Feedback Strategies

Individual Conferencing

The goal of individual conferencing is to help Prep Year students become independent and provide them with useful strategies that can be applied either in the English language classroom or their majors.

Both the teacher and the student play different roles during individual conferencing. The teacher is the resource and the coach, while the student acts as an inquirer, writer and idea-generator. Individual conferencing also provides students with a chance to be note-takers and discussion participants.

Teachers can develop a conferencing model based on three types of individual conferencing: content, process and editing.

**Type 1: Content:** Teacher elicits the type of content/theme from the student.

**Type 2: Process:** Helps the student to learn how to reflect on their work; review their progress and set goals to improve their work.

**Type 3: Editing:** Helps the student to concentrate on one problem, it also teaches the student the skill.

In order for the individual conferencing session to be successful, teachers should consider the following phases: Pre-conferencing, Conferencing, Post-conferencing.

**Pre-conferencing:** What is the single most important problem about the work presented? How can I help the student?

**During Conferencing:**

⇒ At the beginning state your expectations from holding the individual conferencing.

⇒ Listen to the student and allow the conference to function as a two-way interaction rather than dominating the student.

⇒ Help students explore the various ways of locating and organising information necessary to completing their work.

⇒ Your aim is not to correct; but to raise the awareness of the students and not to provide them with the answers.

**Post Conferencing:** The teacher can ask students to indicate what skill strategy they were taught during the conferencing. Both the teacher and the student can agree on the new skill that the student needs to develop.

Types of Feedback

**Generic feedback strategies:**
Generic feedback, individual conferencing, peer feedback and self evaluation.

**Oral feedback strategies:**
Recasts, repetition, elicitation and paralinguistic signals.

If feedback is to be effective in guiding learning, it should focus on ‘growth rather than grading’ encouraging and advancing student learning (Sadler, 1983: 60).

The elements of the feedback that the student receives could include a mark, a feedback sheet, a criteria matrix and a copy of the essay (Rae & Cockrane, 2008: 223).
Corrective Feedback

Written Feedback Strategies: There are many ways for giving written feedback on students’ written work. These ways can be as follows:

⇒ Error feedback (using correction codes and an error awareness sheet)
⇒ Error feedback and commentary on a submission form
⇒ Submission form feedback commentary and rubric

Errors can be underlined, circled and categorized. The choice among those strategies depends on the language proficiency level of the students in each class. To consolidate the feedback process, this process should be followed by meeting the student to give oral feedback, or what is literally known as individual conferencing. Individual conferencing will help students get more clarification about their work.

Dos and Don’ts of Feedback

♦ Do give feedback that is prompt, encouraging and constructive.
♦ Do provide feedback during the learning process as it helps students improve their work in the future (i.e. formative feedback).
♦ Do pay attention to diversity and individuality when giving feedback.
♦ **Ensure your feedback is directed at the student’s work, rather than at the student.**
♦ Make judicious selections of which errors to treat; do so with empathy.
♦ Do not stifle the students’ attempts at production by smothering them with corrective feedback.

Good Practice

1. Select and photocopy an anonymous essay.
2. Divide students in groups and ask them to edit the essay using the set of editing questions given to them for the task.
3. After 20 min. each group gives feedback to the whole class. For example another Thesis Statement can be proposed, topic sentences for the body paragraphs suggested, correct in-text citation, or propose another conclusion.
4. Show students a good writing sample.
5. Elicit from students areas of best practice based on the shared essay samples.

Just a Thought . . .

“A teacher had used in class a green pen to give written feedback to students. I was interested to know whether or not the teacher had a rationale for using only a green pen. He had. He said he thought green was softer on the eye. I thought this a perfectly reasonable rationale” (Hunt, 2010).

Self-test—Feedback Checklist

Read through a recent feedback sheet you have given one of your students and then answer the questions below. Award yourself one point for each positive answer.

**Did you:**

✓ start off with a positive comment?
✓ write a brief summary of your views?
✓ turn criticism into positive suggestions?
✓ ask questions that encourage reflection about the work?
✓ explain ALL your comments? Including the mark or grade?

Coming Up

Research Seminar: Feedback Strategies: Is there a best strategy for giving feedback?
12/12/2010 12:00—1:00pm.
English Department—Building D, room # 304

For further support on Feedback Strategies please visit:

http://isucomm.iastate.edu/oralcomfeedbk
http://www.netc.org/focus/strategiesprov.php
http://prepyearenglish.pbworks.com


**ALSO** Advising and Language Support Office
English Department, Building D, ground floor, Office # 107.

References:

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