



# Module 5

## Learner Feedback

### Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

**Video Length: Approximately 13 Minutes**  
**Notes to the Trainer**

For best results, have participants go through the readings for this module prior to viewing the video. As you work through this module, use pairs or groups whenever you think it might be effective. After each group activity, debrief the answers and use them for further discussion of various points. Refer back to the main points when appropriate. The primary goal is for participants to begin thinking positively and creatively about types of learner feedback they can find and adapt to their own local teaching situations.

See Appendix A for additional handouts that can be used for general observation and discussion tasks with any of the modules.

#### **Before Viewing**

Ask participants to think of a situation or story about a time when they gave feedback to someone; e.g., a student, a child, a friend, or someone else. The feedback may have had either a negative effect (the person was angry or sad) or a positive effect (smiles all around; the “Aha!” effect as the student finally understood a language point). Then, have participants think about a situation or story from a time when they *received* feedback from someone. What was the effect in this case?

#### **Debrief**

Have participants get into pairs or small groups and share their stories. As they tell their experiences, they could include such information as:

- Their relationship to the person.
- Why they gave or received the feedback.
- When, where, and how they it happened.
- The result.

In addition, they can reflect on whether they wish anything had happened differently.

Finally, have groups compile their feedback and sort items into three columns or categories or piles: + (plus / positive), - (minus / negative), and not clear. Give them these discussion questions:

- How were feedback examples distributed within the group? Across all of the groups?
- Did any clear patterns emerge?
- What conclusions might you draw from this?
- What further questions or issues come to mind?
- What is the relationship to this activity and types of feedback in your class(es)?

## Module 5: Learner Feedback

### Preview Vocabulary

Terms	Definitions
Canoe	A small, narrow, open boat.
Diagnose	To determine exactly what kind of mistake or error the student is making and what might be the cause of the error.
Error	Language production that is not correct. In applied linguistics research, it refers to patterns in production that shows incomplete or incorrect learning.
Feedback; error correction	Information which lets learners know how they are doing or whether their production is correct.
Formative feedback	Feedback used to check on learner progress <i>during</i> the period of learning, to determine what has been learned so far and what still needs work.
Formulaic	Structures or communication patterns that are predictable and usually the same, such as greetings, shopping dialogues, etc.
Mistake	Generally, a mistake is incorrect language production. In research, as opposed to the specialized meaning of "error" (see above), a mistake is the result of inattention or carelessness, rather than incomplete learning.
Negative feedback	Informing learners directly when their work is incorrect. May use negative wording such as "no" or "don't."
Positive feedback	Techniques that help learners discover their own mistakes and self-correct. Avoids the use of negative wording.
Pragmatics	Social and cultural aspects of language use.
Reformulate	To write or say something again, differently.
Self-reflect	To reflect on or think about your own learning or teaching.
Summative feedback	Feedback that takes place at the end of a learning period to measure what has been achieved by the learners.
Synthesize	To combine ideas in a way that creates a whole that is new or different from the separate ideas or that encompasses the separate ideas under a more holistic idea.
Trial and error	Learning by trying new or different language, taking risks, and learning from errors or mistakes.

Now start the video. Listen to the introduction. Complete the guided observation and reflection tasks for each of the video segments. The next part of the manual is for trainees and is available on separate pages for ease of copying.

# Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

## Module 5, Learner Feedback

### Introduction, Expanded Narrative

Appropriate feedback is necessary for effective and efficient learning. Incorrectness is not the only standard teachers can use to assess learning. This module considers learner feedback in these three domains:

1. Feedback can be linguistic in nature and relate to the actual use of the language.
2. It can also focus on communication, which concerns the task or the content of the message.
3. And, finally, feedback can be affective, encouraging learners' attempts to communicate and to use the language. The purpose of affective feedback is to build confidence.

There are several important aspects to consider when giving feedback:

- Both positive and negative feedback are needed for the most effective learning. Negative feedback is direct error correction or drawing attention to error. Positive feedback can be affective, can reward for correct or successful communication, or can provide the opportunity for self-correction.
- Feedback can be oral, written, or non-verbal; it can be given to individuals, groups, or the entire class.
- Feedback can be given immediately or delayed, depending on which would be most effective for the task or situation?
- Feedback can be either formative or summative. Formative feedback isn't usually graded and is given at all stages throughout the learning period. Summative feedback is given at the conclusion of a unit, a project, or a period of learning. This can be a grade or a final report on students' work.
- It is important to understand the nature of an error in order to determine whether and how to use corrective feedback.

### Module Focus

The focus in this module is formative feedback. Formative feedback is continuous, and it can encourage or discourage the learner. Teachers need to learn how to use techniques that encourage learners and that give them confidence. He or she need to learn how to avoid techniques that discourage learners, that embarrass them, or make them feel "stupid."

Some general guidelines on what to do, and what not to do:

- Understand why the error occurred. Did the student not know how to produce the correct language, or did they make a careless mistake?
- Determine the type of error. If it was a language error, what kind of error was it? Grammar? Vocabulary? Pragmatic in nature (inappropriate usage)?
- Make the feedback fit both the kind of error and the context in which it occurred. Avoid trying to correct every error. The teacher must decide whether the error is important enough to correct, whether it prevents understanding, or whether fluency is more important for this task, so some errors can be overlooked.
- Avoid over-correction and too much negative feedback. Whenever possible, use feedback techniques that allow learners to self-correct, either individually or in groups.
- Above all, encourage student learning through positive feedback. Tell students that making mistakes helps them learn. Help students to be successful and confident. Use positive feedback techniques that help to create a comfortable atmosphere in which students see making mistakes as part of the learning process.

## Module 5: Learner Feedback

### **Video Segment #1, General Dos and Don'ts: Observation Guide** **[Read before viewing.]**

The first two video examples will focus on oral production and the third one will focus on written production. Watch the video as many times as needed.

At a general level, look for examples of the following items in this first video segment. Describe what you see, and try to interpret what you think is happening. (See Module 4 for an explanation of the Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process).

- Classroom atmosphere.
- Trial-and-error processes at work in the classroom.
- Students supporting and correcting each other.

At a more detailed level, look for the next set of items below. Once again, describe what you see, and try to interpret what you think is happening. Be prepared to summarize, analyze, and evaluate your findings as part of the discussion for this module.

- Pay attention to how the first teacher increased student participation in class.
- Listen for comments on how the classroom atmosphere relates to student performance.
- Listen for the first teacher's description of a trial-and-error process.
- Listen for the group process that enables students to help each other and give peer feedback.

### **Reflection**

#### **[Read and answer after viewing.]**

1. Who did the teacher give feedback to in order to increase student participation? Is this something you could do in your own situation? Why or why not? What techniques do you use to get learners to participate actively?
2. This teacher discussed two ideas related to classroom atmosphere. One was something she did, and one was a characteristic of the students. What were they? How are they related to giving feedback? How did the teacher's beliefs and behavior encourage a trial-and-error process?
3. With a partner, write the step-by-step procedure that the second teacher followed in using groups. Do you believe the feedback in the procedure can be effective? Why or why not? Could you use this procedure for feedback in your own situation? If not, try to adapt this idea. How could you use peer feedback in your own situation?

### **Video Segment #2, Feedback on Oral Production, On-the-spot vs. Delayed Feedback: Observation Guide** **[Read before viewing.]**

Some focus points for this video segment are:

- On-the-spot feedback.
- Delayed feedback.
- Relevance of the feedback to the task.

Some suggested observation tasks follow.

1. Before watching this segment, review the definitions of negative and positive feedback in the Introduction. Make two columns on your paper, one labeled "positive" and the other "negative." As you watch, list the types of feedback you see in the appropriate columns.
2. Determine what the task is and decide if the feedback given is appropriate for the task.
3. Look for things in the lesson to which the teacher does not draw attention that might be appropriate for delayed feedback.

# Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

## **Reflection**

**[Read and answer after viewing.]**

1. Compare the notes in your positive and negative columns with a partner or others in your group. Add techniques you missed to your own columns. Are there more negative or more positive techniques? Put a check next to the ones that you already use. Make a circle or highlight those that you would like to try.
2. What student task(s) did you observe? Was the teacher's feedback appropriate? Did it match the situation? Did it meet the students' needs?

## **Video Segment #3, Feedback on Written Production: Observation Guide**

**[Read before viewing.]**

Watch for feedback on written production in this video segment.

1. List the different writing activities that you see students performing or hear listed on the video.
2. Listen for feedback techniques that can be used with writing activities.

## **Reflection**

**[Read and answer after viewing.]**

1. Compare your list of writing activities with a partner. Together, add to your lists.
2. After each activity, write one or two techniques that might be effective ways of giving feedback on the activity. These may be feedback techniques that you observed on the video, or they may come from your own experiences or reading.

## Module 5: Learner Feedback

### Now You Try It—An Action Plan

#### Step 1

You can read some of the articles on the topic of contextualizing language (see Module 5 Readings plus the List of Additional Readings and Resources in *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Readings and Resources*). Using the video, you have seen a few examples and ideas from other teachers' classes. Now, think about your own classes. Here are some suggestions for classroom issues that you may want to consider. Talk about your ideas with others in your group.

#### Affective Domain

- Increase your students' willingness and ability to use or produce language.
- Create a positive atmosphere for risk-taking, so students feel comfortable trying to use the language.
- Create opportunities for peer correction and positive feedback.

#### Linguistic Domain

- Determine what the student's problem really is.
- Create opportunities for positive feedback.
- Maintain student focus on the language goal of the session or activity.
- Help students learn to self-correct in order to make them more independent learners.
- Deal with errors the whole class is making and deal with individual errors.

#### Step 2

By yourself or with a peer, design a portion of a lesson that incorporates a new feedback technique that you would like to try.

#### Step 3

Share your plan with others in your group. Explain how feedback might be given during this lesson to improve the class atmosphere and student performance. Get their ideas and feedback.

#### Step 4

Change your design, as needed. Try it with your class. Share your results with others, as applicable. If you are not teaching, ask the trainer or another experienced teacher for feedback.

# Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

## Answer Key to Module 5, Learner Feedback

### Module 5, Video Segment #1, Classroom Techniques

Here are some suggested directions for answers to the questions for this module. Actual answers may vary depending on local context and the kinds of experience that viewers bring to the task of interpreting and applying video and text concepts.

#### Video Segment #1, General Dos and Don'ts

1. The first teacher wanted more participation from her students, but wasn't able to get it in class. In this case, she gave feedback to the parents in parent conferences. The parents then told their children to participate. This was a successful delayed feedback technique (more on this in Video Segment #2).

2. The teacher told her students directly that making mistakes was part of the learning process. By saying this, she set up an atmosphere of acceptance, so the children would feel comfortable making mistakes. This relaxed atmosphere led to more and better practice. For this technique to be effective, the teacher's behavior and the way she gives feedback must support the statement that mistakes are necessary and natural. If she gives a lot of negative feedback, frequently correcting students, they will not believe her original statement.

3. Motivation was the learner characteristic discussed. The teacher said that the students wanted to be good English speakers. This also contributed to a positive class atmosphere, a willingness to try to use the language and accept feedback. This fact, too, led to better student performance. Positive feedback can ensure that students stay motivated; too much negative feedback, especially if it embarrasses students or makes them feel bad, can cause students to become less motivated.

4. The second teacher used a group process. Her students were grouped according to learning styles. In the groups, they created activities and distributed them to other student groups in the class. As each group finished doing the activities, the original group collected the work and checked it. This check was peer feedback. Peer feedback can reduce overall anxiety about making mistakes and, at the same time, cause students to focus and figure out for themselves what was correct and what wasn't. It is important that the teacher monitors such work closely to ensure that the feedback is both correct and helpful.

#### Video Segment #2, Feedback on Oral Production, On-the-Spot vs. Delayed Feedback

1. Below are some possible positive and negative feedback techniques the teacher in the class used. Both can be appropriate, depending on the context. You may have seen others or have listed these differently.

This teacher used more positive feedback than negative feedback. She used gestures, indirect correction, restatement, and requests for clarification or repetition. Although she did use some negative feedback, she never said, "No, that isn't right." Instead, she quickly gave an answer, gave quick commands, or used humor.

## Module 5: Learner Feedback

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking direct questions to stimulate speaking.</li> <li>• Asking students to restate for clarification.</li> <li>• Using questions as cues to help students continue.</li> <li>• Using question words to cue response ("When," "Where," etc.).</li> <li>• Clapping for student performance.</li> <li>• Using words and vocalization of approval; e.g. "Very good," "Uh huh," "Good."</li> <li>• Thanking students.</li> <li>• Repeating after students to make response clear.</li> <li>• Using rapid gestures to encourage response.</li> <li>• Using words to encourage more response; e.g., "Keep going."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving the next phrase when a speaker can't remember it.</li> <li>• Giving joking criticism; e.g., "Oh, come on. You can do better than that."</li> <li>• Telling students to wait.</li> </ul>

2. The task is retelling a story. Sometimes the two students at the front act out the story and the others respond with a sentence from the story. Sometimes the students in class give a sentence and the students in front respond by acting it out. The teaching/ learning focus is on retelling the story for content. However, for the students in front, it is also a listening task. They have to comprehend well enough to act out each utterance. The students sitting in class have to speak comprehensibly enough that the actors can understand them and respond accurately.

The feedback in this case is a natural communicative one. If the actors understand, they respond appropriately. The speakers then know whether they were understood, even without additional teacher feedback.

The teacher feedback was appropriate to the task. All of her feedback was focused on the main point of the language practice, retelling the story. Her feedback was primarily used to encourage students to complete that oral task and reward them when they did. She did not interrupt them to correct details of pronunciation or grammar. Likewise, she did not give many instructions to the actors, except at the end to encourage a more enthusiastic response.

3. The teacher could take notes during the session and use delayed feedback to correct individual pronunciation and grammar errors. If many students had the same language problem or were making mistakes on one part of the content, the teacher could have the whole class work on it after the activity was completed. She could audio- or video-tape the session and then have students review it to find and try to correct one or two patterned errors. Note: You might have some other answers to this question.



# Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

## Video Segment #3, Feedback on Written Production

Here are some possible answers to the reflection question. Ideas for feedback techniques will vary according to the local educational setting.

<b>Writing Activities</b>	<b>Possible Feedback Techniques Purpose: Accuracy (A) or Fluency (F)</b>
1. Writing the alphabet	1. Provide models; when finished, a partner compares it to the model. (A).
2. Copying	2. Provide models; read the finished copy aloud to a partner, who is reading along with the model. (A).
3. Writing a letter	3. Provide correct letter format; send the finished letter to another student for a response. (A & F).
4. Writing a story you heard or read	4. Provide guidelines that tell students how you will be evaluating the story; correct only those points listed in the guidelines. (Focused A & F).
5. Making a request	5. Provide a format for making requests. Another student responds to the request. (A & F).
6. Synthesizing information for a report	6. Provide guidelines for writing a report; provide a checklist of errors for self-checking the report. (A).

