



The Impact of English Teachers' Feedback Style on Students' Speaking Confidence at Smp Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu

Lela Agustina^{1*}, Handri Pabrina¹, Anisa Alawiyyah¹

¹ English Education Program, STKIP Bina Mutiara Sukabumi

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Correspondence:

Lela Agustina

Phone: +6281261372729

Abstract: Speaking confidence remains a persistent challenge in EFL classrooms, as many students remain reluctant to communicate orally despite the growing demand for English communication skills in the twenty-first century. Students' fear of making mistakes and receiving negative evaluation often limits their participation in speaking activities, underscoring the need to examine the role of teacher feedback in shaping learners' confidence. This study aimed to investigate the characteristics of teacher feedback styles and to explore students' perceptions of how feedback influences their speaking confidence. A qualitative comparative case study design was employed, involving two English teachers and students from Grade VII and Grade VIII at a junior high school. Data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The findings revealed four major feedback types: corrective, epistemic, suggestive, and combined feedback. Corrective feedback was the most frequently used type overall, whereas supportive feedback practices were more evident in Grade VIII classrooms. Five themes describing students' speaking confidence also emerged: Anxiety-Driven Silence, Authoritative Feedback as Confidence Suppressant, Supportive Feedback as Confidence Catalyst, Recast and Epistemic Feedback as Preferred Intervention, and Teacher as Architect of Speaking Confidence. Students who received supportive feedback demonstrated greater willingness to communicate, more active participation, and higher confidence in speaking English. These findings imply that effective feedback should balance linguistic accuracy with emotional support to foster both speaking development and confidence. The study was limited to a single school context involving two teachers, which constrains the transferability of the findings to other educational settings.

Keywords: Teacher Feedback Style; Speaking Confidence; Corrective Feedback; Foreign Language Anxiety; Willingness to Communicate

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Introduction

The ideal condition in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning is one in which students achieve communicative competence that allows them to express ideas spontaneously, fluently, and appropriately across social contexts. Hymes (1972) argues that speaking ability is not limited to grammatical mastery but also encompasses sociolinguistic competence, that is, understanding

when, where, and to whom an utterance is directed. Beyond linguistic mastery, an ideal speaking environment also requires high psychological readiness, known as Willingness to Communicate (WTC); MacIntyre et al. (1998) contend that the primary goal of second language instruction should be to produce learners who are prepared to initiate communication whenever the opportunity arises, within a classroom that minimizes affective barriers so that students can use

English as an active communicative tool rather than merely an object of study.

In reality, however, many EFL students face significant obstacles in achieving speaking fluency. Rao (2020) notes that curricula in many Asian countries, including Indonesia, tend to emphasize grammar and vocabulary for written examinations, leaving productive skills such as speaking comparatively neglected. Compounded by limited exposure to English outside school hours, students frequently experience what Thornbury (2005) calls a "processing blackout", a breakdown that occurs when they are required to produce language orally under real-time constraints despite possessing adequate passive knowledge of the rules.

At SMP Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu specifically, preliminary observations revealed complex psychological barriers among students, including a high level of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), operationalized by Horwitz et al. (1986) as encompassing fear of negative evaluation from both teachers and peers. Within this cultural setting, even minor pronunciation errors tend to trigger a sense of shame (*malu*), leading students to remain silent rather than risk making a mistake. This condition is compounded by low self-efficacy regarding students' own speaking abilities, consistent with Bandura's (1977) view that belief in one's own capability is central to successful task performance, and with Krashen's (1982) notion of the affective filter, whereby a stressed psychological state prevents comprehensible input from being converted into acquisition.

Within this context, teacher feedback style emerges as a key variable capable of raising or lowering student confidence. Schwarz (2015) emphasizes that the manner in which teachers deliver corrections, whether epistemic (triggering reflection) or corrective (directly fixing errors), carries markedly different emotional consequences for students. Feedback delivered supportively can function as "verbal persuasion" that strengthens self-efficacy, whereas overly judgmental feedback can intensify anxiety and silence student participation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This phenomenon is particularly salient at SMP Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu, where two English teachers within the same institution, curriculum, and student community apply strikingly contrasting feedback styles: a firm, authoritative style in Grade VII, and a relaxed, supportive style in Grade VIII. This naturally occurring contrast offers a valuable analytical opportunity to compare the psychological consequences of the two approaches while holding institutional and curricular variables constant.

A comparative case study design (Yin, 2018) is particularly well suited to dissecting this phenomenon,

as it allows an in-depth exploration of complex cause-and-effect relationships within real classroom life. Based on the background above, this study addresses two research questions: (1) What are the characteristics of the feedback styles applied by the English teachers in Grade VII and Grade VIII at SMP Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu during classroom speaking activities? and (2) How do students feel about their speaking confidence in relation to the feedback they receive from their teachers? Accordingly, this study aims to analyze and describe the characteristics of the feedback styles used by both teachers, to compare the impact of these contrasting styles on students' speaking confidence, and to examine students' psychological perceptions of and affective responses to their teachers' feedback. Theoretically, the study is expected to enrich the literature on educational psychology and second language acquisition by contributing a comparative dimension to feedback theory that remains underexplored in the Indonesian EFL context. Practically, the findings are intended to benefit teachers as a reflective tool, students as a means of understanding the developmental function of feedback, school leadership as evidence-based input for policy, and future researchers as a comparative framework for further inquiry.

Method

This study employed a qualitative design with a comparative case study approach, chosen because it seeks to explore a complex social phenomenon in depth within its natural context, without manipulating variables or quantifying data statistically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The comparative case study approach was specifically applied to compare two contrasting feedback styles within clear systemic boundaries, allowing the researcher to track processes at the teacher, student, and classroom level and to identify patterns that might otherwise be overlooked in a single-case design (Yin, 2018; Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

The research was conducted at SMP Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu, Sukabumi Regency, West Java, selected through purposive sampling because the school naturally presents a comparative phenomenon: two English teachers instructing at different grade levels within the same institution, curriculum, and student community apply fundamentally contrasting feedback styles. Participants comprised two English teachers and ten students (S1-S10) from Grade VII and Grade VIII. The study was conducted over approximately five months (February-June 2026), encompassing preparation and licensing, intensive field data collection, data analysis, and final report drafting.

Three primary instruments were employed, all developed with reference to Schwarz's (2015) feedback

theory. A classroom observation checklist, using a dichotomous "Yes/No" format, systematically recorded the occurrence of the four feedback types together with students' immediate affective responses. Semi-structured interview protocols for students explored their subjective perceptions of the feedback they received, while a parallel protocol for teachers elicited the pedagogical rationale behind their chosen feedback approach, serving as a triangulation tool. Audio recordings and supporting documents, such as lesson plans and assessment records, were additionally collected to verify observational and interview data.

Data were collected through methodological triangulation combining non-participant classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Cross-case comparison was conducted at the thematic analysis stage by systematically comparing themes and supporting evidence between Grade VII and Grade VIII.

Trustworthiness was ensured following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria: credibility through prolonged engagement and member checking, transferability through thick description of the research context, dependability through detailed documentation of procedures, and confirmability through reflexive journaling and an audit trail.

Result and Discussion

Characteristics of Teacher Feedback Style

Classroom observations revealed that both teachers employed the same four feedback types throughout their speaking lessons, corrective, epistemic, suggestive, and combined feedback, but differed markedly in frequency, purpose, and delivery. Teacher 1 (Grade VII) predominantly relied on feedback aimed at immediate error correction and improved linguistic accuracy, whereas Teacher 2 (Grade VIII) adopted a more supportive and reflective approach that encouraged students to identify and correct their own mistakes. A summary of these characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Teacher Feedback Style

Feedback Type	Key Sub-Themes	Frequency	Primary Data Source
Corrective Feedback	Direct correction of grammatical errors; tense consistency; subject-verb agreement; article usage; irregular verbs	Most frequent	Classroom observations, teacher-student interactions, interviews
Epistemic Feedback	Recall of previously learned rules; reflective questioning; self-correction through guided questions	Moderate	Classroom observations, teacher-student interactions
Suggestive Feedback	Hints and clues; scaffolding techniques; guided discovery of the correct form	Moderate	Classroom observations, teacher-student interactions
Combined Feedback	Integration of epistemic and suggestive strategies with positive reinforcement; more dominant in Teacher 2's class	Frequent (especially Teacher 2)	Classroom observations, teacher-student interactions, interviews

Corrective feedback emerged as the most frequently used type in both classrooms. Teacher 1 tended to provide immediate and direct correction for instance, interrupting a student mid-sentence to fix a tense error without further explanation, while Teacher 2 typically accompanied correction with additional explanation or encouragement, such that correction functioned simultaneously as accuracy work and as motivational support. Overall, corrective feedback constituted the most dominant characteristic of Teacher

1's instruction, whereas Teacher 2 more frequently combined correction with strategies that allowed students the opportunity to reflect and self-correct first.

Epistemic feedback was observed in both classrooms but was applied with substantially greater consistency and depth by Teacher 2. Teacher 1 generally used epistemic questions such as prompting a student to recall a grammatical rule only as a transitional step before delivering a direct correction, whereas Teacher 2 embedded reflective questioning, for example asking

whether an event described was a routine or something that had already occurred, throughout all stages of the lesson to build a self-correction process and increase student engagement.

Suggestive feedback, delivered in the form of hints or partial clues, was used by both teachers but was significantly more dominant in Teacher 2's practice. Teacher 2 consistently offered pattern-based cues, for example drawing an analogy between familiar irregular verbs to help a student infer an unfamiliar past-tense form, which helped students discover the correct answer independently while maintaining the flow of communication. In Teacher 1's classroom, suggestive techniques appeared only intermittently and were generally embedded within an otherwise corrective pattern, functioning as an initial step before direct correction rather than as a primary strategy. Combined feedback was the most prominent and distinctive characteristic of Teacher 2's classroom. The teacher

consistently opened feedback interactions with positive reinforcement, transitioned into a suggestive prompt, and followed successful self-correction with an epistemic explanation and praise, a sequence that simultaneously delivered correction, cognitive scaffolding, and emotional reinforcement within a single interaction. While combined feedback was also present in Teacher 1's instruction, its application remained more limited and typically centered on direct error correction rather than on this fuller integrative sequence.

Students' Perceptions of Speaking Confidence

Interview data from Grade VII and Grade VIII students revealed that teacher feedback played a significant role in shaping students' confidence when speaking English. Through coding and thematic analysis, five major themes were generated, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes Describing Students' Speaking Confidence

Overarching Theme	Key Sub-Themes	Frequency	Data Source
Anxiety-Driven Silence	Fear of making mistakes; fear of public correction; reluctance to participate; avoidance of speaking	High	Student interviews
Authoritative Feedback as Confidence Suppressant	Direct correction perceived as intimidating; concern about negative evaluation; heightened self-consciousness	Moderate	Interviews & observations
Supportive Feedback as Confidence Catalyst	Teacher encouragement; positive reinforcement; feeling appreciated; increased willingness to speak	High	Interviews & observations
Recast and Epistemic Feedback as Preferred Intervention	Preference for guided correction; opportunities for self-correction; reflective questioning; reduced anxiety	Moderate	Interviews & observations
Teacher as Architect of Speaking Confidence	Teacher support; classroom climate; confidence building; teacher belief in students	High	Interviews & observations

Anxiety-Driven Silence was predominantly identified among Grade VII students (S1-S5), who reported physical symptoms of nervousness and cognitive blanking rooted in fear of making mistakes and being corrected in front of classmates. One student explained that they "suddenly forget what I want to say because I am afraid of making mistakes," while another admitted to choosing to "stay quiet because I don't want to make mistakes." These accounts align closely with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) construct of Foreign Language Anxiety and with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, whereby emotional barriers prevent

language output even when grammatical knowledge is already present.

Authoritative Feedback as Confidence Suppressant captures the specific mechanism through which corrective dominance translated into reduced self-efficacy in Grade VII. Students reported redirecting their cognitive focus from communicating their message toward avoiding errors, precisely the phenomenon Tsui (1996) identifies as a barrier to oral participation. The near-total absence of praise reported by Grade VII students is theoretically significant in light of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy framework, in which verbal

persuasion constitutes one of the most potent and accessible sources of learner confidence; without it, students had little relational evidence that their communicative efforts were valued.

Supportive Feedback as Confidence Catalyst, by contrast, describes the affective climate of Grade VIII, where consistent encouragement, praise, and emotionally safe correction produced exactly the conditions Bandura (1977) identifies as necessary for self-efficacy development. One student stated, "I become braver to speak because I know mistakes are part of learning," while another reported feeling happy at being able to correct their own mistakes, an experience reflecting what Bandura terms a mastery experience, the strongest source of self-efficacy.

Recast and Epistemic Feedback as Preferred Intervention emerged across all ten participants regardless of classroom context, making it the most cross-cutting finding of the study. Even Grade VII students who had rarely experienced indirect feedback expressed a consistent preference for correction delivered through hints and reflective questions rather than explicit error statements; one student remarked, "give a hint first, not directly say it is wrong," while another expressed a wish to be corrected quietly rather than "humiliated." This universal preference, found among students whose actual classroom experiences differed radically, aligns with Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis and reveals a meaningful pedagogical misalignment in Grade VII between the feedback students needed and the feedback they actually received.

Teacher as Architect of Speaking Confidence synthesizes the preceding themes into the conclusion that teacher feedback functions as the primary environmental force shaping students' identities as English speakers. Grade VIII students recalled specific moments in which their teacher engineered conditions for success through well-timed praise and consistent emotional encouragement, whereas Grade VII students could not recall a single moment of genuine speaking confidence in their classroom. This stark contrast between two groups of students situated within the same school, curriculum, and socioeconomic community constitutes the most compelling evidence produced by this study: that teacher feedback style is the primary architect of speaking confidence in the EFL classroom, a conclusion consistent with MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) view that the affective quality of teacher interaction is a stronger predictor of oral participation than learners' underlying linguistic competence.

Taken together, these findings indicate that teacher feedback cannot be regarded merely as a tool for linguistic evaluation; it is also a psychological event that shapes students' affective experience of learning to

speak. Teacher 1's corrective feedback aligned with seven of Schwarz's (2015) eight defining characteristics of corrective feedback, including immediate accuracy, explicit intervention, and linguistic authority, yet the eighth characteristic, that corrections must be delivered with warmth and affective sensitivity to minimize Foreign Language Anxiety, was largely absent. This absence helps explain why corrective feedback in Grade VII contributed to heightened anxiety rather than supportive language development, a pattern consistent with Fitriani (2023) and with Nugroho and Rekha (2020).

Conversely, the prevalence of epistemic, suggestive, and combined feedback in Teacher 2's classroom aligns closely with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) principle that the most effective feedback operates simultaneously at the task and process level. Teacher 2's characteristic sequence, opening with positive reinforcement, proceeding through a suggestive prompt, and closing with epistemic explanation and praise, exemplifies Schwarz's (2015) dual anxiety-reduction property of combined feedback, whereby both the social threat of direct correction and the cognitive confusion of unexplained correction are simultaneously addressed.

These findings also extend Schwarz's framework by demonstrating that the effectiveness of suggestive feedback is not solely a function of the technique itself but is mediated by the broader affective climate of the classroom: in an environment where corrective dominance has already elevated student anxiety, even a well-constructed suggestive cue may be received with apprehension rather than as a collaborative invitation. Finally, the universal student preference for recast and epistemic feedback, evident even among students who rarely experienced it, suggests that the psychological need for dignity in the correction process is a consistent feature of the learner experience regardless of the particular classroom context, reinforcing the conclusion that speaking confidence is a dynamic psychological state actively constructed or dismantled through teachers' everyday feedback decisions rather than a fixed personal trait.

Conclusion

This study concludes that both English teachers at SMP Mutiara Terpadu Palabuhanratu employed the same four types of feedback, corrective, epistemic, suggestive, and combined, but differed substantially in the frequency and manner of delivery. Teacher 1 in Grade VII tended toward direct, corrective feedback that emphasized linguistic accuracy, while Teacher 2 in Grade VIII more frequently integrated supportive elements such as hints, reflective questions, and encouragement, producing distinct classroom interaction patterns and feedback cultures. Regarding

students' perceptions, Grade VII students generally associated direct correction with anxiety, fear of mistakes, and reduced participation, whereas Grade VIII students perceived supportive feedback as guidance that increased confidence, encouraged self-correction, and promoted active participation. Overall, the study demonstrates that teacher feedback influences not only students' linguistic development but also their confidence and willingness to communicate in English, and that supportive feedback balancing correction with encouragement fosters a more positive learning environment for speaking development.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations are offered. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own feedback styles, to prioritize combined feedback as their primary corrective strategy, to use suggestive and epistemic feedback more deliberately through guiding questions, to remain mindful of the affective dimension of feedback delivery, particularly tone and the public nature of correction, and to consistently balance correction with positive reinforcement so that errors are normalized as a natural part of learning. School administrators are encouraged to develop structured professional development programs on feedback literacy, to establish a shared minimum standard of affectively sensitive feedback across grade levels, and to institutionalize peer observation programs. Students are encouraged to adopt a growth mindset toward errors, to take a more active role in seeking feedback, and to engage in supplemental speaking practice outside the classroom. Future researchers are encouraged to extend this study to a larger and more diverse sample of schools, to adopt a longitudinal design to examine the long-term effects of feedback style, to incorporate quantitative instruments such as speaking-confidence scales or Willingness to Communicate questionnaires, and to further explore how cultural factors such as the concept of malu and hierarchical teacher-student relationships mediate the impact of feedback style on speaking behavior.

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