

Do you feel that you always do feedback on classroom activities in the same way? This lesson will help you to gain an understanding of different types of feedback and suggest ways that you can vary your approach.

Task 1 – Emily’s observation

The Director of Studies (DoS) at Emily’s school observed her teach a lesson a couple of days ago. In the DoS’s written feedback, she made the comment: “you are sometimes unclear during feedback stages”. Emily isn’t quite sure what the DoS means and she hasn’t had a chance to have a tutorial with her as yet.



What do you think the DoS means? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

Sometimes teachers want students to think carefully about their answers and initially neither confirm nor deny whether the answer is correct. However, this can sometimes go on for too long and get frustrating for students. At the end of feedback, students can sometimes be unsure about whether their answers to a task were correct or not.

Key Skill

Doing feedback on a task involves more than giving the right or wrong answers. First, you need to think about whether you are doing *language-focused* feedback or *content-focused* feedback. In content-focused feedback, teachers are responding to ideas and information. However, in language-focused feedback teachers are responding to the language that students produce.

Task 2 – Different types of feedback



Numbers 1 to 8 describe different kinds of classroom activities. Put these activities in the correct box in the table, thinking about whether the feedback is language- or content-based, and whether or not there is a right answer. Two of the activities can be placed in more than one box.

Type of feedback	There is a right answer	There is no right answer
Content-based		
Language-based		

Classroom activities

1. Reading comprehension task.
2. Matching new vocabulary to definitions.
3. Role play that is freer oral practice of a grammar point.
4. Completing a text that has missing words.
5. Listening comprehension task.
6. Problem-solving information gap activity.
7. Discussion that is a lead-in to a reading text.
8. Written grammar task where students choose the correct tense.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

When you give feedback on both content and language, it is usually more motivating and interesting for students if you deal with content first. This shows that you are responding to their ideas and not just focusing on how they said something.

Task 3 – Some example feedback procedures



Letters a to l describe different steps in two feedback procedures. One is feedback on a *discussion* that students have been having; the other is on a *grammar activity* where students had to choose a correct tense.

- a) Decide which steps belong to the speaking activity and which belong to the grammar activity.
- b) Put the steps in the correct order for each activity.

Discussion	Grammar activity
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

Steps

- a. Nominate students randomly and put all suggested answers on the white board.
- b. Praise students' contributions and ideas.
- c. Encourage other students to ask questions about or comment on what each group says.
- d. Confirm which answers are correct.
- e. Ask students to check their answers in pairs.
- f. Ask some follow up questions and make comments on what students have said yourself.
- g. Get pairs to look at the unresolved answers quickly for a second time.
- h. If there is disagreement over the answers, accept both versions and write them on the white board.
- i. If you feel it is appropriate and useful, highlight a few errors you overheard in the discussion.
- j. Ask each group to decide what they will say in reporting their discussion.
- k. Elicit the outcome of the second pair discussion.
- l. Ask each group to tell the class what they have been talking about.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

You have to manage your student group carefully if you want to do feedback well. Nominating students, encouraging peer interaction and praising students are all key components of successful feedback.

Task 4 – Some good ideas



Numbers 1 to 6 are some good ideas for the management of feedback. Letters a to f are rationales for each idea. Match the rationales to the ideas.

It's a good idea to...	Because...
1. conduct feedback by nominating students randomly rather than in a sequence ...	
2. ask students to justify their answers, particularly with reading and listening comprehension tasks ...	
3. allow a certain amount of wait time when doing content-focused feedback ...	
4. be clear about what answer is correct and what answer is not ...	
5. provide a written model answer for some tasks on the white board or on an OHP ...	
6. occasionally avoid doing feedback at all ...	

Rationales

- a. ... it will avoid any frustration for students.
- b. ... it is not necessary if you can see that all students got all answers correct when you monitored – you can just confirm that everything is correct and move on.
- c. ... it keep students involved in feedback.
- d. ... as it allows weaker students something concrete to check their answers against.
- e. ... sometimes students need to organise their ideas before replying.
- f. ... it makes students think a little harder and offers stronger students more challenge.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Make notes over a week's teaching. At the end of each lesson, think about what feedback you did and how you did it. Taking into consideration some of the points made in the tasks above, evaluate how effective you think your feedback was.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*

Taking it to the classroom ...

An alternative approach to feedback is to let learners know that you will only confirm the answers to 2 or 3 questions on a task. In groups they have to negotiate and decide which answers they feel certain they have got right and which they are most unsure of. This strategy makes them think harder and it also generates a lot of groups discussion as they negotiate.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 107 - 113 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) contains reading on the teacher role of 'organiser' and also discusses the role of feedback in lessons.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 2 d) Pace in the classroom:** includes discussion of the idea that feedback can affect pace, either positively or negatively.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

Type of feedback	Right answer	No right answer
Content-based	1. Reading comprehension task. 5. Listening comprehension task.	3. Role play that is freer oral practice of a grammar point. 6. Problem-solving information gap activity. 7. Discussion that is a lead in to a reading text.
Language-based	2. Matching new vocabulary to definitions. 4. Completing a text that has missing words. 8. Written grammar task where students choose the correct tense.	3. Role play that is freer oral practice of a grammar point.* 6. Problem-solving information gap activity.*

* This kind of feedback would involve error correction. The answer is not 'right' or 'wrong' as such as there was no expected answer and the teacher feeds back on what they have heard.

Task 3 – Feedback

Speaking Activity

- 1) j
- 2) l
- 3) c
- 4) f
- 5) b
- 6) i

Grammar Activity

- 1) e
- 2) a
- 3) h
- 4) g
- 5) k
- 6) d

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) f
- 3) e
- 4) a
- 5) d
- 6) b