

# **A STUDY OF APPRECIATION RESOURCES IN TEACHER FEEDBACK IN THE CHINESE COLLEGE EFL CONTEXT**

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## **Abstract**

As a subsystem of the appraisal theory, attitude is concerned with emotional reactions, judgments of behaviors and evaluation of things. Most Chinese research on attitude takes literature works, advertisement, news reports and public speeches as subjects. Only a few studies concentrate on teacher talk, and fewer are concerned with teacher feedback. In terms of functional grammar, feedback is in relation to appraising student's performance; therefore it is reasonable to suppose that there exist appraisal resources in teacher feedback, especially attitude resources relying on classroom context to express teacher's evaluation on students and learning. Since appreciation, among three subcategories of attitude, is proved to be used most frequently in teacher talk, this study especially focuses on how appreciation resources in teacher feedback used in classroom context help complete meaning negotiation between the teacher and students. To achieve this, videos and transcripts of 10 advanced reading classes for English majors in a Chinese university are selected as the material. Flanders Interaction Analysis System and classroom discourse analysis are used as quantitative and qualitative methods respectively to analyze the impact of feedback with appreciation in IRF. Results indicate that appreciation resources play a role in pushing student's output and maintaining effective classroom interaction.

## **1 Introduction**

Teacher talk proves to be crucial in EFL class because it not only facilitates classroom interaction and the implementation of teaching plans, but also functions as the major source of comprehensive input of target language for the learners. Types of teacher talk include teacher talk of classroom management, asking questions and teacher talk as feedback. Among the three types, teacher feedback, as the teacher's reaction to the learner's verbal performance, contains the information about or the comments on whether a learning task is successfully proceeded or not, thus constituting a fairly important part of teacher talk especially in language teaching and learning. Researches into teacher feedback mostly focused on its classification and application in classroom context and discovered that teacher feedback exerts some influences on learners of all phases and levels. However, what factors existing in teacher feedback facilitate such influences and how do they work?

Since teacher feedback is a process of assessment of learners' behavior (Cook, 2000), aiming at commenting on their performance and enhancing their understanding of the teaching content. Therefore, from the viewpoint of functional grammar, feedback is mainly concerned with judgment and evaluation, and probably contains appraisal resources especially attitude resources indicating valuation, judgment and affection. It is reasonable to suppose that the use of attitude resources is one of the factors that facilitate the function and influences of teacher feedback. In China, where English is learned by hundreds of millions of people as a foreign language, there exist studies on attitude resources in teacher talk in EFL classroom, but most of them research into single case or a small number of materials. There is no study focusing on attitude resources in teacher feedback yet. Since previous studies proved that compared with affect and judgment, appreciation resources are the most frequently used subcategory of attitude resources in teacher talk and exert great effects on students' feelings, output and initiative, thus promoting or preventing classroom interaction, appreciation resources are take as the focus of the research. This paper investigates teacher feedback from an appraisal view and analyzing general features and functions of appreciation resources existing in teacher feedback based on the appraisal theory and input hypothesis, aiming at investigating how appreciation resources are distributed and how the resources influence students' performance and classroom interaction in EFL context.

## **2 Teacher feedback and appreciation resources**

### ***2.1 Teacher feedback***

#### ***2.1.1 Definition and functions of teacher feedback***

As the teacher's verbal or nonverbal reaction to the learner's performance in the classroom context, teacher feedback plays a significant role in language classes. Ellis (1985) pointed out that feedback is used for communicative purposes in response to the learner's efforts, with the function of correction, acknowledgment, clarification and so on. Swain (1985) held that feedback makes corrections to the learner's wrong suppositions and guide him to the authenticity of the target language. In addition, appropriate correction and encouragement help raise the learner's confidence, relieve his anxiety and construct positive classroom context for interaction between the teacher and the learner (Lv, 2014). In a traditional language learning class where the teacher dominates the teaching and classroom regulation, the talk of teacher and students follows the IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback/ Follow-up) pattern. That is, the teacher first asks questions or gives instructions, the students offer responses and the teacher then gives feedback accordingly. The importance of feedback lies in the fact that it not only includes guidance such as model language and clarification, but also develops, elaborates and builds-up the discourse. Therefore, feedback may directly evoke students' responses again or it may play the role of the initiation move and start a new IRF turn. In other words, just like what Chaudron (1988) pointed out, teacher feedback not only acts as part of input for students but also stimulates their output. It helps the students recognize the effect of their output and provides guidance for their further learning. Previous research found out that the pragmatic functions of teacher feedback in language teaching and learning mainly include 1) diagnosis and feedback, which means the teacher identifies the

student's problem and tries to help correct it, thus preventing fossilization; 2) organization and management, which means the teacher organizes teaching activities, emphasizes key points and guiding the class through giving certain feedback; 3) psychological effect, which means the teacher motivates students, improves their study and develops their personality through positive affect in the feedback, such as expectation and encouragement. All those functions indicate the power of teacher feedback over the results of teaching and student's development.

### ***2.1.2 Previous Studies on Teacher Feedback***

Previous research on teacher feedback mainly focuses on its classification and its application in teaching, especially the application of corrective feedback. In terms of classification, Nunan (1991) identified two types of feedback, positive feedback and negative feedback. Negative feedback is also called corrective feedback. Long (1996) further divided negative feedback into implicit and explicit negative feedback. Lyster and Ranta (1997) further developed six categories of corrective feedback: explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition. Cullen (2002) sorted feedback into evaluative and discursal feedback. According to its role in classroom teaching and discourse, feedback can also be classified into 5 types (Jiang, 2010): 1) model language; 2) clarification; 3) comment; 4) developing, elaborating and building-up the discourse; 5) back-channeling items.

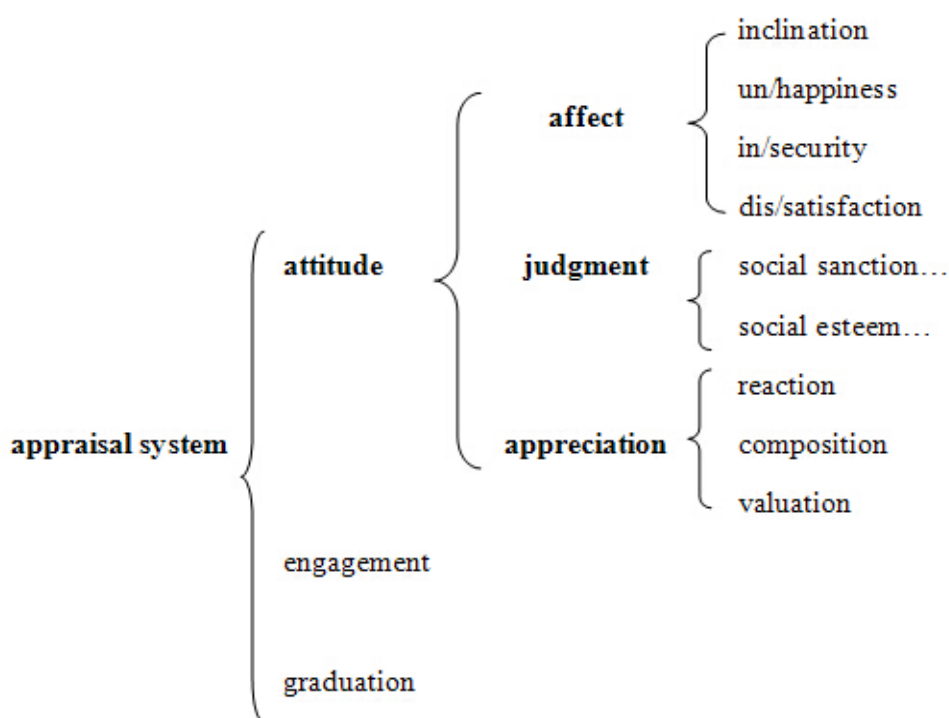
In China, there is abundant research into teacher feedback, most of which is based on classifications done by foreign linguistics mentioned above. Some studies focus on the types and characteristics of teacher feedback in classroom teaching (Lin, 2011). Some focus on the influences of teacher feedback on learners of different phases, for example, the influences on learner's affect (Chai, 2009), attention (Zheng, 2010), output (Ma, 2013), motivation (Liu, 2013) and writing proficiency (Cai, 2011; Yuan, 2014). Those studies pay special attention to corrective feedback, and offer suggestions on teacher feedback strategies. There are also researchers comparing influences of teacher feedback and peer feedback on specific learning tasks (Cai, 2011; Yuan, 2014). Those studies proved the function of feedback and its effects on learners, but did not pointed out what language resources facilitate those functions and effects. Hence, this paper aims at proving the existence and functions of appreciation resources in teacher feedback.

## ***2.2 Theories of appreciation resources***

### ***2.2.1 Attitude as a subsystem of the Appraisal Theory***

The attitude system is a subsystem of the appraisal theory which is concerned with evaluation, namely, the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned (Martin & Rose, 2003). The attitude subsystem focuses on attitude negotiation, concerned with feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviors and evaluation of things (Martin & White, 2005). Attitude is itself divided into three regions: affect, judgment and appreciation. Affect deals with resources for construing emotional reactions. It includes mental process related to

inclination (I'd like it) and that related to feeling (un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction). Judgment deals with attitudes towards behavior according to normative principles, which people admire or criticize, praise or condemn. Social sanction and social esteem are two types of judgment, each of which can be further divided into more subcategories. The subjects of judgment are people, human behaviors and things that closely related to human behaviors. Appreciation involves evaluations of things, according to the ways in which they are valued or not in a given field. The subject can also be people when they are regarded as a substance rather than a behavior. There are three variables of appreciation: reaction, composition and valuation. The attitude system and its subcategories are illustrated in Figure 1.



**Fig. 1. Attitude system and its subcategories**

Because feedback expresses the teacher's evaluation of learners' performances, it is reasonable to suppose that there are appraisal resources, especially attitude resources in feedback. With appropriate use of attitude resources, the teacher successfully conveys his feelings, opinions and evaluation of the learners' performances as well as the teaching content, thus guiding the learners to thinking one step further and facilitating pushed output and classroom interaction.

### **2.2.2 Appreciation as a subcategory of attitude**

Affect and judgment refer to human emotions and behavior respectively, while the subject of appreciation is usually things or processes. Sometimes the subject of appreciation can be a person, but it is what the person looks like rather than how he feels or what he does that is appraised in the case. Since classroom teaching and learning emphasizes objectivity more

than subjectivity, it is reasonable to see less expression of feelings and judgment of people, but more evaluation of things and process such as whether the learner's opinion is right or attractive, whether there is any significance in the learner's answer and whether the learning task is fulfilled. Zhang (2008) analyzed an English class for middle school students and found that in teacher talk appreciation took the largest percentage followed by judgment, and affect took much lower percentage than the above two types. Zhu (2014) studied teacher talk of 5 teachers appearing in 10 classes and reached the same conclusion concerning the proportion of each type of attitude as Zhang did. Wang (2012) investigated teacher talk in college English class. Combining judgment and appreciation into one category and naming it "judgment", he discovered that this category took 76.24% and affect only 23.76%. Therefore, as the most frequently-appeared subcategory of attitude, appreciation is chosen as the focus of this paper.

There are three variables of appreciation, namely reaction, composition and valuation. Reaction refers to how people feel towards things, whether they think the subject is attractive and whether they are impressed by it. When a thing or a process is appraised, reaction is made according to its impact, such as whether it is arresting, stunning, dramatic, dull, uninviting, monotonous and so on, or according to its quality, such as whether it is lovely, splendid, attractive, ugly, plain and so on (Hu, 2005). Composition is the description of form and structure, concerning the complexity and balance of the subject. Words related to balance include unified, symmetrical, harmonious, balanced and so on, and words related to complexity include simple, intricate, precise, convoluted and so on. Valuation is about whether a thing is worthwhile, important, crucial, or whether it is damaging or dangerous. It assesses the value or the significance of the subject according to normal practice or conventions. According to Martin & White (2005, p. 57), reaction is oriented to interpersonal significance, composition to textual organization and valuation to ideational worth. Types of appreciation and typical words with appreciation resources are listed in Table 1 (Martin & White, 2005, p. 56).

Appreciation can be expressed through words and phrases, usually adjectives such as those shown in the above figure. Although adjectives account for the largest percentage in appreciation resources, nouns, verbs, adverbs and their relevant phrases also express appreciation in specific context (Eggin & Slade, 1997). In addition, appreciation is expressed at clause level, because sometimes only words or phrases cannot achieve that goal completely.

**Table 1. Types of appreciation**

	Positive	Negative
<u>Reaction:</u> impact 'did it grab me?'	arresting, captivating, engaging ...; fascinating, exciting, moving ...; lively, dramatic, intense ...; remarkable, notable, sensational ...	dull, boring, tedious ...; dry, ascetic, uninviting ...; flat, predictable, monotonous ...; unremarkable, pedestrian ...
<u>Reaction:</u> quality 'did I like it?'	okay, fine, good ... lovely, beautiful, splendid ...; appealing, enchanting, welcome ...	bad, yuk, nasty ...; plain, ugly, grotesque ...; repulsive, revolting, off-putting ...
<u>Composition:</u> balance 'did it hang together?'	balanced, harmonious, unified, symmetrical, proportioned ...; consistent, considered, logical ...; shapely, curvaceous, willowly ...	unbalanced, discordant, irregular, uneven, flawed ...; contradictory, disorganised ...; shapeless, amorphous, distorted ...
<u>Composition:</u> Complexity 'was it hard to follow?'	simple, pure, elegant ...; lucid, clear, precise ...; intricate, rich, detailed, precise ...	ornate, extravagant, byzantine ...; arcane, unclear, woolly ...; plain, monolithic, simplistic ...
<u>Valuation</u> 'was it worthwhile?'	penetrating, profound, deep ...; innovative, original, creative ...; timely, long awaited, landmark ...; inimitable, exceptional, unique ...; authentic, real, genuine ...; valuable, priceless, worthwhile ...; appropriate, helpful, effective ...	shallow, reductive, insignificant ...; derivative, conventional, prosaic ...; dated, overdue, untimely ...; dime-a-dozen, everyday, common; fake, bogus, glitzy ...; worthless, shoddy, pricey ...; ineffective, useless, write-off ...

### 2.2.3 Previous studies on attitude and appreciation

In the 1990s, Martin raised the appraisal theory for the first time. In his work *Beyond Exchange: Appraisal Systems in English*, he elaborated on the three subsystems of appraisal system, namely attitude, engagement and graduation, and pointed out that the attitude subsystem, with affect, judgment and appreciation as its subcategories, is at the core of the appraisal theory (Martin, 2000). That is the foundation stone of the appraisal theory generally recognized in academia. Then Martin and Rose (2003) made detailed explanation for the framework of attitude subsystem, applying attitude resources in the analysis of different types of texts. Later, in their book *The Language of Evaluation—Appraisal in English*, Martin and White (2005) elaborated the appraisal theory in depth, making the study of attitude more systematic and comprehensible. Since then, the appraisal theory has become a complete theoretical framework applied to analyze interpersonal meaning and position in discourse.

Since its introduction into China by Wang Zhenhua in 2001, the appraisal theory, especially the attitude subsystem, has aroused the interest of Chinese scholars and researchers because of its effectiveness and applicability. Studies on appraisal theory in China mainly focus on literature, advertisement, news reports, speeches and teaching materials. Adopting theories related to attitude system is a relatively new approach to analyzing teacher talks. Such studies first emerged in 2008, and the number has increased apparently in the last two years. Most of those studies are case studies in relatively small scale, and most of them focus on teacher talk

in domestic EFL classroom context. Hence, analysis of teacher talk from an appraisal perspective is still remaining to be explored further. Inspired by previous research, this paper sought for more materials and focused on appreciation, a subcategory of attitude, existing in the teacher feedback.

### ***2.3 Appreciation resources and second language acquisition***

In a classroom context, teacher feedback constitutes an important part of second language input in the spoken form. Although scholars hold different opinions on what role the input plays in SLA, they agree on the importance of it. According to Ellis (1984), a high quantity of input directed at the learner is likely to facilitate rapid development of SLA. However, only input data is not enough for learners to acquire a language. It is comprehensible input that enables learner's internal processing mechanism to work (Krashen, 1981; Long, 1983). According to Krashen's input hypothesis, comprehensible input is one that contains exemplars of the language forms which according to the natural order are due to be acquired next. In other words, the input should be at a little bit higher level than the learner's existing knowledge of language. From a constructivist view (Zhang & Sun, 2005), based on his existing knowledge and the classroom context, the learner notices the gap between the information in the comprehensible input and his current understanding. After that, he is pushed to establish the connection between the new information and his previous knowledge, go through the process of assimilation and accommodation and finally construct new knowledge.

To make input comprehensible, a major way discussed by Long (1983) is through the modification of the interactional structure. That is, when the teacher is talking to a student, he will use various methods, such as repeating, using pause, speaking slowly and modifying vocabulary and grammar, to solve the difficulty in communication. Among all the methods, meaning negotiation is one that has great functions in promoting acquisition (Ye, 2012), because it maintains mutual understanding and promotes interaction. As a way of realizing meaning negotiation, the use of appreciation resources in teacher feedback reveals teacher's feelings of, comments on and evaluation of the student's response, which provides hint for the student to think further. Therefore, appreciation resources make the input more comprehensible.

Through the meaning negotiation realized by attitude resources, the student comprehends the teacher's comment on his performance and notices the gap between his output and the teacher's expectation, thus adjusting his way of thinking and modifying his answer accordingly, in order to produce comprehensible output which can be correctly understood by the teacher and other students in the classroom context. This process will foster language acquisition.

## **3 Research methodology**

### ***3.1 Research questions***

Appreciation resources in teacher feedback may be used unconsciously or consciously by the teacher according to the teaching content, the learning task and student's response and performance. In both cases, attitude resources in teacher feedback play a significant role in

student's comprehensive input and classroom interaction. The distribution of three subcategories of attitude resources in teacher feedback can be similar to that in teacher talk, or it may have different characteristics due to the features of feedback and the specific classroom context. Based on appraisal theory related to attitude and appreciation, this paper aims at answering the following two questions:

- 1) What are the distribution features of three subcategories of attitude resources in teacher feedback?
- 2) What are the distribution features of three types of appreciation resources?
- 3) What are the effects of appreciation resources in teacher feedback on students' performance and classroom interaction?

### **3.2 Data collection**

To probe into the research questions, video recording of intensive reading course for English majors in NPU were carried out. Videos of 10 classes were selected and transcribed for this research. Each class lasted 45 to 50 minutes. The students were junior English majors in NPU and the 2 teachers were professors with teaching experience of more than 20 years. These classes dealt with different reading topics, including history, literature, language, culture, celebrities and so on. The topics of the articles exerted influences on the use of appreciation resources in teacher feedback.

The research subject is teacher's English feedback in oral form. Accordingly, a small amount of Chinese feedback appeared in class is eliminated, and only English feedback is analyzed. Since appreciation resources mainly exist at lexical and clausal level, words, phrases and clauses with appreciation resources in teacher feedback were collected and classified for the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

Attitude resources are collected according to their definition and interpretation given by previous studies. The frequency of each subcategory, both positive and negative, as well as its percentage is calculated and compared in order to reveal the distribution features of three subcategories of attitude and three variables of appreciation.

To figure out the effects on student's performances and classroom interaction, both the teacher's and the student's contributions are considered in the discourse analysis based on the IRF structure of classroom discourse. The three phase discourse consists of exchanges in which the teacher initiates (I), the pupil responds (R), and the teacher supplies feedback (F) (Ellis, 1985, p. 147). Notice that feedback can also act as the initiative which starts a new turn of the discourse. Both I and F play the role of comprehensible input for students and their output is reflected in R. The constant IRF exchanges contribute to the interaction of the class. Besides qualitative analysis of discourse, quantitative analysis carried out through the Flanders' interaction analysis system which is a widely adopted instruction for classroom interaction analysis. Flanders identified and coded 10 categories of verbal events in classroom, including teacher talk, student talk and silence or confusion as follows.



**Table 2. Flanders' interaction analysis categories (Flanders, 1970, p. 34)**

Teacher – talk	Response	1. Accepts feeling.	Accepts and clarifies an attitude or the feeling tone of a student in a non- -threatening manner.
		2. Praises or encourages	Praises or encourages student action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, but not at the expense of another individual; nodding head, saying um, hmm or go on are included.
		3. Accepts or uses ideas of students.	Clarifying, building or developing ideas suggested by a student. Teachers' extensions of student ideas are included but as teacher brings more of his own ideas into play, shift to category five.
		4. Asks questions.	Asking a question about content or procedures; based on teacher ideas, with the intent that the student will answer.
	Initiation	5. Lecturing.	Giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing his own ideas, giving his own explanation or citing an authority other than a student.
		6. Giving directions.	Directions, commands or orders to which a student is expected to comply.
		7. Criticizing or justifying authority.	Statements intended to change student behavior from non acceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extreme self-reference.
Student Talk	Response	8. Student-talk – response.	Talk by students in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits student statement or structures the situation. Freedom to express own ideas is limited
	Initiation:	9. Student-talk – initiation.	Talk by students that they initiate. Expressing own ideas; initiating a new topic; freedom to develop opinions and a line of thought, like asking thoughtful questions; going beyond the existing structure.
	Silence	10. Silence or confusion.	Pauses, short periods of silence and periods of confusion when the observer cannot understand the communication.

Samples of classroom events are taken every 3 seconds and coded according to the above table. All those 3-second events reflect details of classroom events related to verbal behavior in chronological order, constituting a time sequence and revealing the structure, behavior mode and style of classroom teaching and learning. By loading the codes into FIAC software, researchers can get the generated matrix and curve that clearly reveal the distribution of all types of classroom events and the general trend of the classroom interaction.

All the 7 categories of teacher talk except criticizing, which is seldom used in college EFL class, are likely to appear in teacher feedback and be realized through appreciation resources. Therefore, FIAC can be adopted to quantize teacher talk and student talk, reflecting time intervals when interaction is carried out actively and smoothly. That is why as a quantitative method FIAC can be complementary to the discourse analysis.

**4 The use of appreciation in teacher feedback and its influences on students’ output and classroom interaction**

**4.1 Distribution of appreciation resources in teacher feedback**

**4.1.1 Overall distribution of three subcategories of attitude**

The number and percentage of each subcategory of attitude resources in teacher feedback are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Distribution of subcategories of attitude resources**

	positive	negative	total	percentage
affect	35	28	63	27.6%
judgment	7	7	14	6.2%
appreciation	132	19	151	66.2%
total	174	54	228	/
percentage	76.3%	23.7%	/	/

As is demonstrated in the figure, appreciation takes the highest percentage of 66.2%, followed by affect and then judgment, which conforms to the findings of some previous researches and proves the especially important position of appreciation among all three subcategories. Affect accounts for 27.6%, much lower than the percentage of appreciation but four times higher than that of the judgment. Compared with initiative, feedback, as the reaction to and comment on student’s performance, is more interactive and involves more feelings such as whether the teacher is satisfied with the answer from the student or whether the teacher is happy about or disappointed at the proceeding of the task. Hence, the use of affect will encourage students for their good performance, remind them of the teacher’s intention and promote classroom interaction. In terms of judgment, it is concerned with assessing behaviors of individuals and groups in accordance with various social norms including laws, morality and conventions, etc. In a classroom context, judgment resources are more often used to assess characters’ behavior and ability under discussion in the teaching materials, which could exert a little influence on the students. In such a situation, it is reasonable that the teacher uses only a few judgment resources because what the teacher is more concerned with is the teaching content and students’ response as well. In other words, judgment resources appearing in the teacher feedback, regardless of being positive or negative, should be used to evaluate the teaching content or students’ response related to the topic under discussion, rather than students’

characters and capabilities. Otherwise, students would feel disgusted or anxious, which will do some damage to the effective classroom interaction. Consequently, it is reasonable that more affect rather than judgment is involved in feedback.

Another feature of the distribution of attitude resources is that generally there are more positive resources than negative ones. Take affect resources for example. Positive affect is more frequently used than negative affect. Among negative affect, dissatisfaction and unhappiness account for the great majority. However they are not supposed to exert negative influence on students. For instance, dissatisfaction resources are largely marked by phrases like “what else”, leading the students to think further and offer more answers. Unhappiness is marked by words like “sorry”, which is the teacher’s apology to her misunderstanding or mistakes. Overall, the teacher feedback mainly carries approval, praise, encouragement and tolerance, with doubt and correction as complementary. In that way, the teacher reduces students’ anxiety, improves their confidence and better involves them in classroom interaction.

#### ***4.1.2 Distribution of Three Types of Appreciation***

As the most frequently used type of attitude resources, appreciation can be expressed through lexical items or clauses. Repetition or revision of learner’s language may also carry appreciation resources, because in classroom teaching, the teacher often repeats the learner’s answer completely or partly to express approval, or emphasizes his revision of the learner’s language to show disapproval. Table 4 shows the number and percentage of each type of appreciation resource, as well as listing typical words, phrases and clauses that mark the use of appreciation in feedback. All of them are collected from the 10 class materials.

**Table 4. Distribution of three types of appreciation and their typical marks**

	positive	negative	total	percentage
reaction	28	0	28	18.5%
	Ok, good, clear, great, handsome	/		
composition	0	6	6	4.0%
	/	not complete, What do you mean..., Could you repeat again? I didn't quite..., I didn't quite follow		
valuation	104	13	117	77.5%
	Ok, yes, good, right, exactly, sharply, courageous, challenging, important, Repitition of learner's language	no, actually, general, not correct, bad, ridiculous, misunderstood, abstract, Here I'm takling about..., That is not your job. There is no need... Revision of leaner's language		
total	132	19	151	/
percentage	87.4%	12.6%	/	/

In EFL classroom context, each type of appreciation resource plays a different role in meaning negotiation and interaction, which determines different frequency of the three types. The purpose of reaction is usually to encourage the learners and thus align them, with the teacher confirming that the learner's performance is attractive and impressing. Composition is used to comment on the form or structure of the learners' verbal response and to remind them of thinking further and revising their answer. Valuation reflects whether the teacher think the learners' response is correct, important, relevant, provoking, or in other words, whether it is a worthwhile attempt to accomplish the learning task.

As is shown in the figure, valuation takes a highest proportion among all three types of appreciation resources. Valuation deals with the value of a thing or a phenomenon, whether or not it is important, noteworthy, significant, crucial, harmful, dangerous, unhealthy and so on. Representative words appearing in feedback includes "good" "significant" "important" and "challenging". In the classroom context, valuation resources are not only used to evaluate students' answers or their performances, whether they are valuable or correct, but also used to comment the teaching content under discussion, which help make the teacher's viewpoints clear so as to stimulate students to think deeply. The above two functions account for the largest proportion of valuation resources in appreciation category.

Positive reaction is often used as a signal of encouragements or praises. The difference between positive reaction and positive valuation is that the former emphasizes whether the

learner's answer exerts positive influence on people's emotion or classroom atmosphere, concerning more about feelings, while the latter emphasizes whether the answer is correct or meaningful, concerning more on value. For example, after the learner puts forward an answer, the teacher uses "Ok" "good" as an immediate response to show that the answer is attractive even if it may not be completely meaningful.

Composition used in teacher feedback mainly refers to the form or structure of the learner's answer, indicating whether the answer is well-structured and comprehensible. It takes up the smallest proportion among the three kinds of appreciation resources.

## ***4.2 Influences of appreciation on students' output and classroom interaction***

### ***4.2.1 Appreciation Facilitating Students' Output and Classroom Interaction***

In the following section, three extracts are selected for discourse analysis in order to investigate how appreciation resources enable feedback to push student output and facilitate interaction.

#### Example 1

- T: (describing a situation) ... So at the moment, how do you feel? (I)  
S2: I feel disappointed. (R)  
T: disappointed? **Just** disappointed? ... (further describing the situation) ... So at this moment, just like you are in the desert. So you are **just** disappointed? (F&I)  
Ss: (discussing)  
S2: Desperate.(R)

In initiation move, the teacher describes a situation and lets the students share their feelings in such a situation. However, in the response move, the answer is too shallow to meet the expectation of the teacher, so in her feedback, she uses "just" to imply that the answer is incomplete or poor-structured, in stead of using "That's not correct" to directly negate the answer. The word "just" also indicates that the expected answer might be "more complicated" or "more serious" than "disappointed". With the word "just" indicating negative composition contained in the teacher's feedback, students were led to reconsider their answer and meanwhile with the further instruction acting as the initiative to start a new turn in the feedback, students were directed to carry out further discussion for the purpose of modifying their answer in the second response move. This process indicates the function of appreciation resources in bettering the meaning negotiations between teachers and students in the classroom context.

#### Example 2

- T: How does the writer show that her research is worthwhile? (I)  
S1: I suppose the author in the following paragraphs just raises more questions and examples to show the links between this research and its importance to readers. (R)  
T: Yes, **good**. But could you please be more **specific**? You give us a **general** picture. (F&I)  
S1: I just mentioned she gives us some examples such as the words. (R)  
T: The words. (F)  
S1: And proper nouns. (R)  
T: But why... (F & I)

In the feedback move made by the teacher, she first makes an immediate positive reaction to the student's answer by saying "Yes, good" even if the answer is not a perfect one. In other words, she first encourages the student and then expects further thinking. Words like "general" and "specific" are appreciation resources expressing valuation of the student's answer. The teacher first tells what kind of answer she expects. That is, a more specific answer will be more valuable. Then she evaluates the student's answer as general, indicating that it is not as valuable as expected. After that, the student offers response, in which she shows that she understands the teacher's intention but explains that her answer contains some specific information. The teacher follows up by repeating part of the student's answer as the second feedback move, and the student goes on adding new information to the answer. The third feedback move obviously shows that the student's answer is still not satisfactory enough and she needs further guidance. However, these turns constitute a typical meaning negotiation in which the attitude and intention of both teacher and student are made clearer and clearer.

#### Example 3

T: So for the common view what plays important roles? (I)

S: Culture. (R)

T: **It is culture that** plays important roles. (F)

In the response move, the student gives a brief answer to the teacher's question. In the feedback move, the teacher approves of the student's idea by repeating his answer. However, different from complete repetition, the teacher uses the sentence pattern "it is ... that..." in order to emphasize the word "culture" from the student's response, showing that this answer is correct and valuable. By doing so, she also draws other students' attention to the word and thus prepares for her following lecturing. This type of valuation resources occurs in sentence patterns expressing emphasis rather than at lexical level.

#### **4.2.2 Quantitative results from the FIAS**

Complementary to qualitative discourse analysis, one class is selected for classroom interaction analysis through FIAS. For the 45-minute class, 900 codes are recorded and loaded into the software. The curve generated are shown in figure 2. The red curve represents the teacher talk, the green one the student talk and the blue one the silence in the classroom.

When the red and green curves intersect, the interaction peaks, or in other words the most interactive parts of the class, occur. Since the curve offers reference for the dynamic trend of classroom interaction, we can check whether appreciation resources play a role in the occurrence of the peaks. Of course it is not wise to expect that all peaks are closely related to appreciation resources, or the use of appreciation resources will surely result in peaks, but we do discover that within some most interactive intervals, there is intensive use of appreciation resources. For example, the following extract is taken from the third peak (22-24min).

(00:22:18—00:23:55)

S1: We may make some mistakes of understanding the third question. Just now after your explanation I think the question is the sexism in language. That is the question she wants to study.

- T: **Could you repeat again? I didn't quite... (composition, negative)**  
 S1: The sexism in language.  
 T: **Ok, the sexism that exists in language (valuation, positive).** That means she is trying to find out what would be the sexism that exists in language. How does the writer make her questions more and more clear?  
 S1: The writer studied the question from three different aspects.  
 T: **Ok (valuation, positive).**  
 S1: In name of some places that...  
 T: No, **that is not your job (valuation, negative).** My question is how does the writer...

From the above extract we can see during one of the most interactive interval, four appreciation resources are used, one for reminding the student that his answer is incomprehensible, one for pointing out an irrelevant answer, and two for confirming the value of correct answers.

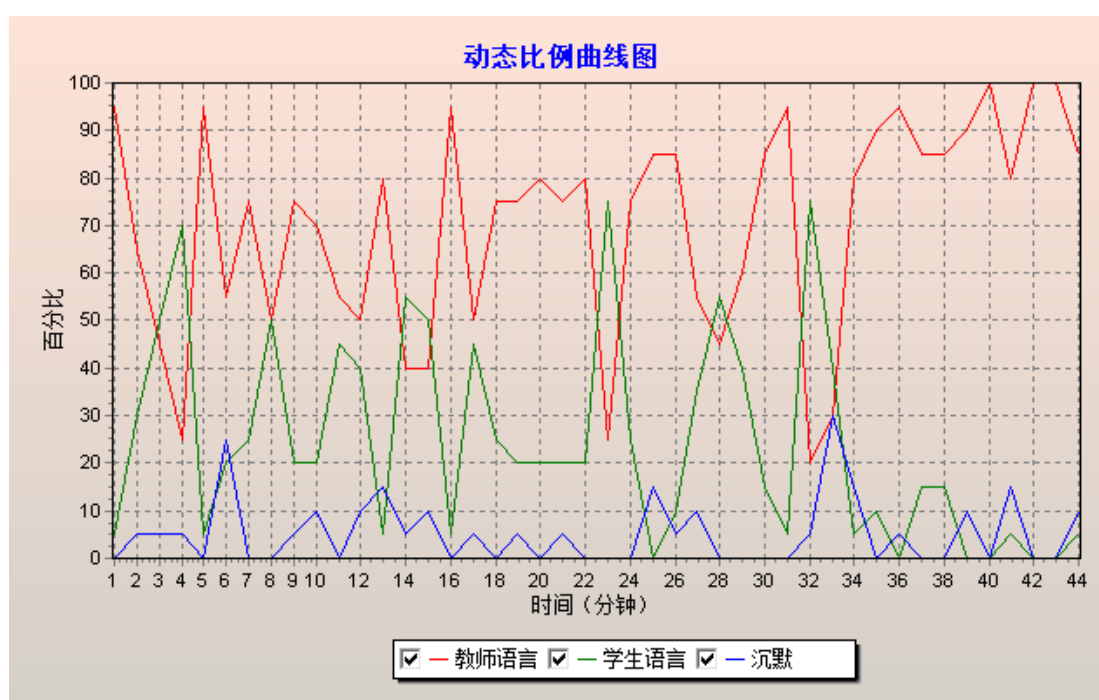


Fig. 2. Dynamic curve of classroom interaction

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Major findings

Through the analysis of appreciation resources in EFL teacher's feedback, the research comes to the following conclusions.

- 1) Among three subcategories of attitude resources, appreciation takes the largest proportion, followed by affect and then judgment. The majority of attitude resources in teacher feedback are positive.
- 2) Among appreciation resources, valuation accounts for the largest percentage, mainly

evaluating students' answers or performances as well as commenting the teaching content under discussion. Reaction takes the second largest proportion, functioning as a signal of encouragements or praises. Composition takes the smallest proportion, dealing with the form or structure of students' answers or performances.

- 3) The use of appreciation resources helps make the teacher feedback become more comprehensible to the students through meaning negotiation, thus reducing students' anxiety and aligning their feelings. In other words, appreciation resources, to a certain extent, could help make the pushed output happen so as to maintain effective interaction between teachers and students in the classroom teaching and learning context.

## **5.2 Limitations**

There are still some limitations of this research. First, this research selects 10 classes for analysis but focuses only on teacher feedback, so the number of attitude and appreciation samples is relatively small. Second, the analysis of effects of attitude resources on students' performance and classroom interaction is achieved through observation of students' reaction and discourse analysis, which may involve subjectivity. If questionnaires or interviews can be carried out to collect ideas of teachers and students, the findings can be more objective and persuasive. Third, theories related to attitude system are largely subject to cultural and ideology. Since the theories are based on middle class media in English speaking countries, the classification should not be supposed to be generally applicable to other cultural context (Hu, 2008). In the EFL class context studied in this research, the teacher's language is influenced by her own cultural background and thinking pattern as a Chinese, and at the same time she has to take the language proficiency and thinking patterns of her Chinese students into consideration in order to produce comprehensive input for them. Therefore, the use of words, phrases and sentences in her feedback is likely to be different from that of a native speaker. As a result, it remains to be further tested whether theories related to attitude system can be successfully applied to the analysis of teacher feedback produced by Chinese teachers in EFL class.

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