

THE IMPACT OF TEACHER FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING

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Abstract: This paper examines the impact of teacher feedback on the development of students' speaking skills in second and foreign language classrooms. Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most challenging and anxiety-provoking skills to acquire, and the quality, timing, and type of feedback teachers provide can substantially influence learners' fluency, accuracy, confidence, and willingness to communicate. Drawing on second language acquisition theory and classroom-based research, this paper reviews the major forms of oral feedback, including explicit correction, recasts, elicitation, clarification requests, and metalinguistic feedback, and considers how each interacts with learner affect and motivation. The paper further discusses the balance between corrective and affective feedback, the role of feedback timing, and the importance of individualized, learner-centered approaches. Findings across the literature suggest that feedback which is consistent, specific, and delivered within a supportive classroom climate produces the strongest gains in oral proficiency, while feedback perceived as overly critical or poorly timed can increase anxiety and reduce participation. The paper concludes with pedagogical recommendations for teachers seeking to use feedback as a tool for sustained oral language development.

Keywords: teacher feedback, speaking skills, oral proficiency, corrective feedback, second language acquisition, classroom communication

Speaking is often considered the most demanding of the four language skills because it requires learners to process language in real time while managing pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and social appropriateness simultaneously. Unlike reading or writing, oral production leaves little room for planning or revision, which makes learners particularly sensitive to how their attempts are received by teachers and peers. Within this context, teacher feedback functions as one of the most powerful tools available for shaping the trajectory of a learner's spoken language development. Feedback can confirm that a message has been understood, draw attention to an error that would otherwise go unnoticed, or encourage a learner to keep speaking despite hesitation and uncertainty. The purpose of this paper is to examine how different types of teacher feedback influence the development of students' speaking skills, with particular attention to fluency, accuracy, confidence, and motivation to communicate. The paper synthesizes theoretical perspectives from second language acquisition alongside classroom-based findings in order to identify feedback practices that are most likely to support sustainable improvement in oral proficiency, as well as practices that may inadvertently discourage learners from participating in speaking activities. Several theoretical frameworks help explain why feedback plays such a central role in speaking development. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis emphasizes that learners acquire language primarily through exposure to comprehensible input, but subsequent researchers argued that input alone is insufficient for developing accurate oral production. Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis complements this view by proposing that learners also need opportunities to produce language and to notice gaps between their own output and target-like forms; feedback is precisely the mechanism that makes these gaps visible to the learner in real time. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory offers a further lens, framing feedback as a form of mediation that occurs within a learner's zone of proximal development. From this perspective, a teacher's comment or

correction is most effective when it is pitched slightly above the learner's current independent ability, allowing the learner to internalize the correct form with appropriate support. Together, these theoretical positions suggest that feedback is not simply a corrective add-on to speaking practice but an integral part of how oral competence develops over time. Lyster and Ranta (1997) identified several distinct feedback types used by teachers in oral interaction, including explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition. Explicit correction directly supplies the correct form and clearly signals that an error has occurred, which can be efficient but may also interrupt the flow of communication. Recasts reformulate a learner's incorrect utterance in a corrected form without explicitly flagging the error, preserving the communicative flow of the conversation, though learners do not always notice that a correction has taken place. Clarification requests and elicitation, by contrast, prompt learners to self-correct by asking them to reformulate or complete an utterance themselves, which research suggests can lead to deeper processing and longer-term retention of the corrected form. Ellis (2009) further distinguishes between feedback that focuses on linguistic accuracy and feedback that focuses on the successful communication of meaning. Both types have value: accuracy-focused feedback helps learners refine grammatical and phonological precision, while meaning-focused feedback reinforces the communicative purpose of speaking and helps maintain learner motivation. A recurring theme in this line of research is that no single feedback type is universally superior; rather, effectiveness depends on the learner's proficiency level, the classroom context, and the specific communicative goal of the activity. Beyond linguistic accuracy, feedback exerts a strong influence on learners' emotional relationship with speaking. Brown (2007) notes that affective factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation are closely tied to learners' willingness to take risks in oral production. Feedback

delivered harshly, too frequently, or in front of peers can heighten anxiety and cause learners to withdraw from speaking opportunities altogether. Conversely, feedback that acknowledges effort, highlights what was communicated successfully, and frames errors as a natural part of the learning process tends to build learners' confidence and encourage continued participation. Hyland and Hyland (2006), although focused primarily on feedback in writing, offer principles that transfer readily to the oral domain: feedback is most effective when it balances praise with constructive guidance, is specific rather than vague, and is delivered in a manner that preserves the learner's sense of competence. Applied to speaking instruction, this suggests that teachers should avoid overwhelming students with multiple corrections at once and should instead prioritize the errors most likely to impede communication or that are pedagogically relevant to the current lesson focus. The timing of feedback, whether immediate or delayed, also shapes its impact on speaking development. Immediate feedback, delivered during an activity, can help learners correct errors before they become fossilized, but frequent interruptions may disrupt fluency practice and discourage risk-taking. Delayed feedback, provided after a speaking task has concluded, allows learners to complete their communicative intent without interruption and gives the teacher an opportunity to address common errors more systematically, for example through a brief whole-class review. Nunan (1991) argues that fluency-focused activities benefit from delayed or minimal feedback during the task itself, reserving more detailed correction for follow-up stages, whereas accuracy-focused drills can accommodate more immediate correction without undermining the communicative purpose of the task. The manner of delivery is equally significant. Feedback framed as a collaborative problem to solve together, rather than as a judgment of the learner's ability, tends to be received more constructively. Simple strategies such as using a warm tone, pairing correction with specific praise, and inviting the learner to

self-correct before supplying the answer directly can meaningfully change how feedback is experienced. The literature reviewed in this paper points toward several practical implications for teachers. First, feedback should be varied and matched to the purpose of the activity: recasts and elicitation may be more appropriate during fluency-building conversation, while explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback may better serve activities aimed at accuracy. Second, teachers should be mindful of the emotional impact of feedback and strive to create a classroom climate in which errors are treated as a normal and expected part of language learning rather than as failures. Third, feedback should be selective rather than exhaustive; attempting to correct every error in a single utterance can overwhelm learners and discourage further attempts at speaking. Finally, involving learners in the feedback process, for instance through guided self-correction or peer feedback, can promote greater learner autonomy and a deeper understanding of their own developing oral competence. Teacher feedback occupies a central place in the development of students' speaking skills, shaping not only the accuracy and fluency of learners' oral production but also their confidence and willingness to engage in communication. The research reviewed in this paper suggests that no single feedback strategy works best in all situations; rather, effective teachers draw on a repertoire of feedback types and adapt their approach based on the learner, the task, and the classroom context. When feedback is specific, appropriately timed, and delivered within a supportive environment, it can serve as a powerful catalyst for sustained improvement in spoken language ability. Future classroom practice and research would benefit from continued attention to how feedback can be tailored to individual learners in order to maximize both linguistic growth and learner confidence.

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