

FEEDING BACK, AND FEEDBACK

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*G*IVING AND RECEIVING feedback are at best delicate activities - at their worst they can be totally destructive. Some teachers avoid asking for feedback outright; others proffer a questionnaire at their learners which they later read in the security of the Teachers' Room; others still - perhaps the majority - don't even consider it at all. The three activities which I present here are all based on the belief that open, frank communication between teachers and learners, and learners and teachers, can only benefit the learning process and enhance the quality of the learning product for everyone concerned. Each of these activities has its own particular focus, but there are three points which are common to them all.

1. Each of the activities can be used at any level above Council of Europe 'Threshold level', though some are more suited to lower, and others to higher level groups.
2. Before you carry out one of these activities, tell your class in a previous session that you are going to do a feedback activity, and explain your objectives. Ask them to think about the period of learning you intend to review before coming to the next class. Tell them to bring with them any notes, etc. which they think are relevant.
3. Once the activity itself is completed, you can then lead a class discussion on the feedback.

The Feedback Letter¹

AT THE END of a course, it is important to provide learners with a means of objectively focusing their thoughts on the period of learning just completed. This can be aided by asking them to report back to a known person, thus making their review much more meaningful.

Level: Threshold and above

Timing: 45 minutes

Resources: pens and paper to make wallcharts

Procedure:

1. Begin the session by going over some of the things you have covered, and then ask them to continue individually listing as many items as possible which they recall. Their notes will help them to do this.
2. Next, put them together into small groups, and set them the task of sharing their lists in order to produce a wallchart on which each group will present their combined recollections. Put these wallcharts up around the room and give them all time to wander around reading, and comparing what others have written.
3. Tell them to write a letter about the course to a friend from another class or school who probably follows a similar course, but who maybe has a different teacher, course book, and so on. Make it clear to everyone that they do not have to show the letters to anyone, not even the addressee, unless they want to.
4. Give the class as much time as they need to write their letters. When they have finished give them (stamped!) envelopes so that they can send the letters if they want to.

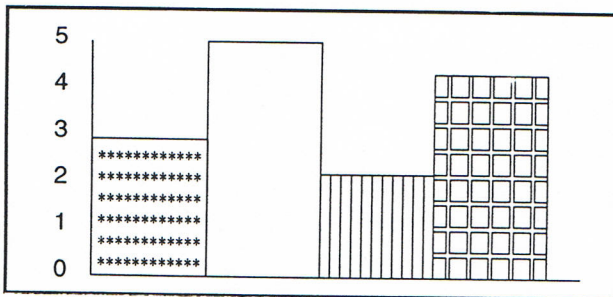
¹ I first came into contact with this idea through Jim Wingate.

Bar Chart Feedback

Level: Treshold
 Timing: 20 minutes
 Procedure:

Using graphics in one way or another is a part of studying most subjects these days, and secondary school English courses generally include some work involving transferring information from one medium to another. This activity provides a useful way of exploiting this, and of obtaining valuable feedback at the same time.

1. Show the group an example of a bar chart and teach, or review, the vocabulary needed to describe it.
2. Propose names for different aspects of the course you want to review. Use titles which they will clearly understand, such as Enjoyment, Tiredness, or Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, or Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening.



3. Individually, they draw bar charts, naming one column for each aspect, and scoring these from 0 to 5.
4. Learners pair, and cross-pair to share their feedback.
5. You can then lead a group discussion on the feedback.

A balanced view

Timing: 45-50 minutes
 Resources: scissors
 Procedure:

THIS ACTIVITY TAKES the sting out of feedback. It obliges learners to balance their responses, and to provide equal amounts of praise, constructive comment, criticism, and plain good humour!

1. Draw the feedback 'frame' on the board and complete it with examples of things they might include.
2. Everyone makes their own copy on a large piece of paper, and writes three comments for each category.
3. Allow 15 minutes for writing. Once everyone has finished they cut their papers into the four categories.
4. The class then divides into four subgroups, with each of these taking responsibility for one of the categories.
5. The subgroups read all the papers for their category, summarise the comments, and report back to the whole class.

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| I praise... | I suggest... |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| I criticise... | I laugh (ed) about... |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

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