

## **University Teachers' Conceptions of Feedback**

В статье представлены результаты анкетирования по восприятию обратной связи как оценочного инструмента, проведенного среди преподавателей Уральского государственного экономического университета (Екатеринбург) в рамках проекта ENTEP.

**Ключевые слова:** оценивание, эффективная обратная связь, высшее образование, обучение

This paper reports the findings of a mini survey carried out in the Ural State University of Economics (Ekaterinburg, Russia) within the framework of the ERASMUS+ENTEП Project. The objective of the study was to clarify the different conceptions that Russian educators have of feedback within the assessment process.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Effective Feedback, Higher Education, Teaching and Learning

### **Introduction**

Assessment feedback is arguably the most important part of the assessment process. Over the last decade, assessment feedback practices in higher education have gained considerable attention among educators and scholars. Research has confirmed that feedback is central to student learning process [3]; [8]; it plays a decisive role in student learning and development [10]. Effective comments on students' work represent one of the key characteristics of quality teaching [13]. The content of feedback, an awareness of the psychology of giving and receiving feedback is vitally important to student learning [15]. Feedback can only be effective when it is understandable by the learner and the latter is willing and able to act on it [7]; [12].

The meanings of various terms in the field of assessment and feedback and its typology have changed over recent decades [5]; [14]. The feedback literature has moved from a focus on providing better information to students (e.g. feedback comments on student work) to designing the tasks and activities in which students engage (e.g. requiring students to use feedback comments from their first assignment in their second assignment). The conceptualizations of feedback currently prominent in the literature consider the entire feedback process, driven by the student rather than the educator.

Despite its central impact on learning, feedback is still relatively underexplored [9] and continues to be poorly understood and enacted by both educators and students [4]; [5]. The roles attributed to feedback fall broadly into five categories [12]: correction, reinforcement, diagnosis, benchmarking and development. These categories act as a hierarchy, each building on information provided by the previous category.

Feedback is a social process which faces challenges, such as time, miscommunication and emotional barriers [3].

Feedback-related studies in Russia are exceptionally theorised [11] and though some of them claim providing methodological recommendations on giving feedback, this intention is often overstated. Perceptions of feedback focus on a single discipline (most frequently, foreign language or medicine) at a single institution or concentrate in limited discipline groups (e.g. IT). Educator's capability to apply effective feedback is not adequately reflected in any documents regulating to teaching and learning processes in the Russian higher education. Thus, there is a major shift in the focus in the evaluation process from a student to a formal need for assessment *of* learning.

Feedback is a learner-centred process, and the predominant source of feedback comments in higher education is generally the educator [1]. Therefore, understanding the experiences, including challenges, of educators is as important as those of the student [2]. For these reasons, the present study aims to identify the range of challenges to feedback perceived by educators.

### **Data collection**

The data for a mini feedback survey were collected within the specific context of higher education at the Ural State University of Economics (USUE) (Ekaterinburg, Russia). Respondents were university staff teaching across a range of subjects within the different business schools, who participated in the Teachers' Training workshop held in October 2019 within the framework of the ERASMUS+ ENTEP project.

The intention of the survey was to clarify the different conceptions that educators have of feedback within the assessment process. The questionnaire was designed in Russian and completed by 39 staff members. The questionnaire included 9 items: 5 multiple-choice and 4 Likert-scaled.

### **Results and discussion**

The findings describe the perspectives of staff on feedback; assessment experiences at university; comprehensibility of feedback and particular factors that participants identified as pertinent to its effectiveness. First, the teachers were asked to comment whether they consider feedback an important element of their curriculum (Question 1: Do you include feedback as a component in the curriculum design? a) yes; b) sometimes; c) rather *yes* than *no*; d) never). The results indicate that over half of teachers (n=22; 56%) were very positive in their responses. One third of respondents (n=13) were less sure and chose 'rather *yes* than *no*' option.

In regard to the patterns of giving feedback (Question 2: What patterns of feedback can be used in teaching and learning?) most of the educators (n=31; 79%) acknowledged that all three mentioned (T-St; St-T, St-St) were applicable.

Staff recognised (n=29) that they used feedback for both formative and summative assessment (Question 3: Do you used feedback for a) formative assessment; b) summative assessment; c) both formative and summative assessment?). When asked to specify the stage of the lesson for giving feedback (Question 4: At what

stage of the lesson do you give feedback: a) after each learning activity; b) after presentation; c) after written works; d) other (specify?) most teachers (n=28) acknowledged that they provide feedback after each learning activity; few were more specific and marked presentations (n=4) and written tasks (n=7).

Question 5 related to most and least frequently used assessment methods. The results of multiple-choice indicate that the most common assessment methods were written tests ('often' n=15; 'usually' n=15); oral presentations ('often' n=15; 'usually' n=9); and oral examination ('often' n=13; 'usually' n=10). On the other hand, the methods that were the least used were individual essays ('rarely' n=12; 'never' n=4); posters ('never' n=17); peer review ('rarely' n=5; 'never' n=9) and portfolios ('never' n=9; 'rarely' n=8).

By asking Question 6 (What evaluation methods do you use to have feedback?), we wanted teachers to 'match' feedback with an assessment method. The findings show that the highest number of participants associated feedback with oral examination (n=27) and presentations (n=24). Tests, projects and review works were almost equally rated (n=18; n=17; n=16 respectively).

Responding to Question 7 and choosing three most important factors of effective feedback [6], the staff made clear that feedback should be specific and clear (n=22), well timed (n=20), and it should have understandable success criteria (n=19).

Since providing feedback is a multifaceted skill and needs to be a two-way process between teacher and student [6], staff members were asked whether they teach students a skill of giving feedback in a constructive manner (Question 8: Do you teach your students how to give effective feedback?). While the overwhelming majority of respondents welcomed this opportunity (n=21; 72%), still 28% (n=8) commented that they did not see any need for student to be taught to engage with feedback, which is not a figure to be neglected.

Responses to Question 9 (Do you think you need to learn more about effective feedback as the key to successful assessment for learning?) clearly showed that there was near consensus ('yes' n=16; 'rather *yes* than *no*' n=16) about necessity to provide teachers with more information on the quality and innovative forms of feedback that teachers and learners engage in, thus making feedback a key aspect of successful assessment for learning.

### **Conclusion**

The evidence from this mini survey suggests that teaching staff recognised the place of feedback in learning and had faith that it made a contribution to learning. The findings allow us to look upon feedback as a complex endeavour, in which student and staff experience is influenced by a number of challenges. In some cases teachers may not fully understand what feedback involves. They may believe that they engage in regular feedback provision when closer scrutiny suggests this is not always the case. For Russian academic staff favouring practice tests and oral examinations as main evaluation methods is inherent in the traditions of the Soviet teacher-

centred system of education, on the one hand, and may be the negative effect of institutional pressures to deliver good results, on the other hand. Issues of individual attitudes or capabilities to provide feedback can also present a challenge. In teachers' practice, the evaluation of feedback relies more on faith and intuition than scientific investigation. Carless and Boud [4] argue that both students and staff require feedback literacy, i.e. the ability to generate, understand and use comments. The findings indicate that faculty members need more expertise, competency, credibility, knowledge, skill, or training in relation to feedback. Though small in number, the responses of the survey are thought-provoking and can be used for needs analysis, generating topics for teacher training courses, as well as a starting point to further research. It would be important to understand the kinds of feedback used (oral, written, individual, in group, etc.) by Russian educators and their effects both in the case of traditional and learner-centred methods of assessment.

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## **Corrective feedback and its effect on motivation in language learning**

В статье исследуется проблема коррекции ошибок при изучении иностранного языка, а также ее влияние на мотивацию обучающихся. Рассмотрены различные подходы к исправлению ошибок и типы корректирующей обратной связи. Также излагаются результаты исследования, проведенного в целевой группе студентов с целью выявления стратегий корректирующей обратной связи и их влияния на мотивацию обучающихся.

**Ключевые слова:** изучение иностранного языка, обратная связь, исправление ошибок, мотивация

This article presents a study of corrective feedback in language learning as well as its effect on learners' motivation. We explored different approaches to error treatment and types of corrective feedback. The article also reports on the findings of a small-scale investigation of correction strategies and their effect on motivation of the target group learners.

**Keywords:** second language acquisition, corrective feedback, error correction, motivation

Error is an integral part of learning. When studying a foreign language students inevitably proceed from the norms of their native language. At the same time the main source of errors might be structures that do not exist in the native language, for example, English articles, or structures that to some extent are similar to the forms of the native language. The latter are often called "false friends".

On a subconscious level we are accustomed to the fact that mistakes are bad, but without mistakes we will have no development. And here the crucial role is played by a teacher. It is the teacher who should explain to students that a mistake is not a demo-