Habermas's theory of communicative action applied to the development of classroom feedback practices for pupils who make less than expected progress.

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**Background.** For pupils who make less than expected progress within the English education system, the tightly focused objectives based teaching, which seeks to shape a child’s learning gap in pre-constructed ways, is often not successful. (Learning gap - gap between what children know and can do and what is planned for them to know and to do next). Feedback processes have become more focused and objective orientated (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, Torrance, 2012). Although feedback is deemed to have a high ‘effect size’ (Hattie, 2010), Black and Wiiam (1998) indicate that not all feedback is successful. This research examines the responses of children to their teacher’s written feedback in year 1 (11 pupils aged 5-6) and year 5 (10 pupils aged 9-10), in two schools which have over 40% Free School Meals. Furthermore, it draws on Habermas’s notion of ‘communicative action’ (1984 and 1987) in order to develop a new process for engaging pupils in feedback.

**Research question.** To what extent can the process of Communicative Action, applied through a processes of discussing feedback with pupils who demonstrate less than expected achievements in years 1 and 5, enhance learning outcomes?

**Research approach.** The research offers a case study in which pupil’s understanding of teacher’s feedback on their learning, together with pupils own priorities and choices about learning are drawn together. Each pupil was engaged with five one to one sessions with the researcher in order to explore his/her own understandings of learning and the sense they made of written feedback. Furthermore, the paper examines how a series of short tasks designed around Communicative Action principles seeks to support the pupils to articulate how they make decisions, justify their views and identify next steps in their learning.

**Theoretical framework.** This paper draws specifically on Habermas’s notion of ‘communicative action’ in order to develop an intervention strategy to enable pupil engagement with feedback. This paper develops previous theoretical work by the author in exploring the potential contribution of Communicative Action to developing greater assessment literacy for teachers and pupils in using feedback.

**Research findings.** The research illustrates the possibilities of: 1.) engaging an intervention strategy; 2.) the process of enabling pupils to take ownership of their learning, 3.) how pupils articulate their own priorities and negotiate these alongside more formal “imposed” priorities. These contribute towards more effective use of pupil feedback.