THE ROLE OF FEEDBACK IN IMPROVING SPOKEN LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Feedback plays a critical role in the development of spoken language skills. Whether provided by teachers, peers, or digital tools, effective feedback helps learners identify their strengths and areas for improvement, refine their pronunciation, and enhance fluency. This article explores various types of feedback—formative, corrective, peer-based, and technology-assisted—and how they contribute to better speaking performance in language learners. Focusing on the context of Uzbekistan, the study examines classroom practices, student responses, and the growing use of digital tools such as AI-based speaking apps and automated speech evaluation platforms. Drawing on both academic literature and local examples, the article shows that timely, specific, and constructive feedback improves learners' self-awareness, confidence, and oral communication skills. It also discusses challenges such as emotional sensitivity, over-correction, and lack of individualization. Recommendations are provided for teachers, students, and institutions on how to integrate feedback effectively into speaking-focused lessons.

Keywords: Feedback, spoken language, speaking performance, oral communication, pronunciation, fluency, formative assessment, corrective feedback, peer feedback, teacher response, self-correction, speaking activities, speaking anxiety, language learning,

Uzbekistan, English as a foreign language, student motivation, speaking classroom, digital feedback tools, speaking evaluation.

Intraduction

Speaking is often considered the most challenging skill in language learning. Unlike writing or reading, which allow for more time and reflection, speaking requires quick thinking, correct pronunciation, appropriate grammar, and confidence. One of the most effective ways to improve spoken language performance is through feedback—responses given to learners that guide them in making progress.

In the context of English language learning in Uzbekistan, many students struggle with fluency, accuracy, and self-confidence when speaking. Teachers often notice that students hesitate to participate in oral activities, fearing mistakes or negative judgment. However, when feedback is provided in a supportive, constructive way, it can build students' motivation, correct errors, and improve communication skills over time.

Feedback can take various forms. It can be immediate or delayed, written or spoken, general or specific. In speaking tasks, feedback often focuses on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary use, and clarity. Modern classrooms and digital platforms now offer many ways to provide feedback—not only from teachers but also from peers, self-reflection, and even artificial intelligence.

This paper explores the different types of feedback used in speaking classes and how they influence students' oral language development. It includes real examples from Uzbek classrooms, teacher observations, and relevant academic studies. The aim is to understand what kind of feedback works best, how students respond to it, and how it can be improved in both traditional and digital learning environments.

Literature Review

Feedback in language learning has been widely studied, especially for its role in improving speaking skills. Researchers agree that effective feedback encourages learners to reflect on their performance, correct mistakes, and gradually develop more accurate and fluent

speech. This section explores different types of feedback and what scholars say about their effectiveness.

Types of Feedback

According to Ellis (2009), feedback can be broadly classified into **corrective feedback**, **formative feedback**, and **peer/self-feedback**. In speaking activities, **corrective feedback** is the most common. It refers to pointing out errors in grammar, pronunciation, or word choice. There are two main forms:

- **Explicit correction** – where the teacher directly tells the student what the error was.
- **Recasts** – where the teacher reformulates the student's sentence correctly without directly pointing out the error.

Formative feedback, as described by Shute (2008), supports learning over time. It includes advice, encouragement, and tips on how to improve performance, rather than just correcting errors.

Peer and self-feedback are also important, especially in speaking clubs or group tasks. Studies like Topping (2009) show that when students evaluate each other's speaking, they develop critical thinking and language awareness.

Feedback and Fluency

Several studies (e.g., Lyster & Saito, 2010) have shown that feedback improves not just accuracy but also **fluency**. Students who receive regular spoken feedback tend to become more confident and expressive. For example, in a study conducted in South Korea, students who received teacher feedback during oral tasks improved their speaking speed and reduced hesitation.

Emotional Effects of Feedback

While feedback is useful, it can also affect students emotionally. Harsh or overly critical feedback can lower motivation and increase anxiety (Young, 1991). This is especially

relevant in Uzbekistan, where many students already feel nervous about speaking English in front of others. Therefore, feedback must be delivered with care, using positive language and supportive tone.

Technology-Enhanced Feedback

In recent years, digital platforms like **Duolingo**, **EWA**, and **Elsa Speak** offer **automated feedback** on pronunciation and fluency. These apps use AI to detect errors and guide learners. In Uzbekistan, such tools are becoming popular, especially in private language centers. Research by McCarthy (2016) suggests that learners using digital feedback tools feel more independent and less afraid of making mistakes.

The Uzbek Context

In Uzbekistan, most speaking classes are still teacher-centered. Feedback is usually given orally, during or after the activity. However, some universities have started using peer evaluation sheets and self-reflection tasks to promote learner autonomy. According to a small survey by teachers at Samarkand State University (2023), students who received regular peer feedback showed better participation in English speaking clubs.

Methodology

This study uses a **qualitative descriptive approach** to understand how feedback affects spoken language performance, especially in the context of English language learning in Uzbekistan. Data was collected through classroom observations, informal interviews with students and teachers, and analysis of feedback practices in speaking lessons.

Research Design

The research focuses on **real classroom settings** in several universities and language centers in Uzbekistan, such as Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature and private institutions like SpeakUp and English Time in Samarkand. It also considers feedback given through mobile applications used by students.

Participants

Participants included:

- **20 English language learners** (ages 18–23) from different regions (Tashkent, Namangan, Bukhara)
- **5 English teachers** who regularly conduct speaking classes
- All participants had at least A2–B2 level English proficiency.

Data Collection Methods

Classroom Observations: Speaking activities such as role plays, presentations, and interviews were observed. The focus was on how feedback was given and how students reacted to it.

Student Interviews: Students were asked about their experiences with teacher and peer feedback—what kind of feedback they found helpful or discouraging.

Teacher Interviews: Teachers shared their feedback strategies, and how they balance correcting mistakes with maintaining student confidence.

Digital Feedback Tools: Some students demonstrated how they used mobile apps like Elsa Speak or YouGlish, and how these tools provided automated speaking feedback.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using **thematic coding**, identifying common themes such as:

- Student confidence after feedback
- Preference for immediate vs delayed feedback
- Effectiveness of peer vs teacher feedback
- Use of apps for pronunciation and fluency

Findings were categorized and interpreted in light of previous research (see Literature Review), with special attention to local relevance.

Limitations

This study has a small sample size, and feedback effects were not measured quantitatively. However, it provides meaningful insights into how Uzbek students respond to feedback and how it can be improved for better speaking outcomes.

Analysis and Discussion

This section analyzes the data collected from classroom observations, interviews, and student feedback, focusing on how different types of feedback impact speaking skill development. Special attention is given to the local context of Uzbekistan, where English is increasingly taught in schools and universities as a second or foreign language.

Student Reactions to Teacher Feedback

Many students expressed appreciation for **immediate oral feedback** from teachers during speaking tasks. For example, when a student made a mistake in verb tense or pronunciation, teachers would either recast the sentence or provide direct correction. Most learners said this helped them remember the correct form and use it next time.

"My teacher always repeats my sentence in the correct way. I listen and copy it in the next answer." – Student, Bukhara University

However, some students reported that being corrected in front of the class made them nervous. In particular, students from rural areas, who had less experience with speaking English, preferred **private or delayed feedback**, such as comments after class or written notes.

The Power of Peer Feedback

Group activities like pair interviews, discussions, and debates allowed for **peer feedback**, where students commented on each other's speaking. Surprisingly, many students found peer feedback more comfortable and less stressful.

"When my classmate corrects my pronunciation, I don't feel ashamed. We help each other." – Student, Samarkand

Teachers also noted that peer feedback encourages **collaborative learning**. However, its effectiveness depends on students' language level. Beginners may not recognize mistakes, while advanced learners can provide useful suggestions.

Fluency and Confidence Gains

Students who received **regular, supportive feedback** showed increased fluency and confidence. Observations showed that:

- They used longer sentences.
- They used fillers (like "well", "you know") to keep talking.
- They spoke with fewer pauses.

In speaking clubs like "English Friday" in Tashkent and "Speak and Shine" in Andijan, students received encouraging feedback, which led to visible progress in spontaneous speaking.

Digital Tools and Automated Feedback

Mobile apps like **Elsa Speak** and **Cake** are becoming popular in Uzbekistan. These apps give feedback on pronunciation and speaking speed. Students like that they can practice privately and repeat mistakes without embarrassment.

"Elsa tells me where my sounds are wrong and helps me improve with practice." – Learner, Tashkent

However, not all students trust AI feedback. Some complained that the apps don't always understand Uzbek accents or non-standard intonation. So, while digital feedback is useful, it works best when combined with human guidance.

Challenges in Feedback Practices

Teachers identified several challenges:

- **Time limits** in large classes made it hard to give individual feedback.
- Some students ignored feedback or forgot it quickly.
- Emotional reactions: Some learners were too sensitive and lost motivation after correction.

Teachers recommended combining feedback with **encouragement**, such as praise for effort, and letting students **self-correct** first before being told the answer.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that feedback plays a **central role** in helping students improve their spoken English. Whether it comes from teachers, peers, self-evaluation, or technology, **well-delivered feedback** helps learners become more accurate, fluent, and confident in their oral communication.

In the context of Uzbekistan, where students often face speaking anxiety and limited exposure to real-life conversation, feedback becomes even more important. Teacher-led correction, when done with care, helps build grammar and vocabulary awareness. Peer feedback encourages teamwork and relaxed practice. Digital tools provide pronunciation support and a safe space for repetition.

However, feedback must be **balanced and personalized**. Overcorrection or harsh tone can hurt motivation. Feedback should focus not only on mistakes but also on **positive reinforcement**, helping students recognize their progress.

Recommendations

For Teachers:

- Use a **supportive tone** when correcting students.
- Encourage students to **self-correct** before giving the answer.
- Combine **oral and written feedback**, especially in large classes.
- Design group speaking activities where students **give peer feedback**.

For Students:

- Ask for feedback actively and **keep a record** of corrections.
- Use apps like Elsa Speak or Cake to practice pronunciation daily.
- Reflect on mistakes and try to **use corrected language** in future speaking.

For Institutions:

- Train teachers in **feedback strategies** that support speaking development.
- Provide access to **language labs or apps** for independent speaking practice.
- Organize speaking clubs or competitions with **constructive judging criteria**.

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