## Module 5: Learner Feedback

### Preview Vocabulary

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

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. They need to learn how to avoid techniques that discourage learners, that embarrass them, or make them feel “stupid.”

Some general guidelines for 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 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.
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 appro-
Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

priate for delayed feedback.

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.
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 below). 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 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.