

Anna Pałczyńska  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0096-4363>
Akademia Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna w Łodzi
e-mail: a.u.palczynska@gmail.com

Virtual feedback

Abstract

Feedback is a complex issue that can be discussed from many perspectives. It can be given by teachers to students, by students to teachers, by students to students, by teachers to teachers. Moreover, nowadays thanks to technology our students can be offered automatic feedback that will be given to them immediately upon completing a task. Even though there are several texts dealing with feedback that students receive from teachers, it seems that not much research has been done on other types of feedback. This article aims to start a discussion on the different types of feedback as well as to show ways in which technology can be useful in terms of giving and eliciting feedback.

Keywords: feedback, apps, online teaching, remote teaching, technology

Introduction

Today the role played by computers and CMCI practices allows students to become more active and engaged in their learning.
(Caws, 2006: 19)

Numerous articles have been written on effective ways of showing how the learner could improve his/her skills or on how to structure feedback so that it helps and does not discourage. Lyster and Ranta (1997) write about explicit error correction, metalinguistic feedback, elicitations, repetitions, recasts, translations, clarification requests. Santos et al. (2010) mention reformulation of correcting error types. Feedback types have also been referred to as indirect or direct feedback (Ferris, 2003; 2006; Truscott, Hsu, 2008). Nevertheless,

¹ Computer mediated communication.

in that approach, it is the teacher's role to assess. This article suggests ways of structuring feedback in a different way. As Hepsiba and others argue "teachers used to be a major source of knowledge, the leader, and educator of their student's school life" (2016: 67) but communication, as well as information revolution, means the role of a teacher has to change as well (see: Hepsiba et al., 2016: 67). In the era of digital natives a teacher becomes a mentor, observer rather than an assessor.

As a computer is nowadays "a tool for individual and societal development" (Warshauer, 2002: 453) this article presents different ways of giving feedback to learners or teachers with the usage of modern technology.

Teacher–student feedforward

Guénette (2007: 40) claims that "the results of the many experimental studies on written corrective feedback carried out over the last 20 years have been so contradictory that second language teachers looking to support their pedagogical choice to correct, or not correct, the grammar of their students' written production are left in the midst of controversy." Instead of trying to establish what the answer to the intriguing question 'to correct or not to correct?' should be, teachers could turn to a different way of helping students to improve their language skills.

The author of this article believes that in the 21st century feedback that comes from the teacher and is given to students should have the form of a strategy referred to as *feed-forward* (see: Cathcart et al., 2014; Conaghan, Lockey, 2009). The teacher tells learners what they can do to make their performance better in the future instead of focusing on what has gone wrong. It seems especially important in the context of weaker students who make a lot of mistakes. Instead of listing all of them, it seems like a better idea to draw the student's attention to just one problem that the teacher considers most vital and ask him/her to try to eliminate it. For instance, if there is a student who mixes tenses, uses incorrect articles, and forgets to include a subject in each sentence, the teacher could ask him/her to try to remember to use *a/an* before every countable noun. Once the student does that, the teacher will ask him/her to think about subjects, etc. Learning is a process that is not easy or quick (see: Brown, Roediger, McDaniel, 2014). It is a winding path that discourages a lot of people, so in today's world, the teacher could decide to become a partner rather than a mentor, especially that knowledge itself is no longer something that can be obtained solely at school. Knowledge nowadays is found mostly online and this virtual reality could be used by students to look for information but also used by teachers to convey messages. One of the ways of feedforwarding that younger generations could find more intriguing and memorable is creating a video. Students constitute mostly 'digital natives' and teachers 'digital immigrants' – terms introduced by Prensky (2001) – who live in separate worlds, often feeling not understood by the others. When a teacher decides to create an online video to help his/her students improve their skills, a link of connection and understanding could be created. Moreover, the students may consider the teacher as inspiring. Creating such videos is probably easier than most teachers think. You can use

online free apps such as animoto.com or biteable.com to do that. Another possibility is to use a popular nowadays virtual tool canva.com. If you are not keen on virtual apps you could create a PowerPoint presentation and save it as an MP4 file. A nice surprise for the students is to receive a YouTube video with the teacher's advice. Once an MP4 file is created in PowerPoint or canva.com, you can upload it to YouTube studio and publish it there. It will not be seen by anyone unless you make it visible, you can also make it available only to people who have the link that you can share.

Student–teacher feedback

It could be argued that in a contemporary primary or secondary school students are rarely asked what they think about a given class, teacher, or material. The decisive person seems to be the teacher who has the power to decide what will be taught, how and when. Some teachers, especially at the beginning of their careers ask their students for feedback but it seems that the constraints of the curriculum along with the parents' and authorities' expectations limit the freedom of making adaptations to materials or how classes are conducted. The situation looks a bit better at the higher education level. It has become standard to ask students at the end of the term what their opinion on a given subject, teacher, or presented material is. One disadvantage of that approach is that the term is over and nothing can be changed at that moment. The decision that could be made at this point is to dismiss a teacher whose work has not been efficient, to delegate him/her to other subjects, or to encourage him/her to improve his/her teaching methods. The group of students that have been taught will not see the result of any workshops the teacher may be willing to take part in. For that reason, Duncan advocates eliciting feedback from students after one task and before another to improve the learner's performance at the latter (Duncan, 2007). That seems reasonable as it enables the teacher to change his/her teaching strategies during a course and immediately see if the changes s/he introduces have an impact on their students. Such mid-term feedback lets the teacher rethink what s/he is doing and gives him/her the chance to change things that might need changing.

Letting the students express their opinions and letting them know that they are heard improve the atmosphere in class and makes students responsible for what is happening in the classroom. Koenig (2021) mentions a journalism instructor at the University of Minnesota who after a month of teaching asks her students brief questions like: "What should keep happening in this class? What should we start doing in this class? What should we stop doing in this class?". Answers to those three simple open-ended questions will inform the teacher if what she has been doing is what the students need and expect. A huge advantage of doing that during the term is that certain things can be altered so that the student's expectations are met. You can do it the traditional way – students write on a piece of paper with their pens or the modern way – using a google forms app, in which you can easily create questionnaires. Sharing them is also easy – you just send your students a link. The look of the questionnaire can be changed so that it looks more attractive. Another simple tool that can be used to gather information from your students

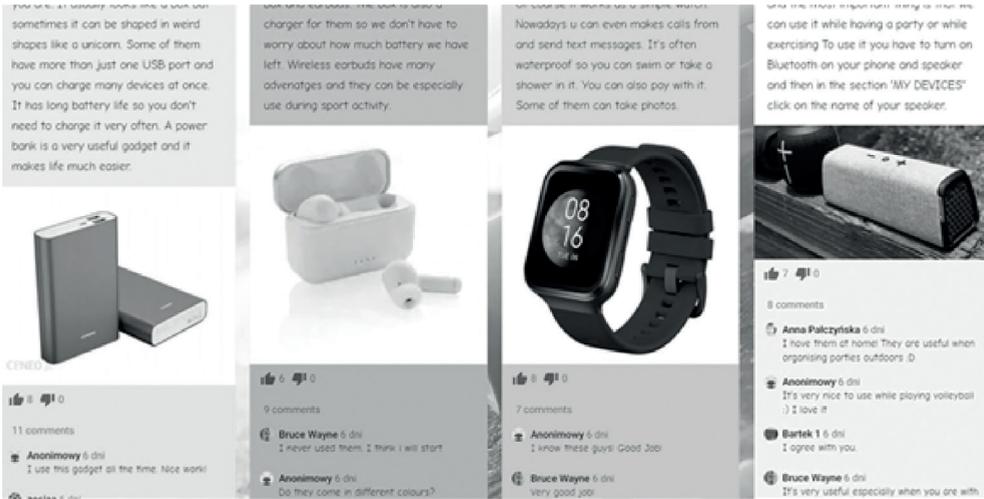
is answergarden.ch. It is much less complex than google forms and allows you to ask just one question that is not very long. The answers are later displayed as a word cloud and may be seen by all the people who have a link to your question. Still, the answers are written anonymously and you can sometimes learn about things that students would not tell you to your face. You could ask questions like: What do you like best about my class? What do you like least about my class? Do you think I speak too fast? Do you struggle to comprehend what I'm trying to explain? etc. A great advantage is that no registration is needed to use this website.

Student–student feedback

As teachers and lecturers, we are so used to assessing that we often forget that students could profit from other students' work or opinions. Peer assessment can be an efficient tool for learning (Falchikov, 1995). A teacher could start with a simple instruction like 'compare your answer to your friends' answers' after a listening or grammar task. When the students have different answers, they try to figure out whose answers are correct and why, they often end up explaining to each other why they believe their answers are correct and, thus, learn. A similar situation will take place if students are asked to work in pairs or groups on some project, they will assess each other.

Modern technology can also prove itself helpful here. A teacher can create a virtual board using padlet.com and while doing that enable students to comment on other students' work. In the first stage of the class, students are asked to create a piece of writing, enrich it with a photo and post it online. In the second stage of the class, students read other students' pieces of writing and can comment on them. Thanks to the introduction of the second part of the session students get to know each other, practice their reading (and writing!) skills as well as acquire the skills as to how to react politely to other people's posts that may be useful in the virtual world where there are numerous haters.

When teaching tech-savvy students introducing a task on flipgrid.com may be a good decision. The teacher introduces the topic s/he wants the students to discuss either by describing it or recording himself/herself. S/He may also decide to provide the students with some additional materials like links to articles, videos, etc. The learners create videos with their responses and when they feel uncomfortable being seen talking they can add a sticker or emoji to hide their faces or blur the vision or choose some other way to make themselves less visible.



Pict 1. A padlet.com board with students' descriptions of their favourite gadgets and comments (see: Pałczyńska, 2021: 91)

April 26, 2020

Technology

How does technology change our life?
 What are the advantages and disadvantages of it?

Attachments

 some inspiration if needed
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CWsLR5SuyU>



Pict 2. An example of a simple task created on flipgrid.com Students answer by clicking “Add Response”

Once the students have uploaded their videos (they usually stress that the most difficult part of the task was to record themselves), other students can comment on them. The app can be found especially useful when teaching Speaking online.

Another idea connected with student–student feedback when teaching online with the usage of the Moodle platform is to create a forum where the students can share their doubts or advice. No matter what subject is taught, creating some space where students can exchange their ideas is useful. Sometimes the questions students have may be more quickly and with better results answered by other students than the teacher.

“According to Yeha and Lob (2009), corrective feedback or error correction provided via written computer-mediated communication could play an important role in developing learners’ metalinguistic awareness, especially marking up text with coloured annotations and focusing the learners’ attention on limited information. This makes corrective feedback an efficient way to draw learners’ attention to the error and the feedback about it in the written text” (AbuSeileek, Abualsha’r, 2014: 76). Students can be encouraged to work together on one text with the usage of the Microsoft Word tools but there is also another possibility. Framapad.org is a virtual tool that helps groups of people work on one text.

Teacher–teacher feedback

Feedback given to teachers by other teachers is important and should not be absent both in secondary schools and universities. Exchanging ideas and experience make teaching more efficient, especially when teaching remotely. Creating interactive materials that are needed to teach remotely is time-consuming, yet can be divided among colleagues. Moreover, when one has created some worksheet, it is always a good idea to ask a colleague to have a look at it before sending it to students, as possible mistakes can be found.

When working on a piece of writing teachers may decide to take advantage of framapad.org, which enables teachers to work on the same document simultaneously. Each teacher can choose which colour s/he will be writing in and it is easily seen who has written what. This website is recommended when working on longer pieces of writing, whereas padlet.com, jamboard.google.com, or linoit.com could be used effectively when brainstorming.

Automatic feedback

Several apps offer the possibility to create automatically corrected worksheets. The moment a student has completed them, s/he may be sent information on which questions have been answered correctly and what needs to be worked on. In terms of online gaming apps such as Kahoot, blooet.com, or quizziz.com feedback is given after each question, whereas when using bookwidgets.com, wizer.me or liveworsheds.com feedback is given after completing the whole worksheet. This kind of feedback has a number of benefits for both teachers and students. Teachers are happy not to have to correct a pile of papers and students receive information immediately. Even though creating those worksheets may take up quite some time, which may be problematic for some teachers, such worksheets can be used on multiple occasions and much time is saved on correcting the papers. In terms of interactive worksheets corrected papers are received by teachers and students via mail.

Conclusion

The computer is a pedagogical tool that needs to be carefully used, evaluated, and explored by pedagogues and researchers alike
(Caws, 2006: 20)

Naisbitt predicted in 1982 that as a society “we are moving from the specialist who is soon obsolete to the generalist who can adapt” (18). There can be no denying that mentors of the past who were believed to be experts will probably be less effective at teaching than teachers who at least try to adapt to the changing world, in which technology plays a great role. According to Badley and Habeshaw a higher education teacher “has to become **computer literate** himself; he has to have some understanding of the new technology not in a technical sense but as someone who will be able to manage it comfortably as a resource for learning and teaching” (2006: 215). Nowadays in the era of COVID-19 and emergency remote learning these words sound truer than ever. Even though in the world of digital natives and digital immigrants (see: Prensky, 2001: 1) the teachers are doomed to be foreigners, there are several ways they can prove to be technology literate. Thanks to the usage of various tools the teaching/learning process can be more effective and pleasurable. Moreover, essential social skills can be improved. Digital immigrants – teachers – may be tired with the need to keep up with the digital natives. Students may become frustrated when things do not go the way they should. However, it “should not blind us to the genuine benefits technology can bring when used wisely” (Bates, Poole, 2003: 11).

Feedback/feedforward is an important part of it and as such should not be underestimated but taken advantage of in all its forms. Both teachers and students can learn from each other with the view of creating a positive learning environment that will benefit that only them but the whole society.

References

- AbuSeileek A., Abualsha'r A. (2014), *Using peer computer-mediated corrective feedback to support EFL learner's writing*, “Language Learning & Technology”, 18(1), pp. 76–95, <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/7d52456d-62df-4850-8030-9d4e4f593228/content> (accessed 16.08.2022).
- Badley G., Habeshaw T. (1991), *The Changing Role of the Teacher in Higher Education*, “Journal of In-Service Education”, 17, pp. 212–218, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0305763910170307> (accessed 16.12.2021).
- Bates A.W., Poole G. (2003), *Effective teaching with technology in higher education: foundations for success*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Brown P.C., Roediger H.L., McDaniel M.A. (2014), *Make it Stick. The science of Successful Learning*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Cathcart A., Greer D., Neale L. (2014), *Learner-focused evaluation cycles: facilitating learning using feedforward, concurrent and feedback evaluation*, “Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education”, 39(7), pp. 790–802.

- Caws C. (2006), *Assessing group interactions online: Students' perspectives*, "Journal of Learning Design", 1(3), pp. 19–28.
- Conaghan P., Lockey A. (2009), *Feedback to feedforward*, "Notfall+ Rettungsmedizin", 12(2), pp. 45–48.
- Duncan N. (2007), *'Feed-forward': improving students' use of tutors' comments*, "Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education", 32(3), pp. 271–283
- Ferris D. (2003), *Response to student writing: Implications for second language students*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.
- Ferris D. (2006), *Does error feedback help student writers? New evidence on the short- and longterm effects of written error correction* [in:] K. Hyland, F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp. 81–104.
- Guénette D. (2007), *Is feedback pedagogically correct?: Research design issues in studies of feedback on writing*, "Journal of Second Language Writing", 16(1), pp. 40–53.
- Hepsiba N., Subhashini A., Raju M., Rao Y. P. (2016), *Changing role of teachers in the present society*, "International Research Journal of Engineering, IT and Scientific Research", 2(9), pp. 67–72, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/230597064.pdf> (accessed 16.12.2021).
- Koenig R. (2021), *Why Professors Should Ask Students For Feedback Long Before the Semester Is Over*, <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2021-06-10-why-professors-should-ask-students-for-feedback-long-before-the-semester-is-over> (accessed 29.11.2021).
- Lyster R., Ranta, L. (1997), *Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms*, "Studies in Second Language Acquisition", 19, pp. 37–66.
- Naisbitt J. (1982), *Megatrends: Ten new directions transforming our lives*, Warner Books, New York.
- Palczyńska A. (2021), *Aktywizacja na lekcji języka obcego w nauczaniu zdalnym*, „Języki Obce w Szkole”, 3, pp. 89–94.
- Prensky M. (2001), *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*, "On The Horizon", 9, pp. 3–6.
- Santos M., López-Serrano S., Manchón R. (2010), *The differential effect of two types of direct written corrective feedback on noticing and uptake: Reformulation vs. error correction*, "International Journal of English Studies", 10(1), pp. 131–154.
- Truscott J., Hsu A.Y.-P. (2008), *Error correction, revision, and learning*, "Journal of Second Language Writing", 17, pp. 292–305.
- Warschauer M. (2002), *A developmental perspective on technology in language education*, "TESOL Quarterly", 36(3), pp. 453–475.

Netography:

<https://animoto.com/>

<https://answergarden.ch/>

<https://biteable.com/>

<https://en.linoit.com/>

<https://framapad.org/abc/en/>

<https://www.google.pl/intl/pl/forms/about/>

<https://kahoot.it/>

<https://info.flipgrid.com/>

<https://jamboard.google.com/>

<https://pl.padlet.com/>

<https://quizizz.com/admin>

<https://wizer.me/>

<https://www.bookwidgets.com/>

<https://www.blooket.com/>

<https://www.canva.com/>

<https://www.liveworksheets.com/>

Streszczenie

Wirtualna informacja zwrotna

Informacja zwrotna to zagadnienie, które można omawiać z różnych perspektyw. Taką informację może przekazywać nauczyciel uczniom, uczniowie nauczycielom, uczniowie sobie nawzajem, nauczyciele sobie nawzajem. Co więcej, obecnie dzięki technologii uczący się mogą otrzymać automatyczną informację zwrotną, która generowana jest zaraz po ukończeniu zadania. W literaturze fachowej znajdziemy liczne artykuły dotyczące informacji zwrotnej, jaką nauczyciele kierują do uczniów, jednak wydaje się, że dotychczas niewiele badań poświęcono innym rodzajom informacji zwrotnej. Niniejsza praca ma na celu zwrócenie uwagi na tę kwestię oraz wskazanie sposobów wykorzystania technologii w kontekście informacji zwrotnej.

Słowa kluczowe: informacja zwrotna, aplikacje, nauczanie zdalne, nauka zdalna, technologia