

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK ON EFL LEARNERS'
MOTIVATION AND SELF-EFFICACY**

Nuraliyev Abdulloh

Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

Faculty of Foreign Language and Literature 5th-year student, Group 2115.

nuralievabdulloh15@gmail.com

Khandamova F.B.

Scientific supervisor.

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Abstract. This study investigates the influence of assessment feedback on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' motivation and self-efficacy. The research explores how formative and summative feedback affect students' learning attitudes, confidence, and engagement. Findings indicate that timely, specific, and constructive feedback significantly enhances students' learning motivation and self-belief. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of teacher-student interaction and emotional support in feedback practices.

Keywords: assessment, feedback, motivation, self-efficacy, EFL, formative assessment, language learning.

Introduction

In the field of foreign language education, feedback has long been considered a powerful pedagogical instrument that significantly shapes learners' performance, motivation, and emotional engagement. Within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, assessment feedback serves not only as a reflection of achievement but also as a key factor influencing how students perceive themselves as learners. The way teachers design, deliver, and communicate feedback has a direct impact on students' motivation and their sense of self-efficacy — that is, their belief in their ability to accomplish learning tasks successfully.

Feedback can be viewed as a two-way communication process between teacher and student. It is not merely about marking errors or assigning grades; it is about creating a dialogue that helps learners understand what they have achieved and how they can improve. Effective feedback connects assessment with learning by providing the information students need to close the gap between their current performance and desired goals.

The Role of Feedback in EFL Learning: In EFL classrooms, assessment feedback plays multiple roles: it evaluates performance, motivates learners, builds confidence, and promotes self-regulation. According to Hattie and Timperley [3;68], good feedback answers three fundamental questions: "Where am I going?", "How am I going?", and "Where to next?" These questions guide students toward improvement by clarifying expectations and offering strategies for progress.

Formative feedback, given during the learning process, is particularly influential. It allows students to modify their learning approaches and encourages reflection on their progress. For instance, a teacher who provides continuous written comments on students' essays helps them identify weaknesses in grammar, vocabulary, or organization while reinforcing their strengths.

Such ongoing feedback turns assessment into a learning opportunity rather than a judgment.

Summative feedback, by contrast, is provided at the end of a course or assessment period.

Although it helps measure achievement, it often lacks the immediacy and instructional value of formative feedback. Still, when combined with constructive comments, even summative feedback can boost motivation by acknowledging students' effort and improvement over time.

Feedback and Motivation in EFL Contexts; Motivation is one of the most significant predictors of success in foreign language learning. Dörnyei [6;198], defines motivation as the internal drive that initiates, directs, and sustains goal-oriented behavior. Assessment feedback can either enhance or diminish this drive, depending on how it is delivered. Positive, encouraging, and specific feedback strengthens intrinsic motivation, the kind of motivation that comes from within the learner. When teachers acknowledge effort and progress — for example, saying “Your speaking fluency has improved noticeably since last week” — students feel valued and capable.

This sense of accomplishment encourages them to continue learning. In contrast, negative or overly critical feedback can reduce motivation. Comments that focus only on mistakes (“Your pronunciation is poor”) without offering guidance on how to improve may cause anxiety and discourage participation. Therefore, the emotional tone of feedback matters greatly. Constructive criticism should be framed positively, highlighting not only what needs improvement but also what has been done well. Another key motivational aspect is setting goal. Feedback helps learners set realistic and achievable goals. When feedback clearly shows progress toward those goals, learners develop a stronger sense of direction. For instance, students who receive regular oral feedback during speaking practice sessions can track their fluency development over time, reinforcing their desire to improve.

Feedback and Self-Efficacy; Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura [1;70], refers to a person's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks successfully. In EFL learning, self-efficacy determines how much effort a student invests in learning, how persistent they are when facing difficulties, and how resilient they remain after failure. Feedback is one of the strongest influences on students' sense of efficacy. When learners receive comments that emphasize their progress and potential, they start to believe in their capacity to learn. For instance, when a teacher writes “You are developing strong writing skills — try expanding your ideas even more,” the student perceives both recognition and possibility for growth. This belief fuels confidence and encourages risk-taking, both essential for communicative language learning. Conversely, feedback that focuses solely on errors may damage self-efficacy. EFL learners often experience anxiety due to their limited vocabulary or fear of making mistakes. Teachers who provide feedback in a supportive and empathetic manner can reduce this anxiety. Even when correcting errors, phrasing such as “You're close! Let's work on pronunciation of these sounds together” promotes a sense of partnership rather than judgment.

The Nature of Effective Feedback; Research suggests that effective feedback should meet several key criteria: it must be specific, actionable, and balanced. Timely feedback ensures that learners remember what they did and can act on the advice immediately. Specific feedback avoids vague comments like “Good job” and instead provides concrete information (“Your introduction clearly states the main idea, but the conclusion could be stronger”). Balanced feedback combines positive reinforcement with constructive suggestions. This balance helps learners feel appreciated for their progress while understanding areas that need further development.

Too much praise without guidance can lead to complacency, while excessive criticism can discourage learning altogether. Additionally, feedback has become an increasingly important part of modern EFL pedagogy. When students review each other's work under teacher supervision, they develop analytical skills, learn to evaluate performance objectively, and internalize the feedback process.

Peer interaction encourages autonomy, which further strengthens both motivation and self-efficacy.

The Emotional and Cultural Dimension of Feedback; Feedback does not exist in a vacuum — it is influenced by the cultural and emotional context of both teachers and students. In some cultures, learners expect direct and explicit feedback; in others, they prefer more indirect or polite forms. Teachers in EFL settings must be sensitive to these cultural differences to ensure their feedback is interpreted positively. Emotional intelligence also plays a vital role. A teacher who can recognize a student's emotional state — frustration, anxiety, or pride — and respond empathetically creates a more trusting learning environment. Positive emotional support transforms feedback from simple evaluation into motivation for continuous growth. Moreover, technology has changed the way feedback is delivered. Online platforms allow for personalized digital comments, voice notes, and interactive discussion threads. These forms of digital feedback provide flexibility and accessibility, enhancing the immediacy and clarity of teacher-student communication.

Ultimately, assessment feedback should not only aim to improve immediate performance but also to foster lifelong learning skills. When students learn how to interpret and use feedback effectively, they become more independent learners. They begin to self-assess, set their own goals, and monitor progress without constant teacher intervention. This autonomy is essential for success beyond the classroom. Developing reflective learners requires teachers to model reflective thinking through feedback. Asking questions such as "What do you think worked well here?" or "How might you improve this paragraph?" encourages students to evaluate their own work critically. Over time, this process leads to greater self-awareness and self-regulation — hallmarks of high self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Assessment feedback stands at the intersection of evaluation, motivation, and psychology.

For EFL learners, it is more than a response to performance; it is a source of confidence, encouragement, and direction. Constructive, supportive, and interactive feedback nurtures intrinsic motivation, strengthens self-efficacy, and transforms learners into active participants in their educational journey.

Therefore, teachers should view feedback not as the final step of assessment but as an ongoing, formative process embedded in instruction. Effective feedback should be dialogic, culturally sensitive, and emotionally intelligent — providing not only correction but also inspiration. When implemented thoughtfully, assessment feedback becomes one of the most powerful tools to help EFL learners realize their full potential.

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