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# Classroom Atmosphere, Teacher Feedback, And Speaking Confidence Among Young EFL Learners: A Systematic Review

**Ardya Rigita Cahyani** [1]
Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
**Nunung Suryati** [2]
Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
**Mirjam Anugerahwati** [3]
Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: ardya.rigita.2502218@students.um.ac.id

**Abstract**

*Classroom atmosphere and teacher feedback are plausible influences on young learners' speaking confidence, but the primary-age evidence on either one is thinner than the topic's popularity suggests. This systematic review examined what empirical studies report about classroom atmosphere, teacher feedback and speaking confidence among EFL learners aged 7–12, and whether any study tested the two factors together. Searches in Scopus, ERIC and ScienceDirect, supplemented by Google Scholar, returned 56 records; after removing 12 duplicates and screening 44 titles and abstracts, the authors assessed 23 full texts and included 10 studies. The review followed PRISMA 2020 reporting guidance and synthesized the findings through thematic analysis. Seven studies bore on atmosphere and four on feedback, yet only two named speaking confidence as an outcome; the rest measured anxiety, willingness to communicate, feedback preferences or peer support. Fear of mistakes, classmates' reactions and incomprehensible teacher talk recurred as sources of anxiety, while understandable teacher talk, encouragement and clear, supportive correction were linked with less anxiety and more willingness to speak. Nine of the ten studies had 40 or fewer participants, none used a comparative or experimental design, and none tested atmosphere and feedback together, so any joint effect remains an untested proposition. Future research should measure both factors in the same classrooms with a child-appropriate speaking-confidence instrument.*



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**Keywords: Classroom Atmosphere, Teacher Feedback, Speaking Confidence, Young Learners, Systematic Review**

## INTRODUCTION

English in primary schools belongs to the wider research agenda on English language education in Indonesia, which covers primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Zein et al., 2020). Speaking exposes learners in a way reading and listening do not, since every attempt happens out loud in front of a teacher and classmates. Researchers have treated foreign language classroom anxiety as a situation-specific reaction since Horwitz et al. (1986), yet Nilsson (2019) noted that few researchers had looked at young learners in this respect. Her study of 225 learners aged 8–12 in Swedish primary classrooms found that 18.2% reported high anxiety, mostly tied to their own oral performance in English lessons, and other classroom situations triggered anxiety in other children too. She suggested that teachers examine routine practices instead of treating anxiety as a flaw in individual learners. That suggestion points at the two things a teacher controls most directly in the moment: the atmosphere of the room and the feedback given after a child speaks.

This review defines speaking confidence as a learner's belief that they can carry out spoken tasks in English, which applies Bandura's (1997) idea of self-efficacy to one skill. Related constructs sit close by without being identical. Willingness to communicate (WTC) is the readiness to enter communication at a particular moment (MacIntyre et al., 1998), anxiety is an emotional reaction, and participation is behaviour a teacher can count. A child can speak often while doubting their ability, or stay silent while feeling capable, so how often children speak cannot stand in for confidence. WTC, anxiety and participation remain eligible outcomes here, and the synthesis analyzes them separately from confidence.

Classroom atmosphere refers to the socio-emotional climate: how supportive learners find the teacher, how classmates treat one another, and how the class handles mistakes and competition. Seating plans and the design of activities belong to the physical and instructional setting, so this review keeps them apart from atmosphere. The best-known evidence on the socio-emotional side comes from older learners. Khajavy et al. (2018) studied 1,528 secondary school students in 65 Iranian classrooms, and a positive classroom environment was related to higher WTC and enjoyment and to lower anxiety. Whether the same pattern holds for children aged 7–12 is a question that study could not answer.



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Research on teacher feedback is older, but it mostly measures linguistic outcomes. Lyster and Saito (2010) meta-analyzed 15 classroom studies and found that younger learners benefited more from oral corrective feedback than older learners, and the feedback had significant and lasting effects on target-language development. Gains in accuracy say little about how a child feels while being corrected. The studies that do ask use other measures. Aedo and Millafilo (2022) explored which types of oral corrective feedback Chilean young learners prefer during speaking activities, and Tavakoli and Zarrinabadi (2018) compared explicit and implicit corrective feedback in relation to WTC. Preferences and WTC are informative, but neither is confidence.

This review is anchored in two foundational psychological and second language acquisition (SLA) theories that explain how affective factors operate in young learners' language development:

1. The Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982): Affective Filter Hypothesis proposes that anxiety, low self-esteem and low motivation block input from reaching the learner's language acquisition device, so a classroom that eases those states should let more input through. The idea suits classroom atmosphere well. It also has weaknesses: critics have called the hypothesis vague and unable to predict linguistic development (Gregg, 1984; McLaughlin, 1987), and it concerns how input is processed, not how confident a child feels about speaking. This review therefore uses the hypothesis to interpret reported patterns of anxiety and participation, and it does not treat a drop in anxiety as proof that a filter has lowered.
2. Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997): Self-Efficacy Theory addresses the outcome directly, and second language researchers have studied self-efficacy often enough to support a meta-analysis of its link with achievement (Goetze & Driver, 2022). The theory holds that efficacy beliefs draw on four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experience is hypothesized to be the most powerful of these, although Usher and Pajares (2008) found that the strength of each source differs across contexts. For this review the four sources give feedback a wider job than praise. A teacher's comment can persuade, but it also shapes how a child reads a spoken attempt as success or failure; classmates who speak successfully serve as models; and a calm room changes the emotional state in which the child speaks.


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3. Willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998): Willingness to communicate (WTC) gives the review a third reference point, though it does not serve as a third explanatory theory. WTC was traditionally seen as a fixed personality trait that did not change with context (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). MacIntyre et al. (1998) reworked it for second language use as a six-layer pyramid. At the base sit lasting influences such as intergroup climate and personality, and among the situated antecedents are state communicative self-confidence and the desire to communicate with a specific person. The model therefore places self-confidence next to WTC without equating them: confidence is one input, and WTC is the choice to enter talk. Classroom research adds that WTC fluctuates with interaction patterns and context instead of staying fixed (Yashima et al., 2018), which is why classroom atmosphere and teacher feedback are plausible influences on it. For these reasons the review records WTC as a related outcome and analyzes it separately from speaking confidence.

Existing reviews cover only part of this ground. Yan et al. (2024) reviewed 25 studies published between 2013 and 2022 on factors influencing students' WTC in English, sorted them into internal and external factors, and found that most studies came from the Middle East and used quantitative designs. Their question concerned students' WTC broadly, not the speaking confidence of primary-age children. Alghannam (2024) conducted a qualitative review of feedback for very young learners, starting at age six, to extract guidelines for teachers, which puts the weight on feedback alone. To the authors' knowledge, no review has examined classroom atmosphere and teacher feedback together in relation to the speaking confidence of children aged 7–12. The gap has two parts. The first is age, since the atmosphere evidence cited above comes from adolescents (Khajavy et al., 2018). The second is scope, since Khajavy et al. studied atmosphere without feedback, while Lyster and Saito measured feedback against language development, not against confidence or atmosphere. A further question remains: does any study test the two factors together, or does the idea of a joint effect rest on reading separate studies side by side? This review treats that as something to find out, not something to assume.

This review therefore synthesizes empirical studies on classroom atmosphere, teacher feedback and speaking confidence among EFL learners aged 7–12. It compares findings by study design, context and outcome measure, and it separates direct evidence on the two factors together from interpretation assembled across studies. Three questions guide it:


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1. What relationships between classroom atmosphere and speaking confidence are reported among young EFL learners aged 7–12?
2. What teacher feedback practices are associated with speaking confidence among young EFL learners, and how do findings vary across contexts and study designs?
3. What direct evidence addresses the joint roles of classroom atmosphere and teacher feedback, and what gaps remain?

## METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

This study is a systematic review of empirical research on classroom atmosphere, teacher feedback and speaking confidence among EFL learners aged 7–12. The included studies use quantitative, qualitative and mixed designs, so the review synthesizes their findings thematically and does not pool effect sizes. The authors reported the review following the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021), which is a reporting guideline, not a method for conducting a review. They reported the literature searches with PRISMA-S (Rethlefsen et al., 2021), a checklist for verifying that each component of a search is completely reported and therefore reproducible.

### 2.2 Search Strategy and Sample Selection

Searches were run in Scopus, ERIC, and ScienceDirect, with Google Scholar used only as a supplementary source because it is not appropriate as a principal search system for evidence syntheses (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). The search string combined four blocks: classroom atmosphere and teacher feedback terms, speaking-outcome terms, young learner or primary school terms, and EFL context terms.

The full search string was: *("classroom atmosphere" OR "classroom climate" OR "classroom environment" OR "teacher support" OR "peer support" OR "teacher feedback" OR "corrective feedback" OR "oral feedback" OR recast*) AND ("speaking confidence" OR "speaking self-efficacy" OR "oral self-efficacy" OR "self-efficacy" OR "willingness to communicate" OR "speaking anxiety" OR "language anxiety" OR "oral participation") AND ("young learner*" OR "young language learner*" OR "primary school" OR "elementary school" OR child) AND (EFL OR "English as a foreign language" OR "foreign language").*


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To ensure the sample articles align precisely with the research objectives, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established:

| Criterion | Included | Excluded |
|---|---|---|
| Population | EFL learners aged 7–12 in primary or elementary school. If age is missing, grade level serves as a proxy and appears in the extraction table. Mixed-age samples count only when results for the 7–12 group can be identified; one mixed-age study (ages 8–13) was retained as a documented exception because it is one of the few to measure speaking confidence directly. | Adolescent, university or adult samples; mixed-age samples without separable 7–12 results |
| Exposure | Classroom atmosphere, defined as socio-emotional climate (teacher support, peer relationships, handling of mistakes, competition), and/or teacher feedback on speaking | Studies whose only exposure is seating, room layout or activity design (extracted and coded separately when reported beside atmosphere variables) |
| Outcome | Speaking confidence or speaking self-efficacy; willingness to communicate, speaking anxiety and oral participation as related outcomes, analyzed separately. Studies on peer support without an affective outcome were retained as evidence on the peer dimension of atmosphere. | Outcomes limited to test scores or accuracy, with no affective outcome |
| Source Type | Peer-reviewed empirical journal articles using quantitative, qualitative or mixed designs | Reviews, conceptual papers, book chapters, conference proceedings, dissertations |


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| | | |
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| Language and Period | English; published from 2019 to 2025 | Other languages; earlier or later dates |

**2.3 Data Analysis**

Procedures Through a systematic screening process (identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion), a final corpus of selected empirical articles was compiled for analysis. The data from the selected articles were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, following the six-phase framework by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization: Reading and re-reading all selected articles to gain comprehensive immersion in the data.
2. Generating Initial Codes: Systematically coding recurring concepts, patterns, and findings related to classroom atmosphere, feedback types, and speaking confidence indicators.
3. Searching for Themes: Clustering codes into broader candidate themes (e.g., low-anxiety environments, process-oriented praise, emotional resilience in speaking).
4. Reviewing Themes: Checking candidate themes against the extracted data to ensure consistency and reliability.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Formulating clear definitions and labels for each core theme to address the research questions.
6. Reporting: Synthesizing the findings into a coherent narrative supported by empirical evidence from the reviewed literature.

**2.4 Trustworthiness and Rigor**

To ensure the validity, reliability, and academic rigor of this literature review, several measures were implemented:

1. Methodological Transparency: Adhering strictly to the PRISMA 2020 protocol to ensure reproducibility.
2. Data Triangulation across Sources: Cross-verifying findings across multiple independent studies to prevent subjective bias.
3. Audit Trail: Maintaining a clear record of search strings, database filters, inclusion/exclusion decisions, and coding notes throughout the review process.


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## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Search Output and PRISMA Flow

The search yielded 56 records. After the authors removed 12 duplicates, 44 titles and abstracts remained for screening, and 21 of them were excluded. That left 23 full texts for eligibility assessment, of which 13 failed the inclusion criteria: 8 used adult or university samples, 5 had no oral-communication focus. The remaining 10 studies form the corpus (Figure 1). The reasons for each full-text exclusion are recorded in the authors' screening log.

Ten is a small corpus, and it reflects the question more than the search. The eligibility criteria asked for four things at once: learners aged 7–12 whose results could be separated from older children, an exposure defined as socio-emotional atmosphere or teacher feedback on speaking, an affective or speaking-related outcome, and a peer-reviewed empirical design published from 2019 onward. The atmosphere evidence cited in the introduction comes from adolescents (Khajavy et al., 2018), which falls outside the age criterion, and research on corrective feedback mostly measures linguistic accuracy (Lyster & Saito, 2010), which falls outside the outcome criterion. The authors kept both criteria fixed instead of widening the age range or accepting test-score outcomes, since doing so would have blurred the line between confidence and its neighbors that the review sets out to hold. The small number is therefore a finding in its own right: few studies of children aged 7–12 have examined atmosphere or feedback in relation to speaking, and the Discussion treats it that way.

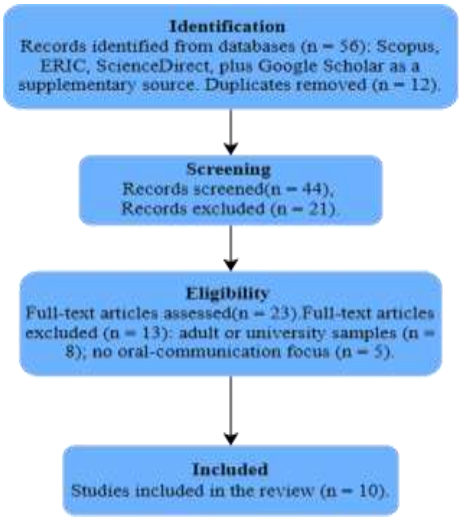



**Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of articles selected**



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### 3.2 Profile of Included Studies

The following table presents the 10 selected articles (Table 1.) that form the basis of this systematic review, focusing on young learners' speaking confidence, classroom atmosphere, and teacher feedback.

**Table 1. Summary of selected articles**

| No | Name & Year | Participant | Focus | Key Finding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Nilsson (2019) | 225 learners aged 8–12 who studied English as their first foreign language in Swedish primary classrooms | Levels and triggers of foreign language anxiety during oral classroom participation, in classrooms described as supportive and non-competitive | 18.2% of the learners reported high anxiety, and oral classroom performance was the main trigger. Anxiety was mostly situation-specific and tied to the learners' own speaking. |
| 2 | Aedo & Millafilo (2022) | 20 Chilean young learners of EFL | Preferred types of oral corrective feedback and the reasons behind the preferences | Students valued correction given carefully and clearly, with attention to their beliefs and motivation. They leaned toward recasts and repetition and liked metalinguistic feedback and elicitation less. |
| 3 | Matuzas (2022) | 39 students in grades 1–6 in after-school EFL classes in Korea | Factors that influence WTC in the classroom | Familiarity with speaking tasks, class size and environment, and instruction suited to each student's |



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| | | | | proficiency influenced WTC. |
| 4 | Nilsson (2020) | 26 learners aged 9–10 in a target language-only English classroom in a Swedish primary school | Learners' beliefs about English instruction and their classroom experiences, with attention to foreign language anxiety and sense of agency | Learners agreed on the value of extensive teacher target-language input and oral engagement. High-anxiety learners showed three mismatches between their beliefs and behavior: incomprehensible teacher talk, social fear of making mistakes, and classroom organization. Their agency was reduced, and the target language-only approach seemed to affect many learners negatively. |
| 5 | Fenyvesi (2021; online) | 32 Danish learners, early starters (age 8) and later starters (age 10), at two primary schools where English was not assessed | Situations that young learners found anxiety-provoking in EFL classes, and how their anxiety changed over time | . Anxiety came from fear of making mistakes, speaking in front of peers who might criticize or laugh, and insecurity (not understanding teacher talk or words, or tasks beyond their ability). |


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| | | | | Children whose anxiety dropped after one year said appropriate teacher support had helped in some of these situations. |
| 6 | Samodra & Faridi (2021) | 22 fifth-grade students at SD N 1 Wates Undaan Kudus, Indonesia | Correlation of verbal, gestural and token reinforcement with speaking performance and self-confidence | All three types of reinforcement correlated significantly with speaking performance and self-confidence (verbal r = .444, gestural r = .459, token r = .564). Twelve of the 22 pupils reported low self-confidence. |
| 7 | Choirunnisa et al. (2025) | One English teacher and 18 third-grade students at a private elementary school in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia | Teacher verbal strategies (questioning, prompting, encouragement, feedback) that support oral participation | Encouragement and feedback reduced anxiety, built confidence and clarified linguistic expectations. Together the four strategies created a supportive speaking environment that fostered WTC. |
| 8 | Kos (2023) | 24 grade 5 EFL learners working in pairs during regular lessons | Peer support during tasks on lexical phrases, and how far it accounts for | Learners mostly gave linguistic support (suggesting or using resources). Social–emotional support, |


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| | | | learning opportunities | such as offering help, giving positive feedback or inviting a partner's participation, was limited. Some pairs also showed reprimanding, impatience or disregard for a partner's contribution, and this varied widely across pairs. |
| 9 | Leslie (2021) | 36 learners aged 9–10 in two Year 4 classes at a private school in Portugal, at pre-A1 level (17 dyad recordings) | How learners support each other's language production during peer oral tasks, and how interaction patterns affect that support | Of 17 dyads, 9 were collaborative, 4 expert/novice and 4 passive parallel, and collaboration increased with task repetition. Dyads with high mutuality gave the most support, while passive-parallel dyads gave the least and rarely asked their partner for help. |
| 10 | Yun & Park (2021) | 6 elementary students aged 8–13 in a private education institute, in online classes over four months in 2020 | Effect of the teacher's corrective feedback in online conversational interaction on students' English- | Anxiety was high at the start. Students gradually spoke words, gave opinions and joined conversations in English, and the teacher's feedback during these |


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| | | | speaking confidence | interactions helped them understand how to speak better and build confidence. |

### 3.3 Thematic Analysis and Findings

#### 3.3.1 Classroom Atmosphere and Speaking Confidence

Seven studies bear on RQ1, and they report links with anxiety, WTC and agency far more often than with speaking confidence itself. Two themes recur: how learners experience teacher talk and classroom conditions, and how they experience their peers.

In Sweden, Nilsson (2019) found that 18.2% of 225 learners aged 8–12 reported high anxiety, mostly tied to their own oral performance, and many classroom situations triggered anxiety in other learners as well. Nilsson (2020) followed 26 learners aged 9–10 in a target language-only classroom. High-anxiety learners described incomprehensible teacher talk, social fear of making mistakes and classroom organization as points where their beliefs and behavior diverged, and their sense of agency was reduced. In Denmark, Fenyvesi (2021) interviewed 32 learners aged 8 and 10 and found three groups of anxiety situations: fear of making mistakes, speaking in front of peers who might criticize or laugh, and insecurity, for example when teacher talk or a task was not understood. Children whose anxiety fell over one year said appropriate teacher support had helped in some of these situations. In Korea, Matuzas (2022) identified familiarity with speaking tasks, class size and environment, and instruction suited to proficiency as influences on WTC among 39 learners in grades 1–6. In the comfort ratings, speaking opportunities associated with teacher-centered classes ranked above typically student-centered tasks. In Indonesia, Choirunnisa et al. (2025) described a grade 3 teacher whose encouragement and feedback were reported to reduce anxiety and build confidence, and whose strategies together created a supportive speaking environment linked to WTC. That study relied on observation and teacher interviews, so its confidence finding reflects the researchers' reading of teacher practice, not a learner measure.

Two studies examined peers without any affective outcome. Kos (2023) found that peer support among grade 5 learners (N = 24) was mostly linguistic, while social–emotional support such as positive feedback or inviting a partner to take part was limited.


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Some pairs also showed reprimanding or impatience, and this varied widely across pairs. Leslie (2021), who recorded 36 learners aged 9–10 in Portugal, found that most dyads worked collaboratively and that dyads with higher mutuality gave more support for language production. Neither study measured confidence, WTC or anxiety, so both inform the peer dimension of atmosphere only indirectly

The Nordic studies drew on learners' own voices through questionnaires, group discussions and interviews, and they named anxiety triggers. The Indonesian and Korean studies drew on observation, teacher accounts and surveys, and they described supportive practices. The studies also differ on target-language policy. In Choirunnisa et al., the teacher enforced English-only talk with point deductions for Indonesian, and the authors linked this to students' willingness to speak. Nilsson (2020) found that a target language-only approach was associated with reduced agency among high-anxiety learners. The two studies differ in method, perspective and outcome, so the contrast is not a test of one claim. None of the seven reports a test of the association between a measured atmosphere variable and speaking confidence.

### 3.3.2 Teacher Feedback Practices and Speaking Confidence

Four studies address RQ2. They span three countries and four designs, and none compared feedback practices against one another on a confidence measure.

Aedo and Millafilo (2022) explored the views of 20 Chilean young learners. Students appreciated correction that was careful and clear and that considered their beliefs and motivation, and they leaned toward recasts and repetition over metalinguistic feedback and elicitation. A preference shows what children like, not what builds their confidence.

Samodra and Faridi (2021) studied 22 fifth graders. Verbal, gestural and token reinforcement each correlated significantly with speaking performance and self-confidence ($r = .444, .459$ and $.564$), and 12 of the 22 pupils reported low self-confidence. The correlations are moderate, and the authors acknowledge weaknesses in their instrument, so the findings are suggestive only.

Yun and Park (2021) followed six learners aged 8–13 for four months of online classes. Anxiety was high at the start, learners later spoke words, gave opinions and joined conversations, and the authors report that feedback during these interactions helped them build confidence. The ages slightly exceed the review's range, and without a comparison the change cannot be assigned to feedback alone.


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In Choirunnisa et al., feedback ranged from explicit correction to reformulation and rule-based evaluation. The teacher said she corrected students privately to spare them embarrassment. That claim comes from an interview and was not tested against learners' reactions.

Findings differ by design (preference, correlation, case, observation) and by context (Chile, Indonesia, Korea). Feedback type is the most coded feature. Timing and delivery setting appear only in the teacher's own account. A supportive tone recurs across all four studies. None reports a negative association between feedback and confidence, which likely reflects the absence of comparisons as much as an absence of harm.

### 3.3.3 Joint Roles and Remaining Gaps

Direct evidence on the joint roles of atmosphere and feedback is thin. None of the ten studies tested the two together through an interaction term, a mediation model or a comparison of combinations. Two come closest. Choirunnisa et al. describe one teacher's encouragement and feedback as working together to create a supportive environment linked to WTC, but this is an account built from observation and interview. Yun and Park interpret feedback delivered through conversation as building confidence, yet they do not separate the feedback from the interactive setting in which it occurred. A joint claim therefore rests on reading separate studies side by side.

Six gaps remain. First, confidence was a named outcome in two of ten studies, while anxiety was the focus of three. Second, no study used a comparative or experimental design. Third, nine of ten studies had 40 or fewer participants, and the study durations ranged from a three-week task series to one year. Fourth, most evidence concerns learners aged 8–12, and the one study with older children (Yun & Park) mixed ages. Fifth, timing and setting of feedback were not examined directly. Sixth, much of the atmosphere and feedback evidence is observer- or teacher-reported, not learner-reported. Designs that would resolve these gaps include studies that measure atmosphere and feedback in the same classrooms with a child-appropriate confidence instrument, and comparisons of feedback delivery (private or public, immediate or delayed) with atmosphere held constant.


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### 3.4 DISCUSSION

This review set out to learn what the primary-age evidence says about classroom atmosphere, teacher feedback and speaking confidence. The short answer is that it says less than the topic's popularity suggests. Confidence was a named outcome in only two of the ten studies. The rest measured anxiety, willingness to communicate (WTC), agency, preferences or peer support. The discussion below therefore treats the findings as patterns worth testing and uses the two theories to interpret them.

The studies that listened to children found a consistent set of triggers: fear of making mistakes, the prospect of classmates laughing, and not understanding the teacher (Fenyvesi, 2021; Nilsson, 2020). Krashen's (1982) hypothesis expects exactly this kind of emotion to get in the way of learning, and Fenyvesi's report that teacher support eased anxiety for some children fits that expectation. Two results complicate it. Nilsson (2019) found high anxiety in classrooms she described as supportive and non-competitive, so a pleasant atmosphere does not remove anxiety by itself. Nilsson (2020) also traced anxiety to incomprehensible teacher talk, which means the quality of input and the emotional climate cannot be separated in practice. None of these studies measured a filter or input processing, and the hypothesis has been criticized for being vague and hard to test (Gregg, 1984; McLaughlin, 1987). The findings are compatible with the hypothesis, but they do not confirm it. The adolescent evidence that a positive environment goes with higher WTC and lower anxiety (Khajavy et al., 2018) points the same way, although the designs differ too much for a direct comparison.

Bandura (1997) names four sources of efficacy beliefs, and the feedback studies touch each of them unevenly. Verbal persuasion is the best covered. Samodra and Faridi (2021) found that verbal, gestural and token reinforcement each correlated with self-confidence, and Choirunnisa et al. (2025) described encouragement as lowering anxiety. Mastery experience is a plausible reading of Yun and Park (2021), where children moved from isolated words to opinions and conversation while their feedback helped them see how to speak better, but the study cannot show that feedback caused the change. Peer modelling appears only in Kos (2023) and Leslie (2021), and neither measured confidence. Emotional states appear in the anxiety data of Fenyvesi (2021) and Yun and Park. Usher and Pajares (2008) found that the weight of each source varies with context, so the pattern here may not generalize. The fact that token reinforcement showed the strongest correlation in Samodra


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and Faridi (r = .564) invites several explanations, such as a tangible sign of success, and this review cannot choose among them.

The corpus does not support a trade-off between protecting children's feelings and correcting their language. Children in Aedo and Millafilo (2022) valued correction that was careful and clear, and the teacher in Choirunnisa et al. combined explicit correction with private delivery. Lyster and Saito (2010) found that younger learners gained more from oral corrective feedback than older ones in terms of language development. Taken together, the question for teachers is how to correct, considering tone, timing and setting, more than whether to correct. Only the teacher's own account in one study speaks to delivery setting, so this remains a hypothesis.

No study tested atmosphere and feedback together. A reasonable proposition is that each shapes the other: a supportive climate affects how a child hears a correction, and the way correction is given affects the climate. Krashen's filter and Bandura's emotional states meet at this point, since anxiety is central to both. This is an interpretation assembled from separate studies, and it remains untested.

These are suggestions for teachers to try and evaluate, not conclusions from tested interventions. Nilsson (2019) advised looking at routine classroom practices before treating anxiety as a trait of individual children. The corpus adds three practical points. Teacher talk needs to be understandable to learners at low proficiency. Corrections can be delivered clearly and, where possible, privately. Peer work may need explicit teaching of supportive strategies, because Kos (2023) found social–emotional support among partners to be limited.

The review covers English-language, peer-reviewed studies published from 2019 to the search date in 2025. Searches ran on Scopus, ERIC and ScienceDirect, with Google Scholar as a supplementary source, and the full search string appears in the Methodology. The corpus is small and heterogeneous in design, measures and context. Two peer-support studies (Kos, 2023; Leslie, 2021) entered the corpus as evidence on the peer dimension of atmosphere although they measured no affective outcome, and Yun and Park (2021) entered with learners aged 8–13 because it is one of only two included studies that measured speaking confidence directly, and the only one that specifically tested corrective feedback against that outcome. Dropping it would have left the review with no feedback study on the outcome it was built around. The age range overshoots the criterion by one year at the top, so Table 1 reports it as it stands and the Discussion reads the study's findings with that limit in mind.


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## CONCLUSION

This review asked three questions about EFL learners aged 7–12. For RQ1, ten studies were included, and seven bear on atmosphere. They link teacher talk, peer reactions and classroom conditions to anxiety and WTC, but none tests a measured atmosphere variable against speaking confidence. For RQ2, four studies report feedback practices. Clear, supportive correction and positive reinforcement are associated with children's confidence or comfort in small, mostly descriptive studies, and no study compares practices with one another. For RQ3, no included study tests atmosphere and feedback together, so any claim about their joint effect remains a proposition.

The evidence therefore supports a modest conclusion. Supportive teacher behavior and understandable classroom talk appear in every strand of the corpus as conditions linked with less anxiety and more willingness to speak. It does not show how much each factor matters, whether one depends on the other, or what works for confidence itself.

Future research would resolve this with studies that measure atmosphere and feedback in the same classrooms using a child-appropriate speaking-confidence instrument, and that compare feedback delivered privately or publicly, immediately or later, with atmosphere held constant. Longitudinal and larger samples would help separate change caused by teaching from change that happens with time and familiarity.

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