ABSTRACT


Title: Positive Feedback Loops in Second Language Learning

What are the effects of positive feedback on student learning in the English language classroom? This study applies ideas from complexity theory to find a correlation between oral feedback and student language proficiency. The researcher collected data from digital recordings of adult students ($N = 41$) who attended 3 consecutive terms at the Portland State University Lab School. During the focused observation, the researcher recorded tokens of praise, affirmation, laughter, and nodding given by teachers and students in response to target student Interlanguage. Students provide far more affirmation than praise tokens to their peers, while teachers issue nearly equal frequencies of affirmation and praise tokens to students.

Statistical tests support the hypothesis that the rate of positive feedback received has an impact on English as a Second Language student course level promotion. A multiple linear regression analysis controls for the effects of confounding student variables such as initial course level, gender, and first language. A logistic regression analysis shows that rate of oral positive feedback significantly predicts English as a Second Language course level promotion.