

Praise as Classroom Communicative Reinforcing Device: Perceptions of Vietnamese University Students

Linh Thi Thuy Do –Lecturer in English at Department of Foreign Languages, linhdothithuy@gmail.com; linhdt84@dhhp.edu.vn, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9714-5497>

Haiphong University, Haiphong, Vietnam

Address: No. 171 – Phan Dang Luu street, Kien An District, Hai Phong city, Vietnam

Anh Thi Lan Vu – Vice-Rector, lananh@hlu.edu.vn, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8259-3943>

Hanoi Law University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Address: 87 Nguyen Chi Thanh str., Dong Da district, Hanoi city, Vietnam

Abstract. One of the biggest challenges for teachers is to foster a positive learning environment in which students become motivated and engaged in classroom activities. Growing concerns have been shown about how evaluative praise functioned as a good reinforcer for students' achievement and desirable behaviour affects students' motivation to learn, depending on teachers' messages communicated with students. This study examined the impacts of different types of teacher praise upon university students' perceptions. Case study was employed to collect the data through observations and semi-structured interviews. The results highlighted that students perceived differently towards kinds of praise that they earned. They tended to respond to specific, verbal praise in a more positive way because of its explicit recognition and precise information about their contributions, hence it could make better their self-concept as well as help them keep motivated. Also, high-achievers sought for ability praise whereas low-achievers desired to draw effort praise from teachers. Educators would benefit these findings for the pedagogical purposes.

Keywords: teacher praise, teaching communicative strategy, communicative reinforcing device, motivation, university students' perceptions, students' self-esteem

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Introduction

It is human nature that actions bringing pleasure tend to be repeated. When a person earns praise for doing something right, that praise acts as a reinforcer stimulating the person to repeat the desirable behaviour. Everyone desires praise to a certain extent, and in one form or another. In a working environment, being praised for working well helps people feel worthwhile, motivated to work harder, and encouraged to do whatever to support the business. In educa-

tional settings, being noticed and appreciated for the good behaviour, students become active and creative in learning, and more involved and committed in outdoor activities.

Many educational psychologists and classroom teachers stress the significance of teacher praise on communication transaction as it positively influences students' academic achievement [1; 2], on-task behaviour [3; 4], pupil's speech [5], students' perceptions [6; 7] and helps to provide encouragement to students, to build

self-esteem and a close teacher-student relationship [8]. Indeed, teacher praise is considered as one of the most long-recognized and essential skills for language teachers finding it the easiest to employ [9]. Research findings reveal that the simple act of praising students can have both reinforcing and informative qualities.

Teacher praise, however, is not always beneficial; even it does more harm than good when teacher praise does not meet student's expectation. Such researchers as P.L. Denny [10], T. Gordon [11], C.M. Mueller and C.S. Dweck [12], M.L. Kamins and Dweck [13], and P.C. Burnett [14] argue that praise, whether intended or unintended, can produce a number of negative outcomes to students' learning environments.

This research investigates the students' perception of different types of teacher praise at the tertiary level in Vietnam to see whether it motivates or demotivates students in classroom communication. For such purposes, the study aims at answering the following questions:

1. What are different types of praise that teachers usually employ in classrooms?
2. What is students' preference for different types of teacher praise?
3. What are students' emotional responses to different types of teacher praise?
4. To what extent is students' self-concept influenced by different types of teacher praise?
5. To what extent is students' behaviour influenced by different types of teacher praise?
6. To what extent are high-achievers different from low-achievers in terms of their preference for different types of teacher praise?

In order to come up with the most effective findings, the research employed case study, using observations and semi-structured interviews as instruments of data collection.

Although studies of teacher praise are numerous in Western cultural and educational settings, such studies of teacher praise in Vietnam are extremely scarce. The study would pave the way for further studies and would serve as a useful reference as well. Therefore, this study would contribute to enriching the researches on this area in the context of tertiary classrooms in

Vietnam. The findings and implications of this study would be of much help for both teachers and students.

Literature review

Definition of teacher praise

The term "praise" is derived from the Latin verb "*pretiare*", meaning 'value highly'. Praise is used to show approval, admiration or commendation of the worth of one action [8]. Simultaneously, D.E. Kanouse, P. Gumpert, and D. Canavan-Gumpert [15] claim that praise is given a positive evaluation for a person's performances, attributes or products, when the evaluator thinks that person-earned praise meet the validity of the standards. According to R. Hitz and A. Driscoll's research [16] on the use of teacher praise in the classroom, effective praise occurs when teachers positively acknowledge students' work. They point out that this requires teachers to be non-judgemental to prevent status being assigned to students. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary [17] defines praise as admiration or approval about the achievements or characteristics of a person or thing.

Functions of teacher praise

Teacher praise has two main functions, namely as reinforcement and informational feedback. Firstly, as reinforcement, B.F. Skinner, a behaviorist, [18] believes that language is learnt through repetition and positive or negative reinforcement. Reinforcement is the process by which the likelihood of a certain response following certain stimuli is increased. Thus, in the educational settings, this use of praise as a positive reinforcement has been widely recommended as a teaching strategy. B.R. Stringer and H.T. Hurt [19] state that verbal praise is regarded as an interpersonal experience, and essential for reinforcement process, which in turn positively modifies behaviour and stimulates learning. Furthermore, J. Thomas [20] considers praise as a kind of positive reinforcer, and a motivational tool in the classroom if reinforcement is descriptive and involved using the students' name, choosing appropriate praise words and

describing precisely the behaviour that merits the praise. Similarly, A. Woolfolk quoted in K. Moore [21], views praise as teachers' rewarding stimuli to motivate some actions or behaviour. R.L. Blaney [22] investigates the effects of teacher praise on high and low academic achievement of elementary students. The author claims that students in the groups that receive higher rates of praise for correct responding perform significantly better on academic tests than students who receive lower praise rates for correct responding. Secondly, in contrast to behaviourists, constructivists in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasize interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. Therefore, teachers act as advisors, facilitators, or co-communicators, motivating learners to work with the language. So, praise in this approach is regarded as both communicative reinforcer and informational feedback. According to E. Emmer [23], praise is a form of feedback denoting the correct or appropriate students' answers and other behaviours, together with teacher's positive attitudes towards learners' behaviours. However, praise is different from feedback in that praise always provides feedback, but not all feedback is praise. Moreover, praise is more personal than feedback in the sense that it expresses positive teacher emotions such as surprise, pleurability, excitement and admiration and/or place the student's behaviour in context by giving information about its value or its implication about the student's status. Flander, cited in [8], regards praise as teacher reactions that go beyond simple feedback about appropriateness or correctness of behaviours. Similarly, A.W. Blöte [24] states that teacher praise contains positive effect and is a more intense, detailed response to students' behaviour than feedback.

Classification of teacher praise

In educational settings, teacher praise is classified into content (what to praise) and manner (how to praise). In terms of the content, it is further divided into effort or ability praise, and general or effort praise. Similarly, the manner

can be sorted out verbal or non-verbal praise. Firstly, effort versus ability praise. Effort, which is often used synonymously with strategy or process praise, is a type of praise that focuses on a specific strategy students using to complete a task. Whereas ability praise, which is used synonymously with trait-oriented or person praise, would be an example of a teacher offering a student ability praise. Secondly, general versus specific praise. General praise is directed either at no one in particular or if directed at an individual, it is generic in its use. Obviously, it lacks credibility because of no effort at all for a praiser to give a compliment without paying attention to the person's performance. In contrast, specific praise is directed at an individual student and is very specific in what is being praised. Specific praise not only lets students know they are correct, but it is meaningful because it allows them to see exactly what specific behaviour teachers are praising and to know that teachers pay attention to their performance. Thirdly, verbal versus non-verbal praise. J.M. Cooper et al. [25] looks at the different ways praise can be delivered, verbally and non-verbally. Verbal praise occurs when the teacher follows a student action or response with some types of positive comment such as one-word praise or brief phrases like "Good," or "That's right". Another form is the use of student ideas by applying, comparing or building on student contributions during a lesson. In contrast, non-verbal praise refers to the use of some physical actions to send a message of approval for some student actions or responses, for example, eye contact, a pat on the back or such positive gestures as "thumb-up" or OK sign.

Three mentioned subscales, effort versus ability praise, general versus specific praise, and verbal versus non-verbal praise are all taken into consideration in this research study.

Students' perception of teacher praise

Regarding students' preference for ability versus effort praise, a study by P. Burnett [14] ($n = 747$) measures Australian primary school students' preferences for teacher praise. Results

show that 91% of students like being praised often or sometimes while 9% do not want any praise. The author suggests that if teachers meet students' preferences for praise, they would often give effort type. F. Merrett and W.M. Tang [26] conduct a study with 1779 British primary students on their preferences for rewards, praise, reprimands, and punishments. Again, an astounding 90% of the students prefer to receive praise often or sometimes, which is somehow similar to Burnett's findings.

The psychologist, T. Apter [27] warns that praise for overall ability is harmful as any good performance is a result of natural ability, which makes students reluctant to take on a challenge. J. Henderlong and M.R. Lepper [28] argue that ability praise may have unintended consequences for motivation, performance, and determination, especially when students experience continuous setbacks in the areas in which they were praised. However, on the basis of self-efficacy theory, D.H. Schunk [29] reasons that ability praise should produce higher expectations for future performance than effort praise because of the stronger competence information, particularly for children in the early stages of learning a new task.

Concerning the impacts of *specific and general teacher praise* on students' perception, giving a specific praise reinforces good behaviour in a way that general praise could not. In adults, the act of giving a general praise is often dismissed as being insincere because it alludes to the fact that the person is not really noticing in the first place. The result in Burnett's study [30] indicates that general teacher praise is not related to students' perception of the classroom environment or their relationship with their teachers. He believes that whilst general praise does not affect students' perception, the specific types of praise do.

As regards to verbal and non-verbal praise, verbal praise, when used correctly, can enhance the learning process. In two separate studies [31; 32], D.R. Hancock reveals that undergraduate and graduate students who are exposed to verbal praise report that they study significantly

more outside the classroom than students who are not exposed to verbal praise. He believes that verbal praise plays an important mediator in the enhancement of students' motivation to learn. However, verbal praise can have potential negative consequences. W.C. Elwell and J. Tiberio [33] realize that while adolescents perceive praise to be important to academic achievement, they do not want to be praised verbally in front of their classmates. It may be even more powerful than verbal praise. Research suggests that when verbal and non-verbal messages differ, students tend to respond to the non-verbal message [21].

Resistance to teacher praise

Whereas the empirical literature demonstrates the positive effects of teacher praise, there are some opposing the use of praise in the educational settings. M. Montessori and A.E. George [34] believe that learning is intrinsically worthwhile and rewarding, at least when learners are allowed to follow their own interests at their own pace. They consider elements controlling through extrinsic reinforcement as unnecessary, intrusive and perhaps harmful. R.E. Farson [35] states that it is questionable as a motivator since verbal praise is an evaluation, and judgement of any kind which causes people to feel uncomfortable. Stringer and Hurt [19] contend that rather than being a reward, praise is in fact a threat because of the user's intent to motivate or change the recipients. Therefore, they want to train their students to think for themselves rather than depend on the teachers for guidance.

M.B. Rowe [36] sets forth the protest against the use of praise for improving achievement. Through her three observations, she notices that praise inhibits the verbal performance of her students, lowers the number of alternative explanations offered by her students, and apparently undermines their confidence in their answers. Praise also fosters competition and cuts down on cooperation and exchange of ideas among the students. And finally verbal praise cuts into the students' task persistence. It is ap-

Table 1

Teachers' profile

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Degree	Years of teaching experience	Subject / Course name
1	A	Male	47	B.A	9	British studies
2	B	Female	36	M.A	12	Grammar
3	C	Male	38	M.A	15	English Teaching Methodology
4	D	Female	30	M.A	5	Phonetics and Phonology
5	E	Male	32	M.A	7	Semantics

parent that the fact that praise can function as a reinforcer does not necessarily mean that it always or even usually does [8].

Methods

Research design

This research studied a group of students' perception of different types of teacher praise in Haiphong University. Five teachers teaching this group were also the subjects of the research. In this case study, the way teachers delivered praise in the classroom was recorded and the praised students were interviewed to see how they perceived their teacher praise. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the collected data.

Participants

Sampling and defining the case. There were some criteria for this purposive sampling. The first criterion was a mixed ability class with high-achievers and low-achievers. The second was that the students specialized in English language teaching. Finally, the participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the study.

A case that satisfied these selection criteria was a class of 50 English language teaching students K9 in Haiphong University. The age of students ranges from 19 to 23, 92% being 20 or 21 years old. This group comprised 12% boys and 88% girls, from different districts of Haiphong city, 46% in urban areas and 54% in rural areas. They had studied English for seven years in secondary schools, and for two years as university students. Basing on GPA for the first two years at university, 22% of the students were evaluated "very good", 48% "good" and 30% "weak".

Since they were juniors, they got used to the ritual language teaching in the department and familiar with their teachers' teaching style. In class, the students were quite active and cooperative with their classmates and teachers.

After classroom observation sessions, the total number of the praised students was 30. They were treated as the subjects of the interviews. Four of them (13.33%) were male and twenty-six (86.67%) were female. These students could be divided into two groups: high-achievers (63.33%) and low-achievers (36.67%).

Teachers. In this research, two female and three male teachers teaching at Haiphong University were involved. There is an American teacher, from Eli group (a non-governmental organization providing volunteer teachers for African and Asian areas) and other four Vietnamese teachers. They are all aged from 30 to 47. They have a minimum of five years of foreign language teaching experience and a maximum of 15 years. Four of them hold an M.A degree as shown in the *table 1*.

Data collection

Instruments. As the present study attempted to find out kinds of teacher praise and students' perception of those praises when teachers gave lectures to English majors in classroom setting, as a result, a case study was utilized. The reason for choosing the case study was that classroom was a special and restricted setting. It was impossible to control all the variables that might influence the outcome in a large-scale study, as D.M. Mertens [37] concludes that single case research is very beneficial thanks to the effectiveness of an intervention for a particular sub-

ject. In this sense, this research is naturalistic in nature. Hence, a research method called “*naturalistic inquiring*” [38] is adopted to investigate what happens in foreign language classrooms. To obtain the data, classroom observation and semi-structured interview were the main devices in this study.

Classroom observation. This is a method of measuring classroom behaviours from direct observations specifying the behaviours that are to be observed and the frequency with which they occur in the classroom. This method permits researchers to study the processes of education in naturalistic settings, provides more detailed and precise evidence than other data sources and supplies a coherent, well-substantiated knowledge base to improve understanding and better models for improving teaching. During classroom observation, the researcher observed and noted down the teaching sequence with the use of an observation form created on the basis of what and how to praise. By means of this form, names of the praised students were singled out. After the class, data were examined with regard to the first research question which the study set out to address.

Semi-structured interview. To give insights into the students’ perception of teacher praise, semi-structured interviews were conducted with praised students. The choice of semi-structured rather than structured interview was employed because it offered sufficient flexibility to approach different respondents while still covering the same areas of data collection. It started minimizing the hierarchical situation in order that the subject felt comfortable talking with the interviewer. Then, the interview questions tended to be asked in a similar order and format to make a form of comparison between answers. However, there was also scope for pursuing and probing for novel, relevant information through additional questions that the interviewer posed during the process. Usually the interviewer’s role was to engage, encourage and facilitate the interviewees to talk about their views and experiences in depth but with limited reciprocal engagement. After each observation session,

the praised students were invited for the semi-structured interviews with the question design based on the framework of students’ perception, specifically their cognitive (self-awareness), affective (preference) and conative (motivation to study). All of the interviews were analyzed for data analysis process to find out the answers to the last five research questions.

Procedures

The duration of the observation period for data collection was 5 months. Data were collected in each of 5 lecturers, resulting in a total of 25 class visits. The subject matters being taught during observations included Grammar, Methodology, Phonetics and Phonology, Semantics, and British studies. Classroom activities were lecture-giving, tutorials, exercise-checking and students’ presentation. They also ranged from individual seat work to entire class oral discourse. Each observation session lasted 45 minutes. During observation procedure, the researcher noted the names of the praised students, the statements of teacher praise and any other accompanying factors. After each observation session, these students participated in semi-structured interviews with 10 preset questions. Each interview lasted 15 to 20 minutes. They were conducted in a friendly atmosphere in the teaching staff’s office. The researcher took detailed notes during the interviews. A total of 30 students partook in the interviews revealing their awareness of the teacher praise (Questions 1 & 2), their overall feeling when they earned teacher praise (Questions 3 & 4), their preference to the way teacher praised (Questions 5, 6 & 7), their self-concept (Question 8) and their behaviour after receiving teacher praise (Questions 9 & 10).

Then, the two sources of information were studied correlatively so that we could get a thorough understanding of the students’ perception of teacher praise.

Data analysis

Based on the notes from observation forms, the answer to the first research question was found out (with the number of occurrence,

Table 2

Means and standard deviation for different types of teacher praise

No.	Type of praise	Times of occurrence (N)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	Effort	10	2.0	0.71
2	Ability	5	1.0	1.22
3	Specific	10	2.0	1.0
4	General	20	4.0	2.0
5	Verbal	28	5.6	2.3
6	Non-verbal	14	2.8	1.92

mean and standard deviation), and the students for semi-structured interviews were selected. Then, the results of the interviews were categorized according to five research questions, using descriptive statistics. Quantitative method (figures in numbers and percentages) and qualitative method (teacher praise statements and students' opinions) were both adopted to analyze the collected data.

Results and discussions

Different types of teacher praise

The observations aimed at exploring the types of praise that teachers administered in the classroom. Following the data collection, the data obtained were simplified for analysis. For each teacher, 5 visits during 5 months were combined, providing the time that teacher praise occurred was a 225-minute period.

The total number of praise given was 30, among which mean frequencies were computed for each type of praise as follows (Table 2).

As glimpsed from the table 2, little difference was found for the times of occurrence between effort praise and ability praise. However, there were statistically significant differences in the appearance of specific versus general praise, verbal versus non-verbal praise.

The data revealed that *effort praise* was delivered when the teachers appreciated students for their successful or brave attempt, hard work, and their applying of appropriate strategies to fulfill the tasks. Take these as illustrations: "*You must have tried really hard*", "*That was hard for you, but you kept going on*". Meanwhile *ability praise* focused on intelligence or competence

of the students, such as "*Very smart!*", "*That's good! I can see that your ability is above average for this kind of exercise*".

General praise could be such one- or two-word compliments as "*Great job!*", "*Excellent*" or structured in "*That's + adjective!*" In contrast, *specific praise* tended to be longer and varied in structures. The recorded ones were:

+ I – message ("*I'm really impressed by the way you delivered your presentation!*", "*I like it when you gave a fast response*");

+ You/Your – statement ("*You showed your work on number three perfectly!*", "*Your ideas seem interesting*");

+ Thanking statements ("*Thanks for pointing it out*");

+ That's – statement ("*That's a great way of pronouncing the voiced and voiceless sounds*").

It is also noticeable that very few number of *non-verbal praise* (2 out of 30) went alone. Often such *non-verbal praise* as nodding, smiling or thumb-up sign was integrated with verbal praise, but not vice versa.

Though teacher praise was divided into 6 subscales but they were not entirely separated. A praise statement could be both verbal, specific and students might earn that for their effort. Nevertheless, it was very hard, sometimes, to categorize a general praise into either effort or ability praise. During the observation process, students singled out for teacher praise were both high-achievers and low-achievers. Interestingly, the rate and type of praise depended on not only student behaviour or performance but also on the teacher's personality, teaching style, and kind of activities that the teacher carried out in

the classroom settings. Some teachers praised much more frequently than the others. And more praise was delivered in exercise-checking activities or after students' presentation.

Students' preference for different types of teacher praise

The first and second questions tested whether the students were fully aware of the praise that they won. The students revealed that they were praised for getting top marks, contributing good points, answering challenging questions, making effort or progress. Compared to the understanding of the researcher during the observation period, the students' understanding in this context was marked in either A (awareness) or UA (unawareness). The *table 3* displays the results in percentage.

Most students were aware of what and why they were praised, whilst 6.7% of the students said that they were not quite sure about the merit of the praise. One claimed that when the teacher smiled, she did not know whether he was happy about her answer or not. In another case, the teacher raised a question about how to give instructions in a language classroom. After several answers, she explained some tips of delivering instructions and told one of the students that *"Thanks for pointing that out!"* That recipient did not understand because the praise was delayed and the teacher did not specify what was good in his contribution.

Questions 5 to 7 served a purpose of eliciting the students' preference for different types of praise. With regards to students' inclination to the three dimensions of praise, the *table 4* summarizes the results.

Effort praise versus ability praise

As for the first two praise subscales, there was very little difference. 46.67% of the participants favoured ability praise because of a strong message of competence whereas 53.33% liked effort praise because they wanted their attempt, hard work, and choice of strategies used to fulfill the assigned tasks to be acknowledged. One student recalled her experience in a lesson:

"It was a particularly challenging lesson and many of us gave up hope of catching on;

Table 3

Percentages of students' cognition

Students' cognition	Percentage
A	93.3
UA	6.7

Table 4

Students' preference for different types of teacher praise

Types of teacher praise	Students' preference (in percentage)
Effort	53.33
Ability	46.67
Specific	70
General	30
Verbal	86.67
Non-verbal	13.33

but finally the teacher made a point of honestly praising our efforts. That encouraged us to keep coming back and master the material."

In short, students did not indicate any strong preference for either ability or effort praise. This finding is particularly surprising given that other researchers dealing with primary and young student population such as Schunk [29], Mueller and Dweck [12], and Apter [27] reported either ability or effort praise was better than the other. One possible reason for that university students are more mature and they find very little difference when being praised for their ability or effort. What they tend to consider is the result or achievement they get and how their teachers acknowledge that. Therefore, this facet of praise would not influence a university student the same way it would a younger student.

General praise versus specific praise

Most students found it acceptable for teachers to give *general praise*. They thought that time was precious so that in the classroom the prompt one or two responses were appropriate. But they would feel more valued to receive more feedback in *specific praise*. The following extracts clearly illustrate this:

"When the teacher takes the time to give detailed praise, that means a lot. It really makes a

difference as to how I feel about my work and how hard I try on my next assignment."

"I am glad to get specific feedback. I have worked hard and feel that my teacher values my efforts. It makes me want to try my hardest to do the best I can on the assignments."

It was evidently supported that specific praise was much more favoured by students, since it provided more feedback and clearly communicated to the students about what was good in their performance. Hence, the probability of any misunderstanding was lessened.

Verbal praise versus non-verbal praise

Taken *verbal and non-verbal praise* into consideration, the majority of the recipients (86.67%) had a preference for the former type. One reason was verbal praise was easier to recognize and it provided more information than just teacher's pleasantness. It was also advised that two types should be combined together in order to take full advantages.

The result highlighted that verbal and non-verbal praise were incorporated and integrated. Though students perceived the former type in a more positive way for it is easily recognizable and much more informative, the latter type was believed to increase the validity and credibility of teacher praise when two types were accompanied.

Students' emotional responses to different types of teacher praise

The third question revealed the overall feeling of the recipients of praise. All of those who were aware of teacher praise responded that they were happy and proud. The study showed that it was a common belief among students to crave praise from their teachers. They all liked to hear that others were noticing their hard work, triumphs and achievements.

In response to the question 4, *"Do you like your teacher praise and the way he/she praised you?"*, most of the interviewees claimed "Yes" since it gave them the sense of achievement and they felt like being valued and appreciated for what they had done. One of them stated that:

"I like getting teacher praise so I know I am headed in the right direction, and I like receiv-

ing such a praise that would give me ideas on how I can improve my work and it can direct my thinking. When a teacher spends time evaluating my work, it shows that he/she values who I am and the work that I produce."

Only 10% disliked the way their teacher praised them, including 6.7% who were uncertain about merit of the praise they received. Some of the participants suggested that the teacher praise in the way that it could point out what was good and what should be improved in students' performance. One student said,

"A sentence or two outlining what I did well and any areas for improvement would contribute to the success that I would feel regarding my work."

The study result indicated that being fully aware of teacher praise inspired positive feeling inside students, especially those who received specific praise reported more satisfaction. It highlighted that in terms of emotion, students respond positively to qualified teacher praise. One possible explanation for the case that the student expressed his indifference towards teacher praise might be he did not understand the teacher praise or the teacher praise did not meet his expectation or need.

Influences of different types of teacher praise on students' self-concept

Regarding students' cognition, question eight was addressed. The interviewees all believed praise from their teachers made great sense to them. They admitted that they deeply desired recognition and acknowledgement for what they had done in the classroom, particularly when they earned verbal and specific praise. Being offered a praise statement that was tailored to a specific behavior or effort, students could more genuinely evaluate themselves. By praise, they felt their teacher noticed their hard work, contribution, achievements and what they had done made a difference. It in turn enhanced their motivation in learning. They opined that good teacher praise helped them a lot in building their positive self-image. One of the interviewed showed that teacher praise could help to better her self-concept:

Table 5

High-achievers' and low-achievers' preference for teacher praise

Types of teacher praise	High-achievers' preference	Low-achievers' preference
Effort	36.8%	81.8%
Ability	63.2%	18.2%
Specific	68.4%	27.3%
General	31.6%	72.7%
Verbal	84.2%	90.9%
Non-verbal	15.8%	9.1%

"It helps me see the good in ourselves, overcome difficulties and challenges, then build on success".

Influences of different types of teacher praise on students' behavior.

With regards to the two last questions about the influence of different types of teacher praise on students' conation, students found no distinction between effort and ability praise, verbal and non-verbal praise. However, they stressed more importance on specific praise than general one. All the participants who liked their teacher praise said it was of much help in the sense that it motivated them to keep on learning and to make more academic contribution in the class. This was best demonstrated in the opinions as follows:

- *"Praise is very important to me because it fosters my self-confidence and encouragement",*
- *"Teacher praise motivates me a lot. It makes me do more research. I want to contribute more and get more".*

The finding that praise can be an effective agent of change was similar to an abundance of research suggesting that teachers can use praise to influence students' behaviour and academic achievement positively. It should be noted that some people are self-motivated because they like challenges and want to perform. While educators cannot make or teach students to be self-motivated, they can encourage and promote this by letting students know what is expected of them, that the effort is worthwhile and they will benefit through effective performance. In sequence, praise helps build intrinsic motivation and a positive self-image.

High-achievers versus low-achievers in preference for teacher praise

As observed during 25 class visits, teacher praise was distributed unevenly to high achievers and low-achievers. 19 out of 30 praised students were high-achievers and 11 were low-achievers.

The most significant difference was found out among the two groups of students regarding preference for the first dimension of teacher praise. 63.2% of high-achievers wished to receive ability praise, meanwhile 81.8% of low-achievers had preference for effort praise. There was likelihood that high-achievers wanted to prove their intelligence, their capability which in turn inspired them to higher levels of challenge. In contrast, low-achievers believe that teacher praise should focus more on their hard work, skills and strategies that students used to accomplish the given tasks, which led them to increase attempt and enhance skills even the mistakes would be made in the learning process.

Implications for teachers

Teachers have challenges and responsibilities discover what makes students desire, or not desire to use their abilities and to cultivate their potential. High communication skills are necessary to effectively teach and motivate students. This research findings highlight that praise is an imperative part and communicative strategy in the teaching and motivating process. Teacher praise is positively correlated with students' feeling of pride, their levels of happiness and satisfactions, and results in enhancement of motivation and their expectation for their future success.

However, ineffective praise achieves the opposite of a sincere teacher's goal and may actu-

ally stifle students' natural curiosity and desire to learn by focusing their attention on pleasing their teachers or on conforming to an unspoken classroom "norm". Even well-meaning but ineffective praise turns learners' attention from the intrinsic rewards that come for mastering a task and focuses it on the extrinsic rewards that may be gained by "winning". This kind of praise replaces a desire to learn with blind conformity and/or a mechanical work style. Teachers striving to encourage every student create a positive learning environment where students do not fear continuous evaluation, where they can make mistakes and learn from them, and where they do not always need to strive to meet someone else's standard of excellence. Learners thrive in class and beyond when they are given specific feedback and are given the opportunity to evaluate their own behavior and work.

In short, praise, like penicillin, must not be administered haphazardly. There are rules and cautions that govern the handling of potent medicines-rules about timing and dosage, cautions about possible allergic reactions. There are similar regulations about the administration of emotional medicine [39]. There are many types of praise, many types of people, and each type of praise given will either positively or negatively affect students and their state of mind. Since students come from different socioeconomic status families, and have different individual traits, personality, social and cultural background, it is important to realize each student has his/her own needs. Therefore, teacher praise is supposed to fit the needs of their students in classroom situations. Following are some implications for the context of university classrooms:

- *Be fair.* Consciously and unconsciously teachers react more positively to some students more than others. Teachers should put personal differences aside and be fair in distributing their praise. Students should be treated equally to enjoy the same opportunity to learn. Teachers positively comment a student's work even when pointing out problems and mistakes. Some students may earn teacher praise for bigger ac-

complishments than others but even the lower-achievers/performers need praise for effort or a little contribution.

- *Be specific.* Teachers should specify praise to behaviours that they want to promote by recognizing noteworthy things, calling attention to new skills or evidence of progress, which encourages students to make meaningful connections between the praise and the behaviour. Giving specific praise motivates students because it clarifies the teacher's expectations and allows students to evaluate themselves more effectively. This will make the praise much more valuable to them, and it will reinforce desirable behaviours, build students' self-esteem, and provide intrinsic motivation for continued learning.

- *Praise sooner, not later.* Praise can enhance expected behaviours in students, but its effectiveness greatly diminishes over time. Thus, it is advisable for teachers to administer immediately specific praise on a worthy behaviour. This creates an immediate psychological feedback association between the praise and the behavior, which is still fresh in students' mind and also avoids misunderstandings.

- *Tailor praise to each student.* Students are not widgets and they do not respond to praise in the same way. Some might want a nod; some might want a whole class announcement about their success. Some might want to be praised for their effort; some might want to be praised for their ability. Therefore, teachers should attempt to be sensitive to students' needs and preferences, and then modify their praise to serve the individual's.

- *Show sincere and honest appreciation.* Praise can be a powerful reinforcing and motivating tool. But it needs to be genuine, and has to be done with sincerity; otherwise it runs the risk of being dismissed as being fake or manipulate. As Bouchard states that honest and sincere praises are welcome by students. Thus, teachers should administer verbal or non-verbal praises simply and directly.

- *Vary ways to praise.* Individual statements that teachers use should be varied. When students hear the same praise statement repeat-

edly, it loses its value. To prevent praise from becoming mundane, teachers wisely use different types of praise during the lessons.

Conclusion

Obviously, students at any academic level prefer an environment where they feel supported and appreciated. Most educators have been taught to consider praise as a communicative reinforcing device which aids in fostering students' self-esteem, their achievement, and motivation for learning. Previous research findings tend to support the use of this positive reinforcement in the classroom and demonstrate how teacher praise can effectively encourage students and motivate them to improve their performance. However, teachers must be cautious when providing praise to their students because through their interactions teachers may unintentionally communicate messages which can be useful or harmful to students' learning. Therefore, teacher praise is a need to ponder perceptions of each type of praise among student populations at university. In an endeavor to achieve that, a case study is set up to explore types of praise that teachers administer and how correlated they are with students' cognitive, affective and conative behaviour. Five teachers and thirty students seriously participated in the study. The data were collected through class observations and semi-structured interviews.

After analysis based on descriptive statistics, the major findings from this study provide a solid foundation for future research. Firstly, six types of praise namely effort praise, ability praise, specific praise, general praise, verbal praise and non-verbal praise were distributed unevenly to both male and female, low-achieving and high-achieving students. Secondly, university students perceived verbal, specific praise in a more encouraging way than the other types because of its apparent recognition and precise information about their performance. Thirdly, students evoked positive emotional responses to teacher praise, for that it made them happy, proud and feel worthwhile. Furthermore, teacher praise, especially specific praise could make better

students' self-concept because it helped them to value what they had performed. Besides, teacher praise was believed to be an agent to change students' behaviour and motivate them to learn. Last but not least, high-achievers desired to draw ability praise while low-achievers were happier to receive effort praise.

Remarkably, teacher praise and students' perception depend much on each personality, teaching and learning style. Also, praise is not a simple one-way transmission from the evaluator to the recipient but rather a complex social communication in which the role of the recipient is just as critical as the role of the evaluator. That is, the effects of praise vary depending not only on the content of the praise but also on the context in which it is delivered, the array of potential meanings it may convey, and the characteristics and interpretations of the recipient. Accordingly, teachers should choose an appropriate way when administering praise. Some implications were provided for university teachers and students of English language teaching. First, teachers should be fair in distributing praise. Second, an effective praise should be specific, immediate, individualized, sincere and honest. Last, teachers should vary ways of praising; and praise selectively to nurture and foster students' satisfaction and motivation to study.

In short, this study highlights that teachers should be aware of how they relate to various students in the classroom and to monitor their behaviour to create a more equitable and satisfying learning environment for all students.

Limitations and future research

This study provides a starting point for future researches. Since this study was carried out in a term. During that short period of time, students were interviewed only once, right after the observation sessions to get their immediate feedback and opinions. The problem is that these participants might not have full awareness of the impacts of different kinds of teacher praise. Moreover, it does not exclude the possibility of changes in their perception after a while. Therefore, if possible, a longitudinal research study

should be conducted so as to get back to praised students two or three more times to see how teacher praise influences them in the long term.

What is more, this study investigated all three dimensions of teacher praise and students' perception of six types simultaneously. The findings just offered an overall view but not in-depth exploration into the matter. Thus, a further research should concentrate on distinctive type of teacher praise or typical group of students in order to gain more comprehensive and profound outcomes.

There should be more researches done in large locales to get unbiased findings. This study paves the way for future researches in national or regional scales.

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Похвала преподавателя как коммуникативный мотивирующий инструмент
в восприятии студентов вьетнамских университетов

До Линь Тхи Тхюи – преподаватель, факультет иностранных языков, linhdhithuy@gmail.com; linhdtt84@dhhp.edu.vn, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9714-5497>

Хайфонский университет, Хайфон, Вьетнам

Адрес: No. 171 – Phan Dang Luu street, Kien An District, Hai Phong city, Vietnam

Ву Ань Тхи Лан – проректор, канд. юрид. наук, lananh@hlu.edu.vn, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8259-3943>

Ханойский юридический университет

Адрес: 87 Nguyen Chi Thanh street, Dong Da district, Hanoi city, Vietnam

***Аннотация.** Одна из важнейших задач вузовского преподавателя – создание благоприятной, мотивирующей учебной среды, способствующей заинтересованному погружению студентов в непосредственную учебную деятельность в аудитории. Авторы полагают, что такому инструменту, как оценочная похвала преподавателя, а также коммуникативным особенностям поведения преподавателя, влияющим на учебную мотивацию студентов, следует уделять более пристальное внимание. Данное исследование было посвящено изучению восприятия студентами различных видов похвалы преподавателя в ходе аудиторных занятий. Для сбора данных в кейс-стади использованы методы наблюдения и полуструктурированных интервью. Результаты показали, что студенты по-разному воспринимают различные виды похвалы, которую они заслужили в ходе выполнения заданий. Более позитивно студенты откликались на конкретную похвалу, выраженную в вербальной форме, поскольку она отражает явное признание и точную информацию об их вкладе в освоение материала. Такой вид похвалы способствует лучшей самооценке и мотивации студентов. Кроме того, было выявлено, что студенты с лучшей успеваемостью больше реагировали на похвалу за проявленные ими способности или за полученный результат, в то время как студенты с более низкой успеваемостью стремились заслужить похвалу преподавателя за проявленное усердие, за попытки и настойчивость. Результаты проведенного исследования могут быть использованы преподавателями в педагогических целях при организации учебного процесса в аудитории.*

***Ключевые слова:** похвала преподавателя, похвала как коммуникативный инструмент, коммуникативные стратегии преподавателя, мотивация, самооценка студента*

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