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“Towards greater transparency in L2 learning and teaching
through formative feedback - an exploration of feedback
practices in Austrian EFL“

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“Know Thy Impact.”

(Hattie 2012: 18)

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List of abbreviations

EFL	English as a foreign language
FI	feedback intervention
FIT	feedback intervention theory
L1	first language
L2	second language
SLA	second language acquisition
NS	native speaker
NNS	nonnative speaker
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
ELP	European Language Portfolio
BIFIE	Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens
FT	feedback about the task
FP	feedback about the processing of the task
FR	feedback about self-regulation
AHS	Allgemein bildende höhere Schule/ Academic secondary school
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schule/ Higher vocational school

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1 Introduction

In the context of learning and teaching in EFL, feedback is said to be among the most powerful instruments fostering essential values, making development and improvement on various performance levels possible, and taking on crucial importance in enhancing the collaborative classroom environment, relationships and the quality of lessons in schools (Shute 2008: 153, Hattie 2012: 129, Van den Bergh, Ros & Beijaard 2012: 342). Its conception and construction chronicle a long history in research, dating back to the heydays of behaviorism. Since then, the number of references citing feedback and research undertaken has risen with Kluger and DeNisi's meta-analysis (1996) on feedback intervention effects. With the publication of this study, the researchers provoked an even more intensified discussion of feedback impacts for learning and teaching (Hattie 2011: 1).

In their review of numerous studies concerning feedback in the classroom, Hattie and Timperley highlight the significance of feedback, positioning it among the ten most effective influences on student achievement. Furthermore, they found out that it increases motivation, efforts and commitment, but also shows that it does not uniformly enhance performance (2007: 102). If applied inappropriately or heedless, feedback can affect self-esteem and ego, which can lead to far-reaching consequences for the development of the learner. Efficient feedback, on the other hand, can bring substantial gains in making the learning process and progress transparent to both the learner and the teacher (Hattie 2012). The researcher Moreno regarded feedback as pivotal in improving knowledge and skill acquisition (2004: 109), hence its potential for language acquisition seems to be indisputable. As a consequence, and due to its great variability in effects and impacts, researchers have focused on finding out the crucial parameters of feedback use that influence its efficiency (e.g. Hattie 2012: 129-154, Sutton, Hornsey & Karen 2012, Reitbauer, Campbell, Mercer, Schumm-Fauster & Vaupetitsch 2013, Butler & Winne 1995: 245-281).

Although there exist many articles and studies investigating the effects of feedback interventions on learning and teaching, only limited critical attention has been devoted to the meaning of applied feedback in EFL classrooms, its impact and practice, especially in Austrian schools. Furthermore, in the context of EFL research emphasis has been laid upon the efficient correction of errors, but the notion of formative

feedback in its actual sense has not been the topic of much discussion. Although results show a greater transparency of the learning process when applying feedback that focuses on improvements and achievements of students, is goal-oriented and not expressed through grades or the marking system only (Hattie 2012: 1).

For these reasons, the aim of this diploma thesis is to fill this gap and investigate perspectives and perceptions of both Austrian high-school students and English teachers on feedback practices in Austrian EFL classrooms, in order to establish a link between the perceived reality and the theoretical considerations of feedback. The study I undertook was therefore driven by the following research questions: What beliefs do Austrian English teachers and high-school students hold with regard to feedback in the EFL classroom? And additionally, what are key factors that influence the use of formative feedback in Austrian EFL classrooms? Gaining answers on these questions from different perspectives is expected to reveal insights into different or similar understandings of feedback, its purpose and nature and its actual implementation practice in Austrian EFL classrooms. These findings will then contribute to the awareness and understanding of the meaning of feedback, how its application can be enhanced and how the theoretical positions that are held about feedback relate to perceived experiences and opinions.

Moreover, in order to fulfill the intended purpose of this thesis, I have decided to collect data from Austrian English teachers and Austrian high-school students in the form of individual interviews with teachers and a focused group interview bringing together students from Vienna and Lower Austria. The methods applied to compile this study are based on research reported in various relevant publications to gain a deeper understanding of feedback and as a further step of practices in Austrian EFL classrooms.

The following three chapters of this thesis will provide an overview of previous research concerning feedback and its role in the EFL classroom. Chapter 2 will define key terms in the context of feedback, describe its purpose and nature as well as give a historical survey on its conception and an overview of how it has been employed. Chapter 3 will outline the role of formative feedback for learning English as a second language by discussing the interaction approach, together with providing input and producing output, error correction and feedback on writing and speaking. Then chapter 4 will examine different parameters of feedback use, namely the timing, frequency, different types, forms and interaction formats of feedback use. Chapters 5 to 7 will present and discuss the results of the empirical studies undertaken for this thesis.

By addressing students and teachers, it is expected to identify the role of feedback in English learning environments in Austria and how forms of feedback are applied. The main objective of this project has been to raise awareness of constant improvement, development and the effectiveness of applied feedback as a tool to reach these goals, to make the learning process understandable and transparent for all persons involved.

2 A framework of formative feedback

In this first chapter, the notion of feedback and, in particular, formative feedback will be introduced to create a mutual understanding of its nature and purpose. Furthermore, the following discussion of theoretical considerations concerning feedback should contribute to the awareness of its significance for learning English as a second language as well as for teaching and learning in a more universal way.

2.1 Terms and definitions in the context of feedback

Different concepts exist, which aim at gathering information as well as reflecting on a learner's performance in order to gain deeper insights for future personal development, learning and growth. Among them feedback, evaluation and reflection represent instruments that try to uncover, name, analyze and interpret components of the learning process, making learning more visible and transparent to both the teacher and the learner.

In this context, feedback and evaluation procedures follow diverging purposes. Evaluation focuses on the objective, generalized assessment of a performance's quality and worth (Peerbhoy & Reeve 2007: 121) based on empirical data collected from quantitative and qualitative sources (Freeman, Lipsey & Rossi 2004: 2). In other words, Stufflebeam states that "evaluation means the provision of information through formal means, such as criteria, measurement, and statistics, to serve as rational bases for making judgments in decision situations" (1973: 21). This implies that the process of evaluation is usually based on a certain standard to validate its fulfillment and efficiency to possibly enact an enlightening function bringing new ideas to the fore (Schildkamp & Visscher 2010: 1390). Hence, different stakeholders such as teachers, parents and schools are able to assess the results of a project on the basis of certain criteria (Irving & Peterson 2008: 239). Feedback, in contrast, strives for triggering learning and direct behavioral or cognitive change through the interactive exchange of performance observations and experiences (Mory 1992: 6).

Both instruments have the goal of improving performance. However, while evaluations assess and interpret normative data for policy and decision makers, feedback puts an emphasis on an interactional information transmission concerning perceived behaviors and achievements.

Reflection is defined as a process of introspection as well as the rethinking and evaluation of an experience and tries to alter the gap between a learning experience and learning from it (Boud, Keogh & Walker 1985: 12). To build this bridge, reflection mechanisms are said to activate individual cognitive processes, provoking a person to deconstruct self-evidence and evaluate, question, criticize and create awareness of existing beliefs and assumptions (Hilden & Tikkamäki 2014: 288). Through reflection procedures, a new behavioral repertoire can be established and within this process, the role of feedback and evaluation is to contribute input for a profound analysis of performances and learning outputs.

2.2 Definitions of feedback

From a more general perspective, according to Ur, “feedback in the context of teaching [...] is the information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance” (2006: 242). Further the key aim of feedback should be to identify potential areas in which a learner can improve and engage in (Ur 2006: 242).

A great number of definitions have been used by researchers from various fields to describe the notion of feedback in the context of learning. Amongst them are Hattie and Timperley as well as Sigott who present feedback as a “consequence of performance” (Hattie & Timperley 2007: 81) and, therefore, it is always the result of an instructor giving some kind of input, followed by the possibility for the learner to produce an output. Ultimately, students then receive feedback on the performance they have produced or knowledge they have constructed from the input (Sigott 2013: 9). This implies that the usefulness of feedback depends on the context in which it appears, as without initial learning or at least surface information, feedback is given in a vacuum with no effect (Hattie et al. 2007: 82, 104). Furthermore, several educational researchers define feedback within an instructional context (Kulhavy 1977, Carter 1984, Cohen, 1985, Sales 1993), specifying feedback as any communication intended to provide information on the accuracy of a student’s output resulting from an instructional input (Mory 2004: 745). Kulhavy also speaks of an instruction and feedback continuum, which on the one end shows a clear distinction between giving instruction and giving feedback. However, on the other end, when feedback appears with a correctional comment, it closely becomes linked to instruction “[...] until the process itself takes on

the forms of new instruction, rather than informing the student solely about correctness” (1977: 212). In order to fulfill this instructional purpose, a feedback message has to give information which focuses on the task or process of learning that bridges the gap between the already performed output and the intended output (Sadler 2010: 538).

The concept of feedback and its research chronicles a long history, dating back to the beginnings of behaviorism at the beginning of the 20th century (Hattie 2011: 1). Its definitions have not changed fundamentally since then, however, a number of researchers have revalued the focus of its nature.

Since the publication of Kluger and DeNisi’s meta-analysis (1996) on the effects of feedback interventions, an increase in the number of references concerning feedback has been observed and is still growing (Hattie 2011: 265). Likewise, Sigott, Hattie and Timperley, Kluger and DeNisi put an emphasis on performance when defining feedback as “actions taken by (an) external agent(s) to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one’s task performance” (1996: 255). Winne and Butler are even more concise in their summary of the meaning of feedback, when they claim, “feedback is 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” (1994: 5740). As can be seen by Winne and Butler’s definition, feedback evolves from specific information given by a source regarding different foci of knowledge and understandings.

Reevaluating the previously mentioned definitions, a further component of feedback is that this information is given in relation to some set standard of performance (Van de Ridder, Stokking, McGaghie & Ten Cate 2008: 193), which can be formulated with regard to the learning goals of the class, but also within more global frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which describes certain criteria of European learners of English for specific language competences. Moreover, also Hattie and Timperley concur with the goal-directedness of feedback as an essential facet of feedback (Hattie 2009: 175). Sadler reasserts this claim by saying that in order for learners to adapt their behavioral or conceptual knowledge, they must have a concrete vision of a goal to further compare their performance with that standard to close the knowledge gap (Sadler 1989, quoted in Irving & Peterson 2008: 240).

With this brief analysis of definitions, feedback consists of a number of components, shared by the majority of researchers: 1) the sharing of information, 2) a

response to a learner's performance, 3) directed at a standard/goal, 4) to modify this performance, 5) imbedded in a certain learning context and 6) after some kind of input/instruction.

However, the depth and focus of definitions regarding feedback appear to be variable in their nature. Knight introduces a spectrum of feedback definitions, ranging from a broader perspective to a more specific one (2003: 43). On the broad end of the spectrum, feedback is defined as all discourse that improves learning. In the middle of the spectrum, Knight places "Tunstall and Gipps' typology which describes feedback as either evaluative, with implicit or explicit reference to norms, or descriptive, with reference given to achievement, competence or improvement" (Knight 2003, quoted in Irving & Peterson 2008: 239). At the narrower end of the spectrum, the definition of Sadler is positioned, claiming that feedback is concise and specific information closing the gap between a learner's performance and a concrete target value.

Due to the large body of feedback research and the considerable variability of feedback definitions concerning their broadness, an even more detailed analysis was undertaken to come to a satisfying working definition for this thesis. For this purpose and a more thorough outlook, research has identified three types of feedback, namely outcome feedback, corrective feedback and process feedback. While outcome and corrective feedback principally measure progress and monitor the correctness of an answer, process feedback tries to give explicit information on alternative learning strategies to improve learning and teaching processes. This is also the reason why the former two feedback types are often associated with summative assessment and the latter with formative assessment (Irving & Peterson 2008: 240). Although there seems to exist a prevalence of the use of corrective feedback and scores in schools, which again focuses on the correction of errors, formative feedback and its mediating function could be seen as a different approach to improve performance (Lee 2014: 202). The emphasis of this thesis is not put on the summative evaluation of student performances, but redirected towards the deployment of assessment during the learning process with an additional assistance of specific learning goals and formative feedback to improve learner outcomes (Hovards, Tsivitanidou & Zacharia 2014: 133). To summarize, Shute explains the concept of formative feedback "[...] as information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning" (2008: 154).

Formative feedback as a developmental tool does not only improve learning from a global perspective, but also represents a perpetual integrant in second language acquisition. It can provide a language learner with alternative linguistic information to produce modified output and notice gaps between the target language and the interlanguage (Mackey 2012: 114). In this context, according to Ellis, feedback “serves as a general term for information provided by listeners on the reception and comprehension of messages” (1994: 584). Other researchers like Vigil and Oller have argued for a more precise classification of the feedback message with a ‘cognitive’ component, which describes the actual understanding of the message, and the ‘affective’ feedback element that incorporates a motivational message shared by interlocutors during an interaction (1976, quoted in Ellis 1994: 584). Having described definitions of formative feedback in the context of second language acquisition in a general manner, a more precise investigation will follow in chapter 2.

Drawing on Winne & Butler (1994), Ellis (1994), Kluger & DeNisi (1996), Hattie & Timperley (2007) and Sadler (1989), formative feedback refers to an “information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, self/experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding that reduces the discrepancy between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood” (Hattie 2011: 265). This means the source of feedback can vary, as well as the effects it has on the learner.

The former definition, as feedback being the result of performance, will be the working definition of this thesis, as it contains all relevant components of formative feedback for the context of learning and especially language learning.

2.3 Historical view on the construction of feedback

The first investigations and theories on the concept of feedback reach back to an almost one century-long history and originate from psychological schools, namely Skinner’s behaviorism and Thorndike’s ‘Law of Effect’ study (Mory 2004: 746). In this study, Thorndike (1913) asserts that feedback functions as a ‘connector’ between responses and antecedent stimuli. When a response results in a “satisfactory outcome of any response tended to “stamp in” its connection with the given situation” (Woodworth 1952: 211). Furthermore, it is rather reenacted and might lead to a more intensified and improved learning experience (Mory 2004: 246). On the opposite side, behavior which is followed by inconvenience and discomfort, as for instance a punishment, is less likely

to be repeated in the future. Negative reinforcement rewards behavior by avoiding negative or uncomfortable consequences, which also increases the likelihood of this specific behavior being repeated (Brookhart 2010: 8). The perspective of feedback being information for a learner to establish the possibility of adapting behavior or performance and hence being able to correct an error according to this information, evolved from Thorndike's research as well as the viewpoint that feedback works as a reinforcer. The body of research concerning error correction influenced the contemporary understanding of formative feedback as well, with Sidney Pressey (1926) as a fundamental pioneer within this field (Mory 2004: 746). As this field of study plays a major role for the notion of feedback in the EFL classroom, a more detailed analysis will be provided in chapter 2.

Thorndike's original work marked the path for another important milestone that affected the concept of feedback. Skinner introduced his study of programmed instruction in 1958 using basic maxims of the 'Law of Effect' and the theory of reinforcement. The researcher suggested a solution to instructional problems with improved classroom materials and fostered the idea to present new information stepwise, strengthening and regulating desired outcomes. When the programmed instruction movement increased and gained importance in the scientific world, feedback served as a tool to reinforce, but also as a motivator provoking an entanglement of different perspectives. Consequently, over this period of time, instructional errors implied an aversive element that caused distress as well as a negative effect on self-concepts and thus avoidance and ignorance of errors represented a viewpoint of this movement that was at the forefront of error treatment (Heimbeck, Frese, Sonnentag & Keith 2003: 334). Later, however, Kulhavy and Wagner proposed that feedback with its motivational factors should be treated autonomously to support the clarification of the instructional content of a feedback message and possible other variables that could influence behavior and performance (1993: 15).

As can be observed by the previous analysis, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the notion of feedback was accompanied by confusion and disorientation regarding its nature and focus. Programmed instruction with its operant approach placed emphasis on the provision of a reinforcing message to combine desired and correct responses with previous stimuli and on a learning experience that was subdivided into small parts to enhance the probability of a successful outcome. Another perspective ascribed a motivational factor to feedback messages, acting as an incentive

resulting in an advanced response rate and increased accuracy. Finally, feedback served as a provider for information a learner could use to modify his or her response with a special attention on error correction (Kulhavy et al. 1993: 4-5).

In the 1970s, researchers started to question Thorndike's theory of reinforcement in connection with feedback effects, as a consequence of the non-existence of sufficient evidence for the claim that positive feedback acts as a reinforcer for wanted behavior (cf. Anderson, Kulhavy & Andre 1972). Rather, there had to be other underlying functions of feedback to understand its relevance and impact on learning.

Feedback as a reinforcement tool was alternated by an information-processing perspective on feedback, in which a learner applied error-correcting mechanisms. Thus, feedback from this point of view thrived on errors and its analysis represented a major goal with an emphasis on all metacognitive strategies which were involved in this process (Mory 2004: 747).

The different aspects of feedback which appeared throughout its scientific history still predominate the mindsets that exist towards the notion of feedback. The researchers Kulhavy and Wager relate to these by naming them the 'feedback triad' (1993: 5) with 1) feedback as a motivator/incentive for greater effort in future performances, 2) feedback with a reinforcing message that connects responses and 3) feedback as a provider of information with an emphasis on error correction. The most striking contrasts in the development of feedback principles manifest themselves in the treatment of error replies. In information-processing approaches the belief persisted that behavior can be adapted through external references and task demands. Furthermore, the principles in this theory refer to the importance of the learner within the feedback process as an active contributor (Kulhavy & Wager 1993: 5).

More recently, researchers are more concerned with the variability of effects that feedback has on student achievement and performance. As a consequence, the focus of research lies in the description and investigation of feedback characteristics that on the one hand, enhance achievement and on the other hand, constrain the learning process. Among them is Hattie, who contributed a synthesis of over 500 meta-analyses on different influences that impact student achievement. The average effect size for the influence of feedback on student achievement measured 0.79, which represented twice the average effect size of all investigated factors that impact student performances (Hattie 2012: 130). According to Hattie, in order to be considered as a beneficial effect for learning, interventions have to reach the so-called 'hinge-point' with an effect size

of at least 0.40 (2012: 3). At the minimum, twelve other meta-analyses exist which investigate the impact of feedback with varying results in effect sizes, ranging from 0.12 (Wilkinson 1981) to 1.24 (Skiba, Casey & Center 1986)¹. These outcomes display the wide-ranging variability of feedback effects, but also its possible efficacy for student achievement depending on different characteristics and their application.

Other theories, besides Thorndike's 'Law of Effect' or the reinforcement theory that influenced feedback research fundamentally, contributed to a better understanding of possible feedback effects, among them principles of the sociological control theory, "which emphasizes the discrepancy between a person's performance and their internal standards" (Coe & Visscher 2010: 324). The fundament of this theory is based on the idea that feedback which addresses this internal standard, regardless if implicitly or explicitly, is more likely to result in an attempt of trying to reduce this gap by intensifying efforts or lowering the standard. Subsequently, another theory provides insights into feedback effects, namely the theory of learned helplessness. This theory describes the consequences of frequently repeated negative feedback. In particular, if a learner experiences multiple aversive stimuli, he or she tries to avoid further encounters within this context and hence performance can decrease to a minimum (Coe et al. 2010: 324). A third theory offering explanations for possible influences of feedback is the social cognitive theory by Bandura, in which a characterization of two feedback mechanisms is given. One the one hand, feedback initiates a self-evaluative mechanism that leads to a comparison of performances to internal standards or goals. Otherwise, another regulator is activated that impacts the responses to feedback, namely "a self-efficacy mechanism that judges the capacity for attaining those goals" (Coe et al. 2010: 324). This theory underlines the necessity for both, the provision of positive and negative feedback to motivate students as well as to improve self-esteem and the fostering of the belief that students can reach set standards (Bandura 1991: 251).

All of these theories paved the way to a more profound basis of feedback research and influenced its role for learning. However, Kluger and DeNisi's findings significantly contributed to the debate on the variability of feedback effects, due to their comprehensive meta-analyses of 607 effect sizes (1996: 254) and, as a consequence, formulated the 'feedback intervention theory' (FIT). Investigated feedback regulators included praise, task complexity, time constraints, verbal or written feedback and

¹ cf. Hattie, John; Timperley, Helen. 2007. "The power of feedback". In *Review of Educational Research* 77(1), 83, for a more detailed account and the complete table of effect sizes and meta-analyses.

various types of tasks. The basic idea by which the FIT is driven is the belief that “FIs (feedback interventions) change the locus of a learner’s attention among three levels of control: (a) task-learning processes, (b) task-motivation processes and (c) meta-task processes” (Shute 2008: 168). The underlying premise of Kluger and DeNisi’s FIT lead to the argument that formative feedback that puts attention to a task rather than on the self, results in increased student achievement. In general, the average effect size of feedback effects accounted for a value of 0.40, which shows a “moderate positive effect on performance” (Kluger & DeNisi 1996: 258) for the FIs investigated. Additionally, Kluger and DeNisi came to the conclusion that “FIs do not always increase performance and under certain conditions are detrimental to performance” (1996: 275). Adverse effects are contingent on certain feedback variables, which can be collectively categorized in three different categories: “the cues of the feedback message, the nature of the task performed and situational (and personality) variables” (Kluger & DeNisi 1996: 267). The main point of FIs presented is the fact that they actively change a learner’s attention and hence lead to behavior regulation, as well as to an effect on behavior by comparing feedback to inner goals and standards which are arranged in a personal hierarchy (Shute 2008: 168). The hypothesis that becomes more apparent is the importance of a deeper understanding of feedback effects which impact the outcome of feedback interventions, making it possible to optimize their potential for learning.

Another often-cited study by Bangert-Drowns, Kulik and Morgan surveys forty different research studies on feedback, examining the variance of feedback effects with the investigation of feedback variables such as type, timing and error rates. The results showed that feedback has low effects on achievement. Nevertheless, one finding indicated the higher effectiveness of correct response feedback over verification feedback which only indicates the correctness of a performance. Overall, according to Bangert-Drowns et al., feedback enhances learning if it encourages mindfulness, meaning that feedback causes a student to reflect on both situational cues and underlying meanings of concepts and problems (Shute 2008: 172).

The process of giving and receiving feedback seems to be an unavoidable part of learning for (Bangert-Drowns et al. 1991: 214)

any theory that depicts learning as a process of mutual influence between learners and their environments [and] must involve feedback implicitly or explicitly, because without feedback, mutual influence is by definition

impossible. Hence, the feedback construct often appears as an essential element in theories of learning and instruction.

Therefore, the existence of feedback and its potential benefits are indisputable among researchers within this field. The description and investigation of effective characteristics has not been sufficient for comprehending mechanisms of different feedback variables.

Besides Hattie and Timperley, another more recent study by Narciss and Huth confirmed the positive implications of systematically planned formative feedback on motivation and achievement. In order to achieve growth in learning, three different contexts have to be taken into account: instructional factors, learner variables such as prior knowledge and feedback factors consisting of the content, the function (for instance motivational, cognitive, metacognitive) and the presentation of its characteristics, in which timing, adaptivity and other factors play an essential role for increasing achievement (Narciss & Huth 2004: 181- 190).

Another research field of interest deals with the comparison of formative feedback (written and verbal) and the assigning of grades on school performance. Among them are the studies of Page (1958) and Butler and Nisan (1986), who expressed a preference for formative feedback to achieve higher student output compared to giving grades (Brookhart 2010: 11).

Under certain circumstances feedback effects might be more effective to encourage student achievement positively than under others. However, both negative and positive feedback effects have to be analyzed to understand their powerfulness and impact on learning. In order to bring forward development and growth in learning, the purpose of feedback is described by Sheerens and Bosker, arguing that “it seems that highly structured learning or direct teaching, which emphasizes testing and feedback, again emerges as the most effective teaching form” (1997: 219). Further, “they claimed that for transfer to occur there needs to be deep-level, connected structures that is, knowing and understanding needs to be conceptually deep, cohesive, and connected to other key ideas, relevant prior knowledge, multiple representations, and everyday experience” (Pugh & Bergin 2006: 148). The argument of Hattie and Timperley’s meta-analyses represents the belief that both learning and teaching need to be transparent to reach higher degrees of achievement (Hattie 2009: 38) and after this broad establishment of understanding, feedback could be seen as a notion to make this visibility possible.

2.4 Purpose and nature of feedback

Hundreds of research studies have confirmed that feedback “[...] is one of the more instructionally powerful and least understood features in instructional design” (Cohen 1985: 33). However, the question remains why this is the case and what the specific purpose and underlying mechanisms of feedback are.

Essentially, the major purpose of formative feedback is to enhance student knowledge, competences and understanding through the transparency of the learning process and enabling students to close a critical gap. In addition, feedback triggers reflection capacities and “refers to the process of securing information enabling change through adjustment or calibration of efforts in order to bring a person closer to a well-defined goal” (Hattie & Yates 2014: 66). From a long-term perspective, internalized feedback processes can lead to the empowerment of students to control their own learning and become self-regulated learners (Sadler 2010: 536, Bangert-Drowns et al. 1991: 2014). The vision is to view students as agents who are in charge of their own learning and consequently reflect upon their learning and development, set goals and strive for information on development potentials (Lee 2014: 208).

For a more detailed outlook on possible feedback purposes various researchers have formulated functions of feedback that show its potential uses. Black and William identified two functions, the one describing the directive function of feedback that indicates specifically what needs to be changed and the facilitative function that only provides comments on possible ways to re-conceptualize (1998: 47-52). Other researchers have come to a more comprehensive and specific conclusion. Butler and Wine propose five essential functions and situations in which feedback can set certain mechanisms in motion (1995: 265):

- 1) When students’ conceptual understandings or beliefs are consistent with instructional objectives, feedback can *confirm* that condition.
- 2) If students lack information, feedback can help students *add* information, thereby *elaborating* and *enriching* prior knowledge.
- 3) Where elements of prior knowledge are incorrect or prior beliefs are inappropriate, feedback can provide information to *replace* or *overwrite* those propositions.

- 4) If students' understandings are basically correct, they still may need to *tune* those understandings, for example, by *discriminating* between concepts or by *specifying* conditions for applying learned rules
- 5) If students hold false theories that are incompatible with new material to be learned, they may need to completely *restructure* schemata with which information in the domain is represented.

As can be seen by this examination, feedback can activate various strategies and mechanisms when dealing with a response to a performance with the goal to modify behavior and knowledge. The point to be made here is that these activated mechanisms try to fulfill the purpose of closing a gap between the actual state of understanding and the target state. In Latham and Locke's goal setting theory, the argument is made that in order to regulate behavior an evaluation and comparison to a feedback-standard takes place. This theory as well as the control theory (Carver & Scheier 1981) and others consider behavior to be goal directed and feedback serves the purpose to judge performance in relation to that standard (DeNisi et al. 1996: 259). Hence, a variety of researchers (DeNisi & Kluger 1996; Black & William 1998; Latham & Locke 2002; Shute 2008) have expressed the main purpose of feedback as follows, "Feedback is information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way" (Ramaprasad 1983: 4). Also citing Hattie, the function of feedback "[...] is to reduce discrepancies between current understandings and performance and a learning intention or a goal" (Hattie 2009: 175).

As goal setting theory takes on an essential role in the context of formative feedback and learning, this subject will be dealt with in chapter 1.4.2. Another fundamental model to comprehend the meaning of formative feedback will be presented next.

2.4.1 The Johari Window - perceptions of performances

The Johari awareness model of interpersonal processes by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham represents a paradigm for research in the fields of interpersonal communication, self-awareness and personal development. It describes information processing in communicative exchanges with two constitutive interpersonal procedures, namely disclosure and feedback. Its aim is to mediate between a person's self-perception and outside perceptions of others on that person's behavior, performances and understandings. By explicitly communicating these impressions, awareness can be

raised towards potentials in development (Ingham & Luft 1955: 1-3). Furthermore, when two persons interact, the quality of their relationship is also dependent on the specific contributions of each party and as a consequence, mechanisms of self-knowledge and self-disclosure take turns while exchanging information (Newstrom & Rubenfeld 1983: 117).

The Johari Window consists of a fourfold table with four areas depicting different perspectives of the self into quadrants, which consider the awareness of behavior, knowledge, feelings and needs. The horizontal coordinate distinguishes between information that is known or unknown to the self, whereas the vertical line discriminates between areas that are known to others or unknown.

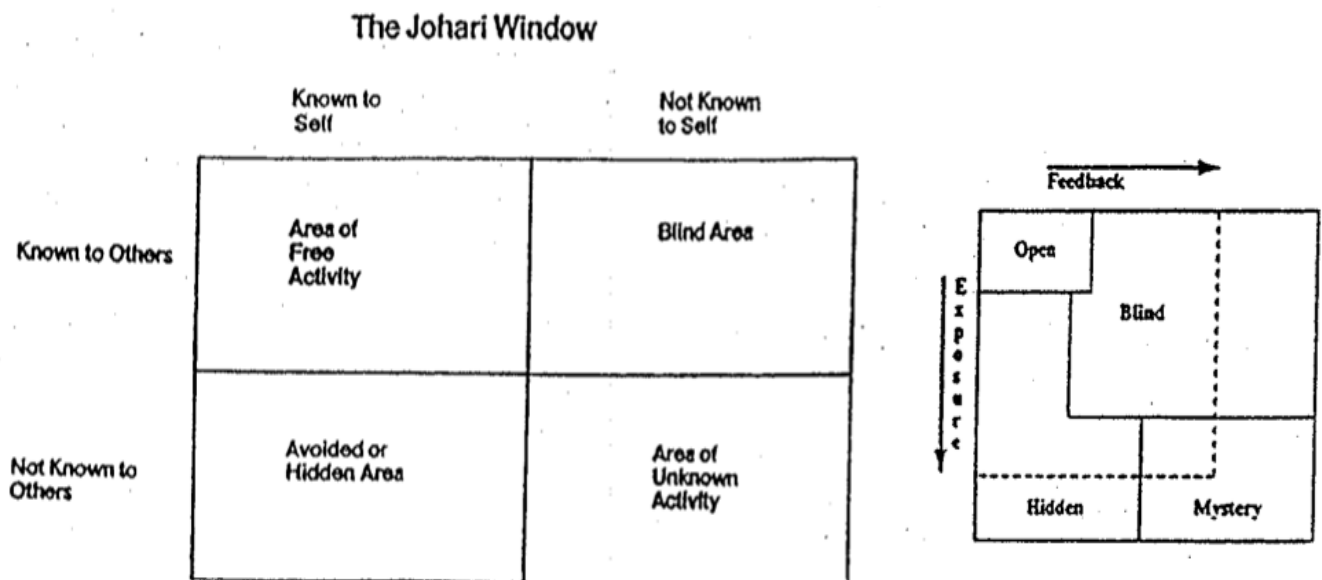


Figure 1: Ingham and Luft's Johari Awareness Model of interpersonal processes (Luft 1982: 1-2)

Ingham and Luft present the following definitions for the four quadrants comprising the model (1982: 3):

Quadrant 1, the area of free activity, refers to behavior and motivation known to self and known to others.

Quadrant 2, the blind area, where others can see things in ourselves of which we are unaware.

Quadrant 3, the avoided or hidden area, represents things we know but do not reveal to others (e.g. a hidden agenda or matters about which we have sensitive feelings).

Quadrant 4, area of unknown activity. Neither the individual nor others are aware of certain behaviors or motives. Yet we can assume their existence because eventually some of these things become known, and it is then realized that these unknown behaviors and motives were influencing relationships all along.

Through the two former mentioned interpersonal processes, exposure and feedback, a reallocation of awareness and changes can be accomplished in size and shape in any of the four quadrants. The fundamental idea behind formative feedback is realized when taking a closer look at quadrant 2, the blind area. When feedback is exchanged, the blind area of a person decreases and the open area enlarges, exposing oneself to the other conversationalist. Within this process, interpersonal characteristics are revealed through the framing of the feedback, body language, behavior as well as signals sent. (Luft 1982: 3-6). Consequently, feedback does not only allow error correction and response to a performance, but also the creation of rapport and a more confiding relationship between student and teacher (Perez, Fuentealba, De La Barra, Rojas & Cisternas 2013: 150-152). To sum up, the purpose of formative feedback is to identify blind areas through information exchanges, possibly resulting in the modification of behavior, altered thinking and beliefs for learning and personal development.

2.4.2 Goal setting and learning

The notion of feedback and targeted learning are closely intertwined and interaction between those two, according to previous demonstrations, seems to be an inevitable constituent of increased achievement and enhancing feedback effects.

One of the basic studies on goal setting in the context of feedback research is the work by Sadler, who established the connection between feedback and the effort of reducing the discrepancy between output and a desired target as the “notion of the gap” (Hattie 2011: 2). Following Sadler, three preconditions have to be met for feedback to be beneficial, namely the possession of a goal’s concept, the comparison of the current level with that standard, and the effort to reduce this gap. The assimilation of feedback messages heavily relies on a goal’s accuracy and how it is communicated to the learner, as well as the sense-making and evaluative skills of the recipient (Juwah, Macfarlane-Dick, Matthew, Nicol, Ross & Smith 2004: 4). Kluger and DeNisi comment on this issue, making a remark that “we are more likely to increase effort when the intended goal is clear, when high commitment is secured for it, and when belief in eventual success is high” (1996: 260). For a more profound understanding of the role of goals in

the feedback cycle, key researchers in the field created a model to depict formative assessment, feedback and self-regulated learning (Juwah, Macfarlane-Dick, Matthew, Nicol & Smith 2004: 5), which is build on an originally published model by Butler and Winne (cf. 1995: 248).

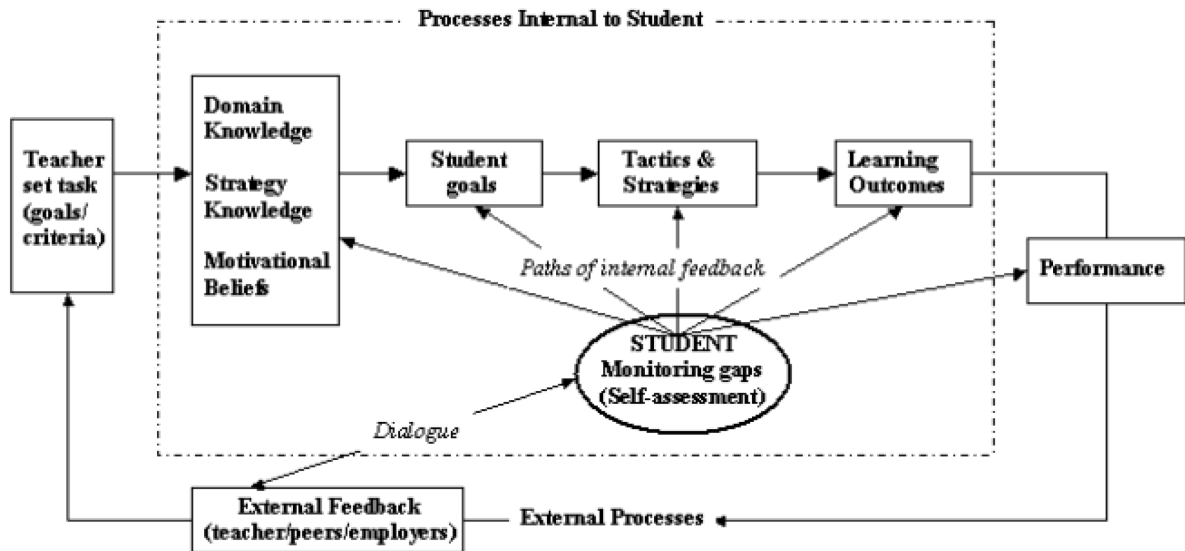


Figure 2: A model of the formative assessment and feedback (Juwah, Macfarlane-Dick, Matthew, Nicol, Ross, Smith 2004: 5)

As can be seen by this scheme, the starting point of the feedback cycle is a teacher's instruction of a task. The engagement with an activity presupposes that students form their own personal interpretation of the framework and requirements linked to the task with their equipped prior knowledge and motivational beliefs. Adapted from this internal conception, students try to reach these goals through the application of strategies to arrive at producing learning outcomes. Internal feedback is generated through the supervision of this interaction between a task and its outcome considering the intended goal. This process is accompanied by a continuing comparison of present progress and internal standards, which could lead to a re-interpretation of tactics, knowledge and internal concepts on all levels. The provision of external feedback can conform or conflict with the student's interpretation, but can also pave the way for reevaluation and modification (Juwah et al. 2004: 5). What becomes apparent when taking a closer look at this model is the visibility and transparency of goals for both the teacher and the learner which is of great significance.

The researchers Locke and Latham also made a major contribution to understanding the relationship between feedback and goal setting. They unfolded four mechanisms of goals that apparently affect performance. Firstly, goals focus attention to activities that are relevant for the attainment of the goal. Secondly, following a goal has a motivational factor (Latham & Locke 2002: 706), because when a discrepancy is recognized, learners are motivated to diminish it. Kluger and DeNisi also refer to a negative-feedback-loop, which can be restored by looking at Miller's T.O.T.E model (cf. Miller, Galanter, Pribram 1986), short hand for test-operate-test-exit (1996: 259). Thirdly, goals increase endurance and ultimately, they arouse the indirect use of task-specific knowledge and strategies (Latham et al. 2002: 706-707). The role of feedback in relation to goals is further specified by Latham and Locke as follows, "Summary feedback is a moderator of goal effects in that the combination of goals plus feedback is more effective than goals alone" (2002: 708) and goals inform individuals (1990: 23)

as to what type or level of performance is to be attained so that they can direct and evaluate their actions and efforts accordingly. Feedback allows them to set reasonable goals and to track their performance in relation to their goals so that adjustment in effort, direction, and even strategy can be made as needed.

For Kluger and DeNisi, the supposition that behavior is monitored through the comparison of standards and the reduction of discrepancies appears to be too simplistic. According to the researchers, this theory disregards the simultaneous activation of a variety of norms and detrimental feedback effects on learning. Hence, a hierarchy of feedback loops is introduced, positioning negative-feedback-loops, which concern the self, at the top of the hierarchy, and at the bottom, feedback-loops are comprised of physical action goals. Feedback-loops which are situated high in the hierarchy can monitor lower level loops in so far that outcomes of higher level loops adapt the goals of the lower levels (DeNisi et al. 1996: 261). This thesis is also supported by action identification theory research by Vallacher and Wegner (1987).

Current approaches to goal setting theories try to offer practical guidelines for the application of goals. Hattie and Timperley present three questions that help guiding the learning process, these are "Where am I going?", "How am I going" and "Where to next?" (Hattie & Timperley 2007: 88). Regarding the first question, commitment and challenge present two main components of goals, which when shared and set at the right level can increase the effectiveness of feedback. Goal commitment can be affected by

numerous factors, among them for instance peer feedback, which will be a topic in chapter 2. The second question is concerned with progress feedback, reflection on personal performances and comparative effects. The third question tries to open up possibilities for future learning such as more complex challenges, enhanced fluency, other strategies that could be used, more profound understanding or simply more information on a task (Hattie & Timperley 2007: 88- 90).

When learning a second language, goals can direct attention to potential areas of the interlanguage. Krashen points to the priority of unconscious acquisition processes for higher levels of success over Gass' claim on the concept of 'apperception' in language learning. This process does not necessarily mean that language problems are perceived actively, but attentional mechanisms form new mental concepts in connection with existing mental systems. Although the role of attention in second language acquisition represents a controversial issue, it is acknowledged that explicit attention and noticing promote second language learning (Mackey 2012: 131). This assumption is supported by Robinson, Mackey, Gass and Schmidt, who state that "all L2 learning is conscious [...], since input does not become intake for learning unless it is noticed" (2011: 250).

3 The role of formative feedback in the EFL classroom

After having established a general framework for the concept of formative feedback and its potential functions for learning and development, these taking of bearings will contribute to the more specific research on the role of formative feedback in EFL classrooms. Hence, the second theoretical chapter of this thesis deals with questions of norms used in Austrian schools as a basis for feedback in EFL classrooms, fundamental theories underlying SLA and feedback, controversies in the context of feedback and SLA research such as error correction, uptake and feedback on writing or speaking performances.

In particular, interaction research, the discussion of input and output processes, and additionally, the negotiation of meaning in SLA have contributed to the amount of progress made concerning the examination of a great variety of interactional factors and subsequent processes involved in EFL development. Supplementary to the research body dedicated to the validation of the interaction approach, there exists a respectable fundament of supportive propositions that proclaim a positive connection between specific interactional processes, especially conversational interactions and L2 learning (Mackey 2012: 3). Mackey provides another summarizing account for the beneficial impact of interaction and feedback in L2 acquisition (2012: 4-5):

Interaction is argued to provide L2 learners with learning opportunities during exchanges of communicative importance that contain critical linguistic information. The input and output processes involved in interaction are such that the cognitive mechanisms driving learning can be optimally engaged in processing form-meaning relationships in linguistic data. Interaction often involves feedback and modification of utterances as interlocutors attempt to resolve the misunderstandings sometimes caused by problems with language use. Through interaction, L2 learners are provided with opportunities to notice differences between their own formulations of the target language and the language used by their native (NS) and non-native speaking (NNS) conversational patterns, and they are sometimes pushed to modify their output in order to be understood.

Interaction formats are variable in everyday encounters, however, in order to promote L2 learning, interactional exchanges of teachers and learners should include information on personal weaknesses, strengths and communicative requirements to arouse and supply language that is adjusted to a learner's individual development stage (ibid).

Before a deeper discussion of further theoretical constructs follows, norms and competence frameworks will be introduced, which are relevant for learning EFL in Austrian schools.

3.1 Standards and frameworks as a basis of feedback

Goal setting from a more general perspective has been the topic of the previous chapter, and as a next step, presuppositions from the insights gained will serve as a foundation for a more precise look at official reference frames that provide norms, standards and goals to be achieved while learning English as a second language in Austrian schools.

According to Sigott “norms can be seen as surface-level expressions of underlying competence” (2013: 11), and as such present “an idealized schematic construct which serves as a reference for teaching” (quoted in Widdowson 1990: 127). Widdowson further argues that common frameworks and syllabi do not only contain pedagogic aims that are formulated in consideration of educational effectiveness, but are also comprised of beliefs and ideals deriving from educational policy makers who represent ideological positions of the educational system (Widdowson 1990: 127). In reference to Clark, the researcher terms this influence of policies in the establishment of norms and frameworks as “educational value systems” (1987: 3). A shift in the specification of syllabi contents can be registered from a structural to a more functional orientation, putting a focus on the actual use of language, goal-directedness and the purpose of language learning rather than on procedures (Widdowson 1990: 131). Wilkins explicates this by saying, “The process of deciding what to teach is based on considerations of what the learner should most usefully be able to communicate in the foreign language” (1976: 19). Proficiency scales should also “reflect language learning abilities and to sample real-life situations rather than to collect them” (Davies 1995: 151-152), as copying real life leads to partial and biased results.

From a historical viewpoint, since the 1960s, the description of linguistic competences has experienced substantial development, starting with component-by-skill matrices, in which components derived from findings of structural linguists and skills from receptive and productive modes of language use. Components were defined as phonology, morphology, vocabulary, syntax and fluency, and the respective skills included listening, reading, speaking and writing. With this groundwork in mind, improvements were made concerning considerations of the purpose of language use, the

setting, differences regarding register and patterns of language beyond sentence level (Sigott 2013: 11). In the 1980s Swain and Canale produced an advanced version, which not only described the levels of linguistic components, but also included discourse, strategic and sociolinguistic competences (Canale 2013: 6). A few years later in 1990, Bachmann refined Swain and Canale's framework, adding pragmatic competences to the description of required norms for communicative language ability. This competence was further separated into the illocutionary competence, which denotes the knowledge necessary to apply language functions accordingly to the communicative context and the sociolinguistic competence, which is essential in selecting language with the appropriate social meaning and considering prevailing conventions in a certain communicative situation (Bachman 1990: 94-95).

In 2001, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) was published by the Council of Europe, as the European answer to the challenge of specifying competences of language learning, their operationalization not only for learning, but also for teaching and assessment purposes (Figueras 2012: 477). Shortly after its introduction, the CEFR gained global attention and was used internationally, especially because of the standardized terminology of reference level labels (A1, A2, B2, C1 and C2), its real-life orientation on language use and its relevance for governments, policy makers and other public institutions (Sigott 2013: 13).

In opposition to Swain, Canale or Bachman's approach, the CEFR represents an analytical scale which characterizes language competencies by answering questions concerning what students should know or be able to do by means of their linguistic knowledge at a certain mastery level. The global scale describes competences at each of six levels within the four skills. The respective levels incorporate descriptions of what a student at this stage should know and do, also referred to as descriptors. In the process of acquiring a second language, the descriptors offer a guided route to reach mastery levels and are formulated in can-do phrases (Mackey 2012: 13) that support the drafting of goals and outcomes. The general B1 level, 'independent user', along the proficiency scale for example is defined as (CEFR 2001: 24):

B1: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of

personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

One instance of descriptors in the CEFR for A2 listening comprehension reads as follows (CEFR 2001: 32):

A2 listening comprehension: can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.

Further scales of the CEFR are concerned with language use modalities, such as oral/written production, aural/visual/audio-visual reception and spoken/written interaction (CEFR 2001: 58-63).

Efforts to create an international educational framework for English paid off, as the CEFR level labels, with or without the diverse descriptors, have been integrated into common practice on all educational levels in Europe (Figueras 2012: 479). Austrian national educational standards for English represent a characteristic example of their use. In Austria, the CEFR and national curricula for various school types and levels are accepted as the presumed foundation of language competences that Austrian learners of English have to achieve. However, as Figueras points out, “the CEFR level descriptors are not objectives or outcomes. A level descriptor in the CEFR states what is observable in a learner at a certain level. A learning outcome needs to state what the learner will have learnt and will be able to do at the end of a course or study” (2012: 481). This means that descriptors help to formulate goals and objectives, support the development of learning materials and exercises and provide guidance for assessment tasks (2012: 482), but do not replace the process of formulating goals. For this purpose, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs, more specifically the *Österreichische Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum*, developed a European Language Portfolio (ELP) as an instrument for self-assessment, reflection and guidance of the individual learning process, based on the CEFR level labels. With the portfolio, students are able to assess their own progress with simple can-do descriptions according to the different skills. For spoken interaction at the B1 level for instance, students are required to do the following: “I can act out a role in a scene from everyday life and also improvise when doing so” (*Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum* 2011: 13). Besides the construction of the ELP, another implementation of Austrian education policy aligns on learning outcomes, namely the concept of the *Bildungsstandards*, which derive from and include components of the CEFR and the Austrian English

curricula. *Bildungsstandards* characterize basic demands of learning outcomes in the form of specific abilities and competencies also in relation to the standardized Matura examinations (BIFIE 2011-2015). Publications from the *Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens* (BIFIE) regarding the description of competencies in English exist for the 8th grade. For the competence level of A2 reading, one learning outcome reads as follows, “Kann vertrauten Alltagstexten die wichtigsten Informationen entnehmen (z.B. Prospekten, Speisekarten, Fahrplänen, Schildern, Formularen und kurzen sachlichen Mittelungen- auch im Internet)” (BIFIE 2011: 2).

With all of these instruments in mind, a great variety of support exists to support teachers and learners to formulate accurate and specific learning goals to give effective formative feedback. Norms guide feedback in so far as they provide an indication of the learner’s current competence status and the desired change to reach a specific learning outcome.

3.2 The interaction approach, feedback and SLA

Numerous interaction research papers have investigated the connection between certain ingredients of interaction in association with SLA, especially regulating the specific types of input, feedback and created output possibilities learners obtain in different kinds of interactional circumstances. More recent examinations are also concerned with the complexity of social, cultural and linguistic components and impacts of learner-centered mechanisms in regard to second language construction, leading to a more all-embracing model in the theory of interaction in SLA. Nevertheless, Mackey points out that “interaction itself is not currently claimed to be sufficient for the learning of a second language. Instead, as a framework for research, it provides a perspective on language learning” (2012: 4). Further citing Pica “over a decade ago, the interaction hypothesis lends its weight to any number of theories” (1998: 10). This is the reason why interaction research should not be seen as a complete theory, but rather as a facilitator of many processes involved in language learning, and is hence better described as an approach (Mackey 2012: 4).

Ellis describes the process of interaction as “the social behavior that occurs when one person communicates with another” (1999: 1). According to Ellis, communication in this sense includes interpersonal as well as intrapersonal phenomena,

as not only engaging in a conversation with another person accounts for communication, but also constructing an understanding or a response of information (ibid). For Chapelle, there exists a variety of different behavior and mechanisms which can be activated by interaction and are of value for second language learning, such as the negotiation and co-constructing of meaning, attending to linguistic form, prompting attention to language, obtaining enhanced input and cognitive processing of input (2003: 56). Other benefits might be added to this list. However, it is important to note at this point that in order to acquire a language, Lee et al. point out that “crucial for language acquisition is what we call an ‘interaction instinct’. This instinct is an innate drive among human infants to interact with conspecific caregivers” (Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates & Schumann 2009: 5), thus interaction can be understood as a foundational innate human instinct. As also proposed by Ellis, “interaction is the primary purpose for our species-specific language capacity” (1999: 1).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Hatch and Long paved the way for further explorations into the interactions of learners and their NS and NSS interlocutors. Relying on Hatch’s hypothesis that “language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on conversations, out of learning how to communicate” (1978: 63), Long assents to this claim by emphasizing the necessity to communicate with NS to produce the adequate condition for SLA (1981: 275). In the course of developments in interaction research, Krashen introduced the influential ‘Input Hypothesis’, which was driven by the idea that SLA was directed by being exposed to comprehensible input (Krashen 1985: 2). As a consequence, teaching practices focused on lingual methods, pattern drills and dialogue memorization (Cook 2009: 139). In opposition to Krashen, Long persisted on the significance of discourse structures and interactional exchanges, as these procedures provide learners with the possibility to obtain further linguistic information and change their output, which could even be of more relevance to SLA than input alone (Long 1981, quoted in Mackey 2012: 5). The investigation of the value of conversational adjustments in interaction lead to the identification of strategies used, such as topic switches, comprehension checks, clarification requests, tolerance of ambiguity, utterance repetition, use of slow pace, confirmation checks and stress of key words, which support a learner to draw attention to form-meaning relationships and discrepancies of input and their interlanguage (Mackey 2012: 6).

Further investigations at the time lead to the conclusion that input alone was not enough for SLA (cf. Swain 2000: 99) and this was the reason for Swain to put forward

the ‘Output Hypothesis’, in which he proposed the need to produce and utilize language as well to gain deeper language proficiency (Swain 2000: 99-102). Following this newly gained insight, the ambition rose to demonstrate a direct relationship between increased achievement and interaction. Pioneers in this field were Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki’s research paper on lexical acquisition (1994) and Gass and Varoni’s findings indicating a beneficial effect on delayed production and a more immediate impact on comprehension gains (1994). The former study showed that test groups who were exposed to interactional modified input received more input overall, leading to a higher number of input possibilities through the negotiation of meaning. Learners also improved in vocabulary acquisition and comprehension through the provision of modified input (Ellis et al. 1994, quoted in Mackey 2012: 7).

To sum up, since the 1970s, researchers tried to provide proof for a direct link between interactional processes and L2 development, as well as more detailed explanations on the individual components involved in interaction, which also demonstrated a facilitating function. The following sections provide an overview on the various constituents of interaction and feedback that have been identified as being prominent in the interaction research body.

3.2.1 Providing input and instruction

Within SLA research there exists mutual consent towards the acceptance of the necessity to provide L2 learners with exposure to the target language and hence, input is to be known as a substantial part of language learning. Krashen, who built the foundation of the ‘Input Hypothesis’, stated that “comprehensible input is necessary for acquisition, but it is not sufficient. The acquirer needs to be ‘open’ to the input” (1985: 3). At this point, Krashen describes ‘the affective filter’, which can be seen as a mental block of a language learner that is activated when the learner feels anxious, unmotivated or a lack of self-confidence (1985: 3). ‘The affective filter’ is open to process an input when “the acquirer is so involved in the message that he temporarily forgets he is hearing or reading another language” (Krashen 1985: 4). Furthermore, Krashen proposed that in order for input to be comprehensible and effective, it has to be addressed slightly beyond the abilities of the learner (Krashen 1985, quoted in Gass & Madden 1985: 5). In this context, Corder makes an essential distinction between the terms ‘input’ and ‘intake’, the former describing information that is available to be processed and the latter being the processed information that actually does go in, both

mechanisms depending on the control of the learner (Corder 1974, quoted in Gass & Madden: 1985: 3).

Mackey (2012) offers a more recent account concerning the value of input. According to Mackey, “input refers to the language that is available to a learner through any medium (from listening or reading, for example, or through gestures in the case of signed languages)” (2012: 9).

In the field of interaction, researchers have tried to typify the input directed at learners and have observed that comments may include linguistic and conversational adjustments in various areas, such as phonological, syntactic and lexical choices (Long 1985: 388). In this process, it has been found that input follows the purpose of making language utterances more comprehensible and simplified, in fact, elaborations allow even deeper examinations of semantic details and varieties in L2 structures. From a sociocultural perspective, the importance of instructional scaffolding has been discussed, which can result in enhanced problem-solving abilities and an extended repertoire of communicative strategies (Mackey 2012: 10). The notion of scaffolding has been termed by Bruner (Wood, Bruner & Ross 1976), who describes it as the supportive assistance in the learning process oriented to the individual needs of the learner and targeted towards a previous unfolded goal. By providing comprehensible input, the learner should be pushed into the ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky 1978, quoted in Golding & Wass 2014: 671). Scaffolding does not only have to appear in a verbal form, but can also aid the learning process with visuals, which can further diminish the affective filter of a learner (quoted in Golding & Wass 2014: 671-677). Another possible impact of modified input is described by Ellis, noting that “interaction involves conditions under which learners can establish links between unfamiliar items in the input and their existing knowledge” through keeping involved “in the kind of mental activity required for new material to be stored in long-term memory” (1999: 26, 29). This transmission process implies that also other mental mechanisms are involved and trained when perceiving an input.

As has been stated, one of the main roles of input and interactional modifications identified is to help the student to decipher and alter incomprehensible output through more simplified input. However, in opposition to Krashen’s hypothesis, more recently, it has been suggested that incomprehensible input also has to offer possibilities for L2 learners to develop their language level, as it might animate language learners to actively notice discrepancies of their interlanguage in comparison to the L2 goal

(Mackey 2012: 115). Gass et al. argue that through clarification requests and “when faced with unknown linguistic forms, learners have the opportunity to observe the mismatches between their L2 grammar and that of their L2 target, which may ultimately lead to a reanalysis and restructuring of their interlanguage” (1998: 301). Furthermore, White adds to the criticism on the ‘Input Hypothesis’ that it is limited to an emphasis on meaning and extra-linguistic criteria, but disregards the significance of internal changes in the system, does not take into consideration cases in which input is not supportive and undervalues the difficulty of the acquisition of form (1987: 108).

More recent studies put an emphasis on the competence of learners, how to make use of the received input and their individual perspectives on interactions. A number of investigations have highlighted that interactions do not just happen, but are actively shaped by experiences, beliefs, opinions and expectations of individuals about their interlocutors and the respective communicative context in which they exchange information. For this reason, Mackey has undertaken a research on learners’ perceptions and roles within different interactional processes, as for example when they obtain input, receive feedback, construct output or test linguistic hypotheses. In summary, findings showed that the possibility of negotiation made the input more comprehensible when learners sensed an immediate communicative need for it (2012: 10-11).

Many more central theoretical questions in the field of input in the context of interaction have been raised over time and were thoroughly investigated. A broad overview on some essential findings and topics will be presented next.

Second language learners frequently request instructional response on their language productions and in SLA research especially two topics have been of great interest: the incorporation of meaning and form, as well as the appropriate degree level of explicitness and implicitness in instructional forms. In the integration of form and meaning it has been suggested that instruction without clear indications of the respective context shows unsatisfactory results, but also if an L2 input is presented within meaningful units it does not lead to the desired results, as essential linguistic details do not seem to be processed or learned. However, benefits can be observed in areas of comprehension, motivation and fluency due to enhanced knowledge in basic oral language. Further perspectives on the integration of form and meaning in instruction are provided in frameworks such as focus-on-form instruction, content-based learning, genre-based language curricula and task-based language learning (Ortega 2011: 179-180). The question on the dimensional aspect of the explicitness in

instructions reveals a preference for more directional modifications that provoke the learner to pay attention to language problems over implied and implicit addressing of issues (Ortega 2011: 180).

In the broader sense of instruction in the context of effective formative feedback, Narciss and Huth identified three major elements of instruction that interact with feedback as well as learner characteristics, consisting of the instructional objectives, the respective task and errors and obstacles involved (2004, quoted in Shute 2008: 172).

The last area of interest examines the processing of input from a cultural perspective. Input to L2 learners imbedded in an English-speaking social setting contains fundamental cultural information “within which the emergent meaning of the code must be situated and interpreted”. Saville-Troike further explains that “new words are encountered along with new cultural artifacts, new verbal routines with new social expectations in role relationships, and new rules for appropriate use with new cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs” (1985: 52), hence demonstrating the cultural significance that resonates with input messages, either verbally or nonverbally expressed. In this context a different proposition has been made concerning input stemming from either non-native speakers or native speakers, arguing that meaningful input is less essential than native-like input. Deficiencies can be detected on morphosyntactic levels, as well as in instances of incorrect pronunciations (Piske & Young-Scholten 2009: 16).

3.2.2 From the provision of input to becoming intake

To grasp the whole notion of input and to understand its role in the interactional process, VanPatten amongst others, dedicated his work to the processing of input, or, as has been analyzed before, to the learner’s attention to form, moving from input to intake and finally to output. Furthermore, VanPatten created a model that depicts the processes which are involved in the acquisition of a second language. These are comprised of three different stages to arrive from input to output. First, input has to be processed through the attention on connections of form and meaning. Then, these connections have to be internalized into the linguistic system through accommodation and restructuring making the input into an intake. In the last instance, the processed intakes are available to produce output (VanPatten 1996 :7). With this model VanPatten claims that in order for SLA to be successful, output is not enough to achieve changes in L2 performances. Rather, the processing of input represents the essential part, as through

this mechanism, underlying language systems are affected and hence modified output can be produced (1996: 6).

According to Sanz and VanPatten, input processing corresponds to “a research domain about how learners make form-meaning connections as well as parse incoming sentences in the L2. [...] It is the application of psycholinguistic inquiry comprehension and processing of second language sentences” (1998: 50). As can be observed by this quote, input processing is composed of two mechanisms, the first of them describing the making of form-meaning connections, as in understanding the link between the third person singular and the –s suffix from an input (Hashemnezhad 2013: 24). The latter of them being parsing, defined by VanPatten as “mapping syntactic structures on to the utterance, for example, knowing which noun is the subject and which is object when hearing a sentence” (2003: 29). Which parts of the input perceived are processed further into intake is contingent on the so-called ‘communicative and inherent semantic value’, which is essential for the learner’s attentional and processing resources, because these are limited during input processing (Marsden 2006: 510). These ideas and strategies have been summarized in VanPatten’s works, consisting of two primary principles and reduced sub-principles, from which the two main axioms will be presented in this diploma thesis. The first one assumes the precedence of input processing for meaning before form. This means that learners put attention on content words first. Furthermore, learners show the tendency of relying on lexical items rather than grammatical forms to understand meaning and non-redundant, meaningful grammatical forms are preferred to redundant meaningful forms. The second principle is called ‘The First Noun Principle’, declaring that the first noun or pronoun the learner is confronted with in a sentence becomes the subject/agent of processing (VanPatten 2004: 4-9, 12-13, 18). Whereas the first axiom with its respective sub-principles is associated with the processing of syntactical categories, meaning word classes such as prepositions and verbs, and morphological forms, the second one is more concerned with order (Hashemnezhad 2013: 24).

Overall, input is variable in its nature and has different functions and effects for SLA. The next component analyzed is the language produced by learners: the output.

3.2.3 Output production

Parallel to Krashen’s ‘Input Hypothesis’ in 1985, Swain proposed the ‘Comprehensible Output Hypothesis’, signifying the importance of providing plenty of opportunities for

L2 learners to use and produce the foreign language, additionally to receiving input, in order to achieve increased L2 development (Swain 1995: 125). The specific impact of producing language on multiple occasions affects SLA in several ways, which were described more profoundly by Swain and also other researchers until now.

The first function of producing output represents the certain fact that provoking students to produce outputs more often leads to improved fluency, although this does not necessarily mean that progress is made in terms of accuracy (ibid). This is the reason why research efforts have focused on the effects that output production has on accuracy rather than on fluency. Adding to this emphasis, Swain has claimed that improvements relating to accuracy have been observed on three different levels (1995: 128):

- 1) the ‘noticing/triggering’ function, or what might be referred to as its consciousness-raising role
- 2) the hypothesis-testing function
- 3) the metalinguistic function, or what might be referred to as its ‘reflective’ role

The first function describes the process of prompting a second language learner to draw attention to linguistic issues and as a consequence affecting a desire to discover something about their L2. By this attention-triggering mechanism new linguistic knowledge can be gained or existing knowledge can be expanded. Another benefit of producing language might be that it leads to testing comprehensibility or linguistic accuracy. Deficient output can point to the indication of hypothesis testing in so far as a learner frames a certain hypothesis on the basis of a certain speculation constructed around the existing language knowledge and which is then debugged. Thirdly, the metalinguistic function of output production is invoked by the conscious reflection on the target language use, empowering learners to regulate and internalize linguistic knowledge into their own interlanguage (1995: 128-140). Summarizing Swain’s estimations on the beneficial effects of output production for L2 development, her general assumption is that “output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, non-deterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production. Output, thus, would

seem to have a potentially significant role in the development of syntax and morphology” (1995: 128).

Several further studies have contributed to the thesis that output benefits L2 learning. However, in order to expand on Swain’s fundament, a distinction had to be made between the notions of ‘modified output’ and ‘comprehensible output’. Whereas comprehensible output solely describes utterances which are intelligible to the interlocutor (Van den Branden 1997: 590), the concept of modified output represents productions followed by instances of feedback that are modified or rephrased accordingly to the feedback message (Mackey 2012: 16). Pushing L2 learners to reformulate their original utterance to produce more target-like, accurate, understandable and complex language through feedback, hence modified output, seems to benefit L2 development more effectively than comprehensible output. Mackey further highlights the process of modifying one’s output as being as essential to L2 learning as the final product (2012: 17).

Following a study made by Mackey and McDonough (2006), another interesting aspect has been pointed out in the context of modified output, feedback and negotiated interaction. In this research, modified output did not lead to an immediate surface manifestation of improved L2 production, but appeared in forms later on in interactions, hence indicating that the modified output might have caused changes in the underlying interlanguage systems of the learners (Mackey 2012: 19). The delayed language production was termed the ‘primed production’ by Mackey and McDonough, indirectly referring to Gass’s assertion of feedback as a ‘priming device’ for learning (Gass 2003: 235).

Eventually, producing output can facilitate L2 learning, but also individual differences ultimately affect learning outcomes. The effectiveness of interactions depends on variables such as anxiety levels, individual perceptions, developmental levels, selective attentional control influencing the noticing of gaps, as well as working memory capacities of learners (Mackey 2012: 19).

3.2.4 Connecting interaction and SLA

In the beginning of the 1970s, researchers focused on the characterization of the perceived input of learners and their following output production and not so much on the beneficial effects resulting from interactions in language learning. Comprehensible, simplified input does not represent the source of language adjustments, but rather,

interactional processes drive learners to utilize new strategies and find new ways to express themselves (Ellis 1985: 82). The thought of a direct relationship between casual interaction and adjacent output was developmental at the time. According to Hatch and Wagner-Gough, among the first to consider interaction in the context of L2 development, “we should not neglect the relationship between language and communication if we are looking for explanations for the learning process” (1975: 307). Through interactional endeavors, learners are provided with numerous possibilities to both perceive input and produce output, hence, exercise different linguistic forms in exchanges by reason of the interactive essence of communication (Hatch & Wagner-Gough 1975: 297). In this process, conversational partners can experience communication breakdowns and, as a consequence, have to acquire certain communicative strategies to keep the topic going or ask for clarification. When learning a second language this can be a supportive activity, which is also referred to as the negotiation of meaning. In 1980, Long highlighted the idea of the significance of mutual negotiated understanding by saying that “negotiation of meaning is the process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor’s comprehension, thus provoking adjustments to their linguistic form, conversational structure, message content, or all three, until an acceptable level of understanding is achieved” (1996: 418). As such, negotiated interaction might facilitate SLA in various ways by putting selective attention on information, linking this input with internal language systems and produce new outputs. This idea is expressed through Long’s ‘Interaction Hypothesis’ and, among other researchers, by the belief that interactional processes in an L2 shape SLA (Long 1996: 451).

Subsequently, another area of interest for Long was to refine the concept of conversational structure with the quantitative analysis of NS/NNS and NS/NS conversations. The results revealed a more frequent use of interactional modifications in NS/NNS conversations opposite to NS/NS conversations (Gass 2003: 233). A striking feature of interactional literature in this context presents the general impression that descriptions of linguistic modifications tend to be based on talks within Western cultures, although investigated differences exist between non-Western and Western culture talks (Gass 2003: 230)². Failed negotiated meaning or encountered issues of

² For a more detailed account cf. Lieven 1994.

understanding can rely on global discourse problems, as for example Japanese NSs appear to prefer an initial exchange of information on upcoming procedures in a conversation, whereas Americans typically start off rather fast in communicative events with words such as ‘okay’ (Gass 2003: 237).

Two instances of negotiated information and interactional modifications are provided to clarify their possible contents (Gass 2003: 226):

- 1) I seed the man.
No, we say “I saw the man”

- 2) NNS: There’s a basen of flowers on the bookshelf
NS: a basin?
NNS: base
NS: a base?
NNS: a base
NS: oh, a vase
NNS: vase

The first example shows the direct reception of information indicating the incorrect, ungrammatical utterance of the learner in an explicit, overt corrective manner. This means that information is given explicitly and with awareness. In the second instance, the purpose of the NS’s response is not adequately understood by the NNS and no direct attention or awareness was raised, which can be classified as an implicit instance of learning. The second instance exemplifies a type of implicit evidence provision which could cause a communicative breakdown or provoke the interlocutors to formulate recasts. However, the NNS and NS in the example accomplished to arrive at a mutual negotiated understanding. Furthermore, different cultural backgrounds can also influence this process, as claimed by Luque and Sommer, who found out that collectivist cultures preferred implicit, group-focused feedback that is not directed at the individual person, in comparison to learners from individualistic cultures who rather choose direct, explicit feedback that is directed at their efforts (2000, quoted in Hattie 2012: 146).

Long has created a useful taxonomy to distinguish different types of corrective inputs or modification suggestions. These have been observed and clustered into categories. In SLA literature there exists the notion of positive evidence, meaning the representation of a correct model in relation to the output of the learner and negative evidence as the provision of information on the incorrectness of a performance. Further, subdivisions for positive evidence are either authentic or modified instances and if

modified, types of simplified or elaborated inputs have been identified. Negative evidence can be either categorized into instances within a pre-emptive context or a reactive one, depending if the information is given in conjunction with an associated error or before its occurrence. Recasts can be further distinguished into simple repetitions or elaborated information on, for example, grammatical forms (ibid). Other discourse moves involved in modification talks are characterized by Mackey, summarizing the most commonly used types in current research: “comprehension checks, confirmation checks, clarification requests, modified output, interactional feedback, recasts and language-related episodes” (2012: 113-114).

How interaction triggered moves facilitate the L2 learning process was explored by many researchers. To recount one of them conducted by Polio and Gass (1998), NSs and NNSs probands were engaged in a conversation on where to position certain subjects on a board. The NNSs talked and the NSs had to place the object according to the NNS’s description, but only half of the NS/NNS pairs were allowed to interact with each other. Results showed an increased effect on production for the groups who were encouraged to employ negotiated interaction (1998, quoted in Gass 2003: 238).

The impact and efficacy of the previously mentioned feedback types require a more detailed examination, which will be provided in chapter 3. However, before proceeding to the next chapter, it is essential to reframe concepts that are often associated with one another in SLA literature, namely feedback, positive and negative evidence and the concept of error correction.

As has already been presented, feedback provides linguistic knowledge to an L2 learner and can be seen as a reaction to an utterance in a certain contextual situation. According to Leeman, positive feedback contains references of a communicative success, whereas negative feedback states the opposite result of a performance that failed or did not meet the intended goal or standard (2012: 212). This information offers learners the evidence of an acceptable or unacceptable output, although the provision of evidence has a pre-emptive focus and can be given at any time on the contrary to feedback. Another term that is often conflated with feedback is error correction, meaning “the pedagogical activity of providing feedback for learner errors” (Leeman 2012: 212). Leeman describes the term as outdated and “a one-dimensional account of the process by which a learner might update his or her interlanguage” (ibid). In view of Leeman’s suggestion, the language to use in order to describe error correction more accurately would be to say explicit correction as a form of negative feedback. The

investigation of error correction follows a long tradition in SLA research and its basic ideas are important to understand the broader meaning of formative feedback in the EFL classroom. On these grounds, the next chapter will deal with notions and concepts of feedback within the established SLA research practice.

3.3 Formative feedback and SLA research

While the significance of providing feedback for L2 development is widely recognized today (cf. for example Hattie 2012), SLA research history in relation to the concept of feedback dates back to the 1970s and has its origins in the exploration of L2 learners' errors, their production and correction (Li 2010: 310). Since its beginnings, the literature in the field was and is dominated by considerable uncertainties and controversies concerning the impact and handling of errors, whereby SLA research still continues to emphasize error correction with its rather summative evaluative nature and effect to date. As early as 1966, Corder explained the importance of learners' errors, as they reveal essential information on the language system that an L2 learner uses at a specific point in the learning process. This reference to the current language knowledge of the learner is termed the 'transitional competence' (Corder 1974: 25). However, the acceptance of making errors was not always regarded as common practice, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

More recent approaches in consideration of specific types of feedback have suggested reconstructing the concept of error correction and seeing it as a subcategory of feedback, namely corrective feedback. According to Sheen, "the term 'corrective feedback' is used as an umbrella term to cover implicit and explicit negative feedback occurring in both natural conversational and instructional settings" (2004: 264). After numerous observations, Lee concluded that the focus of feedback from teachers to students lies on errors as well as scores and for this reason proclaims a necessary transformation from drawing attention on errors solely to the provision of formative feedback in the EFL classroom (2007: 69).

3.3.1 From error correction to corrective feedback

The term 'error' is aligned to the pattern of speech of fluent English speakers, indicating that the production of a linguistic form is incomplete or inaccurate (Liski & Puntanen 1983: 227). However, as even fluent speakers of a language identify errors in utterances

which do not contain faulty components, Lennon paraphrased the definition of errors as “a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers’ native speaker counterparts” (1991: 182). Whenever corrective reactions occur, earlier perspectives have referred to “treatments which elicit the correct response from the committer of the error or from one or more of his classmates”, or another type included “any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner’s utterance” (Chaudron 1977: 31), acting as a simple correcting device of a speech production and not merely more than that. Later, the term ‘corrective feedback’ was used by some authors to refer to error correction as for instance by Lightbown and Spada, adverting to the variety of corrective feedback responses, as they can either be explicit or implicit and can also imply further metalinguistic information about the possible origin of the error (1999: 172). Even more current accounts are provided by Ellis, Loewen and Erlam, who say that corrective feedback takes “the form of responses to learner utterances that contain an error” (2006: 28) and these forms can be put into effect through confirmation checks, problems to understand, clarification requests, silence, corrected or expanded repetitions (Schachter 1991: 90).

From a historical viewpoint, the perspective on error production and their accurate correction shifted from a more immediate reaction of the teacher and an expected corrected repetition from the learner to a more humanistic and communicative approach of language teaching (Hendrickson 1978: 387). The 1950s and 1960s were characterized by the idea that language teaching as well as learning centered on the principle of imitation, the avoidance of errors and, accordingly, to provide standard models of proper forms. With diverse developments in transformational-generative grammar, SLA and psychology, a trend emerged towards the acceptance of errors and the encouragement to communicate without interruption (ibid). This belief incorporated the idea of errors “as a natural phenomenon integral to the process of learning a second language” (Hendrickson 1978: 388) and that the provision of “periodic, supportive feedback” (ibid) would have beneficial effects on the language learning process. As introduced before, Corder was one of the early pioneers in suggesting that the examination of learner errors could point to evidences on the process of SLA and teaching (1974: 25). Explained more precisely, their occurrence can give a subtle hint on learning potentials, language problems and communicative misunderstandings.

In view of this changed perspective, researchers started to examine how educators dealt with errors in the language classroom and what types appeared in their daily use, which in addition was seen as important to a teacher's effectiveness (Allwright 1975: 98). The first publications on error correction and the teacher's effectiveness revealed impreciseness in the provision of corrections and that teachers tend to "repeat the correct model rather than provide any obviously adaptive treatment, and tending to fail to explicitly locate errors for the learners" (Fanselow 1974, quoted in Allwright 1975: 98). In opposition, the inconsistency could be due to reasons such as reduced self-discipline of the teacher or the acceptance of incomplete productions to motivate learners more to just practice and participate (Allwright 1975: 99). The majority of studies investigating teachers' attempts to correct errors in the EFL classroom showed results shaped by ambiguity and uncertainties. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a discussion evolved if errors should be corrected at all or if error correction impedes the natural flow of language learning, which still remains a highly controversial topic to date.

Both Terrell and Krashen advocated for an avoidance of error correction, a focus on content in the EFL classroom and a mixture of L1 and L2 use to facilitate SLA (Terrell 1977: 330). Krashen argued against error correction with the main arguments of creating low anxiety situations for students, not stoking fears by forcing them to produce early performances and the previously mentioned sufficiency of providing enough input for SLA (1982: 7), calling error correction in principle a "serious mistake" (1982: 74). According to Krashen (1982: 76):

Error correction has the immediate effect of putting the student on the defensive. It encourages a strategy in which the student will try to avoid mistakes, avoid difficult constructions, focus less on meaning and more on form. It may disrupt the entire communicative focus on an exchange. [...] A safe procedure is simply to eliminate error correction entirely in communicative-type activities. [...] Improvement will come without error correction, and may even come more rapidly, since the input will 'get in', the filter will be lower and students will be off the defensive.

A variety of different researchers have seriously challenged this position on error correction, among them Swain with the 'Output Hypothesis' (cf. chapter 2.2.3) and her claim that proficiency in the L2 can be increased by the provision of modified output opportunities and corrective feedback from educators and peers (Swain 1985, quoted in Lyster 1998: 184). Alongside interactional reasons that account for beneficial

effects of corrective feedback, Schmidt also argues for the use of corrective feedback by claiming that SLA is a conscious process and “that one way to enhance the learner’s noticing of linguistic forms is through the provision of corrective feedback” (Schmidt 1990, quoted in Li 2010: 311). Schmidt terms this attention-directing process the ‘noticing hypothesis’ (ibid).

Arriving at a conclusion within these controversies, researchers began to compare the results of collections from individual studies on the effectiveness of corrective feedback through so-called meta-analyses. Russell and Spada conducted a meta-analysis with estimates from fifteen different empirical studies released between 1988 and 2003 with the conclusion that corrective feedback had a “substantial effect on L2 acquisition” (Russell & Spada 2006: 152). A more recent and even larger integration of individual studies represents Li’s meta-analysis, containing thirty-three studies over a period of twenty years (2010). Li’s overall argumentation uncovered a medium effect for the provision of corrective feedback, which maintained stable over time, and the impact of implicit corrective feedback was better sustained than the one of explicit corrective feedback (2010: 309). To sum up, Ur contrasted the role of corrective feedback in the EFL classroom and proposed, “it is true that positive feedback tends to encourage, but this can be overstated, whereas negative feedback, if given supportively and warmly, will be recognized as constructive, and will not necessarily discourage” (2006: 257). As can be seen by the theories and perspectives examined above, there exists a considerable range of studies that demonstrate the positive impact of corrective feedback and feedback in general on SLA.

3.3.2 Learners’ reaction to feedback

In the course of becoming acquainted to the controversies concerning error treatment in the EFL classroom, another construct has received attention from researchers, acting as an attempt to identify measures of feedback effectiveness and to arrive at more profound details for the use of feedback.

In the previous chapters, the claim was made that feedback moves which stimulate an L2 learner to react to the given feedback and produce modified output could enhance the language learning process. Taking this idea as a basis, Chaudron was among the first researchers who initiated the concept of uptake as a measurement for the “effectiveness of any type of corrective reaction” and this “would be a frequency count of the students’ correct responses following each type” (1977: 42). After Chaudron’s

first publication, Lyster and Ranta followed a somewhat different path in the description of the underlying uptake features. In their sense, uptake unfolds the learner's efforts on what the student intends to do with the feedback from the teacher. In greater detail, "uptake [...] refers to a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance (this overall intention is clear to the student although the teacher's specific linguistic focus may not be)" (Lyster & Ranta 1997: 49). According to the authors, uptake moves can be categorized in two different groups (ibid):

- a) uptake that results in "repair" of the error on which the feedback focused and
- b) uptake that results in an utterance that still needs repair (coded as "needs-repair")

Furthermore, they noted that uptake is not always the result of feedback, but some feedback responses are not dealt with and followed by the continuation of the topic, and hence, no opportunity is created to produce uptake (ibid). In Lyster and Ranta's model, repair means "the correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single student turn and not to the sequence of turns resulting in the correct reformulation" (ibid). While the basic meaning of the uptake concept remained identical, the categorizations of uptake types varied depending on the respective study. One of them represents the study by Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen, whose perspective on uptake differed in so far as they looked at reactive as well as preemptive forms of uptake in opposition to Lyster and Ranta (Karim & Shamsudin 2013: 1283). Imposed by Ellis et al., "uptake is a student's response that occurs where learners have demonstrated a gap in their knowledge (either by making an error, or by asking a question)" (2001: 286) and as a consequence the teacher responds to this gap by providing explicit or implicit information on an improved linguistic feature and uptake "can be the student's attempt to incorporate that information into his or her own production" (Loewen 2004: 155). Additionally, Loewen grouped uptake into two groups, namely successful or unsuccessful uptake, depending on the effective incorporation of the supplied information or a sole repetition of the correct or incorrect form (Ellis et al. 2001: 424). As can be observed, studies on uptake have focused on the identification of different reactions to corrective feedback.

If uptake is relevant at all to measure the effectiveness of feedback moves for SLA has been the topic of a much-discussed debate. Among the more critical researchers are Philp and Mackey, who describe the equation of uptake reactions to L2 development as a mistake, as “they may or may not be indicative of more permanent restructuring” (Mackey 2012: 18) and hence have a more mimetic nature than proof actual learning. Furthermore, for Ohta, uptake rather takes the form of a discourse phenomenon and does not provide evidence for improved SLA (2000, quoted in Sheen 2004: 266). However, Mackey also commented on the possible delayed effects of corrective feedback for the long term (Mackey 2012: 18). Although learners might not be prepared to change their language productions immediately, studies have shown that the provision of a recast on a grammatical feature without an uptake reaction showed no immediate change, but learners were capable to produce the correct form after five turns. In contrast, students who demonstrated an immediate production of modified output were not able to formulate higher-level sentences in the following turns and therefore it was assumed that no internalization of the correct form had taken place (ibid). The results of these findings indicate that the absence of uptake to recasts does not necessarily mean that no learning is happening.

Regardless, Lyster and Ranta highlighted two specific functions of uptake for SLA, namely, “First, they allow opportunities for learners to automatize the retrieval of target language knowledge that already exists in some form [...]. Second, when repair is generated by students, the latter draw on their own resources and thus actively confront errors in ways that may lead to revisions of their hypotheses about the target language [...]” (1997: 57). Uptake might push the learner to produce outputs and revise their knowledge system of the language, with which essential language learning strategies can be established and language acquisition can occur (Ellis et al. 2001: 287). More recently, the study conducted by Loewen in an EFL classroom showed an increased performance in vocabulary and grammar tests when corrective feedback was provided beforehand and the learners showed an incorporation of the target linguistic forms within their productions (2005: 365).

3.3.3 Feedback on writing performances

In this next chapter, feedback on L2 learners’ writing will be addressed, as it plays a vital role in the daily routine of EFL teachers as well as in improving students’ writing skills.

According to Scriven, feedback on student writing is realized in two different ways, either ‘summative’ as an assessment tool to mark students or ‘formative’, which means an emphasis on the learning process as a whole, targeting on the improvement of a student’s performance (1967, quoted in Campbell & Schumm-Fauster 2013: 55). Although Hyland and Hyland assert that formative feedback practices in writing have overruled summative instruments for the most part (2006: 77), Lee contradicts this claim by explaining that “teacher feedback serves primarily summative purposes, and its formative potential is underutilized” (2012: 60). A starting shift in perspective could be observed with the emergence of the ‘process approach’ in North American writing classrooms in the 1970s, in which not only the written product as a reflection of a student’s proficiency played a vital role, but also the writing process (Campbell et al. 2013: 56).

However, despite the changed view, the predominant nature of feedback remained on summative procedures. It might seem that awareness towards the significance of the writing process and formative feedback has increased, but the transferring into the classroom practice has revealed itself to be difficult. Reasons mentioned for the failed translation into common practice are for instance that giving formative feedback on several drafts is more time-consuming and this could lead to inaccuracy and a lack in detail. In addition, it is possible that the teacher does not apply a preconceived framework and formative feedback results in arbitrary error correction, as well as to providing only general verbal or written comments such as ‘well done’ or ‘grade 1’. Other problems that appear in the context of the provision of formative feedback is to identify the individual writing problems and needs of the students due to the high number of students in each class and the uncertainty if the given feedback is understood or given at the right competence level (Campbell et al. 2013: 55).

The question arises then, if feedback improves the writing proficiency of L2 learners and whether developments vary in regard to the provided feedback type.

One of the studies verifying the value of feedback on writing is the investigation conducted by Fatham and Whalley on different feedback types of intermediate EFL students. When receiving feedback on grammar, students showed greater improvements in grammatical and content accuracy in the second draft. An even superior advancement was achieved when feedback addressed both grammar and content (1990: 183-184).

The revision of written texts also represents a recurring theme in the debate of feedback effectiveness. The significance of drafting and resubmission is highlighted through various researches (cf. Goldstein 2004, Dysthe 2011), as the rewriting and reflection process is an essential part of enhancing writing skills. Some doubts have been raised about the overcorrection of grammatical errors, because according to Truscott, there exists no evidence that proves enhancements in accuracy and at least demotivation can be a result of dwelling on errors. The teacher's role in this process is to "make their learners more aware of different aspects of writing (e.g. content, lexical and grammatical variety) and to dispel the myth that error-free writing is by definition good writing" (Truscott 1996, quoted in Campbell et al. 2013: 58). Hyland further comments that "in an assessment context, errors in writing are stigmatized and reflect badly on the student's language ability and even intelligence" (2003: 184). However, if writing is part of assessment, attention has to be put on grammatical errors in order to pass an exam or achieve the demanded goals.

Feedback on writing should address the individual expectations of language learners, given that perceptions on feedback purposes vary greatly among individuals (Hyland 2003: 180). These expectations include for example a preference for more detailed comments or general ideas on drafts and on the amount of negative feedback. Subsequently, teachers and learners agree on certain procedures in order to avoid a so-called "misfit between written feedback teachers provide on compositions and the learners' interests" (Cavalcanti & Cohen 1990: 155).

The willingness of students to work with received feedback can be boosted by providing learner-centered, individual formative feedback on written texts, creating personal relevance for each learner (Benson 2012: 32).

3.3.4 Feedback on speaking performances

Some researchers have found feedback to be beneficial for the oral production of L2 learners. One of the first researchers to undertake a descriptive study on various corrective feedback types given in speaking performances was Chaudron, who observed a French immersion classroom and the feedback received by the students. Whereas the majority of feedback moves passed unnoticed, some feedback types urged more immediate reformulations than others, such as repetition with emphasis and without (1977, quoted in Russell & Spada 2006: 134). In another investigation, Doughty identified three feedback types that occurred more frequently than others when response

was given to spoken utterances; these were recasts, clarification requests and repetitions (1993: 102). A response from the student to feedback most often appeared subsequently to a recast. According to Lyster and Ranta, recasts are defined as “the teacher’s reformulation of all or part of a student’s utterance minus the error [and] are generally implicit” (1997: 49). Within feedback research in the context of oral production, recasts have grown to be a popular topic and further studies have been postulating that recasts are the most common type used in EFL classrooms (cf. Lyster & Ranta 1997). However, recasts have been identified to be the feedback type least leading to uptake. Elicitation, metalinguistic cues or clarification requests represent feedback types measuring a higher number of uptake reactions from students, showing a tendency for more explicit feedback types (Russell et al. 2006: 135).

While the above presented studies focus on finding out immediate responses from students to feedback, others have put an emphasis on different effects of feedback on oral production. Results have proposed a positive impact on the oral accuracy and development of L2 learners when exposed to corrective feedback while speaking, in contrast to students who did not (ibid).

Yet another integral part of EFL classroom practice is the promotion of presentation skills that L2 learners practice through presentations in front of their peers and teacher. Interests in this field can be divided into two different categories: firstly, researchers that are concerned with the linguistic competence of the speakers and accurate assessment criteria. Secondly, researchers question the effectiveness of feedback for presentation skills because of motivational and cognitive reasons, including beneficial effects of peer feedback and self-assessment (Philips & Scott 2013: 159-160). The establishment of precise, explicit assessment criteria which offer a framework and guidance has led to extreme instances of frameworks that try to systematize the complete presentation process. These leave little room for learners to create their own presentation style and therefore Unearee has formulated a rating form, addressing different parts of a speech such as the introduction (theme, outline, get attention), language functions (use of rhetorical devices, signposting), language aspects (diction, formality, syntax, grammar), performance (verbal proficiency, body language), structure and the conclusion (2006, quoted in Philips et al. 2013: 161, 169-170). A thorough frame can have the function of assisting in establishing clear expectations, goals and a structure for the provision of feedback on a presentation. Other presentation-related aspects researched have been the creation of a positive learning

environment for reducing prejudices and inhibitions towards the giving of presentations (Philips et al. 2013: 162). Furthermore, an arrangement into a pre-presentation, presentation and post-presentation phase has proved to be constructive in order to discuss learning goals and to spend enough time on feedback from teachers, peers and self-evaluation (Philips et al. 2013: 164-173).

Learning how to speak in the L2 appropriately is greatly intertwined with the teaching of pronunciation. Frequently pronunciation practice is neglected in EFL classrooms and efforts vary, because teachers lack self-assurance and knowledge needed (Lane 2011: 1). Since the beginning of research in this field, three approaches have become commonly accepted in the instruction of pronunciation: the intuitive-imitative approach, assuming that pronunciation is acquired through imitation and repetition, the analytic-linguistic approach which signifies the importance of explicit explanations, and the integrative approach that views pronunciation as an implicit component of communication (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu 2010: 984). It becomes clear that feedback on pronunciation presents a difficult task for teachers, as there are a lot of ways to go about it. Insam, Landsiedler and Pfandl-Buchegger have suggested using evaluation or feedback sheets containing information on consonants, vowels, intonation, stress/rhythm, linking, assimilation and the overall impression (2013: 185). The recording and listening to own performances in connection with feedback from educators “can help to sharpen learners’ perceptive skills by bringing relevant features of the sound system of the foreign language to their attention and enabling them to hear the essential differences between their mother tongue and the target language” (Insam et al. 2013: 192) and once again, helping students to notice the gap.

4 Variables that influence the use of feedback

In various studies, it has been demonstrated that the conscious, deliberate use of feedback is among the most influential concepts on manifold achievement levels, even though it is also among the unsteady of influences. In different feedback meta-analyses (cf. DeNisi & Kluger 1996, Hattie 2009) the considerable variability of feedback effects has pointed to the claim that some types and forms of formative feedback show more powerful results than others (Hattie 2009: 174). This thesis has viewed feedback from various perspectives, looked at transparent goal setting, the feedback's role in the language learning process and its purpose and nature for learning in general. Due to its multidimensional nature, the next chapter will explore different aspects of feedback that could impact its efficiency: various types, the timing and focus of feedback, the interaction of sender and receiver, students' characteristics, peer feedback and its effects (cf. Shute 2008).

4.1 What types of feedback in EFL classrooms can be observed?

In search of a consistent classification framework of feedback types, it revealed itself that substantial disagreement among researchers exists in this matter and various different suggestions of possible categorizations have been investigated (Li 2010: 321). One approach to this issue is to classify feedback types into notions of explicitness and implicitness. Both concepts have been defined in chapter 2.2.4 and even more does this distinction provide a first outline of different feedback types. While either concept guides a learner's attention to an utterance that deviates from a standard, explicit feedback (meaning with a detailed and articulated focus on form) may cause an interruption in an interaction, whereas implicit feedback (with a focus on meaning without awareness) enables a continuation of interaction moves (Mackey 2012: 116). Milla and Pilar Garcia Mayo present a visualization of corrective feedback types with the help of a continuum measuring the degree of explicitness (2014: 4). The selection of corrective feedback types derives from Lyster and Ranta's publication 'Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake. Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms' (1996).

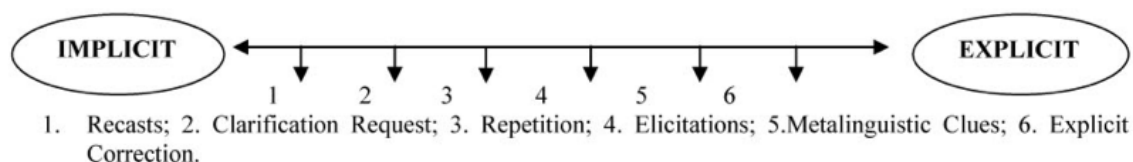


Figure 3: Continuum of corrective feedback types in order of explicitness (Milla et al. 2014: 4)

This figure depicts the most common types of corrective feedback with recasts as being the most implicit form and explicit correction at the other end of the continuum. Different realizations of prompts are located in the middle of the line, usually grouping together ‘clarification requests’, ‘repetitions’, ‘elicitations’ and ‘metalinguistic clues’. The difference between prompts and recasts is explained by Ellis “in terms of whether [the correction] is directed at input [...] or learner modification of their own output” (Ellis 2006: 29). In consideration of Ellis, explicit corrections as well as recasts provide input, in opposition to a prompt which elicits output and “withholds the correct reformulation and instead encourages learners to self-repair” (Yang & Lyster 2010: 237). Those in favor of prompts over other forms have brought forward the argument that by pushing the learner to reevaluate and find the correct form for themselves, new connections can be formulated in their interlanguage and control may increase (Yang & Lyster 2010: 238). Some have even argued to avoid the use of recasts overall as they do not benefit SLA. However, other studies claim that certain circumstances and characteristics could lead to increased SLA. One more concrete example is provided by Lyster and Izquierdo, saying that “the extent to which teachers’ intentions and learners’ perceptions overlap is known to affect recast effectiveness, as is the interactional context in which recasts are provided” (2009: 454). Furthermore, the efficacy of recasts seems to be higher when they follow phonological or lexical errors, when their length is rather short, they do not change an original utterance and when the learner is developmentally ready (ibid).

As the typology of Milla et al. solely takes into account corrective feedback types, which resembles only a small range of forms, another attempt to typify feedback is presented in this thesis. It begins with the incorporation of positive and negative feedback types that are evaluative in their nature. Then, following the feedback continuum, the authors distinguish between achievement or improvement feedback having a descriptive purpose (Gipps & Tunstall 1996: 394):

	Type A	Type B	Type C	Type D	
	Rewarding	Approving	Specifying attainment	Constructing achievement	
	Rewards	Positive personal expression	Specific acknowledgement of attainment	Mutual articulation of achievement	
1		Warm expression of feeling	Use of criteria in relation to work/behaviour; teacher models	Additional use of emerging criteria; child role in presentation	1
Positive Feedback		General praise	More specific praise	Praise integral to description	Achievement Feedback
		Positive non-verbal feedback			
	Punishing	Disapproving	Specifying improvement	Constructing the way forward	
2	Punishments	Negative personal expression	Correction of errors	Mutual critical appraisal	2
Negative Feedback		Reprimands; negative generalisations	More practice given; training in self-checking	Provision of strategies	Improvement Feedback
		Negative non-verbal feedback			
	Evaluative		Descriptive		

Figure 4: Typology of teacher feedback (Gipps et al. 1996: 394)

The first column shows feedback which derives from the behaviorist theory and operant conditioning, which is highly evaluative and either positive or negative. Group B includes instances of approval or disapproval realized not only verbally, but also non-verbally through facial expressions, voice tone, modulation, body language or touches. Going on, the direction of feedback shifts towards the identification of attainment and improvement in a descriptive manner, including error correction which is interpreted as being “specific to a particular task or aspect of behavior and is focused on where mistakes lie” (Gipps et al. 1996: 399) and therefore corrects discrepancies but implies no disciplinarian sense present in the B2 group (ibid). Drawing a distinction between feedback from group C and D, the latter features more qualitative measures realized in frequent conversations with learners on particular processes or aspects of competence and involving the student in this identification of achievement factors. Improvement feedback (D2) tries to construct the way forward, resulting in a mutual appraisal of development (Gipps et al. 1996: 400).

On the basis of DeNisi and Kluger, both positive and negative feedback can have favorable effects on learning (1996), however, Hattie and Timperley counter this argument with another perspective by answering that “the untangling of these effects depends more on the level at which the feedback is aimed, and processed than on whether it is positive or negative” (2007: 98). These various directions that feedback can be focused on will be analyzed next.

4.1.1 The focus of feedback

Although many studies have analyzed the different emerging types of feedback in the EFL classroom, Hattie and Timperley convincingly argued that it is the focus of feedback accounting for its effectiveness. Their investigation led to the establishment of four feedback levels, which revolve around the nature of the task. The way in which the four levels are classified bear a resemblance to the learning activities of students ascertained by Vermunt and Verloop, that is to say cognitive, affective and meta-cognitive activities used by students to learn (1999: 257).

To begin with, the first level is directed at the fulfillment of a respective task or product, indicating for instance whether a performance is correct or incorrect and whether a criterion is met. The frequency of this feedback type is rather high in the classroom and is also known as corrective feedback or knowledge of results (Hattie et al. 2007: 91; Hattie 2011: 6). A common occurrence is ‘feedback about the task’ (FT) combined with additional information at the self-level, diluting the beneficial effects of FT (for example “Good boy, that is correct”) (Hattie et al. 2007: 91). The impact of FT is higher when it is more “information focused, leads to acquiring more or different information, and builds more surface knowledge” (Hattie 2011: 5). If students lack information required, then instructional information should be preferred over FT. Furthermore, FT is frequently realized through written comments on works, which shows better results of efficacy than the provision of grades (Black & William 1998: 49-50). Learning gains were also observed just by commenting on performances (providing FT), whilst marking alone or linked with a comment with or without praise did not show increased performances (Butler 1998, quoted in Hattie et al. 2007: 92). Summarizing the most important findings, Winne and Butler propose that FT “is most beneficial when it helps students reject erroneous hypotheses and provides cues as to directions for searching and strategizing. Such cues can sensitize students to the competence or strategy information in a task or situation” (1995, quoted in Hattie et al. 2007: 91-92).

In opposition to FT, the second level is aimed at enhancing deeper learning and as a consequence the construction of meaning, through focusing on the learning processes involved when wanting to complete a task or realizing a performance. The outcomes of feedback about the processing of the task (FP) can prompt students to “alternative processing, reduction of cognitive load, providing strategies for error

detection, reassessment of approach, cueing to seek more effective information search, and employment of task strategies” (Hattie 2011: 6). The combination of FT and FP can lead to an interactive effect, as FT improves task confidence as well as self-efficacy, which can be further used as a resource to search for profound strategies and creative information (Hattie et al. 2007: 93). To highlight the importance of FP, Earley et al. describe its function that by “using process feedback with goal setting appears to be a direct and powerful way of shaping an individual’s task strategy, and using outcome feedback is a much less efficient way of shaping strategy” (1990: 103).

The third level is concerned with feedback about self-regulation (FR), which means it addresses the monitoring and regulation of the students’ learning process towards a learning goal. This focus of feedback has shown to provoke enhancement in self-evaluation skills, confidence in engaging further, it increases effort towards feedback information and gives assistance in the process of feedback seeking and accepting (Hattie 2011: 6). Significant competences that effective learners seem to inherent are the creation of internal feedback and cognitive procedures, because according to Butler and Winne for “all self-regulated activities, feedback is an inherent catalyst. As learners monitor their engagement with tasks, internal feedback is generated by the monitoring process. That feedback describes the nature of outcomes and the qualities of the cognitive processes that led to those states” (1995: 245). Hence, through FR, students are able to use feedback in order to reduce the gap between their current and desired status.

The fourth level is included by Hattie and Timperley, not for the reason that it positively influences performance, but because it is more frequently used than forms of FT, FP or FR, although its use should be reduced to a minimum. This feedback includes information about the self as a person, which usually contains insufficient task-related information and, as a consequence, attention is drawn away from the task, processes or self-regulation (Hattie 2011: 7). Forms of praise, such as “good girl”, mostly express evaluative impressions about students, possibly enhancing effort, commitment or self-efficacy. However, they are uncommonly converted into increasing these instances. Hyland and Hyland found out that “almost half of teachers’ feedback was praise, and premature and gratuitous praise can confuse students and discourage revisions” (2006, quoted in Hattie 2011: 7). Instead, praise is often given to mitigate critical situations and when combined with other forms of FT, FP or FR, effects can be diluted. According to the authors, it is essential to make a distinction between praise that directs attention to

the self and praise focusing on effort, engagement or self-monitoring. They argue that “this latter type of praise can assist in enhancing self-efficacy and thus can be converted by students back into impact on the task, and hence the effects are much greater” (Hattie et al. 2007: 96).

Looking at the first three feedback levels described, the hypothesis implies that the addressing of these three leads to progressive development, moving from task to processing and from there to regulation (Hattie et al. 2007: 91). Furthermore, it is suggested to provide students with feedback at or one level above the knowledge level of the learner. To summarize, forms of feedback that put emphasis on the self “can interact negatively with attainment as it focuses more on the person than the proficiencies” (Hattie 2007: 7).

4.1.2 Certain feedback types in more detail

As has been highlighted throughout this thesis, interaction and its revolving feedback represents a crucial ingredient in driving SLA and L2 development forward. Relying on observations of student-teacher interactions in L2 classrooms, Lyster and Mori came to the conclusion that feedback moves can be categorized into three feedback types: recasts, prompts or explicit correction (2006: 271). Whereas recasts and explicit correction offer learners with target reformulations of their faulty outputs, either explicitly or implicitly, prompts thrive learners to self-repair and are also known as negotiation of form or form-focused negotiation (ibid). Prompts contain a variety of different signals and therefore they are further distinguished in elicitations, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and repetitions (Lyster 2004: 405) (cf. chapter 3.1). In order to better understand the types of prompts, Lyster and Mori have included examples in which the similarities and differences become visible (2006: 272):

Type of prompt	Speaker	Student utterance + teacher prompt
(a) Elicitation	Student	<i>Ben y a un jet de parfum qui sent pas très bon. . .</i> [lexical error] "Well there's a stream of perfume that doesn't smell very nice. . ."
	Teacher	<i>Alors un jet de parfum, on va appeler ça un . . . ?</i> "So a stream of perfume, we'll call that a . . . ?"
(b) Metalinguistic clue	Student	<i>Kuruma.</i> [lexical error] "A car."
	Teacher	<i>Kuruma janai yo.</i> "(It)'s not a car." ^a
(c) Clarification request	Student	<i>Bashi ni.</i> [phonological error] "On the wagon."
	Teacher	<i>Nani?</i> "What?"
(d) Repetition	Student	<i>La guimauve, la chocolat.</i> [gender error] "Marshmallow, chocolate (fem.)."
	Teacher	<i><u>La</u> chocolat?</i> "Chocolat (fem.)?"

Figure 5; Example of prompts (Lyster; Mori 2006: 272)

When looking at the repetition example, it becomes clear that the teacher neither remodels the output of the student nor gives any hints on the nature of the error. Through repeating the utterance, the teacher tries to provoke the recognition of the error by the student, passing through the subsequent stages: "1) review of original utterance, 2) identification of reason for breakdown in communication, 3) provision of correct form" (Mackey 2012: 118). Clarification requests show the same mechanisms, as students have to reflect on their original output themselves. From a more general point of view, Hattie proposes that there exist a variety of different forms of prompts, such as organizational prompts (for instance: "How can you best structure the learning contents in a meaningful way?"), elaboration prompts (for instance: "What examples can you think of that illustrate this learning content?") or monitoring progress prompts (for instance: "What main points have I understood well?") (Hattie 2012: 144). All of them have the common goal to increase the construction of organization and elaboration strategies while learning (ibid). In this context, researchers have introduced the construct of 'scaffolding', which provides assistance, knowledge, modeling and many more feedback forms for the teacher to know when to provide a prompt and at what time in the learning process it is no longer necessary. On the side of the student, its intention is to lead the student to the stage in which a learner internalizes the intended concepts, knowledge or understanding (ibid).

The notion of language related episodes, as a feedback type, has transpired to be another form to research interaction effects in L2 learning. The meaning of language related episodes is more specifically explained by “any part of the dialogue where learners talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others” (Lapkin & Swain 1998: 326). In this collaborative dialogue, students interact with each other to deal with a linguistic problem and to construct knowledge about language together (Swain et al. 2002: 172). Researchers focused on the investigation of the language related episode’s focus as well as frequency (cf. Lapkin & Swain 1998, Storch 1998³, Williams 1999⁴).

To conclude, all feedback types and interactional moves can trigger learners to re-construct their interlanguage system, achieve progress and growth in the learning process.

4.2 When should feedback be provided?

The controversy surrounding the topic of feedback timing centers on the issue of immediate or delayed feedback provision in regard to effects on learning outcomes. Results in the debate occur to be quite conflicting with no mutual agreement on a specific moment in time, as also effects on performances vary. However, although results and impacts are mixed, the interactions involved are different for each timing variable. Shute explains reasons for the different positions in the debate by summarizing that “some researchers have argued for immediate feedback as a means to prevent errors being encoded into memory, whereas others have argued that delayed feedback reduces proactive interference, thus allowing the initial error to be forgotten and the correct information to be encoded with no interference” (2008: 164). The argument brought forward by supporters of delayed feedback is also termed the ‘interference-perseveration hypothesis’, claiming that it takes time to assimilate correct forms and disturbances should be avoided. Other benefits of delayed feedback are explicated by Allwright and Bailey, saying that “oral errors, particularly if they are patterned and are shared by a group of learners, may form the starting point for a future lesson” (1991: 103). Proponents of immediate feedback accentuate more efficient retention the earlier corrective feedback is given (Shute 2008: 164). The question is posed whether students

³ cf. Storch, N. 1998. “Comparing second language learners’ attention to form across tasks”. In *Language Awareness* 7(4), 176-191.

⁴cf. Williams, J. 1999. “Memory, attention and inductive learning”. In *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 21, 1-48.

would even be able to remember a contextual situation and an error that has been made a longer period of time before, in order to reevaluate, compare and reflect upon it (Long 1996: 79).

A tendency of possible timing effects reveals that delayed feedback might be more beneficial for the promotion of learning transfer, particularly regarding concept-formation tasks, while immediate feedback might be superior for enhancing procedural skills and for short-term effects (Short 1992, Corbett & Anderson 2001, quoted in Shute 2008: 165). More recently, Ellis has looked into effects of feedback timings and surprisingly states that “there is no evidence to show that immediate correction is any more effective than delayed” (2009: 11). Current positions on the timing variable point out that it is not necessarily the timing of feedback accounting for its success, but rather the nature of the task, the feedback level or learner capabilities (Shute 2008: 165). Regarding timing and the feedback level (cf. chapter 3.1.1), Hattie offers one example to show the different impacts, commenting that “immediate error correction during task acquisition (FT) can result in faster rates of acquisition, whereas immediate error correction during fluency building can detract from the learning of automaticity and the associated strategies of learning (FP)” (2007: 98).

Variables that influence the capability of processing feedback are the topic of the next chapter, as well as the teacher’s role in the feedback process and the analysis of the peer feedback concept.

4.3 Who should give feedback?

Giving and receiving feedback is an interactional process in which various interpersonal variables come into play in myriad ways, especially on affective, motivational and behavioral levels. According to Leary and Terry, the most proximate effect of receiving feedback happens on an emotional level, conveying directly or indirectly pleasant feelings of for example gratitude, relief, pride or happiness when the feedback is positive, and feelings of anxiety, disappointment, dejection or anger when the receiver is provided with negative evaluations (2012: 16-17). Affective reactions are not only evoked by the product or outcome of feedback, but also by the simple fact that human beings strive for social acceptance and thus experience an array of different emotions when they are confronted with feedback about their self or their performance, resulting in feelings of high or low relational value (Leary & Terry 2012: 17).

On a motivational level, feedback messages can contain information on a learner's ability to behave in a certain way leading to the achievement of a desired goal. These efficacy expectancies can push or motivate the student's willingness to put further effort into reaching the target goals. In consideration of Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1986), feedback conveying that students' self-efficacy is high increases motivation to act, whereas feedback that results in a feeling of low efficacy reduces the feeling of being motivated (*ibid*). Other interpersonal variables that influence the reception of feedback constitute the effects on self-concepts and self-views, which can be profoundly damaged if feedback contents represent a threat to the self or provoke feelings of constant rejection and disapproval (Leary et al. 2012: 18).

To answer the question of who should give feedback, three possibilities arise: the teacher, the learner or another peer student. Hattie comments on the teacher's mind frame when reflecting on the feedback concept, proposing that "the most powerful way of thinking about a teacher's role is for teachers to see themselves as evaluators of their effects on students" (2012: 18). Putting the teacher into the position of receiving and reflecting on feedback, he claims that teachers who seek constant feedback about their impact are also the most influential ones in enhancing student achievement. Teachers can affect the better processing of feedback with characteristics such as their credibility, their inner motives, style and tone of their feedback message delivery (Leary et al. 2012: 20-21).

At the end of the 1960s and starting to question the audio-lingual teaching method, critical voices were raised that suggested teachers "should not dominate the correction procedures" (Hendrickson 1978: 395). Studies investigated at that time claimed that pushing students to self-repair by withholding correct answers would benefit the interlanguage development, because it creates increased amounts of processing (Lyster & Ranta 1997, quoted in Loewen 2004: 158). Furthermore, Chaudron argued that "instruction that emphasizes self-repair in this way was more likely to improve learners' ability to monitor their own target language speech" (1988, quoted in Lyster 1998: 54). With the growing research on attention and awareness in the context of interaction and language learning, it became the teacher's role to assist the student in noticing errors or potentials as "only input that receives attention and is encoded in working memory may be transferred to long-term memory" (Mackey 2012: 20). It is agreed upon that L2 learners are exposed to a greater amount of input than they can assimilate, hence and in order for students to self-repair, attention may put focus on

smaller and more crucial elements of language (ibid). Schmidt even goes as far as saying that “learning cannot take place without awareness, since the learner has to be aware of linguistic input in order for it to be internalized, implying that awareness and learning cannot be separated” (1990, quoted in Mackey 2012: 20). Ellis holds a different view on students to self-correct their non-target like language productions. Despite acknowledging the possible beneficial effects of self-correction for SLA, she points out that various problematic aspects might emerge, because “learners can only self-correct if they possess the necessary linguistic knowledge [...]. Other correction will be necessary to enable learners to identify forms that are not yet part of the interlanguage” (2009: 7). Ellis further argues that when attention is devoted to a problematic utterance, the student cannot distinguish between a communicative breakdown and a linguistic problem. The possibility of prompting a student to self-correct might not be available and therefore teachers have to reevaluate, if the provision of the correct answer would be less time-consuming and more effective (Ellis 2009: 8).

Another interaction format to provide feedback is the one between student and peers. In an extensive research with observations in various classrooms, Nuthall came to the conclusion that verbal feedback is not mainly provided by the teacher, but 80 per cent of it is given by peers and in the majority of cases includes incorrect content (2007, quoted in Hattie 2012: 147). The effects and effectiveness of peer feedback are mixed with positive and negative consequences. Stating Hattie, “receiving feedback from peers can lead to a positive effect relating to reputation as a good learner, success and reduction of uncertainty, but it can also lead to a negative effect in terms of reputation as a poor learner, shame, dependence, and devaluation of worth” (ibid). Opponents of peer feedback show their resistance by explaining that “peer correction moves students’ attention further away from communicative activities as well as producing corrections of lower quality” (Truscott 1999: 443). Allwright and Bailey support the use of peer feedback. However, they comment, “if peer feedback is encouraged, it will be important for the teacher to establish a tone of mutual support, so that learners are not overwhelmed by corrective input” (1991: 108). Due to the great proportion of natural emerging peer feedback, Hattie considers a profound examination of peer feedback effects as inevitable. According to Hattie, “interventions that aim to foster correct peer feedback are needed particularly as many teachers seem reluctant to so involve peers as agents of feedback” (2011: 10). Following Hattie’s suggestion, researchers and teachers should focus more on the different varieties of possible feedback training methods in

order for peer assessors to provide effective and high qualitative feedback to other peers. Measures taken in this context could also lead to an enhanced acceptance of errors within the classroom setting on which feedback thrives on. Students who are trained to being exposed to errors in a safe environment show less peer reactivity to acknowledgement of errors, more personal risk-taking and higher performance (Hattie 2011: 9).

5 The empirical study

The next part of this diploma thesis provides a description of the empirical study undertaken, in order to understand feedback and its use in Austrian EFL better, as well as to gain new insights and perspectives on experiences, opinions and attitudes towards common feedback practices when learning English as a second language. The analysis of methodological procedures should supply background information on the author's motives for pursuing this investigation, reasons for selecting two different target groups, the process of data collection and the chosen research designs for both qualitative forms of the study.

5.1 Research questions and aims of the empirical study

The previous account of research literature in the context of feedback has revealed a considerable variability of feedback effects. However, if applied efficiently, constructive feedback can lead to significant outcomes and improvements in the language learning process (Shute 2008: 154). The premise underlying a majority of research undertaken is that the concept of goal-directed feedback can function as a powerful tool. Consequently, and due to its inconsistent results, researchers have focused on identifying more or less effective variables and conditions that influence the use of feedback in the classroom. In spite of examining feedback types, timing and other specific variables, which have been subjected to scientific scrutiny, findings show that disparate results as well as continuing controversies dominate the discussions regarding one and the same factor (ibid). Furthermore, the vast majority of studies have measured feedback effects with quantitative methodologies using student achievement as a measurement category or indicator. This lead to an exclusion of other feedback parameters such as learner characteristics, interactional aspects and the contextual surroundings. In addition, to make the notion of feedback more applicable for the broader audience, an extensive amount of popular science literature has emerged in the last decade, most often providing general guidelines and rules for the common use of feedback in the classroom. Yet, perceptions, experiences and attitudes towards feedback effects from the persons involved, namely students and teachers, have not been the center of much discussion. Terhart further highlights this thought by claiming that “qualitative studies are not considered, and methodological problems and debates are neglected” (2011: 426). More limits and research gaps in the current debate are

vocalized by many other researchers, such as Irving and Peterson who stress the importance of reformative views on feedback uses, explicating that “[...] despite the perceived value of feedback and its multiple roles in improving student learning outcomes, secondary students’ perspectives and conceptions of the definition and purpose of feedback remain under-researched” (2008: 238-250).

When observing the literary landscape, it becomes apparent that other perspectives have to be included, in order to gain new insights and an increased visibility of feedback practices in Austrian EFL. A main challenge concerning feedback and learning represents the understanding of its functions and actual uses, thereby contributing to enhanced improvement of both teaching and learning. Described as “active makers and mediators of meaning within a particular learning context” (Higgins, Hartley & Skelton 2002: 53), the role of students and the inevitable process of exchanging feedback information become clear, pointing to the need of increasing awareness for the notion of feedback. Furthermore, a greater understanding enables teachers to reflect on their impact on students and on their own learning process, viewing the acquisition of knowledge through the learners’ eyes. Hattie summarizes this basic idea as he declares (2009: 173):

It was only when I discovered that feedback was most powerful when it is from the student to the teacher that I started to understand it better. When teachers seek, or at least are open to, feedback from students as to what students know, what they understand, where they make errors, when they have misconceptions, when they are not engaged- then teaching and learning can be synchronized and powerful. Feedback to teachers helps make learning visible.

Although positive feedback effects and suggestions on how to improve feedback can be deduced from the research literature and have been demonstrated thoroughly with this diploma thesis, the transfer of these findings to reality is filled with uncertainties when trying to apply feedback in the classroom. Prevalently, teachers experience difficulties in the process of how to give feedback that follows the aim of facilitating and promoting their students’ performances (Van den Bergh, Ros & Beijaard 2013: 355) or interpreting feedback in a way that common teaching practices can be altered more effectively. Findings of Van den Bergh confirmed that the majority of lessons held did not include a communicational exchange between students and teachers of explicitly stated learning objectives and goals. Most often teachers set implicit goals, as their planning represents a routine activity in their daily work (ibid).

With this study the author aims to contribute to an increased understanding of feedback practices in Austrian EFL through the exploration of prevailing attitudes, perspectives and experiences of the persons involved, namely students and teachers. For this purpose, Austrian English teachers and high school students were selected and interviewed, in order to investigate their perceptions and views on interactions in the EFL classroom as well as on various feedback factors and their effectiveness for learning English as a second language. Thus, the investigative intention of this diploma thesis is expressed through the following research question: What are key factors that influence the use of formative feedback in Austrian EFL? In addition to this primary research goal, this study tries to answer the questions:

- What beliefs do Austrian English teachers hold with regard to feedback in the EFL classroom?
- What beliefs do Austrian high school students hold with regard to feedback in the EFL classroom?

As a final step, both perspectives will be compared and brought together to arrive at a conclusion for the following question:

- In what way do perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of students and teachers differ or concur with regard to formative feedback in Austrian EFL?

To sum up, by attempting to answer the previously presented research questions, this empirical study tries to pursue the subsequent objectives:

- i. to analyze the influence of feedback for learning English as a second language and its role in the EFL classroom
- ii. to investigate how errors are treated in Austrian EFL classrooms
- iii. to understand the nature and purpose of feedback better in the context of Austrian EFL
- iv. to identify perceived effects of different feedback variables, such as feedback types that occur, the content, timing and frequency of feedback and different interaction formats
- v. to explore the impact of feedback on the student-teacher relationship
- vi. to compare perceptions, experiences and attitudes towards the use of feedback by interpreting data of Austrian high school students and English teachers

5.2 Research methodology

The empirical section of this thesis includes two different methods with varying target audiences and participants. The overall aim of these research projects is to document both, the evidence of ineffective and beneficial feedback factors, as well as to gain insights into different feedback uses in EFL classrooms. Perceptions and attitudes towards the notion of feedback will be discussed among students and teachers to contribute to a more profound understanding of their interactions, the purpose and meaning of feedback and its position in English language learning processes in Austrian schools.

In order to fulfill the intended research purpose and to gain answers on the posed research questions, I have decided to apply qualitative research methods in the form of individual interviews with Austrian English teachers and a focused group interview with different aged Austrian high school students. The involvement of students and teachers enables a bilateral viewing of feedback practices in Austrian EFL. The interviews conducted among teachers consist of open questions only, giving room for personal comments and remarks. Further, not all of the questions seem to be directly related to the notion of feedback at first sight. However, every question is guided by distinct goals and research intentions, also if they are not explicitly apparent. The reason for this procedure is to possibly elicit answers that ascertain a depiction of the participant's views and opinions without superficial, prejudiced or politicized answers. When comparing quantitative with qualitative research forms, the latter allow for a deeper involvement of the participants, aim at exploring underlying motives and wishes, try to study real-world settings (Kothari 2004: 3) and provide a more interactive examination of attitudes, perceptions and beliefs, so that the results can reveal in-depth, current and unique perspectives. The subsequent realization and design of the interviews is further analyzed and described in chapter 4.2.2.

As crucial importance lies in a pressure-free environment while conducting the interviews, the students are interviewed without the presence of teachers or other participants and the research methodology of a focused group interview is selected. In this way, the feeling of anonymity is increased and ideas can be set in motion through the continuing exchange of arguments, opinions and experiences from other group participants. The literature on qualitative research methods indicates that the terms 'group discussions' and 'focus groups' are often used interchangeably. The original

source for the emergence of focus groups represents the model of focused interviews, which was first described by Merton as a data collection method. Central to focused group interviews is the premise that all participants have experienced a concrete, social situation and share their personal experiences, perceptions and evaluations in the context of this situation (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr 2014:134). Through the so-called 'share and compare' process, memories of the experienced situation can be activated, which would have been forgotten in individual interviews (Morgan 1997: 20), meaning that the primary goal of focused group interviews is to trigger a variety of different reactions to a stimulus given by an interviewer. The interviewer's role is realized through ensuring that the focus is kept on the subsequent topic and subjective impressions are explored and explicated (Przyborski et al. 2014: 135). Hence, the term 'focused group interview' is further used in this thesis on the basis of Merton's explanations. To quote Irving and Peterson, the concept of focused group interviews "respect[s] the fact that people are naturally social and influenced by the comments and advice of others, and also allow the researcher the flexibility to probe unexpected issues. If they are well run, [focused group interviews] encourage reticent members to speak and lead to a snowballing of ideas" (2008: 241).

By addressing the involved persons - students and teachers - it is expected to identify the role and purpose of feedback in English learning environments in Austria and how feedback practices are applied and realized, hopefully showing the essential factors that contribute to the effectiveness of feedback. Furthermore, this project has the aim to raise awareness of constant improvement and development in learning contexts and the effectiveness of feedback as a tool to reach these goals.

5.2.1 Participants and Context

Both the individual interviews with Austrian English teachers and the focused group interview with high school students from Vienna and Lower Austria appeared to be of utmost significance to gain a broad account of varying attitudes as well as to better understand the mechanisms, the nature and role of feedback in Austrian EFL classrooms.

While conducting individual interviews with Austrian English teachers, one of the main goals was to search for perceptions of individual feedback experiences in their English classes. Subsequently, a comparison of these results with the research literature previously analyzed follows and as a next step, contrasts and overlaps of theoretical

considerations and experienced practices are pointed out. A total number of four teacher interviews were held in Vienna and Lower Austria with teachers from the two school types ‘Allgemein bildende höhere Schule’ (AHS) and ‘Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schule’ (BMHS). All of the teachers interviewed earned a teaching degree at the University of Vienna and have been teaching English in Austria between thirteen and thirty-three years. The respective teachers were selected on the grounds of different reasons, one of them being that all of them had participated in a training program for advising young teaching colleagues in their first year of teaching practice. Within this process, feedback loops of observed behaviors, performances and pedagogical proceedings are an essential component of their daily routine. Hence, it is assumed that the teachers interviewed do not only have experience in giving and receiving feedback with students, but also commonly reflect on their own teaching and the impact of other teaching practices. Contacts were also established during my teaching trainee program for English in 2013. As a consequence, potential participants were contacted via email, colleagues or friends and the ultimate willingness to engage in dialogue was expressed by four English teachers. One limitation of the selected target group has to be mentioned, namely that the participating interview partners were all female.

Neither of the school types, AHS and BMHS put compulsory feedback and teacher evaluation into practice. However, within the BMHS, the initiative ‘QUIBB-QualitätsInitiative BerufsBildung’⁵ was brought into being by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs, which aimed at increasing school quality management and tried to guarantee a consistent feedback cycle in BMHS schools. The provision of standardized feedback sheets for students to respond to their teacher’s schooling represents one outcome of the initiative that was mentioned by the teachers interviewed.

The focused group interview as a qualitative research method was chosen to reflect on in-depth understandings of feedback practices in order to receive answers that are not of superficial character or modified. The duration of the focused group interview was 120 minutes and held during the summer holidays. Eleven high school students (six female students and five male students) from both types of schools, AHS and BMHS, participated in the study. They were between fifteen and nineteen years of age. All of them attend different schools in Vienna and Lower Austria and have had English in

⁵ cf. Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen. 2015. *QUIBB-QualitätsInitiative BerufsBildung*. www.qibb.at (20 September 2015)

school for eight to twelve years. Hence, the group covered a range of English performance levels. Since the goal of this research was to capture a broad picture of existing attitudes and experiences, no age, educational or regional limits were imposed. The one factor that the selected group of students had in common was the fact that each of them was elected the student representative of his or her school and above that, part of either the *Landesschülervertretung* Vienna⁶ or Lower Austria⁷, whose mission it is to represent the concerns and requests of students at a national level. The decision to choose a research group like this has to imply an analysis of potential limitations, but also of the gains and advantages in order to eliminate risk factors and calculate major opportunities that might arise. Through the access to contacts of these networks, it was made possible to include a broad variety of students in the discussion, namely eleven different schools and contexts were represented, from AHS to BMHS as well as different age groups. Furthermore, by means of the students' voluntary work, increased commitment and interest in school quality measures were expected. Moreover, students were generally acquainted with the concept of feedback and motivated to contribute to the discussion. Addressing the limitations in order to take measures to prevent them, the interviewer could run the risk of receiving pre-built answers which are influenced by parents, teachers or policy makers. In view of this risk, the focus of research interest is clearly expressed by highlighting the aim to gain insights into personal experiences and perceptions of actual English learning processes. In addition, questions were incorporated which do not state an explicit intention, but rather try to provoke answers that reflect on individual perspectives and attitudes towards how students feel about feedback practices in their classroom settings. Only the respective students and the interviewer were present during the focused group interview. The results of both, the teacher interviews and the student group interview, were transcribed, analyzed and interpreted.

5.2.2 Teachers - individual interview design

The individual interviews were conducted to find out perspectives, experiences and attitudes of Austrian English teachers towards applications of feedback in order to respond to their students' performances and learning processes.

⁶ cf. Landesschülervertretung für den Stadtschulrat für Wien. 2015. *Landesschülervertretung Wien. Deine gesetzlich verankerte überschulische Vertretung. Wien.* www.lsvwien.at (20 September 2015)

⁷ cf. Landesschülervertretung für Niederösterreich. 2015. *LSV NÖ. St.Pölten.* www.lsv-noe.com/about/ (20 September 2015)

The conducted interviews addressed four key aspects of SLA and feedback: the handling of errors in the EFL classroom, the definition and purpose of feedback, variables that influence the use of feedback and interactional effects that feedback might have on the student-teacher relationship. The different variables discussed contained the various types of feedback, the content or focus of the feedback message, the timing and frequency, different interaction formats of feedback and the overall impact. To get an overall impression of the feedback concept's significance, guiding questions were included that investigate in how far feedback functions as a possible component of successful language learning. Questions on important characteristics of an English teacher, the transparency of achievements and potential areas as well as the treatment of errors lead to the main part of the interview, namely the exploration of the role of feedback in Austrian EFL.

Regarding the interview design, I selected a structured interview design, further explicated by McKay as a "standardized open-ended interview" (2006: 52). The decisive factors and criteria for deciding on this interview type represented the possibilities for the interviewer to guide through the conversation and to be able to gain answers on a desired set of questions. The difficulty which arose was to formulate the questions as open as possible without creating a feeling of restriction and to keep the number of questions that are based on a prescribed set of answers (for example: yes/no questions) as low as feasible.

At the beginning of the interviews, I attempted to create a constructive atmosphere, trying to build rapport and finding out some background information on my interview partners. At first, the teachers were asked to reflect on their own English language learning experiences and the majority of them confirmed a predominance of audio-lingual methods including pattern drills, dialogue and phrasal memorizations. Beyond that, emphasis was placed on reading activities stemming from English literature, while the other skills did not receive as much attention. The teachers interviewed considered the input by native language assistants as particularly valuable for their own English learning history, as well as traveling to English-speaking countries.

Secondly, the ideal role of an English teacher was discussed, and thirdly, the topic of goal setting was brought forward, meaning that questions of transparency concerning the setting and stating of learning goals in the EFL classroom were posed. It is important to note that the interview guide constructed does not represent a fixed frame

and has to be adopted within the respective interactional situation. To obtain a detailed overview of the teacher interview guide, an exemplary model is included in appendix A. Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned that the option was provided to the teachers whether they wanted to conduct the interview in English or German and all four interview partners decided to precede in their mother tongue, using German. From my perspective, this also contributed to a more relaxed and congenial atmosphere. In order to prevent a false representation of the statements gained, direct quotes will be given in German to understand certain tendencies and viewpoints, as well as to remain close to the original text. In the course of the interviews, it was decided not to include the total script of transcriptions in this thesis, to retain the participant's anonymity. Anyhow, the most fundamental findings will be presented in chapter 5.

5.2.3 Students - focused group interview design

As the second element of empirical investigation, a focused group interview was carried out, enabling the communication of students' beliefs and attitudes towards the perceived use of feedback in their classroom settings, the estimated advantages, effects and risk factors. The main objective was to explore the role of formative feedback for EFL classrooms and its components in order to be effective for learning English as a second language through the learner's eyes.

The overall focused group interview design required careful and thorough planning and preparatory considerations, as the organization of the whole workshop, implications of group dynamics, the finding of suitable and appropriate premises and equipment acquisition had to be thought through. Moreover, ways had to be established to reach the targeted goals in a short amount of time. A seminar room was found with the possibility to sit in a circle of chairs, to use a flipchart and a large-sized pinboard. Furthermore, there was enough room to install a video camera and to place a recording device into the middle of the circle. As a result of these organizational matters, the focused group interview lasted about 120 minutes including a welcoming phase and a small talk phase where refreshments were offered, aiming at reducing nervousness and creating a constructive climate of communication. The discussion phase was initiated by the formal introduction of myself, a brief overview of research interests, the pursued objectives and a description of the planned setting and frame for the discussion. As a next step, a warm-up activity was performed together with the students to get to know each other and to set the atmosphere and tone for a cooperative discussion. Following

the attempt to establish rapport and a feeling of familiarity, it was intended to provoke each student to reflect on matters of feedback by themselves, distributing a feedback mind map containing leading questions, such as “*what is feedback?*”, “*what is the use of feedback?*” and “*what types of feedback can you observe?*”. This short input should have the function of a mind-opener, which can be further used and referred to in the discussion. Following the introductory phase, the actual discussion was set in motion.

I was present during the entire interview and guided through the discussion as a moderator and summarist, starting with more general questions before more specific ones and cues were provided to prompt additional discussion and new views.

The discussion itself focused on more or less the same key aspects of feedback than compared to the teachers’, but the questions were formulated from the perspective of the English learner, such as the question: “*How do you receive feedback on your performances*” (cf. appendix A). The different foci were concerned with learning in the EFL classroom from a more general perspective, the role of feedback for learning English as a second language, the various feedback factors that could influence feedback effects and possible contextual impacts on the student-teacher relationship for instance. The respective topic in question was written down on the flipchart and presented to all participants before a starting signal for the discussion was given. From my point of view, students seemed to be highly engaged in the topic and the possibility to express their opinion motivated them and was of great value.

After the discussion ended, the sketched mind maps were collected (cf. examples in appendix A), the recording and corresponding video material was transcribed, gaining an overview of the received data. Following a first account of research findings, emerging themes were established and reflected on.

6 Interview results - attitudes towards feedback practices

This section attempts to describe the findings of the interviews conducted between four Austrian English teachers on the one hand, and on the other hand, it provides an overview of the results obtained from the focused group interview lead by eleven Austrian high school students. Once the qualitative data was transcribed, each question and answer was analyzed to arrive at identifying broad themes and categories: the first of them being, experiences when learning and teaching English as a second language, secondly, the role of feedback in the EFL classroom. Thirdly, its different components influencing the effectiveness of feedback (types, focus, timing, frequency and interaction formats) and fourthly, contextual influences that might be inherent in feedback, such as contributions to a more positive student-teacher relationship. While undertaking these analyses, possible conclusions were drawn, attitudes and perspectives interpreted and connections and arising controversies were highlighted. The interpretation process was undertaken on the methodological basis of Mayring's 'Qualitative Content Analysis', which conceptualizes the assignment of categories to the produced text and functions as a data analysis technique, enabling a fragmented, structured examination of the research material (Mayring 2014: 10). Thereby, 'Qualitative Content Analysis' has the aim to recreate a clearly represented image of the initial situation through the process of abstraction, structuring and further explication (Mayring 2002: 463). By the use of this procedure, interpretations can be drawn from the statements gathered. The central point of this thesis is to analyze and interpret common and everyday experiences with the use of feedback, which build the foundation for additional interpretations. At the beginning of this chapter, the defined categories have been introduced and prime examples will be provided in the chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

The final discussion of results offers a thorough discussion of the examined data, bringing together the perspectives of both the teachers and the learners to further link the emerging ideas with each other. Additionally, the intention is to increase awareness of deviating perceptions. Furthermore, a connection is built between the theoretical part of this diploma thesis and the interview results, in order to accomplish a more comprehensive picture of feedback uses, its benefits and limitations and more or less effective feedback factors that could increase its success for SLA. With this empirical

research, the goal is to provide insights into the role of feedback in Austrian EFL classrooms and to discuss possible success factors of feedback to enhance its impact.

6.1 Austrian English teachers' perspectives on feedback practices

The perspective provided in this chapter focuses on perceptions, experiences and common practices of Austrian English teachers with regard to feedback uses as a notion to exchange information on an English student's performance. To me, not only the specific role of feedback in the EFL classroom is of particular interest, but also attitudes towards other EFL related topics. Further, contextual aspects and teaching practices could significantly influence in how far English teachers apply and implement feedback in the English learning process. These include own experiences when learning English, possible perceived success factors of enhancing the English language learning process, goal setting practices, the impression of how errors are handled in the classroom setting and how achievements or potential areas become transparent to the student. The results and insights into these more general topics of SLA and language learning might demonstrate a direct link to common feedback uses.

In order to accomplish a clearly arranged representation of teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding feedback, the transcribed data is described and structured into four categories: the individual EFL practice, the role of feedback, different components of feedback under consideration and the possible contextual impacts of feedback. The results are presented in the subsequent section.

6.1.1 The perceived EFL practice - error correction and goal setting

Towards exploring motives and background information on the English teaching practice of the teachers interviewed, the first question tried to provoke a reflection process of the teachers' own experiences as students of English. Question 1 asked about aspects that made learning English more or less successful for them personally. All of the teachers recounted their English learning experience as consisting of imitation, memorization and pattern drills mainly, the previously described audio-lingual method was a prevailing constituent of the English lessons. Furthermore, the inclusion of a variety of skills was not a daily routine. In the majority of cases, the reading of primary literature was practiced, whereas writing, speaking and listening played subordinate roles in the English classroom. One teacher mentioned that in the case of speaking, the

teacher often encouraged unprepared debates without contextual considerations, which did not lead to major learning gains according to the interview participant. As a consequence, great emphasis was laid on the processing of input and not so much on output production. However, the memorization of phrases, dialogues and even whole texts was not perceived as being impedimental to SLA, but even profitable. Particularly accentuated of being essentially valuable for learning English represented the input provided by native speakers, as well as traveling, being exposed to permanent input and being pushed to produce continuing output in the second language. In the 1950s and 60s, Teacher 1 reported on an upcoming fascination for the English language, originating from Anglo-Saxon territories. Her own enthusiasm and sympathy for the English language as well as its culture arose out of this fascination triggering process, which also lead the interviewee to the conclusion of what makes learning English successful:

Also ich glaube einmal, beim Sprachenlernen ist das Allerwichtigste, dass man eine Sympathie empfindet, (und das ist jetzt ein schwacher Ausdruck), für die Sprache und Kultur. Man lernt eine Sprache nicht, wenn man die Leute, die diese Sprache sprechen ablehnt zum Beispiel und das hat eine große Rolle gespielt, dass doch so in den fünfziger, sechziger Jahren eine gewisse Faszination ausgegangen ist vom angelsächsischen Raum. [...] Wenn die Lehrkraft diese Faszination verkörpert für einen Schüler, dann ist man viel zugänglicher. #00:12:37# [Teacher 1]⁸

The thought of being implicitly motivated as an essential component of successful SLA was further encouraged by the other interview partners. This before described inner drive and a positive attitude towards English were perceived as learning triggering devices, which can spark interest and enthusiasm. Then this motivation can be further extended by the teacher through a diversified methodological structure within classes, the up-to-date use of new media, establishing practical relevance for the content of the lesson, creating a comfortable learning atmosphere, the permanent engagement of the students, the inclusion of all skills and the transparency of achievements, potentials and desired outcomes. However, Teacher 2 pointed out that in the majority of cases, there are not sufficient time resources available in the daily routine of school life to enable an effective communication of reasons, why students should intensify their efforts and why it is important for them to learn English in general. Although the provision of targeted,

⁸ All of the quotes are given in German in order to maintain their natural meaning. The author has tried to make their messages comprehensible without the need to understand their content.

relevant and varied purposes constitutes a fundamental process in increasing engagement and motivation.

Moving on to the role of English teachers and their contributions to a successful learning process, it becomes clear that the English teacher occupies an important position in paving the way for the establishment of prerequisite conditions. From the perspective of the interviewed teachers, ideal English teachers are, among other factors, comprised of expert English knowledge, clearly structured proceedings in the classroom, an orientation on different types of learners and a thoroughly planned lesson. What appears to be even more striking is the fact that all of the English teachers have highlighted the necessity of positive interactions with their students as a vital part of successful English language learning, as a good English teacher is able to create a learning environment in which English learners feel valued, respected and accepted. The question of what makes an English teacher successful accentuates the need for positive interrelations between students and teachers:

Das ist eine extrem schwierige Frage, also ich glaube einmal, dass viel von der persönlichen Beziehung abhängt. Ich merke sofort, wenn die Chemie überhaupt nicht stimmt oder wenn eine sehr negative Energie vorherrscht. Diese Energie ist sehr schnell spürbar. Und ich glaube, das Eingehen auf individuelle Bedürfnisse, die Wertschätzung ist ganz, ganz wichtig! Damit meine ich einen respektvollen, sehr offenen, wertschätzenden Umgang miteinander und dass die Lehrperson auf individuelle Bedürfnisse eingeht. Je nach dem wo die Schwächen liegen, dass man diese besonders fördert und Stärken noch weiter ausbaut. Ich glaube, wenn man einmal diese Freiheit hat, dann ist das Lernen einer Sprache ein sehr tolles Erlebnis. #00:06:47# [Teacher 2]

Ich finde einmal, die Persönlichkeit macht eine Person zu einer erfolgreichen Lehrkraft, wenn man den Schülern vermitteln kann, dass man weiß von was man redet. Dass man andere Meinungen akzeptiert und auch auf einer persönlichen Ebene Verständnis zeigt und nicht nur auf das Fach bezogen ist. Ich bin selbst eine Person, die sehr viel Wert darauf legt wie es den Kindern geht, was gut läuft und was schief gelaufen ist in diesem Jahr. Ich finde das macht sehr viel aus. #00:10:27# [Teacher 4]

A respect-oriented cooperation includes clear rules and behavioral conventions, politeness, paying active attention and a solution-based approach when conflicts emerge. According to Teacher 2 the counting and correction of errors should not be foregrounded when learning English as a second language, but rather, potential areas should be pointed out and discussed with the student. On the contrary, Teacher 4 orientates her teaching practices on the average student in class, arguing that if one focuses on the deficiencies or strengths only, the majority of students would lose its

interest and enthusiasm. Teacher 3 points out another consequence of a misguided learning environment, namely the topic of fear. In her opinion it should be the goal of every English teacher to keep anxiety levels at a minimum and even encourage students to make errors on a regular basis and reflect on failed uses. The possible implications of negative feelings are further explained by Teacher 3, saying that:

Ich glaube, dass eben negative Kommentare zu sehr viel Angst führen. Dass oft Zynismen zu sehr negativen Lernerlebnissen führen und bei den Schülerinnen und Schülern auch wirklich große Angst auslösen, wenn sie zum Beispiel vor der Klasse sprechen müssen oder auch, dass sie beim Verfassen von Texten sehr unsicher sind, oder dass sie bei 'listening comprehensions' sehr nervös sind. Ich denke, eine positive Atmosphäre, beziehungsweise eine konstruktive Lernatmosphäre zu schaffen, sodass alle eine Freude am Englischunterricht haben, empfinde ich als essentiell. Ich finde, nur in einer positiven Atmosphäre kann auch gut gelernt werden. #00:11:50# [Teacher 3]

Throughout the course of interviews, it was mentioned several times that repeatedly negative comments have the power to instill and stir up fears and might build up mistrust as well, which can bear far-reaching consequences for the future language learning behavior of the student. Being enthusiastic about the student's interests and engaging with the individual personality represent constitutive success factors in the EFL classroom for Teacher 3. In addition, for Teacher 4 it is essential to evaluate her own impact on her students as an English teacher. In addition to the frequent reflection of her own lessons and the grades of her students, Teacher 4 consults her students on a regular basis to find out about more or less effective teaching practices. Furthermore, it is part of her lessons to include the students' impressions on their own development, in which areas facilitation is still necessary and in what topics the students want to engage in.

When asking the English teachers how they measured their success and impact, problems arose formulating concrete answers. Achievements of students are perceived differently by the teachers interviewed. Teacher 4 bases her estimations on summative assessments and results, meaning that she measures her success and student achievement on the individual upgrade or downgrade of school grades and accordingly on the produced output of the student, as for instance on a well-written essay, a good grade on a test or an apparent development in the correctness of language use. To quote Teacher 1, she reflects on her impact with certain undefined student achievements, such

as when students show initiative and self-motivation for improvement in the English language.

Also vereinzelt haben wir Schüler, die ihre Sprachkenntnisse durch eine gewisse Eigenmotivation in einer sehr erstaunlichen Weise verbessern und das ist das, was mich am meisten freut, wenn jemand selbstständig versucht, dass er besser diese Sprache beherrscht. #00:20:32# [Teacher 1]

In contrast, Teacher 3 feels successful according to how much interest the students show. Discouraged or demotivated behavior is her feedback indicating the need to alter her ways or that another problem might be distracting the students from learning. In this context Teacher 3 follows Ruth Cohn's theme-centered interaction, as one basic principle postulates that disturbances but also passionate involvements take precedence (Langmaack 2009: 147-168). She further explains that one can feel if learning is successful or not by the prevailing atmosphere. When questioning the interview partner for further details, the teacher mentions postural indications, the tone and style of language, active participation and rapport. Teacher 2 and 3 try to describe their feelings when they think that their teaching practices are successful with a flow-feeling which can be established within their classes. However, other than that, no concrete measurement factors were given.

The next questions' intention was to identify goal setting practices of English teachers and how desired goals and achievements were made transparent to the learner. To introduce the topic, Teacher 1 recounts one basic purpose of making goals transparent for everyone in the learning process by saying:

Ich habe immer wieder die Erfahrung gemacht, dass wenn man bestimmte Ziele formuliert, diese den Schülern erklärt und sie diese auch verstehen, dann sind diese viel eher bereit, Anstrengungen in ihre Arbeit und in den Lernprozess zu investieren. #00:22:03# [Teacher 1]

Students apparently devote increased efforts into their work when goals are made clear and transparent. All teachers agree that the specific goals and desired competencies are strictly predetermined by the CEFR, the Austrian curriculum and the ELP. Furthermore, their overall annual planning is predicated on these proficiency scales, which determine what goals and outcomes have to be achieved by their students. Teacher 1's response to the question on what determines her selection of goals is stated quite explicitly as she answers:

Nach dem kompetenzorientierten Lehrplan sind die Ziele klar bestimmt, nämlich, dass die Schüler mit bestimmten Hörmaterialien umgehen können, dass die Lesekompetenz als Grundkompetenz eine wichtige Rolle einnimmt, genauso wie die schriftliche Kompetenz und die sprachliche Kompetenz. Das sind die Ziele, diese sind konkret vorgegeben und da gibt es überhaupt keine Diskussion, ob diese gelten oder nicht. #00:14:46# [Teacher 1]

Only the initial reaction of Teacher 3 deviates from the other ones, as she specifies the basis of her goal setting practice with the statement:

Dass alle, also wirklich möglichst alle Schülerinnen und Schüler der Klasse ihre Englischkompetenz innerhalb ihrer eigenen Möglichkeiten verbessern. #00:12:22# [Teacher 3]

For Teacher 3, the CEFR or the ELP do not represent primary sources of goal formulation. She follows a bottom-up approach, in which she formulates small scale outcomes and then balances the appropriate and attaining competence level in accordance with the former mentioned proficiency scales and the respective descriptors. This approach becomes visible through the following quotation:

Wenn ich mir das Niveau, das ich erreichen möchte anschau, sehe ich mir natürlich auch die Deskriptoren in den einzelnen Referenzrahmen an. Der CEFR bietet ein gutes Grundgerüst um das gewünschte Niveau auch zu erreichen. Des Weiteren dient es auch der Überprüfung und hilft bei der Formulierung von Zielen finde ich. #00:13:18# [Teacher 3]

From the teacher's professional perspective, Teacher 2 strives for the goal to pursue a constant evaluation process of her own impact on the students and to request feedback on her own teaching practice, as teaching implies a continuing adaption process.

Concerning the transparency of learning goals, teachers report on a variety of different approaches to make learning intentions and achievements visible to their students. For Teacher 4, only one efficient possibility is offered to guarantee a transparent system of learning outcomes within the existing environmental conditions, namely through the use of grades. In addition, also the individual learning process is documented with the Austrian marking system. The English teacher manages a folder with which students can retrace their personal growth or decline in performance by observing their changes in grades. Reasons mentioned for this procedure are limited time resources and an excessive number of students per class. Furthermore, Teacher 2 uses her performance rating as a device to explain goals. However, operational goals do not seem to be clear to the students as the teacher often experiences difficulties with the

comprehensibility of defined outcomes. The teacher possesses the theoretical background knowledge in order to make sense of predefined competencies, which, from the perspective of the student, are difficult to comprehend. The task of the teacher would be to reformulate these definitions suitable for students, which sometimes represents itself as a seemingly impossible challenge according to Teacher 2. Criticism is voiced by the teacher when it comes to the formulation of objectives in the ELP, as she admits that at times she experiences problems with the correct interpretation of learning intentions as well. Teacher 3 focuses on a different path when making learning outcomes visible, namely through the use of permanent feedback varieties. These varieties include the use of praise, exhortations, demands, comments on students' performances and output productions, private conversations and messages to parents. During the interview, Teacher 3 arrives at the conclusion that students receive constant feedback through the teacher's entire behavior in the classroom, resulting in verbal and written feedback on different kinds of levels. Regarding the role of the marking system to evaluate learning processes, Teacher 3 further comments:

Ich finde, dass das Notenspektrum sehr klein ist. Ein und derselbe Dreier kann unterschiedliche Aussagen zum Lernprozess beinhalten und gerade in einer Sprache kann die Entwicklung von einem Vierer auf einen Zweier jahrelang dauern, da Sprachenlernen einen kontinuierlichen Lernvorgang beinhaltet. Aber die Note allein finde ich nicht sehr aussagekräftig, daher ist mir der persönliche Kommentar unter Schularbeiten zum Beispiel sehr wichtig. Und weil wir natürlich auch Talent benoten macht das Kinder oft sehr traurig. Diesen versuche ich zu erklären, dass wir Menschen eben sehr unterschiedlich begabt sind. Ich finde Noten grundsätzlich gut und sie sind eine wesentliche Rückmeldung, aber über den individuellen Lernfortschritt sagt die Note oft nicht viel aus, finde ich. #00:23:54# [Teacher 3]

Hence, the impression arises that in their common practice, teachers do not have a clear cut plan on how to show and point out learning progresses, as well as on how to communicate desired learning outcomes to their students. In the school of Teacher 3, teachers are required to include an alternative assessment besides the marking system which contains personal statements regarding the individual learning process of the respective student. With this practice it is the goal to make the assigning of grades more comprehensible and observable to the student. At a later point of the interview, Teacher 1 arrived at the point where she claimed that too much time is spent on clarifying and discussing learning objectives since the marking procedure is talked about anyways. Although in her opinion, crucial importance should be laid on an increased reflection

and discussion of the nature and purpose of feedback as well as on principles behind a constructive feedback culture.

The last feedback-related issue concerns the handling of errors in EFL classrooms, revealing a diverse picture of common teaching practices. Teacher 1 and 2 do not correct errors immediately when students speak, as they feel that it creates a demoralizing and frustrating learning atmosphere. Whereas Teacher 4 speaks out for an immediate correction, diminishing the risk of internalizing incorrect forms into the language system. Time for personal comments on written assignments appear to be rare and uncommon due to a lack of time resources. According to Teacher 4, this is the main reason for relying on the marking system when describing the stage of development:

Also es [der Entwicklungsstand] erfolgt bei mir eigentlich nur über Noten. Es geht gar nicht anders, weil wenn man 200 Schüler hat, oder mehr, kann ich nicht mit jedem ein persönliches Feedbackgespräch führen und sagen: das ist gut gewesen und das ist schlecht gewesen. Und viele verstehen ja sowieso, wenn es nur Fünfer regnet und nur Minus regnet, dann geht es ja gar nicht anders. So weit sind sie dann schon, dass sie die Sachen selbst verstehen.
#00:27:31# [Teacher 4]

The concrete type of feedback is also dependent on the current learning focus, for example if a specific text format is being practiced. After presentations all of the interviewed teachers apply feedback loops, analyzing positive as well as negative perceptions of the performance. After written tests, Teacher 2 conducts individual feedback conversations with every individual student in which both, student and teacher, work on the definition of strengths and weaknesses and how to improve. Teacher 3 argues that the handling of errors is practiced too rigidly in EFL classrooms:

Wir haben alle Englisch als 'foreign language' gelernt, oft in einer bestimmten Umgebung und meine Variation von Englisch ist nicht die Variation, die auf der ganzen Welt gesprochen wird. Deswegen kann ich auch nicht genau bestimmen oder bewerten, ob etwas eindeutig falsch ist oder nicht. Wenn ich den Eindruck habe, dass eine Phrase so nicht ihren kommunikativen Zweck erfüllt, beginne ich nachzuforschen. Es entstehen einfach neue Dinge und von vornherein zu sagen, das habe ich 1990 auf dem Anglistik-Institut so nicht gelernt ist einfach nicht gut. Ich sehe das schon bei vielen Kolleginnen, dass sie sehr rigide vorgehen. #00:19:26# [Teacher 3]

Teacher 3 accentuates the fact that language changes over time and new variations evolve, which should be taken into consideration when correcting learners' errors.

6.1.2 The role of feedback in EFL classrooms

The next part of the interviews concentrated on identifying purposes of feedback and attitudes towards feedback practices in EFL classrooms among Austrian English teachers. Overall all of the four interviewed teachers attribute fundamental significance to the use of feedback in EFL classrooms in order to achieve increased performances and to create a mutual understanding of the pursued learning process. Moreover, ascribing importance to the deployment of feedback appears to be an omnipresent, inevitable ingredient of the daily learning and teaching routine, which was the topic in all interviews. Hence, understanding the practice of giving and receiving feedback better, meaning its functions, influences and mechanisms, seems to be of valuable importance.

Attitude towards feedback

Generally speaking, a broad consensus has been reached on the potentially positive influences and effects of feedback for the language learning process. The following statements underline this thesis:

Feedback ist unendlich wichtig. Ich glaube, dass man ohne Feedback gar nicht viel lernt. Ich glaube, dass wir Menschen, einfach so wie wir gestrickt sind, ganz darauf angewiesen sind, dass wir immer wieder Feedback bekommen. Und ich glaube auch, dass Kinder viel besser lernen, wenn sie dafür gelobt werden und dass man ihnen aber auch sagen muss was nicht gut ist, welchen Weg sie nicht einschlagen sollen. Also ich glaube, wir leiten Babys, Kleinkinder und später Kinder und Jugendliche in der Schule sehr genau mit unserem Feedback. Und ich glaube, dass kein Feedback eigentlich sehr verletzend sein kann. #00:26:00# [Teacher 3]

In addition to the opinion of Teacher 3, Teacher 2 adds:

Na [Feedback] das ist immens wichtig. Ich glaube, dass man auf beiden Seiten, als Lehrkraft sich nicht weiterentwickeln kann, wenn man sich kein Feedback einholt und auch als Schüler, denn woher soll der Schüler denn wissen wo er steht, wie er dorthin kommen kann und was überhaupt zu erreichen gilt. Wertschätzendes Feedback ist ganz wichtig, also nicht nur dieses Aufzählen was der Schüler falsch gemacht hat, sondern wirklich sehr wertschätzendes, respektvolles Feedback ist extrem wichtig für beide Seiten. #00:26:03# [Teacher 2]

Especially effective for language learning seems to be the use of positive feedback and praise, as feedback messages which emphasize strengths and positive aspects of

behavior and performances also contain a motivational message for the student. As they are seen as essential duties of an English teacher, stoking motivation and providing positive reinforcement can be two possible consequences of feedback messages which focus on strengths rather than on deficiencies. Teacher 4 defines the function of positive feedback as a tool to express happiness and excitement for achievements of students to connect with them on a personal level. In addition, verbal feedback is preferred over written comments, because in an active communication there exists the possibility to check the meaning of misunderstood statements and ambiguities can be adjusted. For Teacher 4 it plays an important role to give students the chance to voice their opinions on prevalent classroom practices as well. Frequently, both groups, students and teachers, try to avoid confrontation and as a consequence stay silent instead, although feelings of discontent and frustration become apparent on multiple occasions. Teacher 4 argues that if verbal feedback would be a commonly practiced ritual, disagreements and negative attitudes towards the subject or the teacher might be changed or solved more easily and more effectively.

One of the last questions in the interview asked for the ideal feedback practice, without contextual limitations of the Austrian school system. From my point of view, it seemed difficult to the interviewed teachers to employ thinking outside the box in order to arrive at new perspectives. Suggestions included the wish for more individual, verbal feedback, which can be communicated explicitly to the students, as well as increased time resources for this reflection process. From the teachers' perspective, Teacher 2 and 3 prompted the need for obligatory teacher evaluation at least once a year.

To conclude this chapter, Teacher 3 came to the following realization at the end of her interview:

Mir war gar nicht bewusst, welchen Stellenwert und was für einen wesentlichen Teil meiner Unterrichtsarbeit, Feedback ausmacht. Aber ich komme jetzt darauf, dass es sehr sehr wichtig ist in meiner Arbeit und ein wesentlicher Teil ist und dass es eigentlich schade ist, dass es so wenig Feedbackkultur gibt, dass es immer noch mehr Personen gibt, die darüber nicht reflektieren und dass das eigentlich auch während der Ausbildung schon wichtig wäre, dass das ein wichtiger Teil wäre. Es ist ja auch Teil des Lehrer-Schüler-Gesprächs und deswegen, finde ich, sollten wir uns da schon auf eine Metaebene begeben und uns einmal anschauen, was da eigentlich passiert, wenn wir handeln. Und es ist immer ein Feedback, wenn wir in der Klasse handeln. Das heißt, es ist ein ganz wichtiger Bestandteil und auch immer impliziter Teil des Unterrichtsprozesses.
#00:56:51# [Teacher 3]

Teacher 3 seemed surprised about her realization of how important feedback is for her daily English teaching routine. She adds that a lot of her colleagues do not reflect on their feedback practices, which should be furthermore an important part of university education. Consequential, the author concludes that the notion of feedback represents a substantial component in EFL classrooms and has far-reaching consequences, which can improve but also deteriorate the English language learning process.

Definition and purpose of feedback

Starting with the question of how the interviewed teachers would describe the notion of feedback to a colleague, my intention was to find out the determining constituents of feedback, as well as its chances and risks for learning English as a second language.

First of all, and from a more general perspective, feedback can be described as any type of communication and interaction with which the provision of information on a student's performance or behavior can be achieved. It can be realized through a variety of different forms, such as written, verbal or nonverbal feedback and also explicit or implicit forms. Furthermore, feedback operates on various levels, not only on a professional level, but also on a personal one. The belief that teaching cannot function without feedback is predominant among the interviewed teachers.

Concerning the purpose of feedback, Teacher 3 remarks:

Meine Erfahrung ist, weil ich vor allem kleine Gruppen unterrichte, dass man die Kinder wirklich wachsen sieht am Feedback. Und dass die beste Entwicklung möglich ist, wenn sie sehr viel individuelles Feedback bekommen. Der individuelle Lernfortschritt kann viel effektiver voranschreiten, wenn die Schüler genau wissen wo ihre Stärken und Schwächen liegen und wie sie diese ausbauen und fördern können. #00:29:56# [Teacher 3]

On a communicational level, Teacher 4 points out that respectful feedback holds the power of establishing trustworthy relationships to a communication partner, as the giving and receiving of feedback includes the process of exposing yourself to another person and opening up, which also implies the risk of receiving hurtful messages. In order for feedback to work, both feedback partners have to build up mutual trust and the willingness to actively get involved with the other person. Furthermore, Teacher 3 highlights that through feedback it is possible to make the learning process more effective as it also allows teachers to observe the growing process of students more visibly. The sharing of feedback helps the individual learning progress when students

reflect on and know about their strengths and deficiencies and how to further develop these competences.

Identified risks of feedback are associated with disrespectful or imprudent feedback mainly, leading to:

Ich glaube schon, dass man vorsichtig auch damit [mit Feedback] umgehen soll. Es ist durchaus ein Risiko, dass man Kinder und Jugendliche sehr verletzen kann mit einem nicht gut überlegten Feedback und das größte Risiko ist eigentlich der Zynismus. Eine zynische Bemerkung kann Schülerinnen und Schüler sehr, sehr treffen und ein bestimmter, verletzender Satz kann sich sehr lange in der Einstellung manifestieren und sogar das ganze weitere Leben beeinflussen. #00:29:29# [Teacher 2]

Adding to this perception of possible risks, Teacher 1 remarks:

Man muss sich ja nur überlegen, wenn man selber Feedback von jemanden bekommt, man kann sich dann sehr zurückgestoßen fühlen. Ich denke, was ich nicht mag was mir einer tut, das mache ich auch nicht dem anderen gegenüber, so einfach ist das. Das ist die Grundregel. Dies kann so weit gehen, dass Schüler den Unterricht nur noch verweigern beziehungsweise sehr viel Angst vor dem Fach haben, was ja bekannterweise zu großen Hemmungen beim Lernen führt. Wir haben alle Angst vor Kritik und ich glaube, dass gerade Lehrpersonen sehr empfindlich sind, was Kritik betrifft und dass es auch deswegen keine sehr ausgeprägte Feedbackkultur gibt. #00:34:28# [Teacher 1]

Feedback can include information on performances and behaviors, but according to the teachers the transmitter of feedback also sends underlying messages of approval, disapproval, acceptance and criticism to the receiver on a personal level. If feedback contains hurtful messages, it can lead to psychological pain and dysbalance. If a learner experiences continuously negative feedback situations, far-reaching effects can be the consequence, such as a changed attitude towards a subject or learning in general and a distorted perspective on possible future job prospects. For Teacher 1 it is sometimes immensely difficult to open up to her students, because in her view teachers have to establish some kind of inner strength to process the quantity of harsh comments coming from students and hence, it happens that through this steady wall, no other perspectives are accepted. However, this resistance derives from insecurities and the feeling that the criticism received is addressed to personal attributes and characteristics. For this reason, Teachers 1 and 2 highlight the need to explain respectful and effective performed feedback and to raise awareness for the purpose of feedback.

Criticism also comes from Teacher 3, who believes that the real purpose of feedback is not reflected upon enough, as she tries to find an explanation for the potential skepticism towards feedback and its nature:

Im Unterricht steht sehr oft das Durchbringen des Stoffs im Vordergrund und dabei wird oft auf den individuellen Lerner vergessen. Meiner Meinung nach ist es nicht möglich eine Masse zu unterrichten, sondern ich muss zu jeder Schülerin und jedem Schüler eine Beziehung aufbauen, ja, ich muss Fäden spinnen und dann habe ich ein Netz und damit kann ich arbeiten. Wenn ich das nicht mache, sondern eine Wand um mich herum aufbaue, dann ist der Unterricht nicht erfolgreich und der Lernfortschritt einfach nicht existent. Durch Feedback gebe ich aber natürlich auch etwas von meiner Person preis, ich mache etwas auf. Ich mache die Wand auf und dann kann natürlich auch etwas zurückkommen, wie zum Beispiel Kritik. Diese muss ich auch einmal schlucken. #00:34:45# [Teacher 3]

The feeling of not being accepted or fear of receiving criticism can lead to the avoidance of sharing information on performances. Additionally, Teacher 1 raises another topic concerning the skepticism towards the use of feedback within her EFL classrooms. One aspect that the teaching staff fears when feedback information is gathered, is the feeling of being monitored and controlled, which leads to a feeling of distrust and constriction. With this statement, Teacher 1 describes a serious force to be reckoned with in the discussion about the nature of feedback. When negative emotions like the one just expressed come up together with a discussion about the use of feedback, then, I claim, the communication of the purpose and nature of feedback has failed.

A large amount of potential chances can be attributed to the notion and purpose of feedback. However, the risks must not be underestimated, as strong feelings, which accompany its use, can be generated and have long-lasting effects on the learning behavior of students, but also for the well-being of teachers.

6.1.3 Different components of feedback under consideration

According to the analyzed and presented theory, the use of feedback is characterized by variable effects regarding its impact on students' performances (Hattie 2011: 266).

When asking the teachers interviewed about successful constituents of feedback, the leading opinion confirmed the theoretical considerations in so far, as its impact is heavily dependent on the specific type, focus, delivery, timing and situation in which feedback is taking place. Hence, it can have immensely positive, but also negative effects contingent on how it is transferred to interactional relationships. One success

factor that was frequently mentioned concerned fundamentals of effective communication as an essential prerequisite for the effectiveness of feedback. All of the interviewed teachers defined feedback as a specific form of interactional communication and as such is not always clearly encoded or definite and operates on a content as well as on a relational level. Being aware of communication processes, the involved properties and the ambiguous nature of the communication act might help to diminish the risk of receiving feedback wrongly or negatively. What seems to be essentially important is the empathic, appreciative style of communication and the formulation of feedback according to social standards and norms.

Positive feedback and praise are perceived as the most effective forms of feedback, having an ultimate impact on both, motivation and the student-teacher relationship, which further leads to more productive second language learning and increased performances. Furthermore, behavior and reactions of students receiving feedback have to be observed actively in order to adapt feedback practices to individual needs and personal character traits.

Types of feedback

As a first step, the interviewed teachers differentiated between written and verbal feedback, which are both used continuously in their EFL classrooms. Written feedback is only given on home exercises and contains positive and negative remarks, whereas the feedback on negative aspects of written texts outweighs the commenting on positive facets of produced works. Moreover, no specific constituents of the text are commented on positively, but rather, an overall impression is expressed with statements such as “Well done”, “Good work” or “Excellent”. Predominating is the correction of errors and the provision of negative feedback on divisional aspects of text production, namely on expression, grammar, structure and content.

On the basis of verbal feedback, the significance of body language signals was discussed as an indicator of current mental states and as a consequence, provides a direct feedback of the teacher’s impact on the student. However, also students receive a kind of feedback when certain measures of body language or classroom management are implemented. Teacher 4 offers some insights into practices of this kind:

Hinsichtlich Maßnahmen die durch körpersprachliche Signale ausgesendet werden passiert bei mir sehr viel im Unterricht. Wenn ich die Hände

verschränke, heißt das was. Oder wenn ich den Lehrertisch nach vorne schiebe und mich dann an das Ende des Lehrertisches setze, wissen die Schüler, jetzt kommt ein längeres Gespräch. Da brauche ich gar nichts mehr sagen. Oder mit dem Blickkontakt, wenn mir etwas nicht gefällt und ich schaue sehr ernst, schauen die Schüler auch ernst und wissen was los ist. #00:38:06# [Teacher 4]

The relevance and impact of praise on a student's performance has been excessively debated in scientific theories and the main conclusion was that praise leads to insufficient effects as too little information is provided on the respective task and competences of the learner. Hence it is suggested that praise directed at a personal level should be avoided. The results of the interviews showed a deviating picture, as all of the teachers shared positive experiences with the use of praise and regularly apply types of praise.

Also mein Feedback ist einmal auf einer menschlichen Ebene, ich klopfe den Schülern gerne auf die Schulter und sage: gut gemacht. #00:37:32# [Teacher 4]

Wenn man die Schülerinnen und Schüler gut kennt, dann weiß man, dass man dem einen auf die Schulter klopfen kann oder dem anderen den ausgestreckten Daumen zeigen kann oder der Dritte braucht dann vielleicht ein 30 Sekunden dauerndes Gespräch nach dem Unterricht. Da sage ich dann: „super, du hast dich getraut das Referat zu halten, du hast viel Kritik bekommen, aber ich finde es ganz, ganz toll, dass du es gemacht hast und dass du deine Grenze überschritten hast“. #00:36:39# [Teacher 3]

When confronting the teachers with the prevailing opinion of research, the reactions included misunderstanding and refusal. From their perspective, one cannot distinguish between content-related feedback (FT) and feedback directed at the self, as communication always contains a personal message. It is part of the daily EFL classroom practice to give feedback on tasks and on performances. However, the use of praise conveys a feeling of reinforcement, increases motivation and has long-term effects on the student-teacher relationship.

Wenn du die persönliche Ebene ganz außer Acht lässt und wirklich nur die Sprachrichtigkeit und den Lernfortschritt reflektierst- das geht ja gar nicht. Ich finde es persönlich schon wichtig, dass man positiv bestärkt wird, auch auf einer persönlichen Ebene. Das ist für mich einfach ganz wichtig. Ob das dann hemmt oder nicht, ist mir dann egal. Du kannst das ja nicht gesondert betrachten, sondern es ist ja immer eine Mischung aus allem. #00:40:09# [Teacher 2]

For Teacher 3, the choice of feedback type is heavily reliant on the individuality of the respective student. Determining factors include the culture of the student, the character,

the preferred learning style and topics of closeness and distance within relationships between the student and the teacher. This is further highlighted with the following quote:

Also ich bin nicht so die Volksschullehrerin, die stempelt oder Zuckerl verteilt, darin sehe ich keinen Sinn. Ich finde, Feedback sollte immer sehr individuell gestaltet sein. Feedback muss individuell auf das Kind abgestimmt sein. Und darauf, inwiefern das Kind mit dem Feedback umgehen kann, wie die Kritik bei dem Kind ankommt und auch, welche Art von Lob das Kind annehmen kann.
#00:37:40# [Teacher 3]

Other maybe more SLA-related feedback types such as elicitation, metalinguistic clues or repetitions, were not explicitly mentioned by the English teachers. When explicitly asking about the teachers' experiences with those types of feedback, they acknowledged the frequent use of these forms, but indicated that they have not consciously reflected on their functions as a certain kind of feedback. The use of prompts and further forms happen on an implicit level to indicate an incorrect statement, eliciting either an immediate change or solely providing the correct form without any further expected reactions.

Focus and content of the feedback message

Reflecting on the teaching practice of the teachers interviewed, the content of feedback is most often directed at the self to motivate and engage the students. A further benefit that accrues from feedback directed at the self is expressed by Teacher 2, who highlights the positive effects on the student-teacher relationship:

Was ich merke ist, dass es [wertschätzendes Feedback] einfach die Lehrer-Schüler Beziehung ändert. Und allein durch diese veränderte Lehrer-Schüler Beziehung ändert sich schon das Lernverhalten. Man weiß ja aus eigener Erfahrung, dass wenn man einen Lehrer nicht mochte, dann hat man nur das Minimum für das Fach gemacht und das war ganz einfach furchtbar und ein Krampf für alle. Wenn man den Lehrer als sehr empathisch empfunden hat und auch die persönliche Ebene gepasst hat, dann war das ganz was Anderes. Und bei Lob, wenn ich weiß was ich gut gemacht habe und dafür gelobt werde, dann werde ich eher mitarbeiten und Spaß am Unterricht haben, als wenn ich ständig ausgebessert werde. #00:38:15# [Teacher 2]

Teacher 3 reports as well that most of her feedback contains personal messages concerning the students' efforts and learning behavior, which she describes as expressing feedback messages on a relational level. However, what the feedback also

frequently includes is feedback on a meta-level, provoking the students to reflect on their used learning strategies, their feelings while learning, beneficial and inhibiting learning behaviors in order to improve the learning process itself (cf. feedback about self-regulation). When a certain competence is trained, feedback about the task (FT) is applied, dependent on the specific focus and respective competence. For Teacher 3, the individual learning progress is central to feedback. The content evolves around the individual needs of the affected learner. At this point she adds that in her opinion, the majority of teachers focus excessively on the achievement of objectives deriving from the Austrian curriculum or proficiency scales, which leads to the negligence of the individual learner.

On the contrary, Teachers 1 and 4 provide their students with error corrections solely and do not reflect on the learning process or review learning behavior on a meta-level. This means that improvements on failed communicative acts are provided, but positive aspects of language use are not highlighted or the path to more improved learning are not content of feedback.

Teacher 2 analyzed her own feedback behavior, in which error correction also constitutes a large part. When asking about its effectiveness, the interview partner expressed uncertainties about its real impact, but has not found a different approach or solution for giving more effective feedback. From her point of view, the goal should be to move away from counting errors and to emphasize the strengths of the students, which also becomes apparent in the following quote:

Früher war es so, dass unser Schulsystem viel eher auf die Schwächen ausgelegt war. Nun habe ich das Gefühl, dass sich hier ein bisschen was ändert, weil es sich durch das neue Korrigieren und die Zentralmatura eher auf die Stärken fokussiert, was mir persönlich sehr wichtig ist. Man sollte von diesem ständigen Fehlerzählen wegkommen und jetzt finde ich das besser. #00:08:58# [Teacher 2]

Overall, it can be concluded that the content of feedback varies greatly among the interviewed teachers, but all of the previously analyzed foci (FT, FP, FR and feedback about the self) appear in one or the other form within their classroom practices.

Timing and frequency of feedback

Disagreement arose when addressing the questions of when and how often the interviewed English teachers give and receive feedback. Overall, written feedback is

given on written products of students, resulting from tests, vocabulary check-ups or home exercises in which certain text formats are practiced. As time resources are scarce, the interviewed Teachers 1, 2 and 4 try to keep the number of home exercises to a minimum. Furthermore, the teachers concentrate on the correction of errors and short statements indicating an overall impression on the student's performance and do not force the highlighting of positive aspects. Teachers 2 and 3 lead individual feedback conversations after every test, in which they formulate learning goals with the respective student and discuss possibilities to improve in potential areas.

Opinions concerning the timing of verbal feedback on verbal performances are deeply divided, as the one half of teachers argues for immediate feedback and the other half for the delayed use of feedback messages. Reasons for supporting one or the other position resemble the theoretical considerations presented in this thesis. The use of immediate feedback tries to prevent the internalization of incorrect forms, whereas delayed feedback has the aim not to interrupt the student while speaking, circumvent the intimidation of the learner. Hence, the aim of delayed feedback is to increase motivation and reduce anxieties towards the use of the foreign language.

In Austrian schools, it is generally not common that teachers receive feedback in a coordinated manner. Initiatives exist, which provide support to teachers who want to obtain feedback from their students with pre-built feedback sheets and instructions on how to include feedback in the classroom. However, the interviewed teachers conduct feedback on their own impact only intermittent, once a year. In the BMHS, the evaluation of teachers is partly obligatory, meaning that it is recommended to conduct feedback in one class per semester. However, the results remain anonymous, do not have to be presented or discussed and no target conversations with the teachers are held. What the teacher does with the feedback results lies within the responsibility of the teacher. Teacher 2 supports the thought of target conversations between teachers and headmasters with no concrete negative consequences, as teachers feel insecure and monitored with a public presentation of results. In order to implement an effective quality management, teachers should be able to speak and reflect on their teaching impact to foster motivation for a steady improvement and a lifelong learning process.

Interaction formats of feedback

Three different varieties of possible feedback interactions were mentioned by the interviewed teachers, namely from teacher to student, from student to teacher and from student to student.

When the teacher is the source of feedback directed at a learner, a certain misbalance in the interactional relationship exists, due to the power of the teacher to assign grades and additionally by reason of an increased responsibility towards the organization and development of the learning process. Teacher 3 reports on various instances of teacher feedbacks, which contain rather cynical than constructive information on a student's performance or concerning the student as a person. Within these situations, feedback fulfills mere debilitating effects, highlighting that the teacher has to carry out the responsibility of living and discussing the ingredients of a functioning, constructive feedback culture.

Feedback from the student to the teacher has been discussed in the previous chapter. According to Teacher 1 and more generally speaking, it is perceived as resulting in threatening and displeasing outcomes on the basis of the belief that the purpose of feedback is not sufficiently communicated. Teacher 2 even speaks of an absent feedback culture in Austrian schools, in which error correction and assessment are treated superior to possible learning potentials and to the importance of the individual learning process as such.

The effectiveness of guided peer feedback is uniformly agreed upon, meaning that its application, addressing and discussion in the classroom involves a high number of different impact possibilities. The variety of beneficial as well as detrimental effects is summarized by Teacher 3. These are, among others, a greater acceptance of feedback, increased respect for other schoolmates and a different mentality concerning the handling of errors in EFL classrooms.

Ich ermutige sehr dieses Schüler-Schüler-Feedback. Warum? Weil die Schülerinnen und Schüler es oft besser nehmen können [als von der Lehrkraft]. Mit dem Erlernen der Grundideen des Feedbacks und wenn ich diese thematisiere, lernen die Kinder aufeinander Rücksicht zu nehmen und dass „Fehler“ nichts Schlechtes sind, sondern eine Chance darstellen um sich zu verbessern. Da sind ganz wichtige Erkenntnisse auch dabei, wenn sie die Formulierung üben, es ist einfach ein anderes Miteinander, wenn die Kinder lernen wie Feedback konstruktiv und respektvoll gegeben wird. Man spricht nicht umsonst von einer konkreten Kultur. Der Nachteil ist, dass Schülerinnen und Schüler oft sehr direkt sind und ihre Klassenkollegen durchaus auch

kränken können. Aber ich glaube immer, dass diese Kränkung von den „Peers“ nicht so tief geht als eine unbedachte Äußerung von einer Lehrerin. Also dass diese Autoritätsvorstellung schon noch da ist und wenn jetzt der Banknachbar sagt, dass das jetzt ein Blödsinn war was du gemacht hast, dann hat es einen anderen Stellenwert, als wenn ich sage, das war heute wirklich sinnlos. #00:43:59# [Teacher 3]

Implicit and unconscious feedback from one student to another student represents a steady constituent of everyday school routine and mostly results in negative comments and mimic insinuations concerning achievements of students, according to Teacher 1. Especially when the performance contains numerous errors, students react with disapproving sounds, offending body language or laugh at their peers. Generally, it has been observed that students articulate their personal evaluations in a direct and honest way and Teacher 3 describes these comments as being superficial and mostly wrong. Raising the question of whether Teacher 1 would cultivate the application of peer feedback within her language classrooms, she responded:

Also es gibt Kollegen, die das sehr kultivieren und die das in der Klasse sehr stark machen, dass zum Beispiel nach einem Referat diskutiert wird, welche Kriterien erfüllt wurden. Ich finde das an sich sinnvoll, aber ich muss ehrlich sagen, mir ist das noch nie gelungen, dass das wirklich effektiv geworden wäre. Die Schüler haben sich dann nie richtig damit auseinandergesetzt, sondern haben Kommentare abgegeben, damit eine gute Note vergeben wird. #00:45:16# [Teacher 1]

Visibly, Teacher 1 has experienced some troubles when trying to transfer theoretical considerations of feedback into the English language classroom. Guided peer feedback seems to be practiced in Austrian English language classrooms, nonetheless, the effective implementation of it poses a challenge for some English teachers. Talking about the underlying ideas and the cultural beliefs of respectful, interactional feedback appears to be an integral part in making students understand its purpose and impact. If students comprehend these meanings and its significance for their own learning process, peer feedback is perceived as creating positive effects on a student's performance.

The impact of feedback

Aspects of possible feedback impacts on the language learning process have already been expressed by the interviewed teachers, including positive and negative effects for learning English as a second language.

In order for feedback to achieve positive impacts, Teacher 2 proposed an idea of a possible basic problem that could lead to its ineffectiveness:

Ich merke es bei uns, dass diese Feedbackkultur nicht als Chance gesehen wird, um an sich zu arbeiten und sich zu entwickeln, sondern als Kritik, die man eigentlich nicht haben möchte, und dass ist ein Gedanke, der sich ändern sollte. Bei uns auf der Universität war das nie ein Thema, war immer sehr negativ besetzt und das ist aber schade, weil ich denke mir, wir sind auch nur Menschen und machen Fehler und entweder es klappt oder es klappt mal nicht. #01:01:49# [Teacher 2]

Hence, there is a possibility that negative feedback effects also come from varying attitudes and a different understanding of the feedback's nature and purpose. Negative feedback has been mentioned as one form which could be responsible for inhibiting learning in various ways. In this context, negative feedback is not perceived as identifying potential areas in which a learner can improve in and communicating these weaknesses, but rather how feedback is negotiated to a recipient. This means that the tone and style of delivery are determining factors that negative feedback is comprised of. As communication is a multi-layered process and operates on different facets, the personal or relational component plays a significant role when talking about underlying feedback messages in accordance to Teachers 2 and 3. The tone and style of the feedback message reveal certain information on a relationship level and send signals of approval or disapproval. When the feeling of disapproval predominates and the content or information about the performance are not central, then feedback can have debilitating effects. The interviewed teachers speak of consequences such as demotivation, reluctance, withdrawal and even a feeling of worthlessness in extreme cases.

Nicht überlegtes Feedback kann den Lernprozess natürlich sehr stark hemmen. Die Schülerinnen können einen Widerwillen oder sogar ein Gefühl der Wertlosigkeit entwickeln, wenn ich nur Kritik bekomme und das Gefühl habe dass ich überhaupt nichts kann. Es kann auch wirklich zu Rückzug führen. Ich habe gar nicht so wenige Kollegen, das sind vor allem Männer, die sehr explizites, sehr direktes Feedback geben und Kinder damit wirklich wirklich kränken. Und die Kinder glauben dann, sie können gar nichts. Sie können gar kein Englisch. Aber es ist auch schwer, diesen Kollegen Feedback zu geben, weil sie es auch gar nicht annehmen können. Also die teilen aus, verstehen aber nicht, was sie anrichten und man kann es ihnen auch nicht sagen, weil sie abblocken. Und das finde ich sehr bedauerlich. Ich finde, Feedback kann eine Schullaufbahn auch wirklich sehr sehr stören. #00:51:51# [Teacher 3]

Furthermore, experiences learners collect in school regarding their self-esteem and their achievements pave the way for future interests and engagements and as a consequence bring about long-lasting effects.

Another component concerning the effectiveness of feedback is pointed out by Teacher 1, who sees feedback as being part of a culture's gestural language and mentality. In her opinion, the English-speaking community expresses encouragement and feelings of approval more directly and positively through facial expressions, gestures, the style and tone of language, whereas in Austria comments primarily are negative in nature.

Dieses Ermutigende. Das ist etwas, was ganz typisch ist für die angelsächsische Mentalität, würde ich jetzt sagen, dass man auch anderen Leuten gegenüber so eine ermutigende Art entwickelt. Man sieht das dort schon im Umgang mit kleinen Kindern, wenn man sie anspricht und zu ihnen sagt: „Give me a smile!“. Das würde bei uns niemand machen. In Österreich ist das ganz furchtbar, da habe ich schon oft erlebt, dass Ausländer über's Ohr gehaut werden und dass es hauptsächlich negative Kommentare gibt. Ich glaube das ist eine ganz grundlegende Sache, wenn es um Feedback geht, dass wir in Österreich uns in erster Linie negativ äußern. #00:50:38# [Teacher 1]

She further adds that her own feedback practices suffer from the exhaustion she experiences within her profession as a teacher.

However, it is acknowledged by the English teachers that a considerable number of positive impacts result from feedback practices. One positive aspect of feedback, which shows its overall purpose and nature, is the fact that it makes the individual learning process visible to both, the learner and the teacher, and, as a consequence, more goal-oriented. A shift can be observed from focusing on errors exclusively to viewing weaknesses as a chance for improvement and highlighting strengths, which lead to increased students' performances and higher motivation. The direction of where to go next and the formulation of objectives becomes clearer. In addition, personal development is steadily recognizable, as students gain confidence and self-assurance when they perform English, as well as understand the importance of suggestions for improvement not as a threat but as a chance to evolve. Teacher 3 has only twelve students on average in her English classrooms and she reports that since she focuses on constructive feedback practices, no student fails or has to repeat the year, because they do not get away with insufficient performances.

Feedback dient als Verstärker und ist unglaublich wichtig. Zum Beispiel, dass man persönliche Sicherheit gewinnt, auch, dass man durch Kritik sich weiterentwickeln kann. Es ist ja ein Riesenfortschritt, wenn man Kritik annehmen kann. Ich denke mir, dass das für die persönliche Entwicklung unerlässlich ist zu erfahren, ich werde kritisiert für diese Leistung, aber nicht meine Person wird kritisiert, sondern diese Leistung, ich ich kann diese Leistung verändern. Das ist auch ein Weg zum Erwachsenwerden. Mehr Reflexion von Lehrerinnen und Lehrern sollte hier getätigt werden, dass Rückmeldungen ein essentieller Bestandteil einer jeden Entwicklung sind.
#00:48:04# [Teacher 3]

From this, it follows that interactions in which the purpose of feedback is clearly communicated are guided by mutual respect and a positive communicative atmosphere. All of the teachers agreed on a more harmonious student-teacher relationship, when goals are expressed explicitly and visibly for everyone. If feedback is given regarding the self, it should be positively formulated. However, not only learners should seek feedback about their performances, but also teachers, to reflect on their own impact. All of the previously mentioned factors have an immediate effect on the English language learning process and they vary from inhibiting language learning to enriching it.

6.2 Austrian high-school students' perspectives on feedback practices

The following empirical part of this thesis reveals the results gathered from eleven Austrian high-school students from Vienna and Lower Austria, addressing their perceptions, experiences and opinions on learning English as a second language in Austria, the role of feedback in their EFL classrooms, risks and chances of feedback and their ideal conceptions of effective feedback practices.

As focused group interviews evolve from the inputs provided by the participants, I tried to structure the interview with overall topics in mind, but focal points were set by the students themselves as the conversation developed.

Moreover, the aim was to include the learner's perspective on the effectiveness of feedback, in order to arrive at a more realistic picture of interactional relationships involved in feedback at school and to find connecting factors as well as controversies in comparison to the English teachers' perceptions. It is expected by the author that the inputs given by students and teachers guide the way to a depiction of the current situation of feedback practices in Austrian EFL classrooms.

6.2.1 The perceived EFL practice of Austrian English learners

The first question addressed characteristics of a good English teacher, provoking the students to reflect on more or less successful language learning constituents. The mixture of providing input and getting the chance to produce a significant amount of output represents an enormous value to the interviewed students. In addition, receiving input from various sources, such as native speakers in EFL classrooms, is perceived as an enrichment for the development of language learning.

Ich kann am meisten mitnehmen, wenn ich einfach mit Leuten in der fremden Sprache spreche. Und irgendwann auch vielleicht damit beginne, in dieser Sprache zu denken. Wichtig ist mir auch, dass die Lehrkraft verschiedene Einflüsse von Medien integriert, sodass wir verschiedene Dialekte hören. #00:01:24# [Student 2]

Wenn ich viel in dieser Sprache rede und wenn man viel im Englisch Unterricht kommuniziert, dann bekommt man ein Gespür für unterschiedliche grammatikalische Formen und dann werde ich auch besser. #00:03:07# [Student 3]

First and foremost, students categorized their own learning process in different stages which a teacher should follow. An introductory input phase by the teacher has to be continued with a phase enabling practice and exercise of the previously unknown input, but within a meaningful context. The output phase should be comprised of different formats and skills involved. The application of theoretical language structures and the use of competences that are relevant in real life situations should be foregrounded in EFL classrooms. Methodological preferences of students include pair work, group work and forms of open learning, in which students receive different types of tasks and complete them with the help of their peers at their own pace. The memorization of certain vocabulary and written texts is not perceived as having major positive effects on the learning process.

A good English teacher has the competence to stir up motivation and to approach students on various levels, in order to gain interest. Although the students admitted that there will also be a small amount of students not showing any kind of engagement, even though efforts to activate them have been intensively present. Authenticity and expertise also represented two main constituents of major concern. The term authenticity contained behaving respectful and sympathetic, acting to a certain extent as a role model, expressing clear and structured expectations and not distributing

grades at random, leading to the discrimination of specific students and treating others better just by reason of their characteristic features or their performance level.

Experiences with assessment scales and teaching practices show the tendency of not revealing sufficient information on the individual learning progress, the current status and what would have been expected of the student. Aside from this perspective, performance and evaluation criteria are either not discussed or not explicitly communicated. The interviewed students have expressed their views within the following quotes:

Mich macht das dann immer umso wütender, wenn ich mir dann am Ende des Jahres die Note anschau mit den Prozenten. Und die sind einfach wahllos verteilt, wo ich mir denke, das passt nicht mehr zusammen. #00:14:05# [Student 10]

Man sieht dann auch nach einer Zeit, dass die Schülerinnen und Schüler resignieren, wenn sie merken, dass nicht ihre Leistung beurteilt wird, sondern dass die Lehrkraft diese nicht mag. Und das merken Schülerinnen und Schüler sehr schnell, das ist der Lehrkraft glaube ich gar nicht so bewusst, dass sie so die Noten verteilt. #00:22:51# [Student 1]

Ich glaube auch, dadurch geht viel Qualität verloren, dass man nach Sympathie beurteilt wird. #00:23:13# [Student 9]

Through the Austrian school system, the students report that efforts which do not lead to major improvements in performances and hence to a better grade are not relevant in classrooms. This is mainly due to the vagueness of criteria for participation in class. Students with creative strengths and enhanced social competences are not taken account of.

With these misunderstandings and friction points, which are mainly induced by indistinct and ambiguous communication, also the formulation of concrete learning objectives and goals is lacking, as expressed by one student:

Das ist ja das Problem. Man wandelt da so ziellos durch das Jahr. Und dann ist es so, dass der Lehrer auf einmal sagt, wir haben jetzt noch eine Woche und wenn du eine bessere Note haben möchtest, dann brauche ich das, das und das von dir. #00:25:30# [Student 11]

No interview partner has recounted on frequent practices of their English teachers or methodologies, clarifying and working on distinct learning goals and making them visible to them. Efforts of teachers to make goals transparent do not seem to be

transmitted to the conscious awareness of students. The respective students articulated the feeling that the only feedback they receive on their current performance levels are tests and grades.

On the contrary, recounted experiences with the treatment of errors in the EFL classroom showed positive correlations with students' perceptions and ideas of a functioning error culture, though, likewise negative perspectives came up as well. One student mentioned the importance of indicating both, improvable and advanced structures when writing a text. The majority of teachers use marking scales, including short comments, as for instance 'well done', 'not so good', smileys or plus and minus. The provision of individual feedback represents a rather exceptional practice and error correction is emphasized. Multi-phase corrections of written products are perceived as immensely valuable for the improvement of language skills and when taken seriously by the students, can put attention on repeatedly misused structures. The problem that arises is that students often do not understand the code-marking of teachers. Then the effective transmission of feedback fails, as the student cannot make sense of what needs to be improved. Concerning speaking activities or presentations, severe errors are corrected immediately, whereas minor errors are treated at a later point within the lesson.

Overall, the students expressed a lack of individual feedback concerning their achievements and potentials, visible learning goals and traceable assessment criteria.

6.2.2 The role of feedback in EFL classrooms

The next part of the interview dealt with students' opinions and perspectives on the effectiveness of feedback in EFL classrooms, as well as how they would describe its functions and purpose to another classmate. The results should point to the identification of central feedback components and if the notion of feedback can facilitate their English learning process.

Attitude towards feedback

Widespread consensus emerged when asking the students about the importance of feedback for learning English as a second language. The arguments were based on the fact that feedback enables a learner to recognize individual strengths and weaknesses and puts attention on these areas. Through feedback, the opportunity is offered to

compare the personal self-image with the public-image and as a consequence diminishes one's own blind area, thereby, development can occur (cf. chapter 1.4.1 The Johari Window).

Wenn mir niemand sagt, was ich gut oder schlecht kann, dann kann ich mich ja nicht verbessern. Das ist eigentlich die einzige Möglichkeit, um mich zu verbessern. #00:31:18# [Student 7]

Natürlich, wenn ich ins Land reise und dort über einen längeren Zeitraum lebe, dann brauche ich nicht ständiges Feedback, denn dann höre ich die Sprache ohnehin dauernd. Aber gerade im Englischunterricht habe ich sonst überhaupt keine Möglichkeit, wenn meine Texte nicht verbessert werden und die Fehler die ich beim Sprechen mache. Dann denke ich mir, es passt sowieso alles. Dann fehlt mir soviel was ich mir selbst nicht aneignen kann, weil ich ja selbst nicht weiß, wo ich die Fehler mache. #00:31:57# [Student 8]

One student emphasized the process of highlighting incorrect forms or failed communicative acts due to grammatical, expressional or other issues, but suggests to pick out only two to three central themes, preventing mental overload or frustration.

Frequent feedback on their current status seems to be a considerable matter of concern, as students feel that the assigning of grades and performance feedback are used interchangeably for the most part. Amongst other themes, this will be the topic of the next chapter.

Definition and purpose of feedback

At first, students experienced difficulties when asking them about a proper definition of the notion of feedback. However, through the interactive nature of the focused group interview, together they arrived at an attempt to depict its nature and purpose with its perceived constituents.

The students agreed on two suggestions for a proper description of feedback:

Feedback ist einfach die Möglichkeit sich zu verbessern und dadurch, dass dir jemand anderer sagt, was du richtig und was du falsch gemacht hast. Feedback ist vor allem, glaube ich, immer zeitnah und vor allem respektvoll. Aber ich glaube das Wichtigste ist, man muss Feedback nicht annehmen. Feedback ist freiwillig. #00:36:40# [Student 11]

Für mich beinhaltet Feedback auch immer einen Verbesserungsvorschlag, und nicht nur, was gut und schlecht war. Sondern auch, wie man sich verbessern kann. Einen Weg den ich auch erreichen kann und der konkret formuliert ist. Zusammengefasst, im Schulkontext, ist Feedback ein Austausch von Informationen in negativer und positiver Form. #00:36:47# [Student 4]

Following these definitions, main constituents of feedback represent the chance for improvement and the description of a possible way to reach predefined goals. The voluntariness within the feedback process, as well as its promptness, represent two characteristics that have not been apparent in the discussion about the nature of feedback up to now, bringing into play the negotiation of information on a learner's performance and the chance to neglect the proposal as a part of giving and receiving feedback.

As a clear dissociation, the students distinguish explicitly between the assigning of grades and the purpose of feedback, as grades do not sufficiently describe individual strengths and weaknesses as well as the competencies a student has accomplished throughout a year. Feedback is perceived as the reception of further or more detailed information on a student's current performance status, pointing to the informational lack of grades and their inability to describe competences and skills.

Das macht ja keinen Sinn. Feedback ist für mich nicht, wenn ich eine Zwei oder Drei auf irgendeinen Text kriege. Das ist für mich einfach kein Feedback, weil ich ja dann nicht weiß, was gut und was schlecht war. Wenn ich beim verbesserten Text, vielleicht durch unterschiedliche Farben, sehe, was ich gut und schlecht gemacht habe, dann kann ich mich auch verbessern. Dann ist das schon eher Feedback. Einfach weil, wenn nur ein Smiley oder eine Note dabei steht, dann sagt das nichts über meine Kompetenzen und mein Können aus.
#00:38:10# [Student 8]

Additionally, students reported on contradictory results when comparing the initially discussed assessment criteria with the outcome of the actual grade, which frequently does not show any instance of traceability or visibility. From another perspective and according to the students, the purpose of feedback is not to have another source of performance evaluation, but should be part of an assessment-free, unbiased and authentic environment.

The students welcomed the suggestion of providing alternative forms of performance descriptions besides the semiannual report card, including proper analyses of achieved and attaining objectives with a concrete suggestion of how to reach the forthcoming goals.

6.2.3 Different components of feedback under consideration

Generally speaking, the first prerequisite for successful feedback from the perspective of the students is to raise awareness of the fundamental purpose of feedback,

particularly with its constructive and respectful nature as its pivotal points. Thereby both students and teachers should get educated in order to understand the feedback's true and positive nature. The challenges faced in schools regarding its proper communication are that teachers feel personally attacked when they receive feedback and students often use feedback as a retaliation or as a payback method, according to the students interviewed.

Viele Schüler wissen nicht, wie man Feedback gibt und haben das auch noch nie gemacht. Sie schreiben dann nur: "Das war unfair...", "Das habe ich nicht gefunden..." und "Das Thema hat mir nicht gefallen...", was einen sehr persönlichen Unterton hat. Dass hat aber nichts mit der Lehrperson an sich zu tun. #00:54:42# [Student 1]

Was ich gemerkt habe, viele Schülerinnen und Schüler benutzen das Feedback nur, um dem Lehrer eins auszuwischen. Es ist wirklich erschreckend. Ich habe mich mit Schülern unterhalten, und drei von den fünf haben gesagt, dass sie in das Lehrerfeedback nur Blödsinn geschrieben haben, um dem Lehrer etwas heimzuzahlen. #00:54:31# [Student 6]

Starting with the introduction of modern feedback practices would be the first step into the right direction, but the students argue that understanding its actual purpose is a societal process and requires some time until it can evolve. In addition, they claim that the younger generation is better acquainted with the concept of formative feedback, because feedback nowadays is part of various educational pathways, as for example at university and in different training programs which focus on the mediation of social competences.

Ich glaube, dass wir, also die junge Generation, wesentlich aufgeschlossener ist [gegenüber Feedback]. Weil diese Feedback-Kultur auch im Studium immer mehr an Wichtigkeit zu nimmt. #00:49:46# [Student 3]

Ich glaube, dass die jungen Lehrer sich schon viel mehr mit Feedback auseinandergesetzt haben, mit unterschiedlichen Feedbackmethoden, dessen Ziele und Wichtigkeit für Lernen. Die ältere Generation, die vielleicht schon kurz vor ihrer Pensionierung stehen, denen ist das egal, die wollen ihren Unterricht nicht mehr großartig ändern. Und für Feedback musst du dich halt irgendwo natürlich schon auf dieselbe Ebene [mit dem Schüler] stellen. Ich glaube, dass das für viele ältere Lehrer doch ein sehr großes Problem ist. Die haben das in ihrer Kindheit anders gelernt und das ändert sich jetzt langsam meiner Meinung nach. Nämlich, dass die Lehrer auch mit den neuen Medien mehr auf einer Ebene mit den Schülern stehen. #00:51:10# [Student 1]

When observing the students' statements, feedback seems to be determined by a certain mindset, viewing feedback as a mutual process between a learner and a teacher that guides the persons' behavior, effort and performance. The experiences just portrayed depict a possible lack of acceptance, almost antipathy to the fundamental beliefs underlying the notion of feedback, or a misunderstanding of its nature.

The students interviewed expect from professional teachers to be able to handle feedback as well as students who do not show permanent interest and motivation. Supplementary, the significance of showing ambition for improvement and expressing the willingness as well as a declared intention to the teacher for receiving feedback, are also mentioned by the students as essential success factors on the side of the learners.

Opinions on the timing of feedback differ between the students. Some of them need immediate focus on incorrect forms, whereas others feel embarrassed or inhibited when feedback interrupts their performances. There is general agreement among the students that feedback regarding FT has to follow promptly within a narrow time frame, as otherwise the context in which a form appears could be forgotten and hence, seems meaningless to the students. No other comments were made concerning the timing of feedback.

Different types of feedback were generally classified into two basic categories, namely into spontaneous or formalized feedback. Spontaneous feedback corresponds to unplanned statements on a performance, which are given and received continuously throughout every lesson as a constant part of the school routine. Formalized feedback, on the other hand, is characterized by its planned and explicit procedure, which is consciously guided or carried out. Structured feedback on a written product would be assigned to forms of formalized feedback as well as feedback after an oral presentation guided by leading questions, a performance scale or other kinds of resources. Furthermore, students differentiated between written or oral feedback and positive or negative feedback, which were used interchangeably compared to the definition of the teachers. Negative feedback was described as disrespectful and harsh in tone, whereas positive feedback included both, information on a learner's strengths and weaknesses, but had to be formulated in a valued and benevolent manner. Digital ways of exchanging feedback were also considered by the students, as they offer the additional advantage of remaining anonymous. A discussion about the effectiveness of praise emerged as well and the results showed that all of the students were in favor of the use of praise, fulfilling its function to stay motivated and to receive some sort of

acknowledgement and confirmation. However, they stressed the importance of pointing out potential areas of improvement, as otherwise no development would be made possible. Other forms of feedback methodologies were suggested, such as peer feedback or feedback conducted in smaller groups with guiding questions and handouts.

Another topic of interest constituted feedback directed to the teacher about her or his impact on the students. The students interviewed made a demand on undertaking teacher feedback at least once every six months, which should then be discussed with the students to prevent misunderstandings and to come up with mutual ideas of improvement in order to shape the learning process together. Nevertheless, one problem remained unsolved:

Lehrerfeedback wäre toll, wenn es alle Lehrer gleich ernst nehmen würden. Die sogenannten ‘Problemlerher’ nehmen Feedback ja überhaupt nicht an und lassen sich auch nicht umstimmen. Ist es dann sinnvoll, so ein Feedback überhaupt zu machen? Denn die Lehrer die mehrheitlich guten Unterricht halten, die nehmen das Feedback ja auch an und probieren sich zu verbessern. Die Lehrer die schon ewig unterrichten, werden nicht von einen auf den anderen Tag umschwenken. #00:49:06# [Student 4]

According to the students, teachers do not always take feedback seriously and adapt their teaching practices willingly. In spite of these experienced difficulties, the students still hold the opinion of students being an essential source of feedback as well, when teachers actively seek feedback on their impact.

Feedback directed at students has to be treated differently within the school context in comparison to teacher feedback. The students voiced a need for permanent and continuous feedback on their current performance status and suggestions of improvement as an interactive process. This feedback has to appear and be commented on in a certain context and has to be given in a benevolent and respectful way.

Schüler brauchen das Feedback viel, viel öfter als ein Lehrer. Beim Lehrer reicht es einmal im Halbjahr und dann kann man sich wirklich für das nächste Halbjahr Verbesserungsvorschläge mitnehmen und umsetzen. #00:58:20# [Student 11]

The students remarked on the idea of introducing a ‘feedback-day’, in which the students can walk from teacher to teacher and are able to lead a personal feedback-conversation with each of them, discussing and reflecting on past performance levels, the current status as well as forthcoming goals and expectations.

6.2.4 *Risks and chances of feedback*

The risks and benefits of feedback have been discussed thoroughly by the students interviewed. The most serious mentioned risk was enunciated through the following quote:

Risiken sind glaube ich, von Schüler zu Lehrer, dass sich vielleicht der eine oder andere Schüler im Ton vergreift und dann zu persönlich wird. Genau, das größte Risiko bei Feedback ist, dass es nicht konstruktiv bleibt. Man driftet sehr schnell ab, gerade bei Schülern, wenn der Zorn gegen den Lehrer einfach zu groß ist, dann wird es schnell einfach mal zu persönlich. #00:41:15# [Student 8]

The same risk factor has been identified when talking about feedback from the teacher directed at the student. Paraphrasing the explanations of Student 8, risky situations can arise when the description of strengths and weaknesses drifts away from the actual task performance and focuses rather on character traits or false declarations and destructive accusations. In a learning atmosphere, in which improvement seeking does not rest on a feeling of communality and is, if anything, perceived as a threat, then feedback is difficult to accept as a benevolent act. The recounted experiences are ample justifications for exchanging feedback which does not accentuate the process of working on ways of improvement and development together. An effort was undertaken by the students to uncover a possible reason for the potential skepticism in regard to feedback. They argue that students, but also teachers, might fear displeasing consequences in the form of poor marks, threats, a loss of face, offending statements or even losing the job and having to deal with allegations from the headmaster, parents or other colleagues, when feedback includes a considerable number of improvement proposals. Correspondingly, feedback should never be followed by unpleasant consequences or the assigning of grades, because then giving and receiving feedback could get connected with negative feelings or even fear.

Another important cognition made by the students was the fact that receiving no feedback at all, or neglecting forms of information exchange on performances, also felt degrading, because then some sort of acknowledgement is missing to intensify any further efforts. According to the students, motivation triggering factors and incentives are also insufficiently existent for teachers.

For the most part, emerging chances involved in using feedback correlate with the identified benefits of the students. Resulting positive effects mentioned include the

greater transparency of the language learning progress and an enhanced and more harmonious student-teacher relationship.

Ein positiver Effekt von Feedback ist auf alle Fälle das Klassenklima. Es bestimmt einen besseren Umgang miteinander und ermutigt ein offeneres Reden mit der Person. Feedback garantiert, dass mir diese Person sachlich sagen kann, wo meine Stärken und Schwächen liegen. Der Lehrer kann sich fragen: „Was kann ich anders machen, wie kann ich das Interesse meiner Schüler wecken und welche Methoden kann ich einsetzen, um das Sprachenlernen meiner Schüler zu begünstigen?“. Ja, man kann einfach auf einer Ebene miteinander kommunizieren. Und es ist okay, dass beide Seiten nur Menschen sind, dass die Schüler nur Menschen sind und dass der Lehrer nicht irgendein böser Teufel ist. Sondern dass er auch einfach nur ein Mensch ist, mit dem man sich austauschen kann, weil er die Expertise besitzt. Dann kann man die lange Zeit die man in der Schule miteinander verbringt auch angenehmer gestalten und große Fortschritte machen. #01:06:30# [Student 3]

As can be observed by this quote, students predict various positive effects if feedback is used as a tool that puts an emphasis on the development of the learning process without having to fear a negative evaluation of weaknesses and even more, treat incorrect language forms or errors as a chance to improve.

At the end of the focused group interview, students were asked to imagine their ideal feedback situation when learning English as a second language and describe it to the moderator. To sum up their answers, requirements of successful feedback uses contained the following characteristics: it has to be respectful, purposeful, considerate, permanent, received without fear, rather verbally expressed and marked by a steady adaption process in order to enhance the quality of lessons and to achieve increased language performances. To demonstrate the students' opinion on feedback even more clearly, the subsequent quote illustrates its significance for the language learning process:

Für mich muss Feedback im Englischunterricht permanent laufen und zielgerichtet sein, nämlich, dass dem Lehrer auch wirklich bewusst ist was er sagt und was gerade nützlich sein könnte. Weil, ohne Feedback gibt es keine Verbesserung und in einer Sprache brauchst du einfach andauernd Feedback, sonst geht es halt nicht. Sonst brauchst du nicht mehr lernen. #01:08:49# [Student 1]

From the students' perspective, feedback is a prerequisite for improvement and development in learning English as a second language, and furthermore, has to be a permanent and goal-oriented process.

7 Discussion of interview findings

In this thesis, my intention was to answer the following research questions: What beliefs do Austrian English teachers and high school students hold with regard to feedback in EFL classrooms? And additionally, what are key factors that influence the use of formative feedback in Austrian EFL classrooms? An analysis of the different teachers' as well as students' interviews has been provided in the previous section of this thesis in order to arrive at a profound understanding of how Austrian English teachers and high school students perceive current feedback practices, their effectiveness and impact on learning English as a second language, to obtain an accurate representation of reality. The evolved interview categories were based on both the research literature concerning feedback and the output received from the interview partners, hence through the interactive nature of this research methodology and the varying perspectives of the participants.

On the whole, teachers as well as students expressed an overall positive attitude towards the use and effectiveness of feedback when learning English as a second language and mentioned various other beneficial effects. Among them, the most frequently mentioned consequences were a more harmonious student-teacher relationship which has a direct influence on learning behaviors and motivational aspects. Moreover, frequent feedback practices result in a greater goal-directedness of learning processes as the learner receives permanent feedback on the current performance level and on expected learning outcomes for the future, leading to more effective language learning. On the other hand, a considerable variability among different feedback effects has been identified, which corresponds to the findings resulting from the research literature. Understanding the functions of feedback seems to be an essential part to enhance its efficacy. On these grounds, an interpretation of the gained insights has to follow to gain new perspectives and suggestions of how to improve feedback practices and diminish its risk factors. Although there exists a variety of different proposals on factors that effectuate qualitatively good feedback and which describe its definition, teachers articulate experiences filled with difficulties when trying to adequately apply feedback with its underlying premises. From the perspective of the students, these insecurities are observed as well, leading me to considerations of closing this gap by bringing together both perspectives and opinions of English teachers and students. The following part of this study has the aim to answer the previously defined research

questions by readdressing the key findings in terms of theoretical considerations referring to feedback, goal setting, types, timing, interaction formats, impact and focus of feedback and comparing these implications with the results of empirical studies conducted. Furthermore, parallels and controversies emerging from teachers' and students' perceptions on feedback practices in EFL classrooms will be discussed.

7.1 Perceptions of feedback practices among Austrian students and teachers

According to both, teachers and students, successful English language learning includes a number of factors that can increase its efficiency, namely conveying passionate enthusiasm and motivation for the foreign language, a constructive learning environment, the provision of sufficient input and output deriving from different sources, a diversified methodological repertoire, a focus on all four language skills, establishing practical relevance and a purpose for the lesson's content and the transparency of the learning progress and of achievements. Opinions regarding components of effective English language learning did not differ profoundly between the interview partners, though the reasoning was depending on the respective perspective obviously. Teachers and students also came to an agreement when thinking about the teacher's position within the language learning process as an expert for the English language and for learning, provoking students to reflect on their individual learning behavior to become self-regulated learners themselves.

Measuring one's own impact as a teacher also represented an important facet of being a more efficient English teacher, reported by students and teachers equally. Whereas students demanded frequent feedback for teachers and their impact on the students, the interviewed teachers approached finding a measurement of their own successfulness in various ways, adding that difficulties occurred when reflecting on the topic of measuring impact and success while teaching. Possible reasons for the experienced troubles could be that the meaning and understanding of terms such as achievement and success in second language learning are perceived differently. The absence of concrete goals and a vision of what learners should be able to reach, make it challenging as well to define measurement variables. A prerequisite seems to be that an English teacher has to get involved in a process of examining and reflecting on requirements which a learner has to achieve in order to prove successful and which furthermore have to be individually adjusted to the respective student and conditions.

The students view their English teachers as being responsible for the effectiveness of language learning and observe the most extensive developments when teaching and learning is shaped by permanent adjustment loops and feedback seeking behavior. One mentioned possibility to measure the impact on learning is through summative assessments, namely through the observation of changes in grades. Other ways of reviewing the successfulness of a lesson are described with behavioral reactions (such as active participation, body language signals, the style and tone of language), the predominant atmosphere, rapport and a so-called flow-feeling during the lesson. The interviews revealed that the borders between the notions of assessment and feedback overlap, as both seem to function as tools which provide information on a learner's current performance status. Although according to the students and some researchers, assessment through grades supplies only limited feedback to learners, not giving a satisfactory amount of information on their achievements and weaknesses. The students claimed that too often, assessment is used as the measure of judgment whether progress has been achieved or not. Hattie and Timperley assert that "It is the feedback information and interpretations from assessments, not the numbers or grades, that matter" (2007: 104). The interviewed students articulated the request for more individualized feedback with concrete formulated information on performances and including desired learning outcomes in order to know where to go, how to get there and what to achieve next, comparable to the three feedback questions researched and suggested by Hattie and Timperley (2007: 88, cf. chapter 1.4.2).

As has been demonstrated with Sadler's gap theory (2010: 538), a distinct vision of objectives is necessary for feedback, because information on performances should always be given in reference to a certain desirable standard. However, findings showed that explicit feedback which is given in relation to a set goal or standard can be seen as a rather uncommon practice in EFL classrooms of the interviewed teachers. Despite the fact that the goal-directedness of feedback represents an essential characteristic of its definition (Van de Ridder, Stokking, McGaghie & Ten Cate 2008: 193). Proficiency scales like the CEFR, the Austrian curriculum and the ELP serve as a basis for goal-setting practices in Austrian EFL classrooms of the interviewed teachers and additionally are perceived as uncontested and unchallenged foundations. Merely one teacher described goal setting from a bottom-up approach, starting with her personal objectives and then going further up the hierarchy. When talking to the students, neither they set explicit learning targets. In behavioral scientific studies, more than 1,000

studies have proven an increase in students' performances when setting accurate and clear goals, in comparison to vague objectives or no indications at all (Latham & Locke 2006: 332-340). In accordance with the presented findings, it is an essential component of feedback to set concrete goals and to communicate them to the learner. The interviewed teachers did not say that they do not set specific goals, but experienced immense difficulties when trying to communicate them age-based to the students and sometimes they have troubles interpreting certain formulated desired outcomes from the curriculum, the ELP or the CEFR themselves. The opinion advocated by one teacher was that from her perspective, teachers often try to fulfill goals excessively which are stated by the curriculum or the CEFR, further leading to the neglect of the individual learner and individual needs.

The ideas of students and teachers regarding the purpose and definition of feedback are not different from those advocated by the introduced researchers. For both groups, feedback means the exchange of information on a learner's performance in an interactive way, including not only strengths and weaknesses but also suggestions of improvement. The purpose of feedback is not to attain a grade, but rather to receive a concrete profile of perceptions regarding one's own blind area (Ingham & Luft 1982: 3, cf. chapter 1.4.1), to enable the identification of ways to improve in these previously unaware fields. In order to accomplish its purpose, feedback has to fulfill certain criteria, bringing together components discussed with the interviewed students and teachers: namely that it is directed at individual learners and their needs, includes a concrete path of how to improve, the existence of mutual trust and respect, a focus on the performance and not on personal attributes or characteristics, imbedding the content in a certain context, the provision of an evaluation-free atmosphere and that it is given and received based on voluntariness. In this context, students reject the evaluative nature of feedback practices in their Austrian EFL classrooms, implying that it should be based on descriptive measures in the form of process feedback and not corrective or outcome feedback (Knight 2003, quoted in Irving; Peterson 2008: 239). To be effective, the sole avoidance of errors should not be foregrounded but instead the essence of feedback encourages the awareness of feedback thriving on errors (Mory 2004: 747).

Concerning the handling of errors in EFL classrooms, students remarked that in many cases the used code-marking of teachers is not clear, leading students to the refusal of accepting errors. Moreover, ambiguous code-marking hinders students from examining errors made. Researchers have increasingly come to the conclusion that the

analysis of language forms facilitates L2 learning, furthermore “contexts in which learners have the opportunity to reflect on language and especially negotiate form can promote the intake of linguistic input” (Fortier, French & Simard 2007: 510). As has already been discussed, some researchers claim that only the conscious noticing of language forms leads to an intake and as a consequence to L2 development (Robinson, Mackey, Gass & Schmidt 2011: 250). Inferring from the experiences recounted, the mindset of teachers is still predominated by practices, which focus on error correction with written or verbal indications of inappropriately used language forms. In this context, students claim that corrections indicated by teachers contain only little information on the individual, current performance status, how to improve and what the desired outcomes for the future represent. The students further argue that applied marking scales and brief hints on possible improvements do not provide sufficient information to alter, adapt and change performances or behavior in order to reach the desired outcomes.

One aspect that has been most prevalent throughout all interviews, was the interactional facet of feedback, which according to the interview partners, determines all other facets involved in the feedback process. If feedback is perceived as a possible threat to the self, conveys feelings of anxiety or antipathy, then it can cause serious damage, bring about harmful effects for future learning behavior and can influence relationships negatively. On the other side of the spectrum, feedback can benefit relationships in various ways, as the process of giving and receiving feedback involves the explicit or implicit articulation of mutual respect and trust on an affective level. Beyond that feedback is one instrument upon others which triggers interaction processes between students and teachers, as well as promotes effective communication and negotiation. To quote Hatch and Wagner-Gough at this point, who highlight the importance of interaction for L2 development, “we should not neglect the relationship between language and communication if we are looking for explanations for the learning process” (1975: 307). As already presented before, the researchers Vigil and Oller have defined two components of a feedback message, namely the cognitive and affective facet (1976, quoted in Ellis 1994: 584). According to the results of the conducted interviews, the affective component is significantly decisive for the processing and acceptance of the cognitive content of the feedback message. If the affective level and communication is disturbed between two interlocutors, then feedback can be interpreted as criticism directed at the self and can lead to the

impression of being a threat to the self-concept. In succession, frequent negative experiences with feedback can result in long-lasting effects, influencing future learning behaviors and attitudes.

Pivotal for the effectiveness of feedback are also factors such as the tone and style of communication and the authenticity of both the transmitter and recipient of the feedback message during an interaction.

In this study, different components of feedback were being investigated, which were believed to influence the effectiveness of feedback. These were: various types of feedback which emerge in EFL classrooms, its focus and content, the timing and frequency, different interaction formats of feedback partners and its possible impacts.

Concerning the various forms of feedback, teachers and students agree on a greater effectiveness of positive feedback types over negative ones. Crucial to mention at this point is that the notions of positive and negative feedback have been defined differently by the interview partners in comparison to the presented theoretical frameworks. Both notions are rather connected with affective measurements and whether feedback is transmitted in a respectful, benevolent, purposeful and meaningful manner, described as positive feedback. If the feedback message conveys negative feelings, disrespect, results in high anxiety levels or is communicated with a harsh tone and style, then the interviewees defined this instance as negative feedback. The research literature suggests a different approach by saying that positive feedback indicates successful language use whereas negative instances of feedback put attention on failed language forms or performances, which do not meet the criteria for the desired goal (Leeman 2012: 212). Gipps and Tunstall have suggested to use the definitions 'achievement feedback' and 'improvement feedback' instead of positive and negative feedback, which would in this case might lead to fewer complications when talking about the focus of the feedback message and its content (1996: 394).

Furthermore, a preference was expressed for verbal over written feedback, as the former facilitates interaction, provides practice for the application of discursive strategies, allows for the discussion of misunderstandings promptly and enables a reflection process which can be set in motion immediately. Opinions are deeply divided on the issue of giving and receiving praise. The interviewed students and teachers feel that praise is an essential part of giving and receiving feedback in the school setting, as feedback is omnipresent. Furthermore, especially the feedback form of praise increases motivation and provides reinforcement. On a relational level, the provision of praise

facilitates the process of building up trust and respect in student-teacher relationships, which as a further step leads to enhanced English performances. Praise, or feedback directed at the self, is described by the majority of researchers as having detrimental effects on students' performances, because it contains no concrete information on the actual performance level, it gives no indications of the goal to be attained and how to alter behavior in order to reach the desired goal. Hattie and Timperley give reasons for its ineffectiveness, "When feedback draws attention to the self, students try to avoid the risks involved in tackling challenging assignments, to minimize effort, and have a high fear of failure to minimize the risk to the self" (2007: 102-103), causing self-defensive behavior. On the whole, most of the described feedback practices are concerned with communicating information about the self or the correction of errors, but also all of the other introduced feedback types are present in EFL classrooms, meaning forms of FT, FP and FR as well. One teacher expressed general discontent with this perspective on learning, but admits that she has not found a better way to fulfill the requirements of the Austrian curriculum and school system yet. Another teacher highlighted the need to adapt feedback accordingly to the individual nature of every student regarding the student's cultural background, prior knowledge, learning behavior in the past, experiences made, character traits, strengths and weaknesses.

No consistent answers have been found for the questions of when and how often feedback should be provided in order to be most beneficial. A wide range of views have revealed themselves during the interviews, pleading for immediate as well as delayed feedback for verbal performances. Hence, no concrete finding can be presented at this point. What seemed to be important for researchers in this field but also for the interviewed participants was the fact that feedback always has to be given imbedded in a certain context, as otherwise, its content would stand on its own and no links or new forms of behavior could be established.

All kinds of different interaction formats were of significant relevance to the interview partners, as all of them entail possible risks and chances. Feedback deriving from the teacher and which is given to the student should be seen as a permanent process with the goal to improve performances, to get information on the current status level and to explain desired outcomes which are expected to be met in the future. It is similarly important to both interview groups that teachers actively seek feedback regarding their impact on students and their own teaching behavior. The gained insights can guide teachers to steadily adapt classroom practices in collaboration with students

to enhance the lessons' quality. However, teachers have expressed some skepticism towards obtaining feedback from students as comments are often harsh and they fear that negative feedback could lead to far-reaching consequences. Fears mentioned in connection with the evaluation of teachers are the feeling of being monitored or controlled and dealing with offending criticism that can reduce self-worth. Peer feedback is perceived as a valuable method to exchange information on self-perceptions and the perception of others regarding a certain performance, if guided and instructed in a meaningful way. In addition, teachers should engage students in a conversation about the fundamental purpose of feedback prior the use of peer feedback, allowing the addressing of misconceptions and discuss its real nature. All the same, different forms of peer feedback are pervasive throughout everyday school life. In accordance with the research literature, teachers mentioned that in the majority of instances spontaneous peer feedback does contain false information on the performance of a student. Moreover, peer feedback is often governed by body language signals, calls and shouts which often transmit hurtful messages.

Overall, feedback in the EFL classroom is perceived as an essential part of learning and teaching by both students and teachers, as well as it entails a great number of possible chances to foster L2 development, social competences and the learning atmosphere in EFL lessons. Regarding its impact, perceived positive consequences of feedback are: a positive influence on the student-teacher relationship, chances for development and improvement, the transparency of the learning process and the reduction of one's own blind area. Described problems of ineffective feedback practices are rather concerned with reasons of attitude, deviant perspectives and persistent beliefs, which are still predominant in the mindsets of teachers. As reported by the interviewed students and teachers, feedback practices in Austrian EFL classrooms focus on error corrections and the avoidance of incorrect forms, rather than looking at the learning process in its entirety. The interviewed teachers have the feeling that feedback is not generally perceived as a possibility for improvement, but as criticism that nobody desires. Rarely feedback and its purpose have been the topic of learning English as a second language in Austria and even more, teachers and students attach negative connotations to feedback and sometimes perceive it as a threat. One teacher argues that this mindset is also a product of the respective culture and mentality.

Concluding from the findings, teachers and students share similar images and ideas of the nature and purpose of feedback, as well as a substantial amount of

experiences described from different perspectives. Transferring these ideas to the classroom practice entails risks which should not be underestimated, but can also have positive effects on language learning. Resentment was expressed when feedback practices were discussed in the daily routine of EFL lessons. Students claim that goals are not stated explicitly and discussed enough, whereas teachers experience difficulties with the appropriate formulation of learning objectives and in the communication of them with the students. In addition, available time resources and the quantity of students make it seem impossible to teachers to apply feedback practices in accordance with their ideal picture of successful feedback.

Transferring feedback to EFL classrooms requires guidance, a variety of different competences and skills by teachers and students equally and a mutual understanding of its purpose and nature. However, students and teachers have an essentially positive attitude towards the notion of feedback. Regarding feedback practices in EFL classrooms, both groups are faced with challenges in order to make feedback an effective interactional process which can be seen as a tool to make the learning progress transparent, promotes improvement and L2 development.

8 Conclusion

Following Sadler and his notion of the ‘gap’ (cf. chapter 1.2), the definition and purpose of feedback is to provide a learner with information on a performance or behavior in order to alter the gap between the actual performance level and a desired goal or status (2010: 536). If feedback is able to fulfill this purpose, it can be a powerful tool facilitating learning, development and growth. Moreover, it can advance our understanding of desired outcomes and the current achievement status, which leads to a greater transparency of the language learning process (ibid). Feedback can have multiple potential positive effects on language learning and it is also among the most critical influences, as scientific research has indicated a considerable variability in feedback effects (Hattie 2011: 266).

The aim of this diploma thesis was to contribute to a better understanding of feedback practices in Austrian EFL by interviewing high-school students and English teachers about their perceptions and attitudes towards successful English language learning and teaching, the nature and purpose of feedback, the handling of errors, goal setting and different parameters that influence the use of feedback when learning English as a second language. Considerations of this thesis were driven by the intention to answer the following research questions: What beliefs do Austrian English teachers and high-school students hold with regard to feedback in EFL classrooms? And, what are key parameters that influence the use of formative feedback in the EFL classroom in Austrian schools? In order to gain new perspectives and insights on these issues, a thorough theoretical analysis of feedback research was undertaken, addressing goal setting theories, the nature and purpose of feedback, different types, the timing and interaction formats of feedback. After conducting interviews with teachers and students, a category system was established to describe feedback practices of four Austrian English teachers and how those were generally perceived by Austrian high-school students. Then the empirical findings were compared to previous theoretical research on interaction theories and components which are involved in the feedback process.

A comparison of the different findings and perspectives gained from them revealed that both students and teachers generally have a clear vision on the essential components constituting efficient feedback. The interview partners agreed that feedback as an inevitable and integral part of learning, it occupies an important position in second language learning and teaching and it has numerous beneficial effects, such as positive

developments in student-teacher relationships which are marked by trust and respect, increased interaction, strengthened motivation, a transparent learning process and goal-oriented learning and teaching. However, views on the perceived reality of feedback practices showed a somewhat different picture, as feedback is mainly provided through grades which contain too little information on the actual performance level and on expected outcomes. It is the combination of assessment and the provision of formative feedback accounting for effective English language learning and improvement (Irving & Peterson 2008: 248). The transparency of the learning process seems to be missing, which results in ambiguous and unclear communication between students and teachers.

Another finding revealed that the explicit communication of set standards or individual learning objectives from teachers to students appeared to be a quite uncommon practice in EFL classrooms. In regard to goal setting practices, the interviews showed that teachers focus on official proficiency scales, such as the CEFR, then the ELP and on the Austrian curriculum when formulating objectives and goals to be achieved. In addition, difficulties arise when wanting to communicate these desired outcomes. Students confirmed this by stating that they experience complications, trying to understand and interpret set goals to improve their English language skills, but failing due to misunderstanding and incomprehension. As has been demonstrated in reference to the relevant theoretical framework, assigning goals can facilitate the language learning process in various respects. For instance; goal setting can result in intensified efforts, increase a student's commitment and help to direct the focus of feedback messages (Latham & Locke 2006: 332-340, Hattie & Timperley 2007: 81-90). Therefore, improvement in the language learning process and in feedback practices can be achieved through specific goal setting practices, the explicit communication of these goals between students and teachers and imbedding feedback in an appropriate and understandable context.

Moreover, observations and expressed perspectives revealed an agreement on fundamentals of feedback purposes, regarding feedback as an instrument to gain knowledge on achievements, progress and potential areas in which a student can improve in. Nevertheless, and according to the interviewed students, errors are still perceived as an obstacle in the language learning process which have to be avoided and as a consequence are assessed negatively. In this sense, common feedback practices still take on evaluative characteristics instead of shifting their emphasis towards a more descriptive approach (Irving & Peterson 2008: 239).

Another topic which predominated most of the interviews was the interpersonal element of feedback, which has not been discussed much by researchers in the context of EFL. Negative as well as positive responses to performances can, on the one side, have beneficial consequences for the learning atmosphere, the student-teacher relationship or the focus of the lesson. From the other perspective, offending feedback can cause long-lasting effects and threatening experiences for learners, which can influence future learning behaviors and interests. How feedback is perceived by individual learners is furthermore contingent on the respective culture, prior knowledge, individual characteristics and needs of the student, but also on the processed task.

Other aspects of feedback which require a more detailed analysis in EFL classrooms represent different parameters of its use, such as different emerging types and the timing of feedback. More empirical data would be needed if these variables influence its effectiveness. This diploma thesis can provide first insights by drawing on perceived experiences of Austrian English teachers and high-school students, which as a further step can assist in gaining new perspectives on how to apply feedback in EFL. Concerning the discussed types, a preference has been described for verbal over written feedback, as interaction processes are facilitated and misconceptions can be discussed. Furthermore, in contrast to the described research literature, positive and negative feedback types are rather associated with the tone, style and content of the feedback message on a personal level than with indicating right or wrong forms. The latter evidences can be better described as instances of achievement or improvement feedback types (Gipps & Tunstall 1996: 394). And although containing little information on performances, praise is frequently used in EFL classrooms of the interviewed teachers and students and is further perceived as a significant tool to increase motivation and commitment. Hyland and Hyland have highlighted the fact that it is essential to distinguish forms of praise which address the self or emphasize on effort, engagement or self-monitoring. Following the second type, these forms of praise can promote self-efficacy and motivation (2006, quoted in Hattie 2011: 7). Other feedback types, such as FT, FR and FP also come up in their classrooms, but no further awareness has been raised concerning their use.

Similar to other previously introduced research results, the timing and frequency of feedback remain controversial topics. Teachers and students both argue for delayed and immediate feedback, depending on the specific context, task and skill involved.

Various interaction formats of feedback were discussed and each of them seemed to be important for an enhanced English learning process. Feedback seeking behavior should not only be shown by students but also by teachers. Feedback makes the learning process visible to learners and enables mutual learning, “ensuring clear identification of the attributes that make a visible difference to learning, and all in the school visibly knowing the impact that they have on the learning in the school (of the student, teacher, and school leaders)” (Hattie 2012: 1-2).

The provision, reception and exchange of feedback requires a high degree of expertise and a variety of different skills by students and teachers. Furthermore, it is important to develop a mutual understanding of its nature and purpose to effectively implement the presented ideas and beliefs into the EFL classroom.

The aim of this diploma thesis was to provide new perspectives and insights into uses of feedback practices in Austrian EFL classrooms expressed by students and teachers. Due to the qualitative nature and focus of my empirical study, quantitative measures on, for instance different feedback types that occur in EFL classrooms, have not been addressed in much detail. Concrete answers on more or less effective feedback parameters can not be answered conclusively with this study. More research should be undertaken in Austrian EFL classrooms that examine and analyze different interaction patterns, various feedback forms and types, the content of feedback messages, the practice of goal setting, the timing and the effects of feedback on student achievement. Collecting further data on these parameters could help to increase the efficiency of feedback for learning English as a second language, as well as to understand its mechanisms and functions better.

Overall, it can be concluded that all participants involved in this study highlight the significance of feedback for learning English as a second language by making the learning process transparent to learners and teachers. Furthermore, feedback is perceived as a valuable tool to promote interaction in language teaching.

As demonstrated with this thesis, taking into account the importance of feedback for EFL, future research on its notion and practice would be of valuable and crucial importance.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Students - focused group interview guide

Forschungsfragen:

- Was sind zentrale Faktoren die den Einsatz von formativem Feedback im EFL Klassenzimmer in österreichischen Schulen beeinflussen?
- Welche Einstellungen und Sichtweisen halten österreichische Oberstufenschüler/innen gegenüber Feedback im EFL Klassenzimmer inne?
- Inwiefern unterscheiden sich Einstellungen, Sichtweisen und Ansichten von Schüler/innen und Lehrer/innen gegenüber formativem Feedback im EFL Klassenzimmer in österreichischen Schulen?

Ziele:

- Meinungsaustausch über die Rolle von Feedback im Sprachenunterricht aus der Sicht von Schüler/innen
- Untersuchung der Einstellungen, Meinungen und Sichtweisen von Oberstufenschüler/innen gegenüber dem Einsatz von Feedback im Sprachenunterricht
- Diskussion über Faktoren die den Einsatz und die Wirkung von Feedback beeinflussen

Ablauf:

- 1) Small-Talk mit den ankommenden Schülerinnen und Schülern, 2) Einnehmen der Sitzplätze (Sesselkreis), 3) Begrüßung, 4) Vorstellung und Verteilung der Namensschilder, 5) Überblick zum Thema und Zielsetzung, 6) Setting, 7) Mind-Opener/ Input Feedback-Übung, 8) Einzelarbeit Mind Map erstellen zu *Feedback im Englischunterricht*, 9) Diskussion mit Fragen in der Gruppe

Einleitung/ Begrüßung: Herzlich Willkommen und danke, dass ihr euch die Zeit genommen habt um mit eurer Erfahrung und euren Antworten zu meiner Studie über die Rolle von Feedback im Englischunterricht beizutragen. Mein Name ist Christina Ofner und ich bin Lehramtsstudentin an der Universität Wien. Ich würde auch gerne wissen wie ihr heißt, wie alt ihr seid und welche Schule ihr besucht. Deshalb habe ich Namensschilder für euch vorbereitet und bitte jeden sich kurz vorzustellen.- vielen Dank!

Das Ziel meiner Diplomarbeit ist es, eure Meinungen und Sichtweisen zum Thema Feedback im Englischunterricht zu untersuchen und mit denen der Lehrer/innen abzugleichen. Dabei wird es um *eure eigenen Erfahrungen im Englischunterricht* gehen, um den *Nutzen und Zweck von Feedback* und *mögliche Faktoren die den erfolgreichen Einsatz von Feedback beeinflussen*. Da ihr ohnehin den ganzen Tag in der Schule sitzt

und Feedback- Nachrichten in unterschiedlichen Formen hört, seid ihr ohnehin Experten/innen.

Es gibt hier weder richtige noch falsche Antworten, genauso ist es in dieser Diskussion auch nicht eure Aufgabe euch auf etwas zu einigen, sondern es sollen alle Sichtweisen und Meinungen willkommen geheißen werden um eine möglichst große Bandbreite an vielfältigen Ansichten und Wahrnehmungen zu sammeln. Vielleicht sind euch auch schon die Videokamera, wie auch das Aufnahmegerät aufgefallen. Ich würde unsere Diskussionsrunde sehr gerne aufnehmen, damit ich auch keine Kommentare verpasse und vergesse. Die Ergebnisse und Antworten von euch werden vertraulich und anonym behandelt, nur statistische Daten wie Geschlecht, Schulen und Alter werden in der Arbeit erwähnt.

Gibt es bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch Fragen oder Anmerkungen? Wenn nicht, dann können wir beginnen.

Zeitplan

Thema	Fragen	Ziele/ Beschreibung	Zeit
Ankommen der Schülerinnen und Schüler		○ Rapport-Aufbau mit den Schülerinnen und Schülern ○ Kurzes Kennenlernen ○ Gesprächsbasis etablieren ○ Aufregung nehmen	11:50- 12:10 Uhr 20'
Einnehmen der Sitzplätze		Sitzordnung: Sesselkreis Raumgestaltung: Flip-Chart innerhalb des Sesselkreises, Moderatorin ebenso, Pinnwand außerhalb, Aufnahmegerät in der Mitte, Getränke auf extra Tisch	12:10- 12:12 Uhr 2'
Begrüßung Vorstellung Überblick und Zielsetzung Setting		Vgl. Text ○ Aufregung nehmen, Atmosphäre auflockern ○ Gegenseitiges Kennenlernen ○ Jeden einmal zu Wort kommen lassen ○ Überblick geben ○ Rahmen schaffen, Grundregeln erklären	12:12- 12:22 Uhr 10'
Input/ Mind-Opener	Reflexionsfragen: ○ Was konntet ihr beobachten? ○ Was war der Inhalt eurer Feedback-Nachricht? ○ An was hat sich das Feedback gerichtet? ○ Was wären Lernfortschritte die durch das Feedback möglich wären? ○ Was waren Erfolgsfaktoren und was waren Schwierigkeiten?	Partnerübung Schülerinnen und Schüler geben einem Gegenstand ihrer Wahl abwechselnd Feedback - danach kurze Reflexion und Einführung in das Thema ○ Hineinfinden in das Thema ○ Diskussionsanstoß ○ Nachdenken über Feedback aus Sicht des Feedback-Gebers und das	12:22- 12:35 Uhr 13'

		Konzept von Feedback im allgemeinen	
Feedback im Englischunterricht Mind Map	Fragen die beim Nachdenken helfen können: ○ Was? ○ Wozu? ○ Wer? ○ Wann und wie oft? ○ Wo? ○ ...	Einzelübung Schülerinnen und Schüler erstellen eine Mind Map ○ Einzelne Gedanken zu dem Thema Feedback im Englischunterricht machen ○ Input, welcher in der Diskussion verwendet werden kann	12:35- 12:45 Uhr 10'
Diskussion		Unterschiedliche Fragen werden einzeln auf einem Flip-Chart zu 3 Themen präsentiert und zur Diskussion gestellt Als Unterstützung dient auch eine Pinnwand mit Moderationskärtchen ○ Vielfältige Ansichten und Meinungen sammeln aus Sicht von Schülerinnen und Schüler	12:45- 13:45 Uhr 20'
Lernen im Englischunterricht	○ In welcher Art und Weise wird mit Fehlern im Englischunterricht umgegangen? Woher wisst ihr wo ihr in eurem Lernprozess steht und wohin ihr gehen müsst? ○ Stellt euch den/die beste/n Englischlehrer/in vor den/die ihr euch vorstellen könnt, was macht ihn/sie zu einem/r guten Lehrer/in? ○ Was macht für euch guten Englischunterricht aus? Wie bekommt ihr Rückmeldungen zu euren Leistungen?	Pinnwand	
Rolle von Feedback im Englischunterricht	○ Inwiefern ist Feedback ein Teil von erfolgreichem Sprachenlernen? ○ Stell dir vor ein/e Freund/in fragt dich, was Feedback genau ist, wie würdest du es ihm/ihr erklären? Was sind dessen Chancen und Risiken?		15'
Faktoren die Feedback im Englischunterricht beeinflussen	○ Was sind Faktoren die erfolgreiches Feedback beeinflussen?		25'

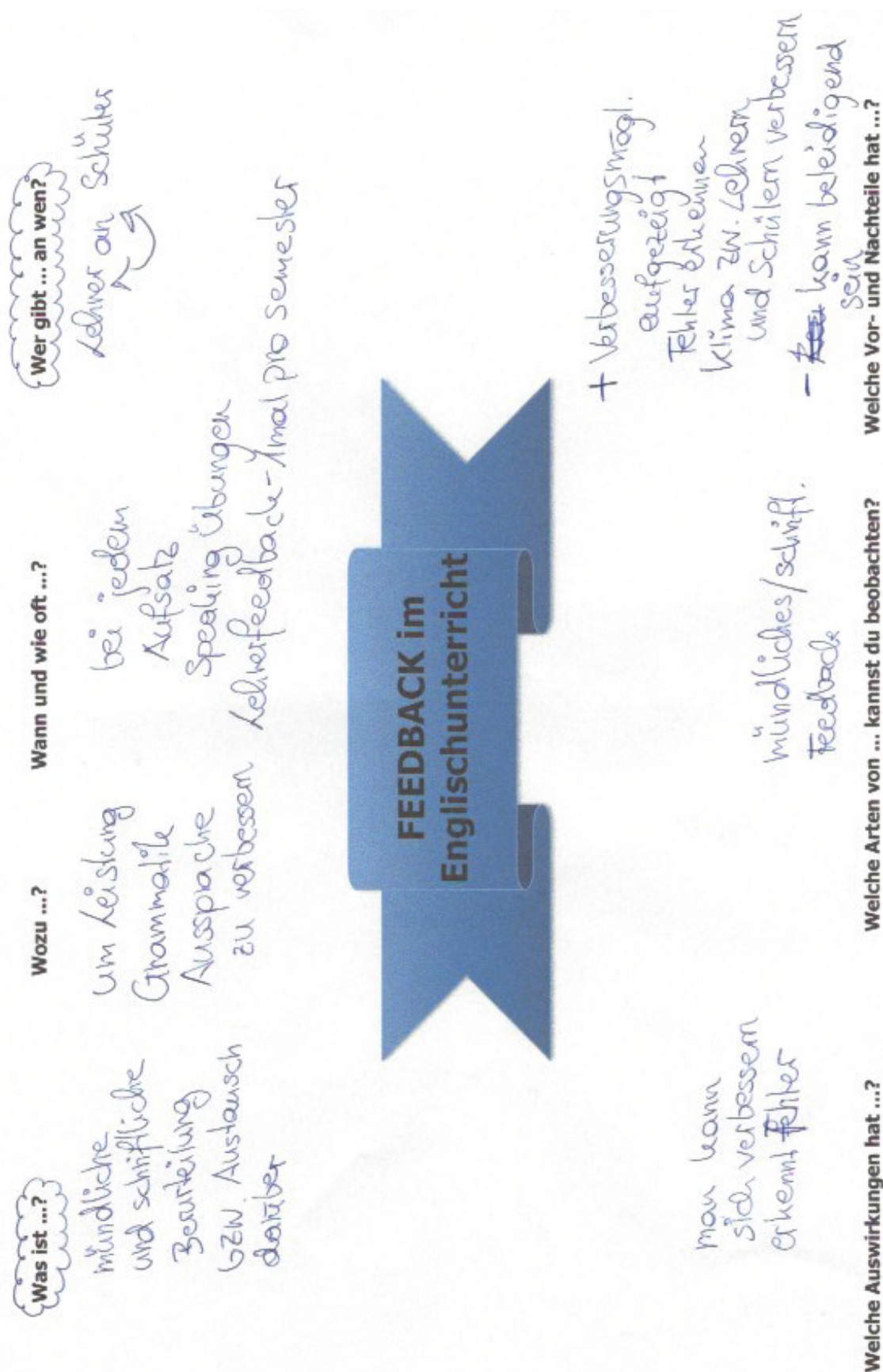
Arten	○ Welche Arten von Feedback erlebt ihr im Englischunterricht? Welchen Fokus haben diese? (Thema, Inhalt)		
Zeitpunkt/ Häufigkeit	○ Wann und wie oft bekommt ihr Feedback?		
Quelle	○ Wer gibt Feedback? Inwiefern geben euch eure Klassenkollegeninnen und -kollegen Feedback?		
Wirkung/ Effekt	○ Was für Effekte hat Feedback? Inwiefern hat Feedback Auswirkungen auf deinen Lernprozess?		
Kontext	○ Inwiefern beeinflusst Feedback das Klima im Unterricht und die Beziehung zwischen dir und deinem/r Lehrer/in?		

Schluss: Wir kommen nun zum Abschluss unserer Diskussion. Für das Ende habe ich noch eine kleine Aufgabe für euch: *Bastelt euch euer ideales Feedback- System zusammen. Folgende Fragen könnten euch dabei helfen: Inwiefern könnte Feedback den Englischunterricht verbessern oder verschlechtern? Was sind wünschenswerte Effekte von Feedback? Und bedenkt die unterschiedlichen Faktoren, wie: Was für Feedback? Wer gibt Feedback? Wann und wie oft? Wo? Was ist der Inhalt?*

Habt ihr für den Schluss noch etwas zu ergänzen oder anzumerken was wir noch nicht behandelt haben?

Herzlichen Dank, dass ihr bei unserer Fokusgruppe teilgenommen habt. Die Resultate und Antworten werden zusammengefasst und dann mit den Antworten der Lehrer/innen verglichen.

Students - focused group interview mind maps



Was ist ...?

Der Konstruktive

Austausch von
Beurteilungen, der
nicht durch eine
Note ausgedrückt
wird

(Bilder)

Wozu ...?

dadurch man
sich verbessern
kann

Wann und wie oft ...?

max. 1 pro
Semester :)

Wer gibt ... an wen?

Schüler $\rightarrow$ Lehrer

FEEDBACK im Englischunterricht

vor allem bei Aufsätzen
oft leider nur durch
eine Note die zu wenig
ausdrückt

man kann
sich verbessern
und verändern

Welche Auswirkungen hat ...?

Welche Arten von ... kannst du beobachten?

Welche Vor- und Nachteile hat ...?

⊕

⊕

+ man kann sich mehr daraus mitnehmen	- oft nicht konstruktiv - oft nicht ernst genommen
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Was ist ...?	Wozu ...?	Wann und wie oft ...?	Wer gibt ... an wen?
Was war gut? Was kann ich verbessern? Wie kann ich mich verbessern? Beispiele zeigen	Zeitaufwand für den Lehrer bei jeder Hausaufgabe „Spiele“ wie Vokabelhäufig	SchülerInnen können sich besser vorstellen was verlangt wird Kritik besseres Englisch Verbesserungsvorschläge Übungen für das richtige Aussprechen der englischen Wörter	Welche Auswirkungen hat ...? Welche Arten von ... kannst du beobachten? Welche Vor- und Nachteile hat ...?

Was ist ...?

1-2 mal im Jahr

Wozu ...?

Vorbereitung auf die
Matura

hilft seine Stärken zu
finden

hilft eine Entscheidung der
Matura - Fächer zu treffen

Wann und wie oft ...?

am Ende
des Jahres

Wer gibt ... an wen?

Feedback der Schüler
untereinander

nach Präsentationen
über die

FEEDBACK im Englischunterricht

von Schüler zu Schüler

von Schüler an Lehrer

von Lehrer an Schüler

schriftlich
elektronisch (online)

mündlich

Rückmeldung
Verknüpfung
potenzial

Aufwand
Unersichtlichkeit geht
bedeuten

Welche Auswirkungen hat ...?

Welche Arten von ... kannst du beobachten?

Welche Vor- und Nachteile hat ...?

Students - statistical information on interview partners

Student	Age	Nationality	School type	English learning experience
1	16	Austria	AHS	10 years
2	17	Austria	AHS	11 years
3	15	Austria	AHS	9 years
4	18	Austria	BMHS	9 years
5	17	Austria	AHS	8 years
6	18	Austria	BMHS	8 years
7	18	Austria	BMHS	12 years
8	17	Austria	AHS	10 years
9	19	Israel	BMHS	11 years
10	17	Bosnia- Herzegovina	AHS	11 years
11	16	Austria	BMHS	12 years

Teachers - interview guide

Date:

Start time:

End time:

Gender:

Research Questions:

- What are key factors that influence the use of formative feedback in the EFL classroom in Austrian schools?
- What beliefs do Austrian English teachers hold with regard to feedback in the EFL classroom?
- In what way do perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of students and teachers differ towards formative feedback in the EFL classroom in Austrian schools?

Objectives

- To identify the influence of different variables on feedback in a qualitative way.
- To discuss the influence of feedback for language learning and specifically for learning English as a second language.
- To find out/to explore diverse attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of teachers with regard to the use of feedback and its effectiveness for language learning

Possible interview probes

- Can you give me an example? Tell me more about that. How do you do that?
- Why was that important to you? How did you feel about that? What was significant about this to you?
- How does this fact/issue relate to the topic we started with? I would like to understand this more.

Introduction

Good morning/ afternoon/ evening! Thank you so much for taking the time and contributing to my study on feedback in the EFL classroom. The results of this interview will only be used for this diploma thesis and all answers will be treated confidentially and anonymously. My goal is to *understand the role of feedback when learning a second language*, as well as *in what way feedback is used in the EFL classroom practice*. I am curious about your perceptions and opinions of the Austrian school system. The topics I want to address in this interview can be categorized in:

Outline of topics to be addressed in the interview:

- Your professional background
- Your personal experiences and opinions on learning English
- Purpose of feedback and its role for the EFL classroom
- Variables that affect the usefulness of feedback
- Possible perceptions/beliefs of the use of feedback
- Contextual influences of feedback

Learning English as a foreign language	
Main topic	Questions
Professional background	• Where do you teach? • How long have you been teaching English (there)? • What were the reasons for becoming an English teacher?
Own experiences in the EFL classroom and EFL practice	• When looking back at your own experiences of learning English in school, what made second language acquisition successful for you and what did not? • Imagine the best English teacher you know of, this could be a teacher of your past or a colleague, what made/makes her/him a successful teacher? (attitude towards SLA, methods, climate, learning process,...) • As a next scenario, try to imagine that, at the beginning of the school year, your headmaster calls each English teacher in to discuss their own goals for the school year, what would you tell your headmaster? • When you think of achievements of students when learning English you were especially pleased with, what were they? How did they reach them? What would I have been able to observe you doing? What would I have been able to see your student doing? • What is valuable English language learning? • In what way do English teachers handle errors in the English language classroom? How do students know where they stand in their learning process and where to go next? How can achievements and learning intentions be made transparent in the EFL classroom?
Role of feedback in the EFL classroom	
Attitude towards feedback	• In how far is feedback a component of successful language learning?
Definition and purpose of feedback	• If a colleague would ask you what feedback is, how would you explain it to her/him? What would you tell her/him about the chances and dangers of feedback? • What would you say is the purpose/ nature of feedback?

Variables that influence the use of feedback in the EFL classroom	• What are influencing factors/variables for the effectiveness of feedback?
Types of feedback	• What types/foci of feedback do you use in your daily classrooms? What does your feedback address?
Content of feedback message	• Depending on the type, what is then the content of your feedback message?
Timing/ frequency	• When and how often do you give feedback?
Source	• Who is usually the source/sender of feedback? What do you think about peer feedback? What are benefits and disadvantages of peer feedback?
Impact/ effect	• What would you say are effects of feedback? In how far does it impact the language learning process? What does it affect?
Feedback and the student-teacher relationship	• How does feedback interact with attributes of the learner? • In what way does it influence the climate in the classroom and the relationship between the teacher and the learner?
Attitude towards feedback in the EFL classroom	• In what way could feedback be helpful for the advancement of the English learning process? In what way could it be a distractor? Could you imagine incorporating it more explicitly into your daily classroom practice? • If yes, how? If no, why not?
Further comments	• What do you want to add what we have not discussed so far?

Appendix B

English abstract

Analyzing the corpus of research on the concept of feedback, results reveal a great variability in feedback impacts and effects on learning English as a second language (DeNisi & Kluger 1996, Hattie 2012). The literature points to the assumption that some types and parameters of feedback lead to more positive outcomes than others (Hattie 2009: 174). Its beneficial effects are frequently mentioned in recent research and empirical studies concentrate on quantitative measures of feedback, examining its impact on student achievement. However, a qualitative perspective on its actual use in Austrian EFL and attitudes towards feedback practices of students and teachers have not received much attention from the scientific community until now.

As a consequence, the aim of this diploma thesis is to identify and explore perceptions of the notion of feedback and its actual practice in Austrian EFL from the perspectives of both, Austrian high-school students and Austrian English teachers. The first part of this study establishes a basic framework of the feedback concept by considering different definitions of feedback and its nature and purpose. Furthermore, the role of feedback is discussed in the context of EFL, examining how interaction, input and output contribute to the broader sense of feedback for learning English as a second language. Then, different parameters of feedback use are examined, namely the timing, frequency, different types and interaction formats of feedback that occur.

In order to fulfill the intended purpose of this thesis, the collection of data is realized through individual interviews with four Austrian English teachers and a focused group interview with eleven Austrian high-school students. The findings of the empirical studies show that both students and teachers generally have a clear vision on components of efficient feedback and highlight its significant importance for EFL. Nevertheless, the application of feedback in the EFL classroom presents a different picture, as feedback is rather given through evaluative assessment and not through descriptive, non-evaluative measures. This thesis further shows that the effectiveness of feedback is also contingent on interpersonal factors, the individual culture, characteristics and needs of the student and on the processed task. Giving and receiving feedback is found to be a difficult task, requiring a high degree of expertise. However, if respectful interaction is foregrounded, feedback can have powerful effects on motivation, commitment, performances as well as on the student-teacher relationship.

German abstract (Deutsche Zusammenfassung)

Die Analysen wissenschaftlicher Untersuchungen zu Feedback haben gezeigt, dass bedeutende Schwankungen in der Wirksamkeit von Feedback-Effekten im Kontext des Erlernens von Englisch als Fremdsprache existieren (DeNisi & Kluger 1996, Hattie 2012). Diese Erkenntnisse deuten darauf hin, dass manche Parameter von Feedback einen positiveren Einfluss auf dessen Resultate haben als andere (Hattie 2009: 174). Empirische Studien konzentrieren sich mehrheitlich auf quantitative Messgrößen, um Konsequenzen auf Leistungsergebnisse von Schülerinnen und Schüler zu messen. Qualitativen Perspektiven, die den tatsächlichen Einsatz von Feedback im EFL Klassenzimmer untersuchen, wird von der Wissenschaft weniger Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet.

Infolge dessen ist es das Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit, Auffassungen und Wahrnehmungen von Feedback zu identifizieren, um Aufschlüsse darüber zu gewinnen wie Feedback in EFL Klassenzimmern in Österreich umgesetzt wird. Der erste Teil dieser Arbeit bietet einen fundierten Rahmen, um das Konzept von Feedback besser zu verstehen. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Materie wird durch Definitionen von Feedback unterstützt. Darüber hinaus wird die Rolle von Feedback für EFL in Interaktionsprozessen diskutiert. Infolgedessen werden verschiedene Parameter von Feedback, wie die zeitliche Planung, Formen, sowie unterschiedliche Interaktionsformate von Feedback erörtert und diskutiert.

Die Daten wurden durch Experteninterviews von vier österreichischen Englischlehrerinnen und durch ein fokussiertes Gruppeninterview, bei dem elf Oberstufenschülerinnen und -schüler teilgenommen haben, gewonnen. Die Resultate der Interviews zeigten, dass beide Gruppen eine sehr klare Vorstellung von wirksamen Feedback haben, aber der Einsatz von Feedback, wie es tatsächlich im Englischunterricht angewendet wird, Kritik hervorruft. Obwohl Feedback auf beschreibenden und nicht-wertenden Größen beruht, werden Rückmeldungen zu Leistungen überwiegend über summative Evaluationen erteilt. Darüber hinaus zeigten die Ergebnisse der Untersuchungen, dass die Wirksamkeit von Feedback auch von interpersonalen Komponenten, sowie von der individuellen Kultur, den Eigenschaften und Bedürfnissen der Schülerschaft bestimmt wird. Wenn Feedback von einer respektvollen, wohlwollenden und wertschätzenden Interaktion zwischen Lehrkraft und Lernenden begleitet wird, kann es signifikante positive Effekte für die Motivation, das Engagement, Schülerleistungen und die Schüler-Lehrer Beziehung mit sich bringen.

Appendix C

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Information

Name	Christina Ofner
Date and Place of Birth	January 3 rd , 1989, Vienna/ Austria
Nationality	Austria
E-Mail	christina.ofner@gmail.com

Education

10/2010- until now	Teacher training program in Englisch and Psychology/ Philosophy <i>University of Vienna</i>
2007	Study of <i>Business Administration</i> <i>WU Vienna</i>
01/2005- 07/2005	AFS exchange semester in Houston/Texas <i>USA</i>
1999- 2007	Secondary school: BG/BRG/BORG Kurzweide Eisenstadt Matura
1995- 1999	Primary school: Übungsvolksschule Wolfgarten Eisenstadt

Work Experience

09/2015- until now	Teacher at BG/BRG Mödling Keimgasse
08/2013- until now	Personality Trainer at Apprentice Academy <i>il Aus- und Weiterbildung GmbH</i>
01/2014- 06/2014	Tutor of a <i>Train the Trainer</i> training program
09/2010- until now	Education official at <i>SPORTUNION Burgenland</i>
2010	Internship at <i>EPAMEDIA</i> Marketing
06/2008- until now	Trainer in the area of social competences and personality development
2007	Internship at <i>Telekom Austria</i> Marketing