

A Review of Research on Secondary School English Teachers' Classroom Feedback

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Feedback in the classroom is an important aspect of secondary English teaching that influences language acquisition and classroom involvement. The thematic review covers three of them: What has already been done, what are the constraints, and where to go next. There have been rich findings in the field on the theoretical background, classification features, and effectiveness conditions, but there are still gaps in balancing cognitive and affective processes, theoretical and practical, and long-term impact. The upcoming research should be on real classroom dynamics, how students mentally process feedback, and the application of longitudinal designs and new technologies.

Keywords: secondary school English, classroom feedback, teacher discourse, review

Introduction

Feedback in the classroom means that teachers respond to student answers or views. Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe it as feedback given by another person about some elements of one's performance or knowledge. It is one of the most potent influences on learning (effect size = 0.79), but its effectiveness is heavily influenced by how it is delivered. The secondary level students develop a fast rate of language acquisition and increased self-consciousness. Feedback can be supportive to both cognitive and affective development when employed properly, but when applied improperly, it could cause anxiety. Researchers are inclined to follow an internal versus external dichotomy which threatens to divide the research environment. This paper is based on the thematic review method and gives a systematic overview of the following dimensions.

Theoretical Basis and Classification of Types

Theoretical Basis

Feedback research has undergone three stages of evolution. Behaviorism viewed feedback as reinforcement which reinforced language habits by way of confirmation and correction, yet disregarded the role of the learner in feedback. The theory of cognitive interaction highlighted the importance of feedback in negotiating meaning, shifting the focus on discrepancies between the output and target language. Hattie and Timperley (2007) note that the main purpose of feedback is to assist learners to reduce this gap through involvement or cognitive modification. According to sociocultural theory, feedback can be seen as scaffolding. It is most useful when correcting misconceptions. A three-stage model of teacher feedback literacy was put forward by Boud and Dawson (2023), whereas other studies indicate the systematic growth of feedback effectiveness during pre-

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service training (Zhan, 2024) indicating that the effectiveness of feedback is already not limited to classroom practices but goes into the sphere of teacher professional competence.

Classification and Characteristics of Types

Feedback was divided into six categories by Lyster and Ranta: explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition. Some others also identified four different levels task, process, self-regulation, and self of which self-level feedback is the least useful (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Observations of classrooms in China show two characteristics: Recasts are the most commonly used to save time and protect the face, whereas metalinguistic feedback and elicitation are rarely used due to their time-consuming nature. Carless and Boud (2018) claim that feedback activities need to be integrated into curriculum design and students need to be directed on the use of feedback. Recent research indicates that AI feedback is a supplement to teacher feedback (Yao et al., 2025) and automated systems can point attention of teachers to the features of their discourse (Kelly et al., 2025), indicating new relationships between conventional feedback and intelligent technologies.

A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of the Effectiveness of Feedback

The Contradiction Between Cognitive and Emotional Functions

Useful feedback assists the students to realize the gap between their performance and the goal and induces self-correction. Expressed feedback is able to make the repair instantaneously, whereas unexpressed feedback does not always engage the learner mentally since he or she might not even notice the change made. According to Carless and Boud (2018), feedback can only bring about cognitive benefits when learners derive meaning out of it, but not when they are given judgments on whether they were right or wrong. The language classroom has a diverse array of emotions (Wu & Kabilan, 2025). Teenagers are very self-conscious and susceptible to correction in public. Cognition and emotion cannot be separated according to sociocultural theory. Feedback effectiveness is based on learners emotional perception- perceived threat leads to defensiveness and perceived support leads to cognitive involvement. This conflict brings in a structural dilemma where feedback needs to be cognitively understandable and emotionally secure. As observed by Hyldahl and Gamlem (2026), feedback practices center on micro-level transmission of inputs, which lacks sufficient macro-level design, and leave the cognitive-affective balance on the experience of the teacher. Zhan (2024) argues that when teachers perceive the educational value of feedback, it is inherent motivation that makes them want to achieve balance. However, practical solutions are few and far between, especially during secondary L2 classroom instruction.

Factors that Restrict Teachers' Feedback Behaviors

There are three factors that determine classroom feedback of teachers. Factors at the level of the teacher are most important: knowledge of the subject, views on feedback, and language competence affect the choice of strategies. Researches have identified four teacher profiles, including receptive teachers who consider feedback as a chance to improve and indifferent teachers who respond in a passive way (Choi & Bowers, 2024). Student-level factors: The wide proficiency gaps among students in secondary schools suggest that one and the same strategy will have diverse effects depending on the level of students. Contextual factors: the size of classes, the pressure of exams, and the lack of class time limit individual feedback. Many of the existing studies are descriptive, paying little or no attention to how institutional design could be used to maximize feedback practice.

Characteristics of Effective Classroom Feedback Language

Feedback discourse features have an influence on the quality and level of teacher-student interaction. Newman (2025) differentiates between framing questions, which determine the content of the conversation, and responsive talk as that which keeps the conversation going. Open-ended questions encourage student thinking whereas focused questions concentrate the attention on particular linguistic properties (Newman, 2025). These two question types can be used alternately to develop a layered chain of discourse over time, which increases language awareness of students. In discourse features, artificial intelligence (AI) feedback and teacher feedback are complementary; AI gives real-time and targeted feedback whereas teachers place greater emphasis on contextualized strategic advice (Yao et al., 2025). The forms of feedback and interaction must match the instructional goals.

Conditions for Effective Feedback

The effectiveness of feedback is a function of its form, timing, complexity of the task, and self-efficacy of learners (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The most valuable feedback is at the task and process level, whereas the least beneficial type is at the self-level as it contains no information about tasks. One study indicated that most interventions increase feedback intentions but not actual behavior changes (Little et al., 2024). Individual differences among learners also play a significant role. How feedback is perceived and applied depends on self-efficacy, goal orientation, and previous experience (Brandmo & Gamlem, 2025). Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to utilize and use feedback, and students with low self-efficacy may be defensive when receiving negative feedback. Teachers' perception of the value of feedback was found to be another factor that influences teachers feedback engagement as identified by Choi and Bowers (2024). Finally, feedback effectiveness is an outcome of the interplay among teacher, student, and task variables.

Reflection

The current body of research concentrates on the language used by teachers, but does not consider how students process, and make use of feedback. The majority of the interventions describe intention changes, but do not measure behavior changes (Little et al., 2024). The studies end where teachers did, ignoring what students really learnt. Pretest-posttest designs are common methodological choices, which are unable to ascertain long-term internalization. There are few longitudinal studies (Brandmo & Gamlem, 2025) and too much reliance on surveys and observations means that the micro-cognitive processes that occur in students remain uninvestigated. The more fundamental problem is the limited view. Feedback literacy studies have been characterized by individualization, neglecting policy, and institutional limitations. All research projects focus on micro-level activities, but pay little attention to the systemic nature of feedback at various stages of education. Future research ought to be a combination of teacher behavior analysis and student cognition investigation, incorporating stimulated recall and longitudinal designs and institutional and cultural context.

Conclusion

The present paper evaluates the literature on the classroom feedback of secondary school English teachers through theoretical, typological, effectiveness, and methodological aspects. Typology in this field is well-defined and there is a good comprehension of what types of feedback are, their role and how they are used. However, there are still gaps:

1. The studies are focused on teachers and ignore how students perceive and process feedback;
2. The cognitive-affective tension is not addressed by practical solutions;
3. Institutional and cultural factors are not explored enough.

Further studies need to take student-centered methods of investigation, expand the time frame by using longitudinal designs, and combine conventional feedback with intelligent systems. Finally, the question “What students have learned” should be the standard when assessing the effectiveness of feedback.

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