The Influence of Teacher Feedback on Student Motivation in English Language

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Abstract

Teacher feedback is a vital component of the learning process, particularly in language education, where learners frequently face challenges in mastering new skills. This study aims to explore the influence of teacher feedback on student motivation in English language classes. The primary objectives are to identify the types of feedback commonly used, examine how feedback affects students' motivation, and analyze whether positive or negative feedback has a more significant impact on learners. A systematic literature review was conducted using inclusion criteria focused on studies from the past decade (2015–2024), written in English, and related to the context of English language learning. A total of 20 peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers were selected from reputable databases. The findings suggest that teacher feedback, particularly constructive and formative types, significantly enhances students' motivation. Moreover, positive feedback tends to foster student confidence and persistence, while well-delivered corrective feedback also contributes to academic improvement. This study concludes that feedback not only guides students in correcting errors but also acts as a motivational driver, shaping students' engagement and performance in English language learning.

Keywords: English learning, student motivation, teacher feedback

Introduction

Teacher feedback plays a vital role in supporting student learning and boosting motivation, especially in English language classrooms. Feedback goes beyond simply evaluating student performance; it helps guide learners, highlight their strengths and areas for improvement, and encourage them to engage more actively in the learning process (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In English classes, where students often struggle with anxiety or lack of confidence, the way feedback is delivered can significantly influence their motivation and willingness to participate (Shute, 2008; Lee, 2017).

Motivation is widely recognized as one of the key factors in successful language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Research over the past decade has shown that students who receive timely, clear, and encouraging feedback tend to feel more confident, develop positive attitudes toward learning, and stay engaged for longer periods (Brookhart, 2017; Li & De Luca, 2014). Formative feedback which focuses on improvement rather than judgment has been shown to

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support a growth mindset and enhance students' intrinsic motivation (Wiliam, 2011; Carless & Boud, 2018). Other studies have found that feedback that acknowledges effort and gives concrete suggestions can positively impact both academic achievement and classroom participation (Evans, 2013; Jonsson & Panadero, 2018).

However, most existing studies have looked at feedback in general education settings, without paying close attention to its role in English language classes. For example, while Dawson et al. (2019) and Teng and Zhang (2020) explored feedback practices in higher education, they did not focus specifically on their influence on motivation in language learning. Similarly, studies by Mahmud (2021) and Asgari and Mustapha (2021) examined how students perceive feedback but did not explore how it affects their motivation. Other research, like that of Elwood and Klenowski (2020) and Kusumawardhani et al. (2022), looked at feedback mainly as part of assessment, rather than as a motivational strategy.

Another issue is that much of the research has focused on the teacher's perspective, not the students. While some studies link teacher feedback to academic performance (Havnes et al., 2019; Lee, 2022), fewer have examined how students respond emotionally and motivationally, especially in language classrooms where anxiety and low self-esteem are common.

Given these gaps, this study aims to explore how teacher feedback influences student motivation in English language classes. It also seeks to identify which types of feedback are most effective in encouraging student engagement and enthusiasm for learning English.

Method

This study used systhematic literature review. The purpose of conducting a study on student learning motivation is to review and synthesize existing research, identify gaps between past and present studies that need to be addressed, generate a comprehensive summary, and develop a structured research framework.

Table 1
Research Question

ID	Research Question	Motivation
RQ	How does teacher feedback influence students' motivation in English language learning?	To explore the direct and indirect effects of feedback on student learning motivation

This research conducts searches on popular journal databases with specific keywords to answer the Research Question described above. The keywords used are: "Teacher Feedback" and "Student motivation". Searching with keywords is done only in the abstract section.

After conducting a comprehensive literature search using the keywords teacher feedback, student motivation. the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The inclusion criteria included peer-reviewed journal articles or conference proceedings published within the last 10 years (2015–2024), written in English, and focusing on the relationship between teacher feedback and student

motivation in English language learning contexts. Articles that did not directly address both variables or were outside the educational field were excluded.

The literature search was conducted across several databases, including Google Scholar and Publish or Perish. After filtering, 20 relevant articles were selected to be reviewed in this study. These included high-quality journal articles and conference proceedings relevant to the research topic.

Results and Discussion

Positive Impacts of Teacher Feedback on Student Motivation

The results of the literature review in Table 2 indicate that teacher feedback has several positive impacts on student motivation in EFL contexts. Based on the synthesis of the reviewed studies, five main positive effects were identified.

First, teacher feedback contributes to increased student self-confidence. Studies consistently report that constructive and supportive feedback helps learners feel more capable and confident in their language abilities. When feedback highlights students' progress and effort, learners are more likely to develop positive self-perceptions and believe in their ability to succeed in language learning.

Second, teacher feedback enhances students' intrinsic motivation. Feedback that focuses on learning processes rather than solely on outcomes encourages students to engage in learning for personal satisfaction and improvement. Such feedback supports students' internal motivation by emphasizing autonomy, mastery, and meaningful learning goals.

Third, the literature shows that effective feedback improves language accuracy. Corrective and formative feedback helps students recognize their errors and understand how to improve their language use. This process supports gradual improvement in grammar, vocabulary, and overall language performance.

Fourth, teacher feedback promotes greater task persistence. When students receive clear guidance and encouragement, they are more likely to continue working on challenging tasks and persist despite difficulties. Feedback helps students understand expectations and view challenges as part of the learning process rather than as failures.

Finally, teacher feedback strengthens teacher–student rapport. Positive and respectful feedback fosters trust and emotional connection between teachers and students. This supportive relationship creates a classroom atmosphere in which students feel safe to participate, make mistakes, and express themselves in the target language.

Table 2
Positive Impacts of Teacher Feedback on Student Motivation

No.	Feedback Type	Sources
1.	Increased Self-Confidence	Hyland & Hyland, 2006), (Dörnyei, 2001), (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)
2.	Enhanced Intrinsic Motivation	(Ryan & Deci, 2000)
3.	Improved Language Accuracy	Teng & Zhang (2020), Li & De Luca (2014)
4.	Greater Task Persistence	(Black & Wiliam, 2009), (Shute, 2008)
5.	Strengthened Teacher-Student Rapport	(Brookhart, 2008), (Wiliam, 2011

Negative Impact of Teacher Feedback on Motivation

Despite its benefits, the results also indicate that teacher feedback can negatively affect student motivation when it is poorly delivered or inappropriate. Three major negative impacts were identified in the reviewed studies.

One negative impact is the emergence of anxiety and fear of making mistakes. Harsh, overly critical, or public feedback can cause students to feel embarrassed or afraid of participating in classroom activities. This fear may reduce students' willingness to communicate in English, particularly in speaking tasks.

Another negative effect is reduced intrinsic motivation. Feedback that relies heavily on external rewards, punishment, or controlling language may undermine students' internal motivation. When students focus primarily on grades or teacher approval, their interest in learning for its own sake may decrease.

The results also reveal the risk of students becoming overly dependent on teacher validation. Excessive or overly directive feedback may limit students' ability to self-regulate their learning. In such cases, students may rely too much on teachers to judge their performance, rather than developing independent learning strategies and self-assessment skills.

Table 3
Negative Impacts of Teacher Feedback on Student Motivation

No	Feedback Type	Sources
1.	Anxiety and Fear of Mistakes	(Ellis, 2009), (Deci, E. L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R. M. (1999).
2.	Reduced Intrinsic Motivation	(Cameron & Pierce, 1994), (Deci et al., 1999)
3.	Over-Reliance on Teacher Validation	(Dörnyei, 2005), (Hattie & Gan, 2011)

The findings of this review confirm that teacher feedback plays a crucial role in shaping student motivation in EFL learning. Consistent with Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is most effective when it provides information about where learners are, where they are going, and how they can improve. This explains why feedback that emphasizes progress and effort contributes to increased self-confidence and sustained engagement.

The enhancement of intrinsic motivation identified in the results aligns with Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key factors in motivation. Feedback that supports students' sense of competence and autonomy encourages them to engage in learning willingly rather than out of obligation. As Dörnyei (2001) argues, motivation in language learning is strongly influenced by learners' perceptions of success and teacher support.

The improvement in language accuracy through feedback supports the view of Teng and Zhang (2020), who argue that formative feedback helps learners notice gaps between their current performance and target language norms. Similarly, Li and De Luca (2014) emphasize that feedback functions as guidance rather than mere correction, enabling learners to improve gradually.

Task persistence, as identified in the results, reflects Black and Wiliam's (2009) assertion that formative feedback helps learners view challenges as opportunities for growth. Shute (2008) further notes that feedback is most motivating when it is specific, non-evaluative, and focused on improvement rather than judgment.

However, the negative impacts identified highlight important cautions. Ellis (2009) warns that feedback delivered in a threatening or judgmental manner can increase anxiety and inhibit language use. This concern aligns with Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999), who argue that controlling feedback can undermine intrinsic motivation by reducing learners' sense of autonomy.

The issue of over-reliance on teacher validation supports Dörnyei's (2005) view that effective motivation involves gradually fostering learner independence. Hattie and Gan (2011) similarly emphasize that feedback should ultimately encourage self-regulation rather than dependence on external evaluation.

Overall, the discussion suggests that teacher feedback can significantly enhance student motivation when it is constructive, supportive, and autonomy-enhancing. At the same time, poorly delivered feedback may lead to anxiety, reduced motivation, and dependency. Therefore, teachers need to carefully consider not only *what* feedback they provide, but also *how* and *why* it is delivered to maximize its motivational impact in EFL classrooms.

Conclusion

Based on the review of existing literature, it is evident that teacher feedback plays a critical role in shaping student motivation in English language learning environments. Constructive feedback, when provided thoughtfully, enhances students' academic performance, self-confidence, and engagement. Positive feedback fosters enthusiasm and persistence, while corrective feedback contributes to better understanding and mastery of language skills. Therefore, teachers should be

deliberate in delivering feedback, ensuring it supports both cognitive development and emotional encouragement to optimize learning outcomes. Future research could explore more diverse classroom contexts and longitudinal impacts to deepen the understanding of feedback's role in motivation.

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