedback as a politeness strategy in online mediated learning fills the gap of missing interactions. In the constructivist approach, teaching and learning need feedback to regulate and optimize their functioning. The feedback allows the improvement of the educational processes and performances. The active intervention due to the reversed connection supervises the evolution of the process, maximizing the positive effects and minimizing the negative consequences. The feedback as a reinforcement behaviour is a positive or negative response to an action of the interlocutor. The purpose of positive reinforcements is to produce similar future behaviours and negative reinforcements prevent the repetition of the behaviour. The reinforcements are specific especially to the didactic discourse. Our study shows that the feedback as the reinforcement behaviour upgrades the politeness strategy. The artifices are used in order to provide the positive strategies of politeness, even though the written communication selects a greater distance between the interlocutors. The feedback as the pedagogical principle helps to replace the missing face-to-face interactions. Therefore, considering the feedback is specific to the educational discourse, it might transform the written communication characteristic to online education in a mean to personalize the educational relationships in higher education.

Feedback about the self as a person is considered misused by Bond et al. (2000) who argue that it is rarely converted into more engagement and commitment to the learning goals, enhanced self-efficacy, and understanding about the task. They consider feedback on the self impacts learning only if increases students' effort and engagement in the learning strategies. Therefore, praise as a reinforcer or reward has none or limited effect on achievements and as a provider of information regarding the process of learning has low effect (Bond et al., 2000). Usually, the personal feedback confounds the person and the performance, switching the accent from task and behaviour to personal attributes. However, the pragmatic perspective on the reinforcer and the benefits of positive politeness strategies on student-teacher relation and achievements need to be further investigated.

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