

## A Comprehensive Review on the Impact of Teacher Feedback in Language Development for ESL/EFL Learners

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*ESL/EFL Learners; Evidence-based Practices; Feedback Modalities; Language Development; Socio-emotional Dimensions; Teacher Feedback*

### **Abstract**

*This comprehensive review investigates the multifaceted impact of teacher feedback on English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) learners' language development. The paper examines feedback modalities, including written, verbal, and technological approaches, and recommends a multimodal strategy to accommodate diverse learner preferences. The challenges in providing feedback, such as balancing corrective and affirming feedback and individualising responses in large classes, are discussed. Future recommendations include using technology to provide scalable and personalised feedback, encouraging learner agency through self-assessment, and prioritising cultural responsiveness. The integration of socio-emotional dimensions into feedback practices is highlighted, emphasising the importance of a comprehensive approach to ESL/EFL language development. Ongoing collaboration among teachers, students, and researchers is recognised as critical for shaping evidence-based practices and advancing inclusive and effective ESL/EFL teaching. This paper offers valuable insights for teachers, researchers, and policymakers looking to improve language development strategies in a variety of ESL/EFL contexts.*

### **1. Introduction**

Language development for English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) learners is significantly influenced by teacher feedback, which plays a critical role in enhancing linguistic proficiency and overall language acquisition. Effective feedback, whether written, verbal, or delivered through technological means, can guide learners toward improved accuracy and fluency (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Ferris, 2010). This review explores the multifaceted nature of teacher feedback, examining how various modalities contribute to language development while addressing challenges such as balancing corrective and affirming feedback, individualizing responses in large classes, and navigating cultural differences (Lee, 2005; Carless, 2019). Furthermore, the interplay between feedback and motivation is considered, highlighting how constructive feedback can promote learner independence, intrinsic motivation, and a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). By synthesizing insights from existing literature, this review aims to provide practical recommendations and future directions for educators, researchers, and policymakers. The goal is to optimize feedback practices to better support ESL/EFL

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learners, acknowledging the socio-emotional dimensions of learning and the need for a holistic approach.

## 2. Methodology

For this comprehensive review, a total of 22 articles and book chapters were collected. The selection criteria included relevance to ESL/EFL feedback practices, publication within the last 40 years, and availability in English. Researchers conducted searches in academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ERIC, using keywords like "teacher feedback," "ESL/EFL learners," and "language development." Articles were screened for quality and relevance before inclusion in the review.

## 3. Types of teacher feedback

Teacher feedback is crucial in shaping the language development of ESL/EFL learners, with various types responding to different aspects of the learning process. Formative feedback, distinguished by its developmental nature, offers learners ongoing guidance by emphasizing constructive criticism and areas for improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Summative feedback, on the other hand, is a retrospective evaluation that provides learners with a comprehensive review of their performance, resulting in an overall comprehension of their language proficiency (Ferris, 2010). The distinction between these two types is critical for teachers who want to create a balanced feedback environment that encourages continuous improvement and overall language development (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Corrective feedback is a fundamental aspect of language development, focusing on rectifying errors made by learners during language production (Ferris, 2010). This type of feedback aims to enhance accuracy and linguistic precision by addressing grammatical, syntactic, and lexical errors (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Research by Ferris (2010) emphasizes the effectiveness of corrective feedback in promoting language accuracy. However, this view is not without contention. Truscott (1996, 1999) argues against grammar correction in L2 writing classes, suggesting that it may be ineffective and potentially harmful. The ongoing debate, highlighted by Mohebbi (2021) in an interview with Truscott, underscores the complexity of balancing error correction with fluency development in ESL contexts. This review aims to explore these differing perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of corrective feedback in language learning.

Supportive feedback, also known as positive reinforcement, aims to recognize and reinforce proper language use and effective communication (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This type of feedback boosts learners' confidence and motivation by acknowledging their accomplishments, thereby creating a positive learning environment (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Supportive feedback is important in ESL/EFL contexts because it has the potential to cultivate a growth mindset among learners, encouraging them to persevere in their language learning journey.

Motivational feedback addresses the psychological aspects of language development by inspiring and encouraging ESL/EFL students to actively participate in the learning process (Hattie & Gan, 2011). Motivational feedback goes beyond correcting errors to instill enthusiasm and perseverance in language learners. Teachers can significantly impact learners' commitment and effort in language acquisition by aligning feedback with their intrinsic motivation and personal goals (Carless, 2019). Oral corrective feedback has emerged as a crucial component of language teaching and learning methodologies. It has proven to be a valuable tool for enhancing learning in the classroom and serves as an active method for supporting the development of accurate oral skills (Paul & Al-Mamun, 2024).

Finally, understanding the various types of teacher feedback is critical for teachers who want to adapt their instructional strategies to the unique needs of ESL/EFL learners. Formative and summative feedback provide a framework for ongoing development and comprehensive evaluation, whereas corrective, supportive, and motivational feedback contribute to the complex dynamics of language acquisition. Balancing these types of feedback is critical to creating a constructive and motivating learning environment for ESL/EFL students.

#### **4. Timing and frequency of feedback:**

The temporal dynamics of feedback delivery are essential for maximizing its impact on ESL/EFL learners' language development. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), providing timely feedback at the appropriate time during the learning process improves its effectiveness. Delayed feedback may impair learners' ability to connect feedback to their actions, emphasizing the importance of timing feedback with the specific context of language acquisition. This notion is supported by Shute's (2008) work, which demonstrates that timely feedback significantly improves learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the frequency of feedback delivery is critical to its effectiveness. Frequent feedback, when properly balanced, has been shown to improve learning outcomes (Shute, 2008). This is consistent with the findings of Kluger and DeNisi (1996), who propose that regular feedback promotes a continuous feedback loop, allowing learners to gradually adapt and refine their language skills. Teachers must strike a balance between not overwhelming learners with feedback and providing it frequently enough to guide ongoing language development (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Understanding the optimal timing for feedback delivery is critical for teachers seeking to create a supportive and responsive learning environment. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) found that feedback given during the formative stages of language learning can have a greater impact. This supports Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of timely social interaction in cognitive development. Teachers can improve the relevance and impact of feedback for ESL/EFL learners by aligning it with the stages of language acquisition.

Balancing feedback timing and frequency is a difficult task that necessitates careful consideration of individual learner requirements. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) emphasize the importance of customizing feedback to the pace at which learners develop their language skills. Recognizing and addressing the unique paths to learning of ESL/EFL learners allows teachers to optimize the temporal dimensions of feedback, ensuring that it effectively connects with each individual's language acquisition journey.

The timing and frequency of feedback are important factors in shaping the language development of ESL/EFL learners. Timely feedback follows the natural progression of language acquisition, whereas a balanced frequency ensures a continuous and adaptive feedback loop. Teachers must be sensitive to learners' individual needs, customizing feedback to match their developmental stages and pace, resulting in a more responsive and effective language learning environment.

### **5. Individualized feedback**

Recognizing the diverse needs and learning paths of ESL/EFL students, individualized feedback emerges as an important strategy for optimizing language development. Hattie and Gan (2011) argue for a more personalized approach to feedback, emphasizing the importance of understanding each ESL/EFL learner's individual strengths, challenges, and learning styles. By customizing feedback to the individual, teachers can address specific language acquisition needs, resulting in a more focused and effective learning experience.

Individualized feedback not only addresses linguistic challenges, but it also instills a sense of agency and ownership in ESL/EFL learners. Carless (2019) contends that providing feedback that is relevant to learners' personal goals and motivations increases their engagement and commitment to the language learning experience. This is consistent with the principles of self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy in promoting intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Individualized feedback is a powerful tool for teachers to tap into ESL/EFL learners' intrinsic motivations, resulting in a more personalized and meaningful language learning experience.

However, implementing personalized feedback is not without challenges. Hattie and Gan (2011) recognize the complexities of providing feedback for diverse learners in the classroom setting. Time constraints and large class sizes may make it difficult to provide detailed, individualized feedback. Despite these challenges, teachers can use technology to streamline the process, such as tools that enable personalized feedback on a large scale (Carless, 2019). Teachers can explore creative solutions to effectively deliver individualized feedback while balancing the benefits and challenges.

Hattie and Gan (2011) advocate for a diversified feedback approach that includes both corrective and affirmative feedback tailored to the individual learner's needs. Strategies for individualized feedback encompass a range of approaches, from differentiated task design to various modes of communication. Teachers can

promote a balanced and constructive feedback environment by recognizing and celebrating successes as well as addressing challenges. Furthermore, incorporating peer feedback and self-assessment into the feedback process allows ESL/EFL learners to actively evaluate their own language proficiency, resulting in a more self-regulated learning approach (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). At the tertiary level, instructors are expected to provide written feedback on assignments and written test scripts. Feedback is widely seen as crucial for enhancing pupils' writing skills. In the field of English studies, it has an even greater significance (Biswas, 2020).

Individualized feedback is an essential component of customized language development for ESL/EFL learners. Teachers can overcome challenges and provide meaningful feedback that connects with learners' intrinsic motivations by recognizing each learner's unique characteristics and implementing creative strategies. As technology advances, the ability to provide scalable, personalized feedback in ESL/EFL contexts holds promise for advancing language acquisition strategies.

## 6. Feedback modalities

The wide range of feedback modalities provides teachers with a variety of options for enhancing ESL/EFL learners' language development. Written feedback, a traditional method, provides learners with tangible records of corrections and suggestions (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). This method allows for detailed analysis and reflection, allowing ESL/EFL students to review and understand feedback at their own pace. However, challenges such as the possibility of misinterpretation and the time-consuming nature of written feedback must be considered (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

In contrast, verbal feedback allows for real-time interaction and clarification, resulting in immediate understanding and engagement (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). The spoken word enables teachers to convey tone and nuance, resulting in a more dynamic and responsive feedback exchange. Liu, Wang, and Ryan (2019) emphasize the importance of verbal feedback in creating a communicative and supportive language learning environment, recognizing its potential to improve the teacher-student relationship.

The use of technology in feedback mechanisms has altered the environment of language acquisition. Automated tools for providing feedback on written work, such as automated writing evaluation systems, have gained popularity (Liu, Wang, & Ryan, 2019). These tools are efficient and consistent, providing instant feedback on a variety of linguistic aspects. However, automated systems' limitations and potential biases highlight the importance of combining technological tools with human judgment to ensure a comprehensive and accurate feedback approach (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

A more sophisticated consideration is comparing the efficacy of written versus oral feedback. Bitchener and Storch (2016) conducted a comprehensive review and concluded that, while both modalities contribute to language development, they

serve distinct purposes. Written feedback may be superior in precision and detail, whereas verbal feedback excels in immediacy and interpersonal connection. The choice between these modalities may be determined by specific learning objectives, ESL/EFL learners' preferences, and the nature of the language task

As ESL/EFL classrooms evolve, taking a multimodal approach becomes increasingly important. Integrating written, verbal, and technological feedback modalities enables a comprehensive and adaptable feedback strategy. This diversity accommodates different learning styles and preferences among ESL/EFL students, resulting in a more comprehensive and dynamic language learning experience.

## **7. Cultural sensitivity in feedback**

Understanding the complexities of cultural sensitivity in feedback delivery is critical in ESL/EFL contexts, where diverse cultural backgrounds shape learners' perceptions and responses. Hossain (2024) emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural differences in communication styles when providing feedback to ESL/EFL students. Different cultures may hold different attitudes toward authority, politeness, and criticism, which influences how feedback is received and interpreted. Recognizing and respecting these cultural differences is critical to creating a supportive feedback environment.

Cultural sensitivity in feedback entails understanding the impact of power dynamics in various cultural contexts. According to Lee (2005), feedback delivery should take into account the hierarchical structures and authority perceptions that exist in certain cultures. Educators must view feedback as a collaborative process, cultivating a sense of partnership between teacher and learner. This shift in perspective promotes open communication while reducing the possibility of cultural misinterpretations of feedback.

Creating a feedback culture that values diverse perspectives and encourages open dialogue is one strategy for cultivating cultural sensitivity (Carless, 2006). Harklau, Losey, and Siegal (1999) emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive environment in ESL/EFL classrooms that respects and values linguistic and cultural diversity. Providing cultural awareness training to teachers can improve their ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions, lowering the risk of unintentional cultural insensitivity in feedback delivery.

Feedback that adheres to culturally responsive teaching principles takes into account learners' backgrounds, experiences, and values (Carless 2006). This method entails tailoring feedback to resonate with ESL/EFL learners' cultural contexts, making it more relevant and meaningful. Recognizing and valuing diverse perspectives in the classroom contributes to a positive and inclusive feedback environment, creating a sense of belonging for all students.

Language proficiency plays an important role in receiving feedback within a culturally sensitive framework. According to Carless (2006), language barriers can make it more difficult for ESL/EFL learners to understand and interpret feedback.

To address this, teachers can use clear and simple language, contextual explanations, and open communication to make feedback accessible and understandable to all learners, regardless of language proficiency.

In conclusion, cultural sensitivity in feedback delivery is an essential component of effective ESL/EFL education. Recognizing and respecting cultural nuances, addressing power dynamics, and promoting inclusive feedback practices all help to foster a supportive and enriching learning environment. Embracing cultural sensitivity helps teachers create a collaborative feedback culture in ESL/EFL classrooms that recognizes and values diverse perspectives.

## **8. Feedback and motivation**

The relationship between feedback and motivation is critical in creating a positive and productive language learning environment for ESL/EFL students. Constructive feedback is an effective motivator because it provides learners with a plan for improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When feedback is delivered in a supportive and encouraging manner, it helps promote a growth mindset by reinforcing the belief that effort and perseverance lead to improvement (Dweck, 2006). Recognizing and celebrating progress through feedback increases ESL/EFL students' intrinsic motivation and commitment to their language learning journey.

Positive reinforcement in feedback has a significant impact on motivation in ESL/EFL learners (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). A sense of accomplishment and competence is enhanced by affirming correct language use, recognizing improvements, and emphasizing strengths. Hattie and Gan (2011) emphasize the importance of linking feedback to specific learning goals and criteria, allowing ESL/EFL learners to have a clear understanding of their accomplishments. The alignment of feedback and goals boosts motivation by providing a sense of purpose and direction in language learning.

However, the motivational impact of feedback is determined by its perceived relevance and authenticity (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Feedback that is customized to the learners' specific interests, goals, and cultural background is more likely to be meaningful and motivating (Carless, 2019). Integrating learners' perspectives into the feedback process allows them to take control of their language development, promoting autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Self-determination theory plays an important role in understanding feedback and motivation dynamics (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This theory holds that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the fundamental psychological needs that drive human motivation. Feedback that meets these needs by providing options, recognizing competence, and creating a sense of connection with the learning community helps to create a more motivating language learning environment. Teachers can strategically design feedback mechanisms that address these psychological needs, resulting in a positive and lasting motivational impact.

The potential intersection of feedback and external motivators, such as grades or rewards, necessitates a careful approach. While external motivators can influence behavior, intrinsic factors are responsible for motivation's long-term sustainability (Deci & Ryan 1985). Effective feedback strikes a balance between recognizing external accomplishments and encouraging internal motivation. This balance ensures that ESL/EFL students are motivated not only by external rewards, but also by a genuine desire to master the language and grow as individuals.

Feedback's motivational impact on ESL/EFL learners is a complex interaction of constructive guidance, positive reinforcement, cultural relevance, and alignment with psychological needs. By understanding and exploiting these factors, teachers can create a feedback-rich environment that not only promotes language development but also creates long-term motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

## 9. Challenges and considerations

Managing the feedback environment in ESL/EFL language development is not easy, and it requires a thorough understanding of the complexities involved. One significant challenge is the potential for feedback to be misinterpreted or demotivating, especially in cross-cultural settings (Lee, 2005). Differences in communication styles, attitudes toward authority, and perceptions of criticism can result in different interpretations of feedback, emphasizing the importance of teachers approaching feedback with cultural sensitivity. This challenge emphasizes the importance of establishing open communication channels and trust in the ESL/EFL learning environment.

Another challenge in ESL/EFL classrooms is the sheer diversity of learners, which requires teachers to customize feedback to meet the unique needs of each individual. Large class sizes and time constraints may limit the ability to provide detailed and personalized feedback to each student. Balancing the desire for individualization with the practical realities of teaching necessitates strategic approaches, such as including peer feedback and self-assessment in the feedback process (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). These considerations recognize the multifaceted nature of language development and the importance of adaptable feedback strategies.

Finding the right balance between corrective and affirming feedback is an ongoing challenge in feedback delivery (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). While corrective feedback is necessary for language accuracy, an overemphasis on errors can lead to demotivation and fear of making mistakes. Alternatively, an abundance of positive feedback without constructive guidance may impede learners' comprehension of areas for improvement. Teachers must strike a delicate balance, understanding that effective feedback includes both positive reinforcement and guidance for growth.

The integration of technology into feedback mechanisms creates its own set of challenges. While automated writing evaluation systems are efficient, they may lack the nuanced understanding necessary to provide context-specific and culturally sensitive feedback (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). The possibility that technological



tools will be perceived as impersonal emphasizes the importance of using a human touch when providing feedback. As technology plays an increasingly important role in language learning, teachers must be mindful of its limitations and supplement automated feedback with personalized and contextualized guidance.

Ethical considerations in feedback delivery include fairness, transparency, and the avoidance of bias. Unconscious biases in feedback based on language proficiency, cultural background, or gender can have an unintentional impact on learners. Teachers must be vigilant in their feedback practices, implementing strategies to reduce bias and ensure equitable treatment. This challenge highlights teachers' ethical responsibility to provide feedback that promotes an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all ESL/EFL learners.

To summarize, the challenges and considerations surrounding feedback in ESL/EFL language development are multifaceted, requiring cultural sensitivity, individualization, balancing corrective and affirmative feedback, navigating technology integration, and addressing ethical concerns. Recognizing and proactively addressing these challenges helps to create a constructive and supportive feedback environment, thereby improving the language learning experience for ESL/EFL students.

## **10. Future directions and recommendations**

As the environment of ESL/EFL language development evolves, future directions should be guided by a desire to improve feedback's effectiveness and inclusivity. Integrating technology shows promise for personalized and accessible feedback (Liu, Wang, & Ryan, 2019). Continued research and development in automated writing evaluation systems can address current limitations, providing teachers with tools that are both efficient and sophisticated in their understanding of individual learners' needs. Furthermore, investigating the potential of artificial intelligence in adapting feedback to various learning styles and preferences represents a frontier for future innovation in language education.

The need for a more comprehensive and learner-centered approach emphasizes the importance of fostering student agency during the feedback process (Carless, 2019). Future practices should encourage ESL/EFL students to actively participate in self-assessment, peer feedback, and goal setting. Implementing feedback literacy programs that teach students how to effectively interpret and apply feedback can help create a more autonomous and reflective learning community (Carless, 2019; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). These initiatives can provide ESL/EFL students with lifelong skills for language development.

A call for culturally responsive feedback practices emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and appreciating diverse perspectives (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999). Future directions should include professional development for educators to improve their cultural competence and understanding of the diverse backgrounds of ESL/EFL students. Strategies for adapting feedback to cultural nuances should be

incorporated into teacher education programs to ensure that feedback practices are inclusive and respectful of cultural diversity.

Future research could look into expanding the scope of feedback beyond language proficiency metrics to include socio-emotional aspects. Emphasizing feedback's impact on learners' well-being, motivation, and confidence can help us gain a more comprehensive understanding of its role in language development. Strategies for incorporating socioemotional factors into feedback practices can help create a positive and supportive language learning environment.

Future recommendations also call for an ongoing dialogue among teachers, students, and researchers to inform best practices (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Collaboration in research can help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, allowing evidence-based feedback strategies to be implemented more effectively. Creating communities of practice that encourage the sharing of effective feedback practices can help to build a collective knowledge base, promoting innovation and improvement in ESL/EFL language development.

Future directions in ESL/EFL language development should prioritize utilizing technology, promoting learner agency, embracing cultural responsiveness, investigating socio-emotional dimensions, and encouraging ongoing collaboration among teachers, students, and researchers. By addressing these issues, the field can move forward with more inclusive, effective, and learner-centered feedback practices, ultimately improving the language learning experience for ESL/EFL students.

## **11. Conclusion**

The journey through the impact of teacher feedback on language development for ESL/EFL students emphasizes the multifaceted nature of this pedagogical practice. Drawing on seminal works in educational research, studies on corrective feedback, and considerations of cultural subtleties, it is clear that feedback is critical in shaping the language proficiency of ESL/EFL students. Feedback has the potential to be both corrective and motivating. According to research, effective feedback goes beyond error correction; it promotes a growth mindset, recognizes cultural diversity, and fuels intrinsic motivation.

As we consider the various types of feedback modalities discussed, from written to verbal and technological, it is clear that a multimodal approach meets the diverse needs and preferences of ESL/EFL learners. The incorporation of technology improves efficiency, but it must be supplemented by human judgment to address the contextual and cultural complexities of language development. Furthermore, the importance of individualized feedback is emphasized because it respects ESL/EFL learners' unique learning paths and cultural backgrounds, resulting in a more inclusive and responsive language learning environment.

The challenges and considerations discussed in this comprehensive review highlight the importance of striking a delicate balance when providing feedback.

The challenge of balancing corrective and affirming feedback necessitates complex approaches, with ESL/EFL learners benefiting from both positive reinforcement and constructive guidance. The complexities of managing cultural sensitivity and ethical considerations in feedback practices highlight educators' responsibility for creating a supportive, fair, and inclusive feedback environment.

Looking ahead to future directions and recommendations, key areas for innovation include technology integration, learner agency cultivation, and a greater emphasis on cultural responsiveness. Incorporating socio-emotional dimensions into feedback practices is consistent with the growing understanding of language development as a comprehensive process. Collaboration among teachers, learners, and researchers is critical for advancing evidence-based practices and constantly improving ESL/EFL language development strategies.

In essence, this comprehensive review sheds light on the complex interplay between teacher feedback, cultural sensitivity, technology integration, and motivational dynamics in ESL/EFL language development. By synthesizing insights from multiple perspectives and drawing on an array of research, it lays the groundwork for researchers, teachers, and policymakers to inform their practices, advocate for inclusivity, and shape the future environment of ESL/EFL language development.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose regarding the research, ownership, and publication of this article.

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