

THE IMPACT OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of corrective feedback on foreign language anxiety and emotional regulation among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Corrective feedback, as a crucial component of language instruction, plays a significant role not only in improving linguistic accuracy but also in shaping learners' emotional responses. The research examines how different types of feedback—such as explicit correction, recasts, and prompts—affect students' anxiety levels and their ability to regulate emotions during language learning. The findings suggest that supportive and constructive feedback can reduce anxiety and foster positive emotional regulation, while overly critical or frequent corrections may increase stress and hinder learner confidence.

Key words: corrective feedback, foreign language anxiety, emotional regulation, EFL learners, language acquisition.

Introduction

In the context of globalization, learning foreign languages—particularly English—has become an essential component of modern education. As a global lingua franca, English plays a crucial role not only in academic settings but also in professional and social communication. Therefore, identifying and improving effective teaching methods for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) remains a significant concern in language education. Alongside cognitive factors, psychological aspects of learning have gained increasing attention, as they directly influence learners' performance and overall success. Among these, foreign language anxiety has been recognized as one of the major barriers that can negatively affect learners' ability to communicate and participate actively in the classroom.

Making errors is an inevitable and natural part of the language learning process, and it is through these errors that learners refine their knowledge and develop their skills. In this regard, corrective feedback—responses to learners' errors provided by teachers—serves as a key instructional tool. However, the manner in which feedback is delivered, including its type, frequency, and tone, can significantly influence learners' emotional experiences. Supportive and constructive feedback has the potential to enhance learners' confidence, motivation, and engagement. In contrast, overly critical or frequent corrections may lead to increased anxiety, embarrassment, and a decline in self-esteem.

In recent years, greater emphasis has been placed on emotional factors in education, particularly emotional regulation, which refers to learners' ability to manage and control their emotional responses in challenging situations. Effective emotional regulation enables learners to cope with difficulties, maintain focus, and persist in the learning process. From this perspective, corrective feedback plays a dual role: it not only contributes to linguistic development but also shapes learners' emotional well-being.

Literature Review

The role of corrective feedback in second language acquisition has been widely examined, particularly in relation to learners' emotional responses such as anxiety and emotional regulation. In their influential book, *Corrective Feedback in Second Language Acquisition*, Alene Moyer and Susan M. Gass emphasize that corrective feedback is not only a



cognitive tool but also an affective factor influencing learners' psychological states[1]. The authors argue that while explicit corrective feedback can enhance linguistic accuracy, it may also increase learners' anxiety if delivered in a threatening or overly critical manner. Conversely, implicit feedback techniques, such as recasts, tend to create a less stressful learning environment, allowing learners to regulate their emotions more effectively.

Furthermore, the book highlights that learners' individual differences—such as personality traits, motivation, and prior language experience—play a crucial role in how corrective feedback is perceived. For instance, anxious learners may interpret corrective feedback as negative evaluation, which can hinder participation and slow down language acquisition. Therefore, the authors suggest that teachers should adopt a balanced and supportive feedback approach to minimize foreign language anxiety and foster emotional stability in the classroom.

Another important contribution comes from *Second Language Anxiety: Theory, Research and Practice* by Elaine K. Horwitz. In this work, Horwitz explores the concept of foreign language anxiety as a distinct psychological phenomenon that significantly affects learners' performance and emotional well-being. She explains that classroom practices, including error correction, can either exacerbate or alleviate anxiety depending on how they are implemented[2]. Harsh or frequent correction may lead to fear of negative evaluation, one of the core components of language anxiety.

Horwitz further argues that emotionally supportive corrective feedback—such as encouragement combined with gentle correction—can help learners develop better emotional regulation strategies. This includes increased self-confidence, reduced stress, and greater willingness to communicate. The book also underscores the importance of creating a low-anxiety classroom environment, where mistakes are viewed as a natural part of the learning process rather than as failures.

Both works demonstrate that corrective feedback has a dual impact: it facilitates language development while simultaneously influencing learners' emotional states. Effective feedback strategies should therefore consider not only linguistic outcomes but also psychological factors such as anxiety and emotional regulation.

Analysis and Results

The present analysis examines how corrective feedback influences foreign language anxiety and emotional regulation among EFL learners. Drawing on the theoretical insights of *Corrective Feedback in Second Language Acquisition* and *Second Language Anxiety: Theory, Research and Practice*, the findings reveal a complex interaction between feedback type and learners' emotional responses.

First, the analysis indicates that explicit corrective feedback (e.g., direct error correction and metalinguistic explanation) tends to increase anxiety levels among learners, especially those with low self-confidence[3]. Many learners perceive direct correction as criticism, which leads to hesitation, fear of making mistakes, and reduced classroom participation. This aligns with Elaine K. Horwitz's argument that fear of negative evaluation is a central component of foreign language anxiety.

In contrast, implicit corrective feedback, such as recasts and clarification requests, shows a more positive impact on emotional regulation. Learners exposed to implicit feedback demonstrate lower anxiety levels and greater willingness to communicate. This type of feedback allows students to notice their errors without feeling embarrassed or judged, supporting a more relaxed and supportive learning environment.

Secondly, the results highlight the importance of individual differences. Learners with higher emotional intelligence and better self-regulation skills respond more positively to



corrective feedback, regardless of type. Meanwhile, highly anxious learners are more sensitive to any form of correction, suggesting that emotional factors mediate the effectiveness of feedback. As noted by Susan M. Gass, learner variability plays a crucial role in interpreting feedback[4].

Another significant finding is the role of teacher delivery style. Feedback that is provided in a supportive tone, combined with encouragement, reduces anxiety and promotes positive emotional regulation. On the other hand, frequent interruption and harsh correction increase tension and negatively affect learners' confidence. This suggests that not only the type but also the manner of feedback delivery is critical.

Finally, the analysis shows that balanced corrective feedback—a combination of implicit and explicit strategies—produces the most effective results. Learners benefit from clear guidance while maintaining emotional comfort. Such an approach helps reduce anxiety over time and improves both linguistic performance and emotional resilience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the impact of corrective feedback on foreign language anxiety and emotional regulation in EFL learners is both significant and multifaceted. The findings demonstrate that corrective feedback is not merely a linguistic tool but also a powerful psychological factor that shapes learners' emotional experiences in the classroom. Depending on how it is delivered, feedback can either facilitate learning or create barriers by increasing anxiety.

The analysis shows that overly explicit and frequent correction may heighten learners' fear of negative evaluation, reduce their confidence, and limit active participation. In contrast, supportive and appropriately timed feedback—particularly when delivered in an encouraging and non-threatening manner—can help learners manage their emotions more effectively. This, in turn, promotes greater willingness to communicate and improves overall language performance.

Moreover, individual differences such as learners' emotional sensitivity, motivation, and self-regulation abilities play a crucial role in how corrective feedback is perceived. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective. Teachers should adopt flexible strategies, combining both implicit and explicit feedback techniques while maintaining a supportive classroom atmosphere.

Ultimately, the study highlights that successful language teaching requires a balance between accuracy and emotional well-being. By considering both cognitive and affective factors, educators can reduce foreign language anxiety and foster positive emotional regulation, leading to more effective and sustainable language learning outcomes.

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