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GIVING AND RECEIVING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

The article scrutinizes the notion of feedback applicable in classrooms where team teaching is provided. The experience of giving and receiving feedback has been a good practice in cooperation between a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer and a Ukrainian counterpart. Giving and receiving feedback is an effective means of classroom observation that provides better insight into the process of teaching a foreign language. The article discusses the stages of feedback and explicates the notion of sharing experience between two teachers working simultaneously in the same classroom. The guidelines for giving and receiving feedback have been provided as well as the most commonly used vocabulary items have been listed. It has been proved that mutual feedback leads to improving teaching methods and using various teaching styles and techniques.

Keywords: *feedback, team teaching, exploratory questioning, self-assessment, class observation.*

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ПРИНЦИПИ ЗВОРОТНОГО ЗВ'ЯЗКУ В ПРОЦЕСІ КОЛЕКТИВНОГО
НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

Розглянуто поняття «зворотний зв'язок», яке застосовується в класах, де проводиться колективне навчання. Показано, що досвід надання та отримання зворотного зв'язку є хорошою практикою в рамках співпраці між добровольцем Корпусу миру США та українським партнером, а надання зворотного зв'язку – ефективний засіб спостереження в класі, що забезпечує краще розуміння процесу навчання іноземної мови. Рокрито етапи надання зворотного зв'язку. Пояснено поняття обміну досвідом між двома викладачами, котрі працюють одночасно в одному класі. Висвітлено основні принципи надання та отримання зворотного зв'язку. Подано словничок лексичних одиниць, які найчастіше використовуються при наданні й отриманні зворотного зв'язку. З'ясовано, що взаємний зворотний зв'язок зумовлює вдосконалення методів викладання, а також використання різних навчальних стилів і технік.

Ключові слова: *зворотний зв'язок, колективне викладання, анкетування, самооцінювання, спостереження.*

ПРИНЦИПЫ ОБРАТНОЙ СВЯЗИ В ПРОЦЕССЕ КОЛЛЕКТИВНОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА

Рассматривается понятие «обратная связь», которое применяется в классах, где предусмотрено коллективное преподавание. Показано, что опыт предоставления и получения обратной связи является хорошей практикой в рамках сотрудничества между волонтером Корпуса мира США и украинским партнером, а предоставление и получение обратной связи – эффективное средство наблюдения в классе, что обеспечивает лучшее понимание процесса обучения иностранному языку. Рассматриваются этапы предоставления обратной связи. Объясняется понятие обмена опытом между двумя преподавателями, которые работают одновременно в одном классе. Раскрыты основные принципы предоставления и получения обратной связи. Предложен словарь лексических единиц, которые чаще всего используются при предоставлении и получении обратной связи. Установлено, что взаимная обратная связь ведет к совершенствованию методов преподавания, а также использованию различных учебных стилей и техник.

Ключевые слова: обратная связь, коллективное преподавание, анкетирование, самооценка, наблюдение.

Team teaching gives ample opportunities for getting a feedback. It is important for both teachers (Volunteer and Counterpart) as well as for students. The key point of sharing experience and observing classes i.e. providing feedback is to make teaching more effective. The ones who benefit from teachers' mutual feedback most of all are students. If classes are maintained in a good way, if teaching is student-oriented and feedback interaction conducted between a Volunteer and a Counterpart is positive and constructive it means that successful communication has been established. This is the right way to develop ideas on feedback. First, feedback is observation for assessment: it gives a chance to see classes "from the outside". Being only one teacher in the classroom you cannot get a view how it is working. Second, feedback is a communication event that makes your relationship with a Volunteer (Counterpart) stronger and closer. However, feedback, on the other hand, is a fragile notion that might lead to misunderstanding and rivalry. It's all connected with people, their psyches, their needs, wants, goals, their self-perceptions and their fears. Therefore, some simple things have to be kept in mind while giving/receiving feedback.

The objective of the article is to offer a framework for feedback which serves well for the post-observed lesson interaction with a Volunteer (Counterpart) and allows to maximize the benefits of the time spent together in the classroom. It also includes some points about class observation and upcoming negotiation process.

Stages (Steps) of Feedback

Providing feedback is inseparably connected with class observation. Thus, these two processes can be roughly divided into three major parts: pre-feedback/ observation, while-observation/ feedback and post-observation/ feedback activities. The first part deals with preparation for giving feedback and developing certain rules you will keep to when discussing the classes observed. The next stage, i.e. actual class observation, gives grounds for further feedback, thus it is important to take some notes for assessing the techniques used in the classroom. The final, after-observation stage, the feedback itself, is about discussing strong and weak points of a lesson conducted.

Step 1: Preparation

At the outset, it helps to establish between the two participants what the time limit is and how the process is expected to develop. Sit down together and discuss an ideal lesson. By doing this you will know what each of you sees as the main goal of teaching. Then in the process of feedback you might get a clearer vision of what has been produced. Establishing the process is a form of signposting that allows the teacher to gain security from knowing where the feedback is heading. You can suggest an agenda and elicit a response, leading towards an agreement on how to proceed. Preparation stage is mainly about achieving a positive climate before the negotiation. The teacher needs to feel as relaxed and comfortable and unthreatened as possible. Secure a place that is private, where you won't be interrupted. It helps to begin by focusing on some third/neutral ground. A handy one is a comment on the learners themselves – start off with something like *"They're a lovely*

(cheerful/noisy/bright/unruly/etc.) class, aren't they?" This serves as neutral but phatic communion and leads you to the next phase.

Step 2: Procedure

Alternatives. Working from the concrete to the hypothetical: *this is what you did...this is what resulted...what alternatives exist?...how might they work?*

Cause-effect approach. Discussing the outcomes and linking them with processes. This encourages a reflective approach to teaching and helps teachers understand that 'things don't just happen' and that they do have control.

Specificity. Feedback should focus on skills, and not on personalities or behaviors. The one who provides feedback should concentrate on how those skills have been implemented and used and how successfully they have worked out in the classroom.

Food for thought. Feedback is provided to suggest developing and improving. Eliciting and gently steering the teacher towards the key points is more effective than imposing what had to be done.

Description and Example. Be descriptive, not evaluative. Focus on the effect the performance had on you, rather than on how good or bad you perceive it to be. For example, saying, "It's wrong to call on students when they don't raise their hands," is a generalization that may or may not be true in all cases. However, saying "I felt uncomfortable because you called on me when I didn't have my hand up," can help the person realize that students may have the same reaction.

Step 3: Closure

At this stage the one who receives feedback should get a sense of progress and purpose. Armed with a view "from the outside" he knows which direction to go. This can be expressed in terms of objectives: "I'm going to work on organizing my board in a more focused way", "I'm going to script my instructions before the lesson and see if that makes them clearer", etc. The final line of feedback is reflection. It requires pondering about the experience and whether it was successful in terms of class performance, its priorities and objectives. Bear in mind that feedback serves for students. Thus every suggestion on how to improve class work should go to students' perspectives: "Students will probably like more if you try...", "The learners will easily get the point if you suggest them...", "It will appeal to students if you..."

The Guidelines for Giving Feedback

Capture your lesson

Whether you're being observed or observing someone else, request to use video. Why? It will give you both an objective tool to sit down in front of and discuss together. The video turns feedback into a two way discussion rather than a feedback session. Rather than imposing your thoughts you can actively discuss, pause, rewind fast forward and allow your colleague to come to their own conclusions making it more meaningful for both of you.

Use exploratory questioning

It naturally opens up dialogue, giving you time to think and draw conclusions. "What do you think you could do to tackle the problem of..." rather than "What you need to do is...!"

Relate back to previous objectives set

Don't go barking up a different tree! Relate your discussion to the targets already set, if new topics arise; set these as development targets for your next session. Staying focused will allow you to give some 'easy wins', developing a feeling of immediate progression. Be clear in your own mind about why you are feeding back. What exactly do you want your colleague to achieve with what you are telling them?

Be patient

Give you and your colleague time to draw your own conclusions and then explore them together without cutting across one another. You will develop a stronger more professional relationship.

Do it again

Giving or receiving feedback is requested to be done regularly. Only by continually discussing and breaking down what you saw can you understand progression and be able to implement what you have learnt.

Be accurate with the language

The vocabulary, wording and tone you use when voicing your ideas and impressions can make a person receiving feedback feel at ease. Some feedback softeners are as follows:

Maybe you could...

- Have you considered...
- Have you tried...
- Would it be better if...
- I would suggest...
- Do you think you could try to...
- What about trying...
- I wonder if...
- Another possible solution could be...
- Perhaps you could...
- Could you...
- Could you try to...
- One thing that I have found that helps is to...
- Something that I have tried in the similar situation was...

The Challenges of Receiving Feedback

“Who does he think he is telling me...” “Where does she come off saying...”

Our human instinct for self-preservation can be our worst enemy when we are on the receiving end of constructive feedback. We become defensive and prevent ourselves from truly listening to the observations about our teaching. Rather than benefiting from the feedback as an opportunity for self improvement, many of us counter the comments with self-justifications. We then lose out on a valuable chance to continue growing as well as improving our teaching techniques.

In giving feedback one teaching professional communicates to another teaching professional specific observations noted during class time. The feedback is based solely on objective analysis, not on feeling or moods. The purpose is simply to offer some insights into ways the teacher can improve their interactions with students. When we approach receiving feedback with that frame of mind- as a tool or mirror to help us become always better- we can let down the defensive barriers and listen with a mind looking to improve.

There are certain mechanisms that will help us keep our protective feelings at bay. One way to distract the defensive feelings is to listen reflectively and paraphrase what you hear. “I understand that you noticed my back was to the students for a long time while I was writing on the board”. By repeating what you heard, you eliminate misunderstanding and verbalize the actions observed in the classroom. Another way that helps us focus on listening rather than defending ourselves is to take written notes about the comments and observations. Writing can help us to maintain a professional demeanor and not allow our emotions to take over, by crying or becoming angry. Taking two or three deep breaths before you respond can help get past your immediate emotions.

It is important to use this opportunity to be proactive. During the feedback, together with your observer, begin to formulate a plan on how to implement some improvements in teaching techniques. By brainstorming together to pinpoint some changes you can make you retain some control over the feedback process. “Would you suggest that I write the text on the board before class, and leave it covered?” You show that you heard the observations, recognized the issue, and have already thought through a possible solution. Thank your colleague for their observations and insight; it takes courage to give honest constructive feedback.

Receiving feedback is an opportunity that presents itself throughout our lives offers us chances to continuously improve ourselves. By keeping the positive aspects of constructive feedback at the forefront of our minds and practicing both reflective listening and proactive planning, we can receive feedback as a gift, not as personal criticism.

Do’s and Don’ts of Giving Feedback

<p>DO ask for self assessment comment based on observations start with positives balance feedback mention specific observations suggest what might be improved address the performance, not the person look at the outcome to be achieved</p>	<p>DON’T criticize without recommending alternatives make generalized comments be dishonestly kind</p>
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be honest summarize what was learned	
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Do's and Don'ts of Receiving Feedback

DO	DON'T
See it as an opportunity to improve Listen calmly Focus on the content Act professionally Clarify feedback Take notes Ask for suggestions Define a plan Thank you colleague	Blame the messenger Jump to defend or justify yourself Give into your emotions

Self Assessment

Honest self assessment is a vital aspect of our ongoing development as teachers. Through self-evaluation, not only do teachers continuously improve the educational experience of their students, but also improve and update class topics and materials. Self monitoring is something we do all the time—consciously and unconsciously. We are aware of our students' interest level, whether or not the activities are engaging them, whether “teacher talk” is outweighing student input. Through this ongoing self evaluation, a teacher can adjust the pace or activities in the moment, for better interaction with students. In addition to our continuous monitoring, however, it is valuable to regularly review one's classroom experience in a systematic way— through a simple checklist or grid.

Self assessment should begin before class by evaluating your lesson plan. Are my goals and objectives clear? Have I allowed enough time for activities, explanations, practice, questions? After the class, did I meet my goals? Did I explain tasks clearly? Did I allow an opportunity for student discussion and questions? What could I have done better or differently? In addition to the organization and management of the class, it is also important to consider one's use of technology, resources, visual aids. Following an honest evaluation of one's own teaching, thought should be given to possible changes or improvements in future classes.

These regular self evaluations are, by their nature, subjective. One way in which we can occasionally have a more objective record of our teaching is through bi-annual video or audio recordings of our classroom. While this technique doesn't show every aspect of our teaching, it can reveal habits or behaviors of which we are not aware.

Ongoing self-evaluation is the way by which every teacher, from most experienced to first-time teacher, will continuously learn and improve. As our students' interests change and evolve over time, so, too, must our techniques and course materials. The best way to keep a finger on the pulse of our classroom is through the regular self assessment of our teaching.

Conclusion

Since teaching is, in part, a skill, it can be developed, like other skills, by practicing and getting the opinions of others on how well you have performed. Team teaching and class observation are good opportunities to teach in front of colleagues and friends and hear constructive feedback. The feedback you receive will tell you what you are doing that is effective, as well as what you can do to strengthen your performance.

The way in which feedback is given and received contributes to the learning process. Feedback that is vague, judgmental, ill timed, or unusable is not as valuable as feedback that is specific, descriptive, timely, and practical. Similarly, although being criticized is often not pleasant, being open to well-intentioned, well-crafted feedback can only further your professional development.

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