European Journal of Education Studies
ISSN: 2501 - 1111
ISSN-L: 2501 - 1111
Available online at: www.oapub.org/edu

DOI: 10.46827/ejes.v13i3.6539 Volume 13 | Issue 3 | 2026

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FEEDBACK AND STUDENTS' RECEPTIVITY TO TEACHER CRITICISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract:
Feedback is a fundamental aspect of university learning because it links theory and practice, enhances learners' autonomy and self-regulation, and supports their academic development. For feedback to be effective, it must be specific, timely, clear, focused on the process, and encourage active participation. This systematic literature review analyses 54 studies from the decade 2015 to 2025, using the PRISMA 2020 methodology, to explore how teacher feedback contributes to higher education students' receptivity to criticism. The findings indicate that characteristics of feedback significantly impact students' receptivity. Constructive, clear, timely, and personalized feedback is particularly effective in enhancing understanding, engagement, and utilization of comments. Furthermore, psychological factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and resilience play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward criticism. The development of trust and empathy in teacher-student relationships also positively influences receptivity to feedback. In addition, external factors, including cultural context, group dynamics, and educational culture, significantly affect receptivity. Technology contributes positively by enhancing interactivity and accessibility. Finally, self-assessment tools like questionnaires, rubrics, reflective reports, and digital platforms emerge as highly impactful, fostering self-regulation, self-awareness, responsibility, and sustainable learning. These findings confirm the importance of active learner participation in the assessment process.

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Keywords: feedback, receptivity, self-assessment, higher education

1. Introduction

Feedback is a fundamental aspect of the learning process in higher education, connecting theory with practice and enhancing learners' autonomy, critical thinking, and academic development (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It is defined as information regarding student performance that aims to improve learning and serves as a dynamic interaction promoting self-regulation (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Effective feedback is specific, timely, understandable, focused on the process, and encourages self-assessment and active participation (Brookhart, 2008). Learners' acceptance of feedback depends on their receptivity, which is their ability to view feedback as an opportunity for improvement rather than as personal criticism (Hyland, 2006). Several factors influence this receptiveness, including: a) the characteristics of the feedback itself (such as type, mode of delivery, timing, and its connection to learning goals), b) the individual traits of the learner (including self-esteem, self-confidence, experiences, and motivation), c) the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the learner (factors such as trust, respect, and empathy), and d) external influences like cultural and social contexts, technology, classroom dynamics, and external pressures (Carless, 2015). Despite significant research on this topic over the past two decades, gaps still exist in the systematic study of receptivity. Much of the existing research focuses on theoretical approaches or technological tools without thoroughly exploring how learners interpret criticism. This review aims to address this gap by examining the role of feedback in learners' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education. It will utilize a systematic analysis of 54 studies from the last decade (2015-2025) and follow the PRISMA 2020 methodology. Additionally, it will explore the role of self-assessment as a mechanism to promote self-regulation, improving learners' acceptance and meaningful use of feedback.

2. Theoretical framework

Feedback is defined as information provided to a learner about their performance, aimed at improving their learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It serves to connect existing knowledge with learning objectives, enabling learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and it promotes self-regulation in learning rather than being a one-way transmission of information (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). For feedback to be effective, it must be: a) specific, b) timely, c) understandable, d) focused on the learning process, and e) designed to encourage self-assessment and student participation (Brookhart, 2008). In higher education, feedback is a crucial tool for academic development and promoting autonomy. There are various types of feedback, including: a) confirmatory feedback, which enhances self-confidence (Brookhart, 2008); b) corrective feedback, which addresses errors and encourages critical thinking (Hyland, 2006); c) directional feedback, which offers guidance on next steps (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006); d)

procedural feedback, which emphasizes the learning process (Boud & Molloy, 2013); e) digital feedback, which leverages technology (Carless, 2015); and f) peer feedback, which fosters collaboration and critical thinking (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Overall, feedback bridges the gap between theory and practice, strengthening critical thinking and research skills, while the use of digital tools enhances accessibility and interactivity (Carless, 2015).

Feedback is an essential component of the learning process, but its effectiveness relies on how receptive learners are to criticism from teachers. Receptivity refers to a learner's ability and willingness to view feedback as an opportunity for improvement rather than as a personal attack or rejection (Hyland, 2006). This connection is especially important in higher education, where students are encouraged to develop autonomy and critical thinking skills (Brookhart, 2008). The receptiveness of learners to teachers' criticism in higher education is influenced by a range of interrelated factors.

Feedback characteristics, including its type (constructive or damaging, evaluative, corrective, expansive), method of delivery (friendly, clear), educational approach (tailored to individual learner needs), timing (early or delayed), and context (private or group), play a crucial role in the learning process. These elements enhance receptivity, as learners recognize feedback's usefulness for their development (Brookhart, 2008; Boud & Molloy, 2013). In addition to these factors, individual learner characteristics such as self-confidence, psychological and emotional state, anxiety, resilience, and previous experiences significantly affect attitudes toward feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Carless, 2015). Motivation and learning goals also impact on how much value learners place on feedback (Brookhart, 2008). Furthermore, the interpersonal relationship between teacher and student greatly influences receptivity to criticism. Factors such as the quality of the relationship, the level of trust, and the student's perception of the teacher's authority, credibility, clarity, and empathy all contribute to whether feedback is accepted or rejected (Brookhart, 2008). External factors shape the educational context and influence how students respond to criticism. Elements such as cultural background, classroom dynamics, cooperation or competition among peers, educational culture, and a focus on grades versus the learning process all affect students' attitudes and expectations (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Boud & Molloy, 2013). Additionally, technological support, the use of digital media, and academic workload can either enhance or hinder feedback effectiveness (Carless, 2015). Educators can improve learners' receptivity to criticism by training them (Carless, 2015), customizing feedback according to their needs and personalities in a supportive manner (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), promoting active participation through self-assessment or dialogue (Boud & Molloy, 2013), and providing feedback early, before learners disengage from the activity (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Self-assessment is a crucial aspect of active and responsible learning in higher education. Through a systematic reflective process, learners are encouraged to evaluate their own progress, identify areas for improvement, and set personal goals (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This practice fosters self-regulation in learning, enhances metacognitive skills, and boosts self-efficacy. It enables learners to engage meaningfully

in the learning process and develop their academic identity (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). When combined with quality, supportive feedback, self-assessment creates an environment conducive to personal and academic growth, promoting self-awareness, responsibility, and sustainable learning (Boud & Molloy, 2013).

3. Previous research - Contribution of this review

Feedback is a fundamental element of the educational process, and numerous studies have examined the factors that influence its effectiveness, including the form, timing, and quality of the relationship between students and teachers. The existing literature encompasses both theoretical and empirical approaches that offer varying perspectives on how students perceive and utilize feedback. Initially, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) demonstrated, through an analysis of 42 studies, that clear and timely feedback enhances student autonomy in higher education and facilitates the formulation and achievement of learning goals. Subsequently, Hattie and Timperley (2007), based on a meta-analysis of 12 studies, developed a four-level model that highlighted the learning process as a key factor in improving performance. Furthermore, Shute (2008), analyzing 180 studies, argued that formative feedback is most effective when it is characterized by clarity, timeliness, and a lack of excessive criticism, while also suggesting practical implementation strategies. In a different approach, Jonsson (2013) synthesized 103 studies and reaffirmed the importance of feedback, noting that learning strategies and academic discourse significantly affect its effectiveness. Conversely, Evans (2013), examining 68 studies, focused on students' perceptions and concluded that the effectiveness of feedback depends on understanding, communication, and expectations, emphasizing the need to enhance interaction between students and teachers. Additionally, Liu and Brown (2015) identified methodological weaknesses in corrective feedback related to second-language writing based on 44 sources. Moreover, Van der Kleij *et al.* (2015) found through a meta-analysis of 40 studies that analytical feedback is superior in digital environments, highlighting the importance of personalization. Similarly, Chen (2016), analyzing 20 articles, pointed out both the advantages and challenges of peer feedback, advocating systematic guidance for students. Lastly, Winstone *et al.* (2017), based on 51 studies, categorized student engagement into understanding, application, and adaptation, demonstrating that active participation enhances the usefulness of feedback. Correspondingly, Baliram and Youde (2018) confirmed its positive effect on academic performance through a meta-analysis of 8 studies, while Smithers *et al.* (2018), analyzing 14 studies, linked non-cognitive skills to improved learning outcomes, though they noted the possibility of data bias.

Over the past five years, international literature has increasingly focused on the factors that determine the effectiveness of feedback in the learning process. Notably, Haughney *et al.* (2020) conducted a review of 70 empirical studies, demonstrating that the effectiveness of feedback relies on factors such as positivity, clarity, timeliness, and active student participation. Continuing this theme, a meta-analysis by Wisniewski *et al.*

(2020), which encompassed 435 studies, confirmed the significant impact of feedback on learning. Their findings emphasized that focusing on the learning process and self-regulation can enhance learning progress. Similarly, Paterson *et al.* (2020) examined 36 studies and found that students favor clear, timely, and constructive feedback that is directly linked to their work and supports active learning. Moreover, research by Lipnevich and Panadero (2021), which reviewed 14 publications, highlighted the crucial role of personalized feedback. They demonstrated that adapting feedback to meet students' needs enhances their autonomy. Additionally, Röhl (2021) identified, through a meta-analysis of 18 studies, a small but statistically significant positive effect of feedback on perceived teaching quality, underscoring the importance of individual support for teachers. In a related study, Castro *et al.* (2021) analyzed 26 studies and conducted a meta-analysis on 13 of them, concluding that feedback contributes to enhancing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of medical students, despite the high variability in results. Conversely, Yu and Yang (2021) found, across 45 studies, that while students generally respond positively to detailed feedback, they often struggle with its implementation, indicating a need for additional guidance. Following this line of inquiry, Morris *et al.* (2021) reviewed 56 studies and confirmed that formative feedback improves learning when it is systematically integrated into the teaching process. At the same time, a meta-analysis by Koenka *et al.* (2021), which included 61 studies, revealed that written comments have a more substantial positive effect on motivation and performance compared to simple grading. Similarly, Jensen *et al.* (2021), through their analysis of 17 studies, observed a clear shift towards student-centered feedback practices that promote collaboration and self-directed activity. Supporting this perspective, the study by Li *et al.* (2021), based on a meta-analysis of 39 experimental studies, highlighted the positive impact of peer feedback on learning effectiveness, reinforcing the idea that student interaction serves as a catalyst for deeper understanding. However, Hahn *et al.* (2021), in their review of 125 studies, took a more cautious stance, recognizing both the advantages and disadvantages of automatic grading. Finally, Panadero and Lipnevich (2022) proposed a comprehensive categorization of feedback models based on an analysis of 72 studies, emphasizing the need for flexibility and adaptation to specific learning and cultural contexts.

Recent research highlights the growing interest in the relationship between feedback, self-assessment, and non-cognitive skills within the learning process. Frantz *et al.* (2022) conducted a systematic review of 11 studies to explore the interaction between non-cognitive skills and environmental factors, emphasizing their role in academic development. Building on this research, Zynuddin *et al.* (2023), in their analysis of 65 studies, confirmed a strong link between school climate and the development of non-cognitive skills, stressing the importance of a supportive environment for successful learning. Additionally, Badrun (2024), based on 27 studies, emphasized the significance of self- and peer-assessment in enhancing student motivation and suggested the systematic integration of these practices into the educational framework. Similarly, Esmaeeli *et al.* (2023), through 25 systematic reviews, illustrated the extensive

applications of feedback and its essential role in learning, underlining the need to tailor feedback forms and strategies to meet learning needs. In this context, Yan *et al.* (2023) examined 98 outcome measures from 26 studies on explicit and implicit self-assessment, finding that their combined use with clear, targeted feedback yielded greater benefits. Furthermore, Liebenow *et al.* (2024) conducted a meta-analysis of 47 studies, revealing improvements in self-assessment accuracy, particularly in understanding learning outcomes, thus supporting the idea that feedback enhances students' self-awareness. Lastly, the meta-analysis by Cen and Zheng (2024), based on 13 quantitative studies, concluded that feedback from multiple sources increases students' motivation to write in a second language.

Current literature emphasizes the essential role of feedback in the learning process. It demonstrates that clear, timely, constructive, and personalized feedback not only strengthens students' understanding but also enhances their self-regulation and academic performance. The effectiveness of feedback is further improved by active participation, personalization, and the incorporation of technological tools. Additionally, peer and online feedback fosters collaboration and the development of non-cognitive skills. Formative feedback also plays a crucial role in helping students develop self-awareness and improve their self-assessment accuracy. However, students' receptivity to criticism is an area that remains under-researched. Evans' (2013) study highlights the importance of comprehending and managing feedback to formulate effective improvement strategies. This research aims to investigate the relationship between feedback and students' receptiveness to criticism. It will consider various factors, including the characteristics of the feedback provided, individual differences among students, the interpersonal dynamics between students and teachers, external influences, and the role of self-assessment in promoting self-regulation and active participation in the learning process.

4. Purpose - Research questions - Methodology

This review explores how teacher feedback impacts students' receptivity to criticism. It focuses on several factors, including the characteristics of the feedback, individual traits of students, the teacher-student relationship, and external influences. The analysis draws on published research from 2015 to 2025 to reach conclusions, identify gaps in the existing literature, and provide recommendations for future studies. Specifically, this literature review aims to address the following research questions:

1) How do various characteristics of feedback (type, mode of delivery, educational approach, timing, context, and connection to learning objectives) impact students' receptivity to criticism in higher education?
2) In what ways do individual characteristics of the learner (self-esteem, self-confidence, previous experiences with criticism, age, psychological development, emotional maturity, motivations, and goals) affect the acceptance and utilization of feedback in higher education?

3) How do interpersonal dynamics in the teacher-student relationship (trust, mutual respect, empathy) influence learners' attitudes towards feedback?
4) What role do external factors (cultural, social, technological, classroom dynamics, educational culture, external pressures) play in shaping learners' receptivity to teachers' feedback?
5) To what extent are self-assessment procedures and self-assessment tools employed in the studies reviewed, and what specific methods or tools are utilized to help learners become more receptive to teachers' criticism?
6) How does the implementation of self-assessment procedures and self-assessment tools in some studies enhance learners' receptivity to teachers' criticism compared to those studies that did not incorporate such tools?

Furthermore, we analyze various aspects such as the fields of study, the characteristics and sizes of the samples used, the nature of the data collected, and the research tools employed. Our review methodology follows the PRISMA 2020 statement by Page *et al.* (2021), which offers updated guidelines for the stages of study identification, filtering, suitability assessment, and final selection (see Figure 1).

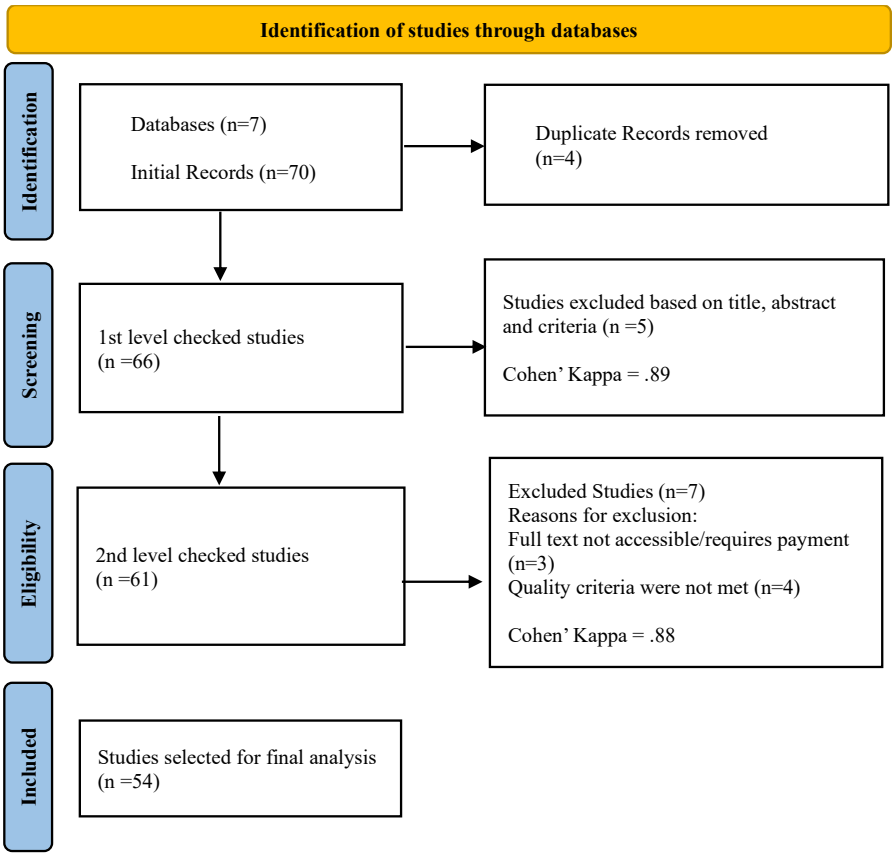

Figure 1: Flowchart of the literature review based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page *et al.*, 2021)

The search utilized keywords and phrases, including "Feedback" AND "receptivity" AND "students*" AND "educators*" AND "higher education*." To expand

the search, these terms were substituted with "students," "teachers," and "university." For the English search, the same structure was applied, with keywords such as "Feedback" AND "receptivity" AND "students*" AND "instructors*" AND "higher education*." Various combinations were explored, including terms like "learners*" and "acceptance of criticism," resulting in phrases such as "Feedback" AND "receptivity" AND "learners*" AND "teachers*" AND "university*," as well as "Feedback" AND "acceptance of criticism" AND "students*" AND "instructors*" AND "higher education*." Most of the search was conducted using English terms, as most relevant literature is published in English.

This review was conducted across seven bibliographic databases to expand the search beyond what previous systematic reviews in the field have covered. Scopus and IEEE Xplore were selected for their extensive subject coverage. Additionally, searches were carried out in ScienceDirect and SpringerLink, which also encompass the social sciences and humanities. SAGE Journals and ResearchGate were included, along with Google Scholar, despite its limitations in search capabilities.

The searches through these databases yielded a total of 70 studies. After removing four duplicates, 66 studies proceeded to the first-level review. During this stage, the titles and abstracts of the studies were analyzed based on predefined selection criteria, which included: a) empirical studies written in English or Greek, b) relevance to the field of education, c) references to feedback and learners' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education, d) information provided in the abstract, and e) a publication period from 2015 to 2025. To ensure internal consistency throughout the process, a small number of studies were re-evaluated, and Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated (see Figure 1). Following this assessment, five studies were excluded, leaving 61 studies for the second level of review. In this second level, the main text of each study was analyzed. Three studies were then excluded due to access restrictions requiring payment. The remaining 58 studies were evaluated for quality based on the following criteria:

- Clarity of the framework: Is the framework for the impact of feedback on learners' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education clearly described (including field of study and type of research)?
- Methodological design: Is the methodological design clearly outlined (including types of data collected and sample of participants)?
- Data collection methods: Are the methods and research tools for data collection clearly detailed?

After this assessment, 54 studies that met all of the criteria were selected for inclusion in the systematic review. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the review process was confirmed again through the calculation of Cohen's kappa coefficient (see Figure 1).

5. Results

The following tables present studies that examine the relationship between feedback and students' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education. The data includes details

such as researchers, year of study, country, purpose, type of research, sample size, subject area, and findings. This information is organized into factors related to receptivity, which include: a) characteristics of feedback, b) individual characteristics of students, c) the interpersonal teacher-student relationship, and d) external factors, all of which help to clarify the connection with the acceptance of feedback. Specifically, Tables 1, 2, and 3 detail the results concerning feedback and students' receptivity to teacher criticism. These tables are organized based on factors associated with the characteristics of feedback (the first research question), such as the type of feedback (Table 1), the mode of delivery, the educational approach, and timing (Table 2), as well as the context in which feedback is provided and its connection to clear learning objectives (Table 3).

Table 1: Effects of Feedback on Learners' Receptivity to Teacher Criticism in Higher Education Based on Feedback Type and Nature

Researchers **Year** **Country**	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type** **Sample Size** **Subject**	**Results**
Kahraman & Yalvac 2015 Turkey	Exploring teachers' preferences for feedback's role in skill development and assessing students' reactions to written corrective feedback.	Experimental 93 undergraduate students (45 males, 48 females) English as a foreign language Self-assessment (intervention, questionnaires)	Learners prefer feedback that is clear, positive, and constructive, especially when it includes specific instructions instead of general or overly negative criticism.
Han & Hyland 2015 China	Studying students' reactions to written corrective feedback from their teachers.	Qualitative (interviews, writing analysis) 30 undergraduate students English as a foreign language Self-assessment (reflective self-report)	Students' willingness to accept feedback depends on how well they understand it and their emotional reaction to it.
Pitt & Norton 2017 United Kingdom	Analysis of students' responses to feedback on graded assignments and their application in subsequent courses.	Qualitative 14 undergraduate students (7 males, 7 females) Social sciences Self-assessment (focus groups, interviews)	Learners appreciate detailed and targeted feedback, while they tend to reject feedback that is general, hostile, or irrelevant to their work.
Mulliner & Tucker 2017 United Kingdom	The study examining learners' and academics' views on feedback practices and their effects on feedback effectiveness.	Quantitative 194 undergraduate students (161 male, 33 female), 26 academics Architecture Self-assessment (self-report questionnaires)	Learners prefer specific, directive feedback; however, academics often believe students do not fully utilize it.

Mahfoodh 2017 Oman	Examining how students' emotional responses to written feedback affect their receptiveness to and improvement in writing skills.	Qualitative 20 undergraduate students English as a second language Self-assessment (thought logs, interviews, task analysis)	Positive and clear feedback fosters improvement, while vague feedback hinders responsiveness.
Dawson, Henderson, Mahoney, Phillips, Ryan, Boud, & Molloy 2019 Australia	Examining the perspectives of both educators and students on the elements that contribute to effective feedback.	Quantitative 406 professors and 4,514 undergraduate students Educational Evaluation (digital questionnaires)	Learners respond better to timely, personal, and relevant feedback, emphasizing the importance of trust between teachers and students.
Beaulieu, Kim, Topor & Dickey 2019 USA	Investigating what resident doctors find valuable about feedback, concentrating on their preferences and perceptions of its effectiveness.	Qualitative 27 postgraduate medical residents Medicine (interviews, focus groups, questionnaires)	Learners appreciate constructive and clear feedback. When feedback is given promptly, and it is delivered in an atmosphere of trust and respect, it becomes more accepted and useful.
Hodgson, Grobler & Morton 2021 South Africa	Exploration of students' experiences and perceptions regarding the feedback received during comprehensive clinical assessments.	Qualitative (phenomenological approach, interviews) 26 undergraduate students Diagnostic Radiography	Learners value and are receptive to feedback for skill development, primarily when it is structured, timely, and offers clear guidance for improvement.
Păduraru, Isac & Bîrleanu 2023 United Kingdom	Exploring students' perceptions of feedback in higher education.	Mixed (experimental, quantitative, qualitative) 102 undergraduate students Pedagogical Self-assessment (questionnaires, interviews, rating scales)	Students appreciate constructive feedback, especially when it is given clearly and supportively by teachers.

Table 2: Results of the impact of feedback on learners' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education, considering factors related to delivery mode, educational approach, and timing

Researchers **Year** **Country**	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type** **Sample Size** **Subject**	**Results**
Reinholz & Dounas-Frazer 2017 USA	Analyzing teachers' individualized responses to guided student reflections and examining their methods.	Qualitative 134 undergraduate students Physics Self-assessment (digital reflection form, interviews)	Learners were more positive and receptive to personalized feedback that addressed their individual needs.
Maas 2017 United Kingdom	This study explores how receptive learners are to self-directed feedback provided by their teachers during English lessons.	Qualitative 18 undergraduate students English as a foreign language Self-assessment (records, interviews)	Learners responded more positively to self-directed feedback than to teacher criticism, as it offered them greater control over their learning process.
Nolan & Loubier 2018 USA	Study of the relationship between feedback from teachers and its acceptance by students in a clinical radiology setting.	Quantitative 132 undergraduate students Radiological Technology Self-assessment (digital self-report questionnaires)	Feedback is essential for clinical performance, with students valuing it when it is timely, clear, and relevant to their skills.
Ducasse & Hill 2019 United Kingdom	Attempt to develop students' ability to understand and use feedback through technology and reflective conversations.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 50 undergraduate students Spanish as a foreign language Self-assessment (rubrics, questionnaires, interviews)	The use of educational technology and reflective conversations enhances learners' ability to interpret and apply feedback, as well as their receptivity.
Dawson, Henderson, Mahoney, Phillips, Ryan, Boud, & Molloy 2019 Australia	Examining the perspectives of both educators and students on the elements that contribute to effective feedback.	Quantitative 406 professors and 4,514 undergraduate students Educational Evaluation (digital questionnaires)	Learners respond better to timely, personal, and relevant feedback, emphasizing the importance of trust between teachers and students.

Moffitt, Padgett & Grieve 2020 Australia	The study examined how the use of emoticons in electronic feedback influences learners' perceptions of their teachers.	Experimental 241 undergraduate students Educational Psychology Self-assessment (questionnaires, assessment using emoticons)	The use of emoticons enhanced learners' perception of and receptiveness to feedback.
Man, Chau & Kong 2020 China	Exploring whether written feedback can be a learning tool, enhancing student engagement.	Mixed (experimental quantitative, qualitative) 118 undergraduate students (82 men, 36 women) Psychology Self-assessment (questionnaires, interviews)	Engaging actively with feedback through written responses improved students' positive attitudes and their willingness to incorporate it.
Alharbi, M.A. 2021 Saudi Arabia	A comparison of the effects of written feedback and audio feedback from teachers on students' writing.	Mixed (quantitative, experimental) 60 undergraduate students of higher education English as a foreign language (Talk & Comment)	Audio feedback is more effective than written feedback in enhancing writing skills because it provides immediate, clear, and easily accepted responses.
Bastola & Hu 2021 Hong Kong	An examination of postgraduate students' perceptions of feedback provided by their supervisors.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 434 postgraduate students (307 men, 127 women) English Studies, Physics – Engineering (questionnaires, interviews)	Students experienced frustration due to unclear or delayed feedback but maintained a positive attitude when it was timely and detailed.
Vangelis Ioakeimidou & Nanos 2023 Greece	Investigating how receptive learners are to feedback in the evaluative activities of a distance learning program.	Qualitative 6 postgraduate students Distance learning (interviews with videoconferencing platforms)	Students responded positively when they received immediate feedback that was specifically tailored to their activities.
Van Wijk, van Blankenstein, Janse, Dubois & Langers 2024 Netherlands	This study investigates how students utilize feedback from their progress exams.	Qualitative 15 undergraduate students Medical Education (tests, interviews)	Students are open to feedback and often need guidance on how to use it effectively to improve.

Chow 2024 Malaysia	Analyzing students' perceptions of peer feedback through written comments, video discussions, or face-to-face conversations.	Mixed (quantitative, experimental) 48 undergraduate students (37 men, 11 women) Engineering (video, intervention, questionnaires)	Students find that receiving feedback through interpersonal interactions helps them understand concepts better and respond more effectively.
Azizah 2024 Indonesia	Exploring learners' attitudes toward oral corrective feedback to better understand their perceptions and evaluations.	Quantitative 23 postgraduate students Linguistics / English Language Teaching Self-assessment (questionnaires)	Students prefer oral corrective feedback from teachers rather than from their peers.

Table 3: Results of the impact of feedback on learners' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education based on factors related to its implementation context and its connection to clear learning objectives

Researchers Year Country	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type Sample Size Subject**	**Results**
Davis & Dargusch 2015 Australia	Analysis of student and teacher perceptions regarding feedback in assessments, focusing on the importance of repetition and trust.	Qualitative (case study) 108 undergraduate students (13 male, 95 female) Teacher Education questionnaires, interviews	Feedback is more effective and better received when given consistently and based on trust in teachers.
Katz-Sidlow, Baer & Gershel 2016 USA	An examination of students' attitudes towards receiving immediate feedback on their teaching skills.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 20 postgraduate students, Medicine Self-assessment (comments, sessions, self-report questionnaires)	Immediate feedback was deemed especially important, and students were open to receiving it.
Ackerman, Dommeyer & Gross 2017 USA	A study examining how source, revision opportunities, and feedback affect students' perceptions.	Experimental 167 undergraduate students Marketing / Education incomplete experimental design	Students who received more feedback and had opportunities to revise were more receptive and expressed more positive impressions.
Henderson, Ryan & Phillips	Analysis of the challenges faced by teachers and learners in providing and receiving feedback, along	Quantitative (digital questionnaires)	Challenges related to feedback and receptivity to criticism often involve practical issues, contextual

2019 Australia	with suggestions for improvement.	3,807 undergraduate students and 281 teachers Educational Evaluation	limitations, and individual abilities.
Tubino & Adachi 2022 United Kingdom	The study explores how an AI tool for automated feedback improves learners' feedback literacy skills.	Mixed (performance, interviews, experiential analyses) 17 postgraduate students Educational Technology Self-assessment (AI automated feedback)	The AI tool assisted learners in understanding feedback better and enhancing their feedback-taking skills, and they were very receptive to it.
Alharbi & Alqefari 2022 Saudi Arabia	The study explored how feedback from teachers and peers on written assignments influences students' receptivity and learning.	Experimental 32 undergraduate students English as a foreign language Self-assessment (digital assessment program Peerceptiv)	Learners favored instructor feedback for its reliability, while peer critiques promoted collaborative learning and openness.
Tippetts, Davis & Zick 2024 USA	Investigating the role of text messaging as a communication and feedback tool for academic advisors assisting students.	Mixed (experimental, quantitative, qualitative) 50 undergraduate students, 20 counselors Academic Counseling Self-assessment (questionnaires, intervention, SMS, interviews)	Students found it beneficial to use text messaging for receiving prompt feedback.
Xueying, Fangrui & Wenjie 2025 China	Investigating the integration of human experience and artificial intelligence in providing feedback for translation education.	Qualitative (case analysis) 34 undergraduate students (28 women and 6 men) Translation Self-assessment (Generative AI)	Collaborative feedback enhanced learners' openness to new ideas, fostered positive responses, and improved their translation skills.
Rüdian, Podelo, Kužílek & Pinkwart 2025 Germany	Exploration of students' views on feedback from teachers and AI language models.	Experimental 5 undergraduate students Educational Technology	Students tend to reject feedback that is generated automatically, perceiving it as a threat to their emotional and social needs.

		Self-assessment (Learning Analytics, questionnaires)	

Tables 4 and 5 present the results regarding the impact of feedback on students' receptivity to teacher criticism. This analysis is based on various individual student characteristics, which address the second research question. Table 4 focuses on factors such as self-confidence, psychological and emotional states, anxiety, and resilience. Meanwhile, Table 5 looks at aspects like previous experiences, motivation, and learning goals.

Table 4: Results of the impact of feedback on students' receptiveness to teacher criticism in higher education, focusing on self-confidence, psychological and emotional state, anxiety, and resilience

Researchers Year Country	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type Sample Size Subject**	**Results**
Han & Hyland 2015 China	Studying students' reactions to written corrective feedback from their teachers.	Qualitative (interviews, writing analysis) 30 undergraduate students English as a foreign language Self-assessment (reflective self-report)	Students' willingness to accept feedback depends on how well they understand it and their emotional reaction to it.
Perrella 2017 Canada	Examining the reasons for resistance to feedback and suggesting strategies to lessen egocentrism, aiming to enhance the learning experience for students.	Qualitative (observations, interviews, experiences) 10 undergraduate students Medicine	Students often resist feedback because they view it as a threat to their self-image, leading to denial or avoidance.
Mahfoodh 2017 Oman	Examining how students' emotional responses to written feedback affect their receptiveness to and improvement in writing skills.	Qualitative 20 undergraduate students English as a second language Self-assessment (thought logs, interviews, task analysis)	Positive and clear feedback fosters improvement, while vague feedback hinders responsiveness.
Ryan & Henderson 2018	Examining students' emotional responses to feedback from their professors.	Quantitative 4,514 undergraduate students	International students and students with low grades were less receptive to feedback, often feeling disappointment, shame, and anger.

Australia		Educational Evaluation (questionnaires)	
Salpietro, Clark, Kress, Laux & Walker 2021 USA	Exploring interventions that improve counselling graduate students' ability to accept criticism from professors for their professional development.	Mixed (workshops, questionnaires, interviews) 28 graduate students Counseling and Counselor Education Self-assessment (Q methodology)	The interventions enhanced students' receptiveness to feedback, enabling them to embrace criticism and develop their skills as future counselors.
Alharbi, B. 2021 Saudi Arabia	An investigation into how feedback affects the writing of students learning English as a foreign language.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 35 undergraduate students, 5 teachers English as a foreign language Self-assessment (diaries, questionnaires, interviews)	Feedback enhances writing skills and boosts self-confidence. Being open to teachers' critiques is beneficial, as constructive criticism fosters improvement.
Lipnevich, Murano, Krannich & Goetz 2021 USA	An investigation of performance feedback and associated emotions' impact on student performance in a written assignment.	Mixed (quantitative, experimental) 464 undergraduate students (223 male, 240 female, 1 gender-neutral) Psychology (written assignment, questionnaires)	Non-graded feedback enhanced receptiveness and performance, whereas graded feedback resulted in mixed emotions.
Lipnevich, Gjicali, Asil & Smith 2021 USA, New Zealand	Creation of a tool to assess feedback receptivity and examine its connection to personality traits.	Quantitative 319 undergraduate students (57 men, 262 women) Psychology Self-assessment (questionnaires, Educational Feedback Receiving Scale)	A reliable receptivity scale was developed, showing greater acceptance among students who have high openness and conscientiousness, and lower acceptance among those with high neuroticism.
Troy, Moua & Van Boekel 2024 USA	The study examines how trust in professors and the university affects their acceptance and use of critical feedback within the framework of "wise feedback" and its role in enhancing learning.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 94 undergraduate students Psychology Self-assessment	"Wise feedback" enhanced their trust and acceptance of criticism; a favourable climate and trusting relationships increased receptivity, while their absence led to defensive reactions.

		(questionnaires, surveys, interviews)	

Table 5. Results of the impact of feedback on students' openness to teacher criticism in higher education, based on their prior experiences, motivations, and learning objectives

Researchers **Year** **Country**	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type** **Sample Size** **Subject**	**Results**
Winstone, Nash, Rowntree & Parker 2017b United Kingdom	Exploring the reasons that prevent learners from seeking and accepting feedback.	Qualitative 31 undergraduate students (3 men, 28 women) Psychology Focus groups	Obstacles to accepting feedback include difficulty in understanding terminology, a lack of willingness to make an effort, and a limited awareness.
Gallavan 2020 USA	Examining the essential roles of teaching readiness, feedback receptiveness, and expectation responsiveness.	Qualitative 15 undergraduate students Teacher Education Self-assessment (observation, discussions)	Acceptance and responsiveness rely on a clear understanding of the learners' context and behaviors.
Molloy, Boud & Henderson 2020 Australia	The research explores how feedback improves learners' receptivity and their understanding and application of feedback in learning.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 4,514 undergraduate students, 140 in focus groups Educational Evaluation Self-assessment (questionnaires, focus groups)	Learners respond positively when feedback provides tools for improvement and is tailored to their learning needs.
Thibodeaux & Harapnuik 2020 USA	The study analyzes how learners utilize feedback to take ownership of their learning and enhance their understanding in an educational program.	Mixed (experimental, quantitative, qualitative) 52 postgraduate students General Education Self-assessment (interviews, questionnaires, online activities)	Students who received clear and actionable feedback showed greater independence, improved understanding, and a higher willingness to accept criticism.
Gan, An, Liu & Zhang 2021 China	Investigation of the relationship between teachers' feedback practices and student behavior, and how these practices influence learning outcomes.	Quantitative 308 undergraduate students (277 female, 31 male) English as a second language	Students are more receptive when they receive supportive feedback that improves their self-regulation skills and acknowledges the emotional aspect of learning.

		(questionnaires)	
Yu 2021 China	Establishing a theoretical and practical framework to improve the reception and use of feedback in academic writing through structured support.	Mixed (quantitative, experimental) 150 undergraduate students English as a second language (digital assignment submission system, questionnaires)	Support from instructors and peers, along with digital access, enhanced students' openness to and use of criticism.
Nicol & McCallum 2022 United Kingdom	This study explores how self-assessment improves learners' openness to feedback and fosters more meaningful conversations.	Mixed (questionnaires, interviews, essay writing) 41 undergraduate students Economics Self-assessment (AROPA software)	Self-assessment enhanced receptivity. Learners, by comparing their self-assessments with feedback, developed a better understanding and a greater willingness to adopt suggestions.
Karunarathne, Han & Harvey 2023 Australia	The evaluation of students' ability to receive and use feedback emphasizes the connection between receptivity and academic performance.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 130 undergraduate students Administration, Economics Self-assessment (questionnaires, task analysis)	Students who are highly receptive have significantly improved their performance. Understanding and accepting feedback is crucial to the learning process.

Table 6 displays the results regarding how feedback affects students' receptivity to teacher criticism, considering factors related to the teacher-student interpersonal relationship, such as trust, mutual respect, and empathy (third research question).

Table 6: Results of feedback effects on students' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education, considering the teacher-student interpersonal relationship

Researchers Year Country	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type Sample Size Subject**	**Results**
Davis & Dargusch 2015 Australia	Analysis of student and teacher perceptions regarding feedback in assessments, focusing on the importance of repetition and trust.	Qualitative (case study) 108 undergraduate students (13 male, 95 female) Teacher Education questionnaires, interviews	Feedback is more effective and better received when given consistently and based on trust in teachers.
Harrison, Könings, Dannefer,	Analyzing the factors that affect the acceptance of formative feedback across	Qualitative (focus groups)	Trust in the teacher, authenticity, and autonomy enhance the

Schuwirth & van der Vleuten 2016 USA, United Kingdom	different assessment cultures.	212 postgraduate students Medicine Self-assessment (interviews, reflective reports)	acceptance of qualitative feedback more than the use of grades does.
Ramani, Könings, Mann, Pisarski & van der Vleuten 2018 USA	It explores how feedback culture influences practices, emphasizing residents' and faculty members' views on politeness and face in their interactions.	Qualitative 29 postgraduate residents 22 faculty members Medicine Self-assessment (interviews, focus groups, feedback emails)	Residents preferred gentle and indirect feedback to minimize criticism, while faculty members avoided harsh feedback due to social pressures.
Dawson, Henderson, Mahoney, Phillips, Ryan, Boud, & Molloy 2019 Australia	Examining the perspectives of both educators and students on the elements that contribute to effective feedback.	Quantitative 406 professors and 4,514 undergraduate students Educational Evaluation (digital questionnaires)	Learners respond better to timely, personal, and relevant feedback, emphasizing the importance of trust between teachers and students.
Beaulieu, Kim, Topor & Dickey 2019 USA	Investigating what resident doctors find valuable about feedback, concentrating on their preferences and perceptions of its effectiveness.	Qualitative 27 postgraduate medical residents Medicine (interviews, focus groups, questionnaires)	Learners appreciate constructive and clear feedback. When feedback is given promptly, and it is delivered in an atmosphere of trust and respect, it becomes more accepted and useful.
Carless 2020 Hong Kong	This study explores learners' long-term experiences with feedback, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between teachers and students.	Qualitative 4 undergraduate students (3 female) General education Self-assessment (interviews, document analysis)	Collaboration between teachers and students enhances feedback effectiveness by promoting dialogue and increasing learners' receptivity.
Abraham & Singaram 2021 South Africa	Examining the obstacles and supports that influence the acceptance and use of feedback in a clinical education environment.	Qualitative (focus groups) 25 undergraduate students Medicine Self-assessment (clinical formative assessment diary)	Students were receptive to feedback when it aligned with their personal goals, was consistent, and included cross-curricular relationships.
McLaughlin-Sheasby	Exploring how a learning environment centered on the	Qualitative (theoretical analysis,	Respecting individual dignity and fostering

2021 USA	concept of "person" and community can enhance sermon feedback in the classroom.	observations, interviews) 20 undergraduate students Theology/Homilics	community collaboration improve feedback acceptance and effectiveness.
Thomas & Gupta 2024 Scottland	Analyzing international students' experiences of psychological safety during feedback interactions in an undergraduate medical program.	Qualitative (ethnographic approach) 15 undergraduate students Medicine, Psychology Self-assessment (observations, interviews)	Feedback, the characteristics of the instructor, cultural factors, and the quality of relationships all contributed to enhancing students' trust and openness to learning.
Troy, Moua & Van Boekel 2024 USA	The study examines how trust in professors and the university affects their acceptance and use of critical feedback within the framework of "wise feedback" and its role in enhancing learning.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 94 undergraduate students Psychology Self-assessment (questionnaires, surveys, interviews)	"Wise feedback" enhanced their trust and acceptance of criticism; a favourable climate and trusting relationships increased receptivity, while their absence led to defensive reactions.

Finally, Tables 7 and 8 present the results regarding how feedback influences students' receptiveness to teacher criticism, focusing on external factors (the fourth research question). These factors include sociocultural and academic influences, such as cultural background, class and group dynamics, cooperation versus competition among peers, educational culture, the emphasis on grades over the learning process, and academic workload (shown in Table 7). Additionally, Table 8 explores the impact of technological support and the use of digital media.

Elements pertaining to the fifth and sixth research questions—specifically, the implementation of self-assessment processes and tools, as well as their impact on students' receptiveness to teacher feedback—are included in all tables that present the results. These aspects are analyzed in depth in the subsequent discussion.

Table 7: Effects of feedback on learners' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education, considering sociocultural and academic factors

Researchers **Year** **Country**	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type** **Sample Size** **Subject**	**Results**
Harrison, Könings, Dannefer, Schuwirth & van der Vleuten 2016 USA, United Kingdom	Analyzing the factors that affect the acceptance of formative feedback across different assessment cultures.	Qualitative (focus groups) 212 postgraduate students Medicine Self-assessment (interviews, reflective reports)	Trust in the teacher, authenticity, and autonomy enhance the acceptance of qualitative feedback more than the use of grades does.
Winstone, Nash, Rowntree & Parker 2017b United Kingdom	Exploring the reasons that prevent learners from seeking and accepting feedback.	Qualitative 31 undergraduate students (3 men, 28 women) Psychology Focus groups	Obstacles to accepting feedback include difficulty in understanding terminology, a lack of willingness to make an effort, and a limited awareness.
Ramani, Könings, Mann, Pisarski & van der Vleuten 2018 USA	The study explores how feedback culture influences practices, emphasizing residents' and faculty members' views on politeness and face in their interactions.	Qualitative 29 postgraduate residents 22 faculty members Medicine Self-assessment (interviews, focus groups, feedback emails)	Residents preferred gentle and indirect feedback to minimize criticism, while faculty members avoided harsh feedback due to social pressures.
Henderson, Ryan & Phillips 2019 Australia	Analysis of the challenges faced by teachers and learners in providing and receiving feedback, along with suggestions for improvement.	Quantitative (digital questionnaires) 3,807 undergraduate students and 281 teachers Educational Evaluation	Challenges related to feedback and receptivity to criticism often involve practical issues, contextual limitations, and individual abilities.
Alharbi & Alqefari 2022 Saudi Arabia	The study explored how feedback from teachers and peers on written assignments influences students' receptivity and learning.	Experimental 32 undergraduate students English as a foreign language Self-assessment (digital assessment program Peerceptiv)	Learners favored instructor feedback for its reliability, while peer critiques promoted collaborative learning and openness.
Bastola 2022 Nepal	An investigation into the involvement and challenges of feedback from thesis supervisors, based on the perceptions of both supervisors and students.	Mixed 30 supervisors, 50 postgraduate students General education	Both students and supervisors were positive about feedback, emphasizing the need for clarity and support in the process.

		Self-assessment (questionnaires, interviews)	
Mir, Arif & Gul 2023 Pakistan	Investigating how prospective teachers view rubrics as effective feedback for learning and assessment.	Qualitative 15 undergraduate students Teacher Education (WhatsApp) (semi-structured interviews)	Participants are receptive and view rubrics as effective tools for providing feedback.
Murdoch-Eaton & Kawai 2024 Japan, United Kingdom	The study analyzes the significant differences in how students experience and respond to feedback from formative assessments.	Qualitative 20 undergraduate medical students (10 from Japan, 10 from the UK) Medicine (interviews)	UK students viewed feedback as a learning tool, while Japanese students perceived it mainly as criticism, resulting in less interaction with teachers.
Thomas & Gupta 2024 Scottland	Analyzing international students' experiences of psychological safety during feedback interactions in an undergraduate medical program.	Qualitative (ethnographic approach) 15 undergraduate students Medicine, Psychology Self-assessment (observations, interviews)	Feedback, the characteristics of the instructor, cultural factors, and the quality of relationships all contributed to enhancing students' trust and openness to learning.

Table 8: The results of how feedback affects learners' receptivity to teacher criticism in higher education, focusing on factors supported by educational technology

Researchers Year Country	**Research Purpose**	**Research Type Sample Size Subject**	**Results**
Ducasse & Hill 2019 United Kingdom	Attempt to develop students' ability to understand and use feedback through technology and reflective conversations.	Mixed (quantitative, qualitative) 50 undergraduate students Spanish as a foreign language Self-assessment (rubrics, questionnaires, interviews)	The use of educational technology and reflective conversations enhances learners' ability to interpret and apply feedback, as well as their receptivity.
Tubino & Adachi 2022	The study explores how an AI tool for automated feedback improves learners' feedback literacy skills.	Mixed (performance, interviews, experiential analyses)	The AI tool assisted learners in understanding feedback better and enhancing their feedback-taking skills, and they were very receptive to it.

United Kingdom		17 postgraduate students Educational Technology Self-assessment (AI automated feedback)	
Xueying, Fangrui & Wenjie 2025 China	Investigating the integration of human experience and artificial intelligence in providing feedback for translation education.	Qualitative (case analysis) 34 undergraduate students (28 women and 6 men) Translation Self-assessment (Generative AI)	Collaborative feedback enhanced learners' openness to new ideas, fostered positive responses, and improved their translation skills.
Rüdian, Podelo, Kužílek & Pinkwart 2025 Germany	Exploration of students' views on feedback from teachers and AI language models.	Experimental 5 undergraduate students Educational Technology Self-assessment (Learning Analytics, questionnaires)	Students tend to reject feedback that is generated automatically, perceiving it as a threat to their emotional and social needs.

6. Discussion

This systematic review examines the impact of teacher feedback on higher education students' receptiveness to criticism. A total of 54 empirical studies were identified, with only two (3.7%) being published at conferences. The United States leads with 15 studies (27.7%), followed by the United Kingdom with 10 (18.5%), Australia with 7 (13%), China with 5 (9.3%), and Saudi Arabia with 3 (5.5%). Hong Kong and South Africa each contributed two studies (3.7%), while countries such as Turkey, Oman, Taiwan, New Zealand, Nepal, Greece, Pakistan, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Indonesia, Scotland, Germany, Japan, and Canada each had one study (1.8%). Additionally, three cross-national studies were conducted (USA-Netherlands, USA-United Kingdom, and Japan-United Kingdom). In terms of distribution by continent, Asia comprises the highest number of studies (n=17, 31.5%), followed closely by America (n=16, 29.6%), Europe (n=14, 25.9%), Oceania (n=8, 14.8%), and Africa (n=2, 3.7%). Regarding the methodologies employed, qualitative studies dominate (n=22, 40.7%), followed by mixed methods (n=19, 35.2%), quantitative studies (n=8, 14.8%), and experimental studies (n=5, 9.3%). Looking at sample sizes, most studies included between 101-500 participants (n=15), followed by those with 11-20 participants (n=11), 21-30 participants (n=8), and 31-50 participants (n=7). Fewer studies had sample sizes of 51-100 (n=5), 1-10 (n=4), and over 500 participants (n=4). The range of participants varies: experimental studies had between 5 to 241 participants; mixed studies had between 17 to 4,654; quantitative studies ranged from 23 to 4,920; and qualitative studies included between 4 to 212 participants. Only 13

studies (24%) provided detailed data on the gender proportions, while one study included exclusively female participants. Regarding subject areas, the majority of studies focused on English as a second or foreign language (n=11), followed by Medicine (n=9), Psychology (n=7), Educational Assessment (n=4), General Education (n=3), and Teacher Education (n=3). Two studies were identified in subjects such as Physics, Radiological Technology-Radiography, Academic Counseling, Engineering, Educational Technology, and Economics. In contrast, one study was noted in each of the following areas: Social Sciences, Marketing, Architecture, Spanish as a Foreign Language, Theology, Distance Education, Management, Pedagogy, and Translation. Additionally, six studies encompassed multiple subject areas. In terms of study level, 44 studies (81.5%) focused on undergraduate students, while 10 studies (18.5%) involved postgraduate students. Furthermore, 8 studies (14.8%) included samples of undergraduate professors, postgraduate thesis supervisors, and academic advisors. Notably, 21 studies (38.9%) utilized digital or technological means, with two of them incorporating artificial intelligence.

Concerning the first research question, the majority of studies reviewed (n=31) have demonstrated that the characteristics of feedback significantly influence learners' receptivity in higher education. Specifically, constructive, positive, and clear feedback enhances students' commitment and motivation by providing guidance without causing discouragement (Kahraman & Yalvac, 2015; Han & Hyland, 2015; Pitt & Norton, 2017; Mulliner & Tucker, 2017; Mahfoodh, 2017; Beaulieu *et al.,* 2019; *Dawson et al.,* 2019; Hodgson *et al.,* 2021; Păduraru *et al.,* 2023). This aligns with research suggesting that clear, positive, and timely feedback fosters learning progress and motivation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008; Haughney *et al.,* 2020). Moreover, well-articulated and positively phrased guidance enhances self-regulation, autonomy, and engagement in learning (Nolan & Loubier, 2018; Dawson *et al.,* 2019; Moffitt *et al.,* 2020; Alharbi, 2021; Bastola & Hu, 2021; Vangelis *et al.,* 2023). This finding is consistent with earlier theoretical and empirical studies that emphasize the role of self-regulation and active participation in promoting learning progress (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Wisniewski *et al.,* 2020). The clarity and structure of both written and audio feedback also aid in understanding and applying comments. Additionally, using emoticons in electronic feedback helps create a positive tone (Man *et al.,* 2020; Van Wijk *et al.,* 2024; Chow, 2024; Azizah, 2024), a point supported by Van der Kleij *et al.* (2015). Direct and interpersonal verbal feedback enhances receptivity through a sense of immediacy and personal involvement (Reinholz & Dounas-Frazer, 2017; Maas, 2017; Ducasse & Hill, 2019), as confirmed by Evans (2013) and Paterson *et al.* (2020). In contrast, vague, delayed, or overly general feedback tends to reduce receptivity (Pitt & Norton, 2017; Bastola & Hu, 2021), a conclusion further validated by the meta-analyses of Shute (2008) and Röhl (2021). Formative assessments and self-assessments promote self-regulation and critical thinking (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Katz-Sidlow *et al.,* 2016; Ackerman *et al.,* 2017), as indicated by Boud & Molloy (2013), Yan *et al.* (2023), and Liebenow *et al.* (2024). Timely feedback enhances engagement, whereas delays diminish its effectiveness (Ackerman *et al.,* 2017; Henderson

et al., 2019; Bastola & Hu, 2021). This observation aligns with findings from Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006) and Wisniewski *et al.* (2020), who argue that timely feedback increases learning engagement and motivation. Additionally, in collaborative or digital environments, active participation boosts receptivity, while SMS and other direct communication channels enhance a sense of immediacy (Alharbi & Alqefari, 2022; Tubino & Adachi, 2022; Tippetts *et al.,* 2024). These findings echo those of Jensen *et al.* (2021) and Li *et al.* (2021), highlighting the positive effects of collaborative and digital feedback on learning. Furthermore, tailoring feedback to individual needs improves acceptance, whereas impersonal automated feedback tends to decrease it (Xueying *et al.*, 2025; Rüdian *et al.,* 2025). This aligns with the meta-analysis by Lipnevich & Panadero (2021), which emphasizes the importance of personalizing feedback to enhance autonomy. At the same time, students' self-concept plays a crucial role in receptivity, with a positive self-image leading to better responsiveness (Rüdian *et al.,* 2025), as confirmed by Smithers *et al.* (2018) and Frantz *et al.* (2022), who explored the relationship between non-cognitive skills and learning outcomes. Finally, despite the extensive documentation of these findings, further research is necessary to explore the optimal frequency of feedback, the interaction between different types of feedback (particularly human versus automated), and the most effective delivery environments, as current studies do not fully address these aspects.

The research identified a significant number of studies (n=16) that focused on factors related to students' individual characteristics, which was the second research question. Specifically, learners with high self-efficacy and positive attitudes towards learning view feedback as an opportunity for improvement (Han & Hyland, 2015; Mahfoodh, 2017; Ryan & Henderson, 2018; Lipnevich *et al.,* 2021a; Troy *et al.,* 2024). This finding aligns with earlier research emphasizing the roles of self-concept and motivation in the positive reception of feedback and acceptance of criticism (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Evans, 2013). Attributes such as self-confidence, emotional maturity, and a learning-oriented attitude enhance the acceptance of feedback (Perrella, 2017; Salpietro *et al.,* 2021; Alharbi, 2021; Lipnevich *et al.,* 2021b). These results are consistent with studies by Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006) and Wisniewski *et al.* (2020), who stressed the importance of a positive attitude and internal motivation for receptivity to feedback. In contrast, students with lower academic or emotional skills tend to respond better to positive and supportive feedback. Negative or grade-focused feedback, on the other hand, can lead to feelings of frustration, shame, or anger (Winstone *et al.*, 2017b; Ryan & Henderson, 2018; Gallavan, 2020; Lipnevich *et al.,* 2021a). This observation is also supported by Shute (2008) and Haughney *et al.* (2020), who indicate that overly critical or ambiguous feedback can increase anxiety and decrease receptivity. Furthermore, self-assessment fosters self-regulation and self-efficacy, enhancing receptivity through improved self-awareness (Molloy *et al.,* 2020; Thibodeaux & Harapnuik, 2020; Gan *et al.,* 2021; Nicol & McCallum, 2022). Meta-analyses by Boud & Molloy (2013), Yan *et al.* (2023), and Liebenow *et al.* (2024) confirm that when combined with supportive feedback, self-assessment can improve academic self-confidence. Positive self-concept, along with a

personality characterized by openness and conscientiousness, increases receptivity to feedback, while higher levels of neuroticism tend to reduce it (Yu, 2021; Nicol & McCallum, 2022; Lipnevich *et al.,* 2021b). These findings are consistent with similar research by Smithers *et al.* (2018) and Röhl (2021). Additionally, experiences of positive feedback build trust, whereas negative feedback can lead to defensiveness (Winstone *et al.,* 2017b; Karunarathne *et al.,* 2023), as noted by Evans (2013) and Paterson *et al.* (2020). Despite these insights, further studies focusing on psychological maturity and special educational needs are warranted.

Very few studies (n=10) have emphasized the significance of the teacher-student interpersonal relationship as a critical factor in the acceptance of feedback, which addresses the third research question. A lack of trust or the absence of student voices limited their receptivity, leading them to feel that the feedback did not meet their needs (Davis & Dargusch, 2015; Harrison *et al.,* 2016; Ramani *et al.,* 2018; Carless, 2020). This finding is consistent with earlier research by Evans (2013) and Hattie & Timperley (2007), which identified trust and the quality of the teacher-student relationship as fundamental conditions for effective feedback. In contrast, active participation and dialogue improved receptivity, fostering a sense of appreciation and collaboration (Dawson *et al.,* 2019; Beaulieu *et al.,* 2019; Carless, 2020). This was thoroughly supported by Boud & Molloy (2013) and Winstone *et al.* (2017a), who noted that dialogue and the collaborative aspects of feedback enhance active engagement and its use. A positive relationship based on mutual respect and trust increases participation and the utilization of feedback (Dawson *et al.*, 2019; Abraham & Singaram, 2021; McLaughlin-Sheasby, 2021). Additionally, Paterson *et al.* (2020) and Röhl (2021) demonstrated that perceived relationship quality and teacher support improve student receptivity. Empathy and clear communication from teachers foster positive attitudes, while overly gentle or indirect feedback, stemming from social pressures, can diminish honesty and effectiveness (Ramani *et al.*, 2018; Thomas & Gupta, 2024; Troy *et al.,* 2024). These findings align with the views of Haughney *et al.* (2020) and Panadero & Lipnevich (2022), who emphasized the importance of honest, transparent, and supportive communication for the acceptance of feedback. However, there is limited research addressing the need for further studies on the role of teacher education in building trust and enhancing students' receptivity.

Few studies (n=13) examine the significant influence of external factors on learners' openness to feedback (research question 4). Cultural context significantly shapes how criticism is interpreted and accepted, as cultural values affect students' attitudes. For instance, students from collectivist cultures tend to prefer indirect feedback to preserve "face" (Harrison *et al.*, 2016; Ramani *et al.*, 2018; Murdoch-Eaton & Kawai, 2024; Thomas & Gupta, 2024). This finding aligns with the meta-analysis conducted by Panadero & Lipnevich (2022), which underscores the importance of cultural context and the necessity for adaptable feedback approaches across different educational settings. Additionally, classroom dynamics—particularly in collaborative environments-enhance receptivity through interaction and support among learners (Alharbi & Alqefari, 2022; Bastola, 2022; Mir *et al.,* 2023), which is consistent with earlier research (Jensen *et al.,* 2021; Li *et al.,* 2021).

Technology also plays a crucial role by providing personalized, timely, and interactive feedback, which increases motivation and acceptance (Ducasse & Hill, 2019; Tubino & Adachi, 2022; Xueying *et al.,* 2025; Rüdian *et al.,* 2025). This observation is supported by Van der Kleij *et al.* (2015) and Castro *et al.* (2021), who emphasize the effectiveness of digital and adaptive feedback methods in improving learning outcomes. However, while technology can facilitate adaptation to individual needs, an excessive focus on grading can diminish effectiveness (Harrison *et al.,* 2016; Winstone *et al.,* 2017b; Henderson *et al.,* 2019). This concern aligns with findings from Shute (2008) and Koenka *et al.* (2021), which indicate that feedback based on grades can hinder learning progress. Moreover, the limited exploration of cultural and social factors—such as assessment culture and social norms—and the lack of studies addressing the long-term impact of technology highlight the need for further research in various educational and cultural contexts, particularly regarding the acceptance of automated feedback.

Regarding the use of self-assessment procedures (research question 5), thirty-four studies (63%) incorporated self-assessment with various methods and tools. These studies utilised digital platforms, such as Peerceptiv for peer feedback (Alharbi & Alqefari, 2022), self-report rubrics and questionnaires (Reinholz & Dounas-Frazer, 2017; Nolan & Loubier, 2018; Ducasse & Hill, 2019; Man *et al.,* 2020; Moffitt *et al.,* 2020; Tubino & Adachi, 2022; Nicol & McCallum, 2022), as well as automated AI feedback (Xueying *et al.,* 2025; Rüdian *et al.,* 2025). Additionally, self-assessment questionnaires (Kahraman & Yalvac, 2015; Han & Hyland, 2015; Mahfoodh, 2017; Pitt & Norton, 2017; Mulliner & Tucker, 2017; Beaulieu *et al.,* 2019; Molloy *et al.,* 2020; Gallavan, 2020; Thibodeaux & Harapnuik, 2020; Salpietro *et al.,* 2021; Alharbi, 2021; Lipnevich *et al.,* 2021b; Hodgson *et al.,* 2021; Păduraru *et al.,* 2023), rubrics (Nicol & McCallum, 2022), self-assessment sheets and self-efficacy measurement scales (Harrison *et al.,* 2016; Salpietro *et al.,* 2021; Troy *et al.,* 2024), as well as thinking protocols, reflective reports, clinical diaries, digital reflection forms, and reflective self-reports. Some research has combined self-assessment with peer feedback (Alharbi & Alqefari, 2022; Mir *et al.,* 2023) or with the incorporation of student voice (Carless, 2020; Abraham & Singaram, 2021; Thomas & Gupta, 2024).

The results related to the sixth research question indicate that self-assessment significantly enhances learners' receptivity to feedback, fostering self-regulation, engagement, and academic performance. The incorporation of digital tools has been shown to improve critical thinking, accuracy, and self-confidence by providing immediate, clear, and constructive feedback (Reinholz & Dounas-Frazer, 2017; Nolan & Loubier, 2018; Ducasse & Hill, 2019; Man *et al.,* 2020; Tubino & Adachi, 2022; Xueying *et al.,* 2025; Rüdian *et al.,* 2025). These findings align with those of Liebenow *et al.* (2024) and Yan *et al.* (2023), who demonstrated that self-assessment, when accompanied by supportive feedback, enhances accuracy, self-awareness, and sustainable learning. While digital feedback was described as detailed, personalized, and re-examinable, it is often met with skepticism due to the perceived lack of emotional nuance in automated feedback (Rüdian *et al.,* 2025). Hahn *et al.* (2021) further emphasize the limitations of automated assessments and advocate for a blend of automated and human feedback.

Self-assessment using rubrics has been found to improve self-regulation and understanding, particularly in collaborative settings (Ducasse & Hill, 2019; Nicol & McCallum, 2022; Alharbi & Alqefari, 2022; Mir *et al.,* 2023). Conversely, self-assessment conducted through questionnaires has been linked to increased self-efficacy and positive attitudes (Han & Hyland, 2015; Molloy *et al.,* 2020; Thibodeaux & Harapnuik, 2020; Salpietro *et al.,* 2021; Lipnevich *et al.,* 2021b; Troy *et al.,* 2024). These outcomes support the conclusions drawn by Badrun (2024) and Boud & Molloy (2013), who noted the positive impact of self-assessment on learning autonomy and responsibility. Additionally, incorporating student voices into self-assessment processes has been shown to boost engagement and autonomy, provided that teachers actively participate (Harrison *et al.,* 2016; Beaulieu *et al.,* 2019; Carless, 2020; Abraham & Singaram, 2021). This finding is consistent with the research of Winstone *et al.* (2017b) and Wisniewski *et al.* (2020), which highlights the effectiveness of active student involvement in the assessment process. Conversely, a lack of self-assessment or unclear, unhelpful feedback can hinder receptivity and overall effectiveness (Perrella, 2017; Pitt & Norton, 2017; Winstone *et al.,* 2017b; Mir *et al.,* 2023; Thomas & Gupta, 2024). These conclusions align with existing literature (Shute, 2008; Evans, 2013).

7. Conclusions-Suggestions

This systematic review examines the role of teacher feedback in shaping higher education learners' receptiveness to criticism, highlighting the factors that influence how feedback is accepted and utilized. Most of the research comes from countries in the Americas and Asia, with a significant contribution from the USA and the UK. However, there is limited publication in conferences, and some international collaboration can be observed. The analysis reveals that qualitative and mixed-methods studies are prevalent, while experimental and purely quantitative studies are less common. The samples used in these studies are primarily medium-sized, although they are not always accompanied by analytical data. The research mainly focuses on learners of English as a second or foreign language, and fields such as Medicine and Psychology, with undergraduate students being the primary participants. Additionally, many studies incorporate digital media, and there is a limited but increasing use of artificial intelligence.

The review results indicate that the characteristics of feedback are the most significant factor affecting learners' receptivity. Clear, specific, timely, and constructive feedback boosts engagement, motivation, and self-regulation while providing guidance to students without leading to emotional discouragement. In contrast, vague, general, or delayed feedback, along with an excessive focus on grades, is linked to decreased acceptance and limited use of comments. The method and medium used to deliver feedback are also crucial. Oral, interpersonal, and multimodal feedback, as well as digital formats that include elements of immediacy and personalization, enhance understanding and foster positive attitudes among learners. Additionally, the use of technology and artificial intelligence tools can significantly improve the individualization and frequency

of feedback, as long as it complements traditional methods and maintains a personal touch.

The review indicates that students' individual characteristics significantly influence how they perceive and respond to feedback. High self-efficacy, a positive attitude toward learning, and emotional maturity are linked to greater receptiveness and the view of feedback as an opportunity for improvement. In contrast, low self-confidence, negative past experiences with criticism, and increased anxiety can lead to defensive reactions and reduced acceptance of feedback. Additionally, personality traits and non-cognitive characteristics, such as openness and conscientiousness, enhance the likelihood of positively receiving feedback, whereas neuroticism is associated with heightened sensitivity to criticism. These findings emphasize the importance of tailoring feedback to meet the diverse needs and capabilities of learners.

The relationship between teachers and students plays a crucial role in how feedback is received. Trust, empathy, mutual respect, and the acknowledgment of students' voices greatly enhance their acceptance and use of criticism. When feedback is part of a framework of dialogue and collaboration, it is viewed as supportive and empowering. Conversely, if the relationship is marked by distance, poor communication, or limited student involvement, feedback is often rejected or dismissed. These findings emphasize the need for pedagogical training for teachers, not only in how to provide constructive comments but also in building trust and creating a safe learning environment.

External factors such as cultural context, educational culture, classroom dynamics, and the learning environment significantly influence how receptive students are to feedback. Cultural values and social norms impact how students interpret criticism; in some contexts, more indirect and protective forms of feedback are preferred. Additionally, collaborative learning and supportive classroom dynamics promote the acceptance of feedback by fostering social interaction and a sense of community. Technology serves as an important tool, providing opportunities for immediate and personalized feedback, but it requires thoughtful pedagogical design to prevent the depersonalization of the learning process.

Self-assessment is becoming a crucial element of modern feedback practices in higher education. The integration of self-assessment tools and processes, such as rubrics, questionnaires, reflective journals, and digital platforms, enhances student participation in the learning process and empowers them to actively shape their assessments. Self-assessment helps students understand quality criteria, develop critical thinking skills, and gradually take responsibility for their learning. When self-assessment is combined with teacher or peer feedback, it creates a more comprehensive and interactive assessment framework. Research shows that self-assessment significantly improves students' receptiveness to feedback by promoting self-regulation, self-awareness, and a positive attitude towards constructive criticism. Students who engage in systematic self-assessment processes demonstrate a greater ability to interpret and utilize feedback, as well as increased engagement in their learning. While digital self-assessment tools and

automated feedback can enhance accuracy and immediacy, their lack of an emotional dimension makes it essential to combine them with human guidance.

The findings emphasize the importance of integrating self-assessment and formative assessment into higher education planning. This can be achieved through curriculum redesign and training teachers to provide supportive and reflective feedback. Additionally, using digital tools in a pedagogically evidence-based manner, combined with human guidance, is crucial for improving students' self-regulation, engagement, receptivity, trust, and psychological safety. Further research is necessary to explore feedback strategies, the teacher-student relationship, and the impact of individual, social, and cultural factors. At the university and educational policy levels, it is essential to gain support from academic leadership and within organizational culture. This support should focus on fostering student-centered practices, promoting teacher professional development, advancing digital transformation, and reducing inequalities.

Conflict of Interest Statement
All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. No funding was received for this research from any source.

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