

THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER'S FEEDBACK AND TASK DIFFICULTY ON ATTRIBUTIONAL JUDGMENTS FOR SUCCESS AND FAILURE

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Teachers often use praise and blame to handle the behaviors of students. It is believed that praise can promote the students to behave themselves, and blame can decrease the students' misbehaviors. Recently, there are several studies revealed that when two persons both succeed at the same task, and only one of them is praised for his success, the one who is praised is perceived as the person whose ability is lower of the two. The studies, which are concerned with the attributions in the achievement context, reveal that when a person perceives himself as a low ability person, he will have less expectation toward future success, and will easily quit when faces obstacles.

In this study, 256 fifth and sixth graders were asked to read a story. The stories describe the procedure that a teacher informs four students their test result after a math test. Test difficulty (easy or difficult), the test results of each student (success or failure), and teacher's feedback (neutral or praise/blame) are manipulated in the story. The subjects were asked to read the story, to rate the importance of ability, effort, luck, and task difficult, which were responsible for the test result of each student, and to evaluate each student's general math ability and effort.

The results indicated that the teacher's feedback significantly affected the attributions. When both succeed, the person receiving praise was perceived to be contributed to his effort. The other one, who receives the neutral feedback, was perceived to be contributed to his ability. The person who receives neutral feedback was perceived to have higher math ability than the one who is praised. When both fail, the failure of the person, who receives neutral feedback, was perceived to be contributed to his effort and luck. He was also perceived to have more effort in math but lower math ability than the one who is blamed. In the discussion, we discussed the effects of teacher's feedbacks to the students, and why task difficulty didn't reveal the significant effect. The suggestions to the teachers and the future studies are proposed.