

Employing Teacher Feedback as a Strategy to Mitigate Learners' Speaking Anxiety: A Case Study

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Abstract. This study investigates the effect of teacher feedback on speaking anxiety among secondary school ESL students. Speaking anxiety is one of the major challenges faced by students when required to speak English in class, often hindering their oral communication development. The study involved 120 participants, consisting of 100 students and 20 English teachers. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected using three main instruments: semi-structured interview guidelines, a structured classroom observation checklist, and students' reflective journal prompts. The interview protocol explored participants' perceptions of feedback and its influence on their confidence and anxiety. The observation checklist documented the type, timing, tone, and delivery mode of teacher feedback, as well as students' immediate behavioral reactions. Reflective journals captured students' personal emotional responses to feedback during speaking activities. The findings reveal that supportive, empathetic, and constructive feedback significantly reduced students' speaking anxiety, increased self-confidence, and encouraged active participation in oral tasks. A positive classroom atmosphere characterized by respectful teacher–student interaction further enabled learners to engage in speaking without fear of negative judgment. In contrast, harsh or overly critical feedback, particularly when delivered publicly, tended to trigger embarrassment and heightened anxiety. The study also highlights the importance of balancing corrective and supportive feedback while remaining sensitive to individual and gender differences, as students' perceptions of feedback mediated its emotional impact and willingness to communicate. Teacher feedback functions not only as a pedagogical tool for improving linguistic accuracy but also as an affective support mechanism that shapes students' emotional readiness to speak in a second language. Emotionally responsive feedback practices are therefore essential in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: Teacher Feedback, Speaking Anxiety, EFL Learners

Introduction

Learners of a second language frequently encounter speaking anxiety, especially when they are asked to speak in front of their teachers and peers. This form of anxiety may limit their capacity to develop into competent speakers or discussion leaders, both of which are important indicators of language proficiency. Song (2024) define foreign language anxiety as a specific combination of self-related perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies that arise from the distinctive demands of classroom language learning. This issue becomes particularly evident during speaking activities, which many students regard as pressure-filled and intimidating situations. Recent studies also demonstrate that speaking anxiety is strongly associated with learners' emotional

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experiences in class, including their sense of enjoyment and self-confidence (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Mercer, 2025).

In this context, teacher feedback plays a significant role in shaping students' learning experiences and may substantially affect their level of anxiety. Feedback should not be viewed solely as error correction; when delivered constructively, it can enhance students' confidence, strengthen appropriate language use, and foster a supportive classroom climate. Fu et al (2024) and Muthmainnah et al. (2024) argue that feedback is one of the most influential factors in student achievement, although its impact largely depends on how it is communicated and interpreted. More recent research further indicates that both corrective and supportive oral feedback can meaningfully influence learners' emotional involvement and anxiety levels (Xu et al., 2024; Shen, 2022).

Considering that speaking anxiety directly influences academic performance and language development, it is important to examine how teacher feedback can be strategically implemented to reduce anxiety and improve oral communication skills. Although teacher feedback has been widely studied in the broader field of language acquisition (Karakaya, 2022), limited empirical attention has been given to its specific connection with speaking anxiety. Recent evidence suggests that learners' perceptions of feedback mediate its emotional and performance-related effects (Ebadijalal, 2023; Liu, 2025). Nevertheless, earlier investigations have tended to emphasize written feedback or overall proficiency rather than the emotional aspects of speaking performance.

To fill this research gap, the present study explores the relationship between teacher feedback and speaking anxiety among ESL learners, focusing on how different forms of feedback may reduce anxiety and strengthen public speaking ability. It also examines other mediating variables that may influence this relationship, with the aim of generating qualitative insights to assist teachers in creating more supportive and emotionally sensitive classroom settings.

This study employs a qualitative case study design, which is well suited to examining complex phenomena within authentic educational contexts. As Rezai et al (2025) explains, case studies allow researchers to view learners as multidimensional individuals shaped by their backgrounds, motivations, and learning experiences. In applied linguistics, such an approach is valuable for producing rich qualitative data and incorporating diverse perspectives (Haidir, et al, 2025). Through this method, the interaction between teacher feedback and students' emotional responses can be explored in greater depth over time.

Overall, this research seeks to investigate how teacher feedback can serve as an instructional strategy to reduce speaking anxiety in ESL classrooms. By utilizing a qualitative case study framework, the study aims to contribute to theoretical understandings of learner emotions as well as practical approaches to developing emotionally supportive feedback practices (Mercer, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety, as one of the most common phenomena, creates tremendous difficulties for ESL learners, as it obstructs their oral communication skills and consequently requires special attention. This study is based on a few fundamental theories that explain the relationship between teacher feedback and student anxiety. One major framework is Language Anxiety Theory, promoted by Horwitz et al. (1986), which divides language anxiety into three separate components: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. These intricacies can offer insight into what may cause learners to struggle with speaking tasks in classroom-based contexts, particularly in terms of oral presentations.

Moreover, besides Language Anxiety Theory, another essential pillar underpinning the present research is the Sociocultural Theory expressed by Vygotsky (1978). This theory highlights how teacher scaffolding can mitigate anxiety and proposes that teacher feedback serves as a mediational tool that reduces students' affective filters, thereby helping them

learn a language. Additionally, Krashen (1982) explains through his second hypothesis, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, that learners who feel low levels of stress and anxiety as a result of positive and constructive feedback will perform better in producing spoken language.

The idea of teacher feedback has changed over the years from basic error correction to one that is more multidimensional, addressing cognitive and affective needs. Feedback mechanisms in language learning should not only pull the user towards linguistic accuracy but should also take into account user comfort and mental health as eloquently pointed out by Johnson and Lee (2019). Such duality is in harmony with current pedagogical practices that are adapted to ensure that learning is centered around learners, with a focus on holistic skill development of learners. According to Fitriana and Gumartifa (2021), creating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom through good feedback also contributes to reduced speaking anxiety and increased confidence among students. Cumulatively, the theoretical insights gained in this section inform the basis for this study's investigation into feedback techniques designed to mitigate the effects of speaking anxiety in individual secondary school ESL learners. Historically, speaking anxiety has been studied from a variety of angles, starting with primarily individualistic psychological factors, but converting to larger social and contextual factors over time. It has been shown that teacher behavior, such as the kind and quality of feedback provided, can either increase or decrease students' anxiety levels (Young, 1991; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Supporting teacher feedback plays a key role in creating a positive learning environment, with sufficient evidence in the recent literature that highlight its role in lessening anxiety (Setiamunadi & Kurniawan, 2022; Ali & Walker, 2023).

Teacher Feedback in Language Learning

Teacher feedback is a fundamental component of language learning because it provides learners with information about their performance and guides their improvement (Brandmo C, 2025). In second language acquisition, feedback serves not only a cognitive function helping learners recognize linguistic errors and refine their language use but also an affective function that influences learners' emotional and psychological development. Recent perspectives emphasize that feedback should be understood as a multidimensional process that shapes both academic outcomes and learner well-being (Liu, 2022). Therefore, examining the types of feedback, its timing, and the manner in which it is delivered is essential for understanding its broader impact on learners' confidence and motivation.

One important dimension of teacher feedback is its type, particularly the distinction between positive and corrective feedback. Positive feedback refers to praise, encouragement, and reinforcement of correct language use. It highlights learners' strengths and progress, helping them develop a sense of competence. Research suggests that emotionally supportive practices, including positive feedback, enhance learners' well-being and classroom engagement (Mercer, 2025). In contrast, corrective feedback focuses on identifying errors and guiding learners toward more accurate language forms. While corrective feedback is necessary for linguistic development, its effectiveness depends on how it is delivered. Liu (2025) argues that corrective feedback promotes learning when it encourages learner engagement rather than discouragement. If delivered in a supportive and balanced way, corrective feedback can improve accuracy without lowering students' confidence.

In addition to type, the timing of feedback significantly affects its impact. Feedback can be provided immediately during speaking activities or delayed until after the task is completed. Immediate correction may help learners notice errors promptly, but it can also interrupt fluency and increase anxiety, especially in speaking contexts. Delayed feedback, on the other hand, allows learners to express their ideas fully before receiving suggestions for improvement, which may reduce performance pressure. Ebadijalal (2023) highlight that emotionally supportive teacher behaviors contribute to lower levels of foreign language anxiety, suggesting that feedback timing should consider learners' emotional comfort as well as linguistic needs.

The way feedback is delivered also plays a critical role. Feedback may be given publicly or privately, verbally or in written form, and in either a dialogic or one-way manner. Studies indicate that supportive oral feedback delivered with empathy and respect can significantly reduce speaking anxiety and enhance performance (Mubarok, 2025). When teachers adopt a dialogic approach encouraging students to reflect and respond feedback becomes a collaborative process rather than a judgmental evaluation. Such practices foster a psychologically safe learning environment in which learners feel comfortable taking risks in communication.

Teacher feedback is closely linked to learners' self-confidence. Confidence in language learning refers to students' belief in their ability to perform successfully in communicative tasks. Positive and constructive feedback reinforces this belief by acknowledging progress and effort. Mercer (2025) emphasizes that emotional well-being is strongly connected to language performance; learners who feel supported are more willing to participate actively. When feedback affirms students' competence while guiding improvement, it strengthens their self-efficacy and resilience.

Moreover, teacher feedback significantly influences learner motivation. Motivation determines the level of effort and persistence students invest in language learning. Feedback that provides clear guidance, recognizes achievement, and encourages autonomy can enhance intrinsic motivation. According to Salbas (2025), classroom emotional climate plays a vital role in shaping engagement and enjoyment. Supportive feedback contributes to a positive emotional climate, which in turn increases learners' willingness to communicate and participate in speaking activities.

Teacher feedback in language learning consists of interconnected components: type (positive and corrective), timing (immediate or delayed), and mode of delivery (supportive, dialogic, public or private). These components influence psychological factors such as confidence and motivation, which subsequently affect language performance. Therefore, effective teacher feedback should balance linguistic correction with emotional sensitivity to promote both academic achievement and learner well-being.

Relationship Between Feedback and Affective Factors

Teacher feedback is not only a cognitive instructional tool but also a significant affective influence that shapes learners' emotional experiences (Xu et al, 2024). Affective factors such as confidence, motivation, anxiety, and enjoyment play a central role in determining learners' engagement and performance. Contemporary research in second language acquisition (SLA) increasingly recognizes that emotional variables are not peripheral but integral to successful language development (Mercer, 2025). Therefore, understanding the relationship between feedback and affective factors is essential for explaining variations in learner outcomes.

From a socio-emotional perspective, feedback influences learners through both informational and relational dimensions. Informationally, feedback provides guidance about linguistic accuracy and performance gaps. Relationally, it communicates teachers' attitudes, expectations, and support toward learners. Liu (2023) argues that the effectiveness of corrective feedback depends largely on learner engagement, which includes emotional responses such as interest, frustration, or encouragement. When learners perceive feedback as constructive and supportive, it fosters positive emotions and strengthens their commitment to learning. Conversely, feedback perceived as overly critical or threatening may trigger negative affective reactions, including anxiety and avoidance.

One of the most studied affective variables in SLA is foreign language anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), language anxiety arises from fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. Teacher feedback plays a direct role in shaping this fear of evaluation. Supportive and empathetic feedback can reduce students' apprehension by creating a psychologically safe classroom environment. Wang et al. (2023) found that teacher emotional support significantly predicts lower levels of foreign language anxiety. This suggests that feedback practices embedded within emotionally supportive interactions can function as anxiety-regulating mechanisms.

In addition to anxiety, feedback strongly influences learners' self-confidence and self-efficacy. Confidence refers to learners' belief in their ability to perform language tasks successfully (Ghafar, 2023). Positive and balanced feedback reinforces learners' sense of competence, encouraging them to take communicative risks. Mercer (2023) highlights that emotional well-being and perceived competence are closely interconnected in language classrooms. When feedback acknowledges effort and improvement rather than focusing solely on errors, it strengthens learners' resilience and persistence.

Motivation is another critical affective factor shaped by teacher feedback. Motivation determines the intensity and duration of learners' engagement in language learning activities. Karimi (2025) emphasize that classroom emotional climate significantly influences learner enjoyment and engagement. Feedback that promotes encouragement, autonomy, and constructive guidance enhances intrinsic motivation. Feedback delivered in a discouraging or judgmental manner may undermine learners' willingness to participate, particularly in speaking tasks (Budayanti et al, 2023).

The perception of feedback mediates its affective impact. Learners do not respond to feedback objectively; rather, they interpret it through their personal beliefs, prior experiences, and emotional states. Liu (2023) suggests that students' emotional interpretations of teacher comments determine whether feedback is experienced as supportive guidance or as personal criticism. This indicates that affective responses to feedback are shaped not only by what teachers say but also by how learners perceive and internalize those messages.

The relationship between teacher feedback and affective factors can be conceptualized as dynamic and reciprocal. Feedback influences emotions such as anxiety, confidence, and motivation, while these emotions, in turn, shape how feedback is received and utilized. Effective feedback, therefore, must integrate cognitive clarity with emotional sensitivity. By balancing corrective guidance with encouragement and empathy, teachers can foster a positive emotional climate that enhances both psychological well-being and language achievement.

Materials and Method

Materials

This study involved 100 senior high school students enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in Sidoarjo, Indonesia, along with 20 English teachers. The student participants were second-year learners aged between 16 and 18 years old. They were recruited from two public high schools representing urban and semi-urban areas, enabling the study to reflect diverse socio-economic backgrounds and varying levels of English proficiency. The inclusion of a larger student population and multiple teachers strengthened the reliability of the findings and allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of how teacher feedback practices relate to speaking anxiety across different classroom contexts. The diversity of participants enriched the investigation by capturing a wider range of experiences, perceptions, and instructional approaches in speaking activities.

All participants regularly engaged in speaking-focused classroom activities, including oral presentations and group discussions, as part of their English curriculum. These activities provided authentic contexts in which teacher feedback naturally occurred. The English teachers involved in this study had more than five years of teaching experience. They implemented various feedback strategies during speaking activities, including praise, corrective feedback, and neutral evaluative comments. The classroom environment reflected the school's institutional emphasis on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes interaction, communicative competence, and constructive feedback practices.

Speaking anxiety was identified as a common phenomenon among participants, particularly due to fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation from peers or teachers. Therefore, this specific group provided an appropriate context for examining how teacher feedback may contribute to reducing speaking anxiety and strengthening oral communication skills.

Method

This research employed a qualitative case study design to explore the extent to which teacher feedback reduces speaking anxiety among senior high school ESL students. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain in-depth insight into students' emotional responses and perceptions of feedback within their natural classroom setting. Data were collected through three primary methods: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method. Individual interviews were conducted with ten selected ESL students and their English teacher to explore their perceptions of teacher feedback and its influence on speaking anxiety and confidence. The interview questions were open-ended and iterative to allow participants to share personal experiences. Example questions included: (a) "How do you feel when you receive feedback during speaking tasks?" (b) "What kind of feedback makes you feel more confident or anxious?" This approach enabled the researcher to gather detailed narratives while maintaining alignment with the research objectives.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted as a secondary data source to document real-time teacher-student interactions during speaking activities. The researcher attended a speaking-focused class twice a week for four weeks. An observation checklist was used to systematically record: (a) Type of feedback (e.g., praise, corrective feedback, neutral comments), (b) Tone and timing of feedback delivery, (c) Students' immediate reactions (e.g., increased confidence, hesitation, visible anxiety). These observations provided contextual support for the interview data and allowed triangulation across multiple sources.

Reflective Journals

Students were asked to write reflective journals for three weeks to document their emotional and cognitive responses to teacher feedback during speaking tasks. Guided prompts included: (a) "Describe the feedback you received today and how it made you feel." (b) "Did the feedback help or hinder your confidence in speaking today?" Reflective journals allowed participants to express their thoughts privately, offering deeper insight into how feedback influenced their emotions, confidence, and behavior over time.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and their parents or guardians. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. All data were anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and the researcher remained attentive to participants' emotional well-being during interviews and observations.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The analysis began with data familiarization, during which interview recordings were transcribed, and journal entries and observation notes were reviewed thoroughly. During the coding phase, recurring ideas, emotional expressions, and repeated phrases were identified and labeled. For example: (a) Statements such as "The feedback reduced my anxiety" were coded as confidence-building feedback. (b) Statements such as "I felt nervous after being corrected" were coded as anxiety-provoking feedback. These initial codes were grouped into broader themes, including: (a) Feedback that promotes confidence, (b) Anxiety induced by feedback, (c) The importance of positive reinforcement, (d) Perceptions of corrective feedback

Observational data were analyzed to identify patterns in feedback types and corresponding student reactions. The analysis focused on examining relationships between

specific feedback strategies and changes in students' confidence or anxiety during speaking activities.

To enhance validity, triangulation was applied by cross-checking findings from interviews, journals, and classroom observations. For instance, students' interview statements about reduced anxiety were verified through journal reflections and observable classroom behavior. Data were manually analyzed and organized using Microsoft Excel to assist in coding, sorting, and thematic categorization.

Results and Discussion

Results

Based on the thematic analysis, the results highlight how different types, timing, and delivery of teacher feedback influence students' confidence and levels of speaking anxiety.

Results

This study aims to explore the extent to which teacher feedback can reduce speaking anxiety in 100 ESL students in grade XI from two public high schools in Sidoarjo. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the framework of Braun & Clarke (2006). The results of the analysis produced four main themes that explain the relationship between teacher feedback and speaking anxiety in the observed classroom context.

Teacher Perceptions of Student Speaking Anxiety

According to Syahri & Susanti (2023), their study explores the teachers' attitudes regarding students' speaking anxiety in EFL classes and found that most of the teachers show a positive perception. The results suggested that teachers were not only aware of the challenges posed by speaking anxiety but also took steps to create a supportive learning environment in which student participation was encouraged. Interviews and observations revealed that teachers used a variety of techniques to establish a relaxed environment that helped reduce anxiety. "The teacher always tries to have a relaxed environment in class so we can speak without any fear that we will be judged," said one of the student participants. When producing oral communication, teachers also have an important role in reducing anxiety and increasing the likelihood of students engaging in speaking activities.

Psychological Issues Induced by Oral Corrective Feedback

On the other hand, the study done by Safa (2025) explored the psychological issues provoked by oral corrective feedback, underlining the intricacies of teacher-student relationships in the context of speaking exercises. Although corrective feedback is crucial in helping students recognize and correct their language errors, the findings suggested it could trigger negative psychological reactions in students. The most significant was the experience of low self-efficacy, feelings of anger, and increased concern for their performance, which many participants reported after receiving corrective feedback. One example was a student who said, "After having received feedback, I doubted myself more. I wonder if I'm really qualified to speak English (pic.twitter.com/nT3JCSG3oO). As one participant put it, "Corrective feedback makes me feel uncomfortable because I do not understand all things straight away. It lowers my confidence, too." These findings imply that, while feedback is important to the improvement process, it needs to be managed in such a way as not to compound students' anxiety.

Strategies Used by Students to Reduce Speaking Anxiety

The exploration of strategies employed by students to manage their speaking anxiety was further examined in Fitriana's (2023) study. The research identified several common techniques that students utilized to alleviate their anxiety during speaking tasks. These strategies included thorough preparation for presentations, relaxation techniques such as deep breathing exercises, positive thinking, seeking peer support, and maintaining control over body language. One participant noted, "Before presentations, we prepare thoroughly by

practicing our speeches several times. This helps calm down our nerves," highlighting the importance of preparation in building confidence. Another student remarked, "Relaxation techniques like deep breathing exercises help me stay composed during stressful situations." These findings underscore the proactive measures students take to manage their anxiety and indicate a need for teachers to support these strategies within the classroom.

Impact of Gender Differences on Speaking Anxiety

Additionally, the study by Al-Khresheh (2024) examined gender differences in speaking anxiety levels among pre-service English teachers. The findings revealed that female students tended to exhibit higher levels of anxiety compared to their male counterparts throughout their educational experiences. Data presented in Figure 1 from Al-Khresheh's study illustrated that female pre-service English teachers displayed moderate to high levels of anxiety across their semesters, whereas male teachers exhibited slightly lower levels of anxiety. This disparity suggests that gender may play a significant role in how students experience and cope with speaking anxiety, indicating a need for targeted interventions that consider these differences.

This study relates closely to the research questions defined at the beginning of the article. For one, they emphasize teachers' willingness to assist students in conquering speaking anxiety; the positive attitudes shown by teachers indicate that proactive strategies can effectively reduce student anxiety. Second, we argue that even if oral corrective feedback is critical for efficiency in language learning, the act of implementing it can be psychologically challenging for students who need careful navigation. The reactions of students showed a divergence between the well-documented desire to receive feedback on errors (specific, actionable insights), and the emotional response feedback evokes when it highlights a struggle, caveat or critical error. In addition, the finding of efficient strategies for alleviating speaking anxiety adds depth to our comprehension of how students cope with their fears in language learning situations. Preparation and relaxation are two techniques that empower students and indicate where teacher support can make a big difference. These findings have important implications for applied linguistics and language education in general. By stressing the impact of supportive teaching on classroom atmosphere and their concerns about undercutting learning through negative critique, they emphasize the balance that needs to be found between student confidence and pedagogical intervention (Shelke, 2025). In addition, considering gender differences in speaking anxiety emphasize the importance of teaching methods that are customized based on the needs of individual students. Utilizing analysis of these results that apply established theoretical models, like Horwitz Foreign Language Anxiety framework, allows teachers to adjust techniques and assist struggling speakers, as well as cultivate healthier learning environments in general. This study provides standards for how teacher feedback can be helpful in overcoming speaking anxiety, considered a major concern for learners in EFL contexts, leading to improvement in both teaching and student learning outcomes.

Discussion

The BEI article contributed some existing research concerning the role of teacher feedback in the alleviation of speaking anxiety. Similar to findings by Syahri and Susanti (2023), this study reinforces that teachers' positive attitudes are relevant for decreasing anxiety and creating a class atmosphere. Syahri and Susanti (2023) highlighted that it is imperative to create an environment for students where young men can participate freely without the fear of being mocked, which corresponds with our results that provide a non-threatening environment through constructive and empathetic feedback, which decreases the speaking anxiety from students. These results are also in line with the findings of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) framework on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which highlights the importance of teacher-student relationships in reducing anxiety and enabling students' participation.

On the other hand, Safa (2025) investigated the psychological impact of oral corrective feedback, pointing out that excessive correction can cause negative feelings, including low self-efficacy and anxiety. These are valid concerns, but our study shows that sensitivity and helpfulness can result in less, not more, anxiety regarding speaking. This distinction indicates that the way teachers deliver positive and negative feedback, as well as the tone in which they deliver it, is particularly important in shaping how students react to the feedback. In the same vein, the findings of this study additionally support Chen's (2025) feedback model that highlights a balance between corrective and love in feedback, thereby contributing to the existing literature on delivering effective feedback.

This study is very consistent with the findings of Fitriana (2023) on the strategies that students use to reduce speaking anxiety, like preparation and relaxation techniques. But where Fitriana looked more broadly at coping methods, our results give insights into how specific teacher feedback complements those coping insight strategies. For example, both teacher feedback in terms of positive reinforcement and concrete suggestions help to boost students' anxiety reduction methods. In addition, a similar effect was evident in regard to the role of gender differences as described by Al-Khresheh (2024). The results indicate that female students reported a higher level of anxiety than male students, which further demonstrates the importance of implementing gender-sensitive feedback practices. This extension of Al-Khresheh's work examines how different feedback strategies can mediate these gendered differences, leading to more equitable learning outcomes.

The theoretical implications of this study for applied linguistics are far-reaching in terms of the relationship between teacher feedback and speaking anxiety. The results confirm and broaden the findings of Horwitz et al. in the FLA framework (Dörnyei, 1986), by showing that certain feedback strategies affect both students' anxiety level and their willingness to engage in speaking tasks. Such findings reinforce the motivational framework proposed by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) and underline the importance of teachers' positive in-class behaviours (such as offering encouragement and constructive feedback) as an effort to boost students' confidence and increase their motivation for participating in oral communication.

Our results also augment Ali & Walker's (2023) feedback framework by underscoring the emotional undercurrents involved when feedback is offered. Positive reinforcement, as part of constructive feedback, also alleviates anxiety centered on linguistic accuracy and reinforces a growth mindset. This cognitive-behavioral approach emphasizes the role of emotional well-being in language acquisition through second language learning, underscoring the interrelation between language and experience. Second, this study contradicts the Interaction Hypothesis by evidencing that instead of using effective feedback only as a means of interaction, but also an effective way to lower emotional barriers in the acquisition and facilitating optimal conditions for language learning (Apriani et al., 2026; Astutiningtyas et al, 2024).

The implications are not just theoretical but practical as well, offering guidance to educators and curriculum designers who seek to promote improved student outcomes in language learning. Ideally, teachers would embrace approaches to feedback that are loving and supportive, that focus on strengthening progress rather than purely on where mistakes are being made. Feedback as such can be approached positively as long as delivered cautiously, with our upcoming lessons to bear in mind, students' emotional dispositions that have the potential to overwhelm and trigger anxiety, so that they can see getting corrected is just part of getting better at speaking. For example, starting with positive phrases that praise and affirm effort and acknowledging corrections that need to be made goes a long way to making students less fearful of making mistakes moving forward.

And one way to address this is through embedding additional teacher training models that focus on effective feedback skills into the curriculum. Such programs can include strategies for balancing corrective and supportive feedback, recognizing signs of speaking anxiety, and tailoring feedback to individual students' needs. Also, including step-by-step exposure to the speaking task, such as structured practice sessions followed by

personalized feedback sessions, would help students overcome their nerves gradually. Teachers must be aware of gender differences and modify their feedback accordingly so that female students, who may be more anxious, feel included and treated equally. Digital methods for delivering feedback also hold great potential. Technology-enabled feedback using recorded comments, for example, or interactive platforms enables students to receive detailed, accessible input, without the pressure of immediate public correction. Using such tools, educators can foster a safe and stress-free environment for learning.

Conclusion

This case study concludes that teacher feedback plays a crucial role in reducing speaking anxiety among senior high-school ESL learners. Supportive, empathetic, and constructive feedback was found to lower students' anxiety levels, increase their confidence, and encourage active participation in speaking activities. In contrast, harsh or overly critical feedback tended to trigger negative emotional responses and heightened anxiety. The findings also indicate that a positive classroom atmosphere, supported by respectful teacher-student interaction, enables learners to engage in speaking tasks without fear of judgment. Furthermore, balancing corrective and supportive feedback, while being sensitive to individual and gender differences, can enhance students' willingness to communicate. Overall, the study demonstrates that teacher feedback functions not only as a pedagogical tool but also as an affective support that directly influences students' emotional readiness to speak in a second language.

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