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FORMATIVE FEEDBACK AS A MEANS OF SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract. The thesis discusses formative feedback as a means of sustaining engagement in English language learning, particularly among non-philological university students. Feedback is interpreted not as final error correction but as a process that helps learners understand current performance and act on the next step. A four-part mechanism - goal, evidence, feedback, action - is proposed. Attention is given to timely, specific and actionable feedback, as well as peer and self-feedback.

Keywords: formative feedback, engagement, motivation, English language learning, self-regulation, non-philological students.

Feedback is one of the most common forms of teacher-student interaction in language education, but its effect depends on how it is used. In many English classes, feedback is mainly corrective: a teacher marks errors, gives a score or provides the correct answer. Such information may be accurate, yet it does not always help the learner decide what to do next.

Hattie and Timperley define effective feedback as information that reduces the gap between current performance and a desired learning goal.[1] Their model is highly relevant to language learning because progress requires repeated performance, adjustment and re-performance. For non-philological students, feedback also has a motivational function: it can make progress visible and show that effort leads to improvement.

Our previous research on motivation among non-philological students emphasizes purposeful tasks, learner involvement and clear connections between classroom activity and the practical use of English.[2] Formative feedback supports these conditions by turning performance into information for the next learning action.

Correction and formative feedback are not identical. Correction identifies an error or provides the correct form. Formative feedback helps the learner interpret performance and decide how to improve it. “Wrong tense” is correction; “Your sequence is clear, but the past events need consistent past-tense forms; revise the three highlighted verbs” is actionable feedback.

Feedback is most useful when it focuses on the task, process and self-regulation rather than on personal labels.[3] Comments such as “Good student” or “You are weak at grammar” provide little guidance. In contrast, “Your main idea is clear; add one example and check article use in paragraph two” identifies both strength and next step.

[1] Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 81-112.

[2] Toshmatova, S. (2026). Developing English language learning motivation among non-philological students. *Eurasian Journal of Academic Research, 6*(5), 259-267.

[3] Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 81-112.

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Motivation also influences the way students use feedback. Gan's study of university EFL learners showed that motivational variables were associated with feedback experience and preference.[4] Gan, He, Zhang and Schumacker later found significant relationships between feedback practices and English learning motivation, with student self-feedback emerging as a particularly strong predictor.[5] These findings support a shift from teacher-controlled correction toward active student use of feedback.

Recent research on formative assessment also suggests that feedback may support motivation by strengthening autonomy, competence and relatedness. A 2025 study reported positive effects of formative assessment on EFL learners' motivational variables and achievement, although the strength of effects differed across psychological needs.[6] The mechanism is important for higher education as well: students are more likely to remain engaged when they understand progress and know how to improve.

A practical classroom model can be organized through four elements: **goal - evidence - feedback - action**.

The **goal** tells students what successful performance should look like. A speaking task may focus on clarity, functional language and interaction; a writing task may focus on organization, vocabulary and accuracy. Clear criteria reduce uncertainty.

Evidence is the observable learner performance: a paragraph, oral response, dialogue, quiz, presentation or self-assessment. Feedback becomes more useful when it is tied to specific evidence rather than to general impressions.

Feedback should be timely, specific and manageable. Correcting every error at once can overload learners. A practical rule is to identify one successful feature and one or two priority areas for improvement. This maintains standards without turning feedback into a list of failures.

Action is the stage that makes feedback formative. Students should revise, repeat, compare or apply the information in a new attempt. For example, they may rewrite two sentences, repeat a 60-second response, correct a vocabulary log or improve one slide. Without action, feedback remains passive information.

This cycle supports self-regulation because learners can compare first and revised performance. Over time, they begin to generate internal feedback before the teacher comments. This is valuable for non-philological students, whose limited classroom hours require greater independence.

Teacher feedback is essential but should not be the only source. Peer feedback can increase interaction and help students understand assessment criteria by applying them to another learner's work. Self-feedback develops responsibility and metacognitive awareness.

These forms need structure. Peer feedback may use three prompts: Was the main idea clear? Was relevant vocabulary used? What is one specific suggestion? Self-feedback can use: "I did well when…", "I had difficulty with…", and "Next time I will…". Such prompts turn reflection into an action plan and support the learner-centered orientation described in Toshmatova's work.[7] Feedback should also arrive while the task remains relevant and students can still use it in a subsequent action.

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[4] Gan, Z. (2020). How learning motivation influences feedback experience and preference in Chinese university EFL students. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 496.

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Four principles can increase the motivational value of feedback. First, feedback should **describe performance, not label the learner**. Second, it should **prioritize a limited number of changes**. Third, it should **state a next action**. Fourth, students should **use the feedback**, not simply read or hear it.

Useful feedback should also be psychologically safe, framing error as information for progress rather than evidence of fixed inability.

To conclude, formative feedback can sustain engagement when it functions as part of learning rather than as final correction. The **goal - evidence - feedback - action** cycle links feedback to observable performance and a concrete next step. For non-philological students, this can make progress visible and encourage responsibility. Future research may compare teacher, peer and self-feedback in relation to motivation and language performance.

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