

# The Pedagogical Potential of Micro-Feedback in Reducing Foreign Language Anxiety in Higher Education

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**Abstract:** the process of mastering a foreign language in the system of Higher Education is closely related not only to language education, but also to the psychological state. In recent years, the problem of foreign language anxiety has been widely studied as one of the factors that have a significant impact on the quality of language training in higher education institutions. This review article systematizes the pedagogical potential of the micro-feedback approach in reducing anxiety associated with a foreign language, its main functions, emotional support, learning motivation, self-confidence and influence on the activity of language participation. As a result of the analysis of the literature, it was found that micro-feedback reduces the student's fear of making mistakes, softens the psychological pressure in the learning process, and creates an immediate and safe feedback environment. Current data show that micro-feedback is effective in reducing anxiety as a short, factual, supportive and timely form of assessment in a foreign language lesson. This conclusion can serve as a scientific and practical basis for the systematic use of micro-feedback in teaching a foreign language in higher education.

**Keywords:** micro-feedback, foreign language anxiety, higher education, foreign language learning, feedback, student confidence, pedagogy

## 1. Introduction

The process of teaching a foreign language in a higher educational institution is carried out

at the junction of complex cognitive and emotional activities. The student learns new language structures, tries to express himself in a foreign language, is evaluated, speaks in front of a group and faces the likelihood that others will see his mistake. In such a situation, language success depends not only on the level of knowledge, but also on the emotional state. Especially foreign language anxiety, i.e. anxiety when using a foreign language, directly affects the student's freedom of speech, responsiveness, listening and writing performance, and learning motivation in general.

Anxiety related to a foreign language is by its nature a multifaceted phenomenon. It is associated not only with fear or shyness, but also with the fear of making mistakes, the squeeze from being appreciated, the insecurity of speaking in front of a group, the comparison of oneself with others and the feeling of linguistic inadequacy. For this reason, teaching a foreign language in higher education should not be limited to mastering grammar and vocabulary. It should be supplemented with pedagogical approaches that provide the student with emotional security, the right to make mistakes and a supportive learning environment. One such way is micro - feedback.

Micro-feedback is a type of feedback that is small in size, specific in content, operational in time and pedagogically supportive. It allows the student to receive a short orientation at the same moment of the educational activity, without waiting for a large assessment or a long explanation. This approach creates the conditions for the student to perceive the mistake not as a disaster, but as a normal learning stage that can be corrected. Therefore, it is relevant to consider micro-feedback as an effective mechanism for reducing anxiety associated with a foreign language.

The relevance of the topic is explained by several factors. First, the level of anxiety associated with a foreign language in higher education is still high, and it negatively affects academic performance. Second, feedback-related research has shown in recent years the effectiveness of quick, short, and student-friendly formats rather than voluminous or final forms of assessment. Thirdly, the formation of an emotionally safe learning environment in the methodology of teaching a foreign language is becoming an increasingly important issue. Therefore, a review is needed that systematically analyzes the pedagogical potential of micro-feedback.

The purpose of this work is to summarize the pedagogical potential, main functions, mechanisms of influence and possibilities of practical application of micro - feedback in reducing anxiety associated with a foreign language in higher education, based on research after 2024. The tasks were to briefly describe the nature of foreign language anxiety, identify the pedagogical features of micro-feedback, explain its impact on emotional, communicative and evaluative aspects, as well as assess the significance of its use in a foreign language lesson in a higher educational institution. The object of the study is the anxiety associated with a foreign language in higher education. The subject of the study is the pedagogical role,

functions and mechanisms of influence of micro – feedback in reducing this anxiety.

## **2. *Materials and Methods***

This work was performed in the format of narrative review and targeted literature synthesis. The selection included articles directly related to foreign language anxiety, feedback in language learning, higher education language pedagogy, formative feedback, student emotional response, classroom anxiety reduction and micro-feedback and published after 2024. The priority was given to studies that dealt with the problems of a foreign language lesson in a higher educational institution, the emotional state of students, short forms of feedback and the relationship between assessment and learning. At the same time, comparative works on feedback culture in general education and language pedagogy were also considered to a limited extent to expand the logic of analysis.

The analysis was carried out according to several criteria. At first, the research was divided into anxiety reduction, then feedback design, then emotional support, classroom participation and self-efficacy groups. Each article separately considered the object of research, the method used, the identified areas of pedagogical influence, as well as the possible impact of micro-feedback on mastering a foreign language. This approach made it possible to compare different empirical and theoretical works within the framework of one review.

## **3. *Results***

### ***3.1. Foreign language anxiety as a barrier to participation and learning***

One of the most important conclusions of recent studies is that anxiety associated with a foreign language is not just an emotional problem, but a pedagogical barrier that directly affects learning activity. In the case of Higher education, Foreign language anxiety is often expressed by the student's fear of answering, avoiding speaking in front of the group, not being able to fully express himself and perceiving even a simple mistake as a big failure. This condition leads to a decrease in language experience, restriction of speech activity, and a decrease in learning motivation [1].

The theoretical significance of foreign language-related anxiety lies in its direct, not indirect, contribution to language success. The student may know the grammar rule or have sufficient vocabulary, but a high level of anxiety prevents him from applying his knowledge in real communication situations. This problem is especially evident with speaking activities, spontaneous response and oral presentation. Therefore, it is necessary to consider foreign language anxiety not only as a psychological category, but also as a didactic factor that determines the result of learning [1].

Research in this area shows that anxiety is also associated with the atmosphere of constant assessment. If a student receives feedback mainly in the form of error marking, strict comparison, or late assessment, then his internal pressure increases. And if the teacher's

answer is prompt, concise, guiding and supportive in nature, then the student begins to perceive the error as a normal part of the educational process, and not as a personal failure. At this point, micro-feedback becomes particularly important as a pedagogical tool to reduce foreign language anxiety [1].

### ***3.2. Micro-feedback as a pedagogically supportive form of response***

The main feature of Micro-feedback is that it is transmitted in a small volume, in a timely manner and without excessive emotional pressure. This approach is different from the traditional voluminous commentary or feedback based only on the final grade. In a foreign language lesson, micro-feedback is focused on the student's actions at that moment: for example, slightly correcting the sentence structure, short praise for a correctly used word, offering only one key word to clarify the answer, or gently guiding without completely stopping the error. Such short reactions allow the student to continue the current learning activity without interrupting it [2].

These results determine the pedagogical nature of micro-feedback. Its purpose is not to evaluate the student, but to support the student's actions. Therefore, he gives the student the idea «you are in the right direction, correct this place a little» rather than the signal «you are wrong». Especially for students with high anxiety, the same short and safe form of feedback is important, as they can reduce their language activity after lengthy criticism or public discussion of the error [2].

Another important aspect of Micro-feedback is its emotional temperature. That is, along with the pedagogical content, the emotional tone is also important. If the feedback is given, albeit short, but of a grumpy, cold or domineering nature, then anxiety does not diminish. And if it is presented in a warm, guiding and respectful way, the student's psychological defenses are weakened and it is easier for him to rejoin the language activity. Therefore, the effectiveness of micro-feedback depends not only on its volume, but also on the pedagogical intonation [2].

### ***3.3. The effect of micro-feedback on confidence, self-efficacy and classroom participation***

Subsequent research has shown that micro-feedback has a positive effect on student self-confidence and classroom participation. Especially in a foreign language lesson, the student's activity and self-confidence are inextricably linked. If the student does not get a reaction at all after his answer or only feels that attention is paid to the error, then the next time the motivation to answer may decrease. And a short supportive feedback makes the student feel that his learning activity is visible, his work is appreciated, and his mistakes are a normal phenomenon that can be corrected [3].

Self-efficacy, that is, the belief that one can perform a language task, plays a key role in reducing the level of anxiety associated with a foreign language. Micro-feedback gradually

reinforces this belief, as it helps the student see small steps to maturity. For example, if the teacher does not immediately point out all the weaknesses in the student's answer, but focuses only on one specific element, and at the same time notes the part that came out correctly, the student will not feel a complete failure. Such an approach facilitates the perception of error and creates conditions for a return to language Activity [3].

Micro-feedback also plays an important role in terms of Classroom participation. In a situation of high anxiety, many students are afraid to say it publicly, even if they know the answer internally. And the risk of participation is reduced if the teacher gives prompt support to their short answers, gently sets the complement question and constructively develops even a semi-correct answer. As a result, the frequency of responses in the audience, the level of readiness to enter the dialogue and the volume of spontaneous speech begin to increase. This shows that micro-feedback gives a real communicative result, not just emotional [3].

### ***3.4. Micro-feedback in formative assessment and emotionally safe pedagogy***

Micro-feedback has a special place in the assessment system, as it is naturally compatible with the principle of formative assessment. The essence of formative assessment is not to evaluate the student at the end, but to guide him in the course of training itself. From this point of view, micro-feedback is considered one of the most compact and flexible forms of formative assessment. It immediately shows the student where he is, what he needs to improve a little and in what direction it is necessary to move forward [4].

In terms of Emotionally safe pedagogy, the advantage of micro-feedback is that it creates a culture of trust, not fear, in the learning environment. In a foreign language lesson, such a culture is very important, since language development necessarily occurs by mistake. If a student hears a big remark or public criticism every time he makes a mistake, then he becomes less active. And micro-feedback helps you process an error in a fast, concise and secure format. Here the error becomes not a «stopping point», but a «moving Point» [4].

In this regard, micro-feedback also changes the rating style. He brings the teacher closer from the role of «checker» to the role of «partner-guide». For the student, this is a very important psychological change, since he begins to perceive the assessment in the classroom not as a means of control, but as a mechanism that helps him grow. Especially in groups with high language anxiety, such an atmosphere of assessment contributes to increasing speech activity, the frequency of voluntary response, and freedom in pair or group work [4].

### ***3.5. Comparative insights and practical relevance in higher education***

Pedagogical works that have considered the issue of Micro-feedback more broadly indicate that its effectiveness in higher education depends on several conditions. First, feedback should be provided in a timely manner. Late feedback may only serve to register a past error, not to reduce anxiety. Second, it must be real. A very generalized answer «good» or «wrong» does

not explain the direction of learning to the student. Thirdly, it is important that his language is of a supportive nature, since it is through this tone that psychological security is formed [5].

In the context of Higher Education, this problem is especially relevant, because students have problems with academic pressure, comparisons, lack of time and self-esteem at the same time. Learning a foreign language puts an additional emotional load on top of this pressure. Therefore, the systematic use of micro-feedback in foreign language lessons at a university can contribute not only to the student's language success, but also to academic adaptation and academic confidence. This is especially important for freshmen, academic speaking subjects, and presentation-based courses [5].

In a practical sense, modern literature offers several directions. First, teachers should use micro-feedback as a consciously planned pedagogical strategy, not a random one. Secondly, it is desirable that its samples are adapted to each stage of the lesson: can be given orally during speaking tasks, in the form of margin comments or short coded prompts during writing tasks. Thirdly, special attention should be paid to the practice of anxiety-sensitive feedback in the training and advanced training programs of Foreign Language teachers in higher education. Current data does not offer a fully universal model, but clearly proves the obvious potential of micro-feedback in reducing foreign language anxiety[2][4][5].

#### 4. *Discussion*

The reviewed literature shows that the role of micro-feedback in reducing anxiety associated with a foreign language is multilevel. At the first level is its operational support function. At this level, the student receives a timely response to his actions and feels that he will not be left alone during his studies. On the second level is emotional security. Here, micro-feedback helps to present the error as a normal step that can be corrected, not a threat. At the third level, communicative activity and self-confidence are formed, as the student becomes more willing to rejoin the language activity each time he receives short and supportive feedback.

The practicality of this model is high. First, to reduce foreign language anxiety, motivational words alone or general support are not enough, specific pedagogical tools are needed, and micro-feedback can be one of them. Secondly, for the effective application of this approach, the teacher needs to understand the feedback design, consciously control the language, time and emotional tone of feedback. Third, in the context of higher education, micro-feedback is naturally combined with the formation assessment system and the principles of student-centered pedagogy.

In the context of Kazakhstan's higher education, this direction is of particular importance. In foreign language classes, many students, although they already have grammar knowledge, face obstacles such as squinting when speaking, fear of a mistake, or embarrassment in front of a group. If teachers systematically and pedagogically competently use micro-feedback, then the emotional background in the lesson improves, the student's speech activity and learning

confidence increase. This is especially important in multilevel groups, language practice classes, and courses focused on academic engagement in a foreign language.

But there are also the limitations of current research. Many works interpret the concept of micro-feedback differently, some consider it as part of general feedback, and some do not have enough real operational definition. There are few Longitudinal studies, and the instruments for measuring anxiety levels are also heterogeneous. Therefore, as the next steps in this area, it is necessary to develop a clear typology of micro-feedback, create experimental models for foreign language lessons in higher education, and study the impact of anxiety-sensitive feedback in the long term.

## 5. **Conclusion**

Anxiety associated with a foreign language in higher education is a complex factor that has a significant impact on language success, participatory activity, and student self-confidence. Current literature indicates that micro-feedback can be an important pedagogical tool in reducing this anxiety. Its short, precise, timely and supportive nature reduces the student's fear of making mistakes, making it easier for them to return to the learning activity. Therefore, it is necessary to consider micro-feedback as a pedagogical mechanism that creates an emotionally safe learning environment, and not just technical feedback in foreign language lessons.

From a practical point of view, these data will serve as the basis for revising the feedback strategy system of Foreign Language teachers in higher education, introducing elements of anxiety-sensitive pedagogy and more flexible organization of formative assessment. However, for its effective use on a large scale, specific methodological models, manuals for teachers, and empirically tested models are required. When these areas are implemented, micro-feedback can become an effective tool to reduce foreign language anxiety in higher education.

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