2.6 Eliciting learner feedback

So far we have dealt with feedback from the teacher to the learners. But, feedback can be channeled in the opposite direction, from learners to teacher. As we noted in section 2.3 above, self and peer assessment may provide teachers with useful information regarding how learners view their own or their peers' performances.

2.6.1 Self and peer assessment form

The range of tools that can be used for self and peer assessment are numerous. We shall take one example of each to illustrate how they can be made to fit their specific purposes.

The self assessment form below has been designed to find out how well learners believe they can perform on one of the tasks introduced in Unit One.

Self Assessment Form

Instructions: Put a cross (x) in the box which you think best indicates your performance on the task you have completed. Then complete the comments at the end of the form.

Task: You would like to try out the fancy new Italian restaurant "Il Gondoliero" tonight Unfortunately, no one is free to accompany you to dinner (this can be changed to include a dinner partner). Look up the phone number of the restaurant in the phone book and call to reserve a table for one at an appropriate time this evening. You will have to speak with the answering machine as the staff do not come in until 5:00 p.m.

I was able to leave a clear and comprehensible message
giving all the necessary information (name, purpose of call,
time of reservation, no. of guests, appropriate greetings).   4   ☐

I was able to give most or all of the information required,
but my message was somewhat hesitant and possibly not
well organized.   3   ☐

I was able to give some of the information required hesitantly.
My message lacked fluency.   2   ☐

My message was not complete or fluent enough to make
a successful booking.   1   ☐

I was not able to say anything.   0   ☐

Comments
      I did the following well _____
      I need to improve _____

Reflect

Identify a task you have used with a group of your own learners and design a self assessment form for your learners. Show the self assessment form to a colleague for comment.

We mentioned above (section 2.3) that self and peer assessment should help learners understand how they are evaluated. We may therefore want them to use the same checklists / feedback sheets that we plan to use to assess a task. We may, however, adapt these to make the task of assessment manageable for the learners. One common way of doing this is to have learners focus on one aspect of performance. If, for example, we were planning to use the following feedback questionnaire to assess an oral presentation we could divide the class into 4 groups with each group focusing on assessing one aspect of the presentation.

Peer Feedback Questionnaire

As you watch the presentation, put a tick in the appropriate box. 1 = agree; 2 = not sure; 3 = do not agree

	1	2	3
Content:			
The content of the presentation was interesting	☐	☐	☐
The content was relevant	☐	☐	☐
Organisation:			
The content of the presentation was well organized	☐	☐	☐
The presentation had a clear introduction	☐	☐	☐
The presentation was brought to an end with a relevant and clear conclusion	☐	☐	☐
Language:			
The presenter was easy to understand	☐	☐	☐
The presenter made few mistakes and these did not prevent me from understanding	☐	☐	☐
The pronunciation was clear	☐	☐	☐
Communicative Strategies:			
The presenter maintained eye contact with the class	☐	☐	☐
The presenter used body language to help get his / her message across	☐	☐	☐
The presenter used good visual aids to illustrate the content	☐	☐	☐

2.6.2   Journaling and keeping a log

Journaling is the final means of giving feedback that we consider. Encouraging learners to write a journal can open a dialogue between the learners and their teacher, thus providing two-way feedback. As Genesee and Uphur (1996: 127) point out, through the use of journals:

> Learners can become more aware of the criteria by which assessment is based; they may gradually internalize these criteria and thus be in a better position to monitor and judge their own learning.

However, it must be remembered that learners need to build their own confidence in making entries into their journals. They may need encouragement from the teacher and therefore it is important that the comments the teacher makes are supportive. Learners need to have the freedom of what to write and they need to know that their entries will not be graded in any way.

As a first step to encourage learners to keep a journal in which they should be free to make open-ended comments, it may be a good idea to introduce learners to keeping a log in which they respond to prompts. A log differs from a journal, therefore, in that it is more structured. After completing an assessment task, learners could be asked to respond to the following prompts:

Assessment Log

- This week / today I completed the following task:
  _____

- I think I did the following well:
  _____

- I think I could have done the following better:
  _____

- I had the following difficulties:
  _____

- I enjoyed / did not enjoy doing:
  _____

- Other comments:
  _____
  _____

- Teacher's Response:
  _____
  _____

Learners need to be given time to make entries into their log or journal. They should have a separate book or file for keeping their entries together. Even for a journal entry they should be provided with a template such as the one below:

Date: _____

Assessment Task: _____

My comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

My teacher's response:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____