Giving feedback on classroom tasks   -   David Petrie

Giving feedback on classroom tasks is a tricky thing to come up with ideas for. Broadly, I think methods can be broken down into Collaborative / Competitive / Partial / Full. The four methods can interact, so you can have competitive partial feedback, followed by collaborative full feedback – or vice versa.

Collaborative methods might involve learners checking specific answers with you and boarding correct versions – or you can monitor and ask stronger students to board the odd correct answer. Thus all the learners eventually, by a process of deduction and copying, end up with the right answers. Or they might involve giving learners specific answers and asking them to show the answers to each other (as per the silent mingle).

Competitive methods will inevitably involve a certain amount of movement, energy and the occasional broken limb. Board races, team games and points allocation all play a part.

Partial feedback methods will often involve allocating points, but not actually correcting the answers. With multiple choice, you might say "you need 4 As, 2 Bs, 1 C and 3 Ds". Or my favourite is "you've got six wrong". Partial feedback methods should ideally be used for one of two purposes – either to provide additional support for a difficult task, or possibly to slow down the faster finishers, or those learners who focus more on task completion than on accuracy.

Full feedback – essentially this is making sure everyone has a correct set of answers. It does however go a little beyond that, as you might want to check that learners understand why the answers are correct. Concept questions and checking questions are useful here.

The twenty different ideas listed below all arose from contributions made by everyone who was at a seminar I ran at International House Coimbra on March 22nd 2011. My thanks to the participants (Jo, Jenny, Dave T, Kate, Jessica, Vera, Alexis, Dave C, Anna, Neil, Stella, Judy, Patricia, Marta, Michael, Daniel) for their contributions.

The notes given are my understanding of the different methods that were described – if I didn't get any of it quite right or if you have an alternative way of doing it, please let me know!

1. Horse Racing:
Learners are in teams, each team has a "horse" (picture cut out) stuck to the board along a "track", presumably with the same number of squares as there are questions. For every question a team gets right, their horse moves further along the track to the finishing line.

2. Gambling:
Learners are in teams, each team allocated a certain number of points / amount of fictional cash to gamble with. If they get the answer right, they win more cash – if it's wrong they lose their stake!

3. Connect Four:
As with the popular game (which you could use if you have it available), the object is to get a horizontal or vertical line of four. The size of the grid can vary depending on how many questions you have to answer. A correct answer allows a team to "drop" a token into a

column that they choose. A full explanation of the original game can be found here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Connect_Four. An online version of the game can be found here: http://www.fetchfido.co.uk/games/connect_4/connect_4.htm

4. Board Race:
Learners in two or three teams, which line up in files. A relay race then ensues with one learner from each team running to the board and writing up an answer before giving the pen to the next person in the team and going to the back of the line and so on. Points can be awarded for the fastest team to finish, then for correct answers and deductions made for spelling mistakes and so on. I've found it useful to have a chair marking the "start" line, beyond which only the learners with the pens are allowed, so as to prevent crowding and cheating at the board.

5. Group Comparison
A peer-teaching method where learners compare and correct their answers in groups. This also means that it allows the teacher to focus on the really difficult questions as most of the easier ones will have been dealt with at the group level.

6 Changing Pairs
Similar to group comparison, but done in pairs, though different pairs to any pairwork that occurred while learners were completing the task. A thought I just had was that you could also do this by allocating A and B to the learners and every two minutes the A's stand up and move clockwise or the Bs stand up and move anti-clockwise. Thus all the learners would interact with each other eventually.

7 Answer Votes
Learners vote for the answers they think are correct.

8 Read out loud:
Learners read through the text one sentence at a time, providing the answer they think is correct as they get to a gap.

9 This many wrong
When examining a completed learner exercise, don't tell the learners which questions they got wrong, only how many questions they got wrong. An extension of this – when a learner has got all the questions right, they can become the teacher and tell their peers how many are still incorrect.

10 Stand Up Sit down
As the teacher reads out possible answers to the question, learners stand up if they think the answer is correct and remain seated if they think it is incorrect. Possibly easiest to run this with multiple choice tasks.

11 Mini-boards
By laminating blank A4 paper (pastel shades or white paper work best for this), you can create mini-board which learners can write on with standard board pens. Pairs or teams can then write their answers on the boards and hold them up at the same time to show their answers. If you don't have laminated mini-boards available, this is a good way to make in-roads into the scrap paper pile by the photocopier.
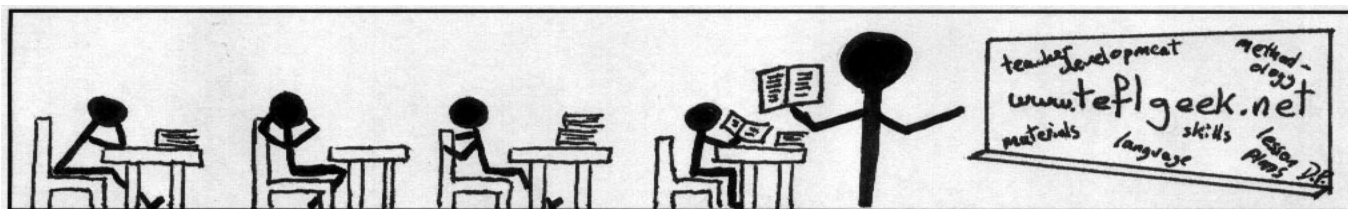
12 On the board
You can give learners the answers on the board in a number of ways – either just writing them up in order, writing up the number of different multiple choice answers (e.g. "there are 3 A, 2 B, 1 C, 4 D"), or you could just write up the answers in random places across the board. You could also include some distractors here, wrong answers that learners try to avoid!

13 Noughts & Crosses / Tic Tac Toe
Simple enough – learners in two teams and a correct answer wins learners a chance to take a square!

14 Round the Room
Put the answers up on the walls of the classroom, learners mingle and work out what goes where. A variety of this might be to put the answers on the learners (post it notes / sticky taped to their backs).

15 Jenga
If you have this game available, it can be a fun way of doing feedback. Teams with a correct answer can either elect to remove a block or make the other team remove a block. A full description of jenga can be found here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenga
An online version (requires FLASH) can be found here: http://www.unoriginal.co.uk/jenga.html

16 First Letter Last Letter
As a partial feedback technique, give teams the first and last letters of each answer.

17 Bin Basketball
Teams with a correct answer win the chance to throw a paper ball into the rubbish bin. Make sure they don't through away the handout! An alternative for multiple choice tasks might be to have four bins, marked A, B, C & D and learners throw their paper balls at the correct basket (might need different coloured paper balls?).

18 Coloured Tick method
Learners are in different teams, allocated to a different colour board pen. Question numbers are on the board. As learners think they have a correct answer, they check it with you and are either told right or wrong. If they are right, they get a tick in their team's colour next to the relevant question. That question is then gone and can't be answered by other teams.

19 The square game.
For this you need to put a dot grid (i.e. three rows of three dots) on the board. Each team is allocated a different colour board pen. On giving a correct answer, each team gets the chance to connect two of the dots in their colour. The object is to complete a square. Squares can be made of different coloured lines, but the team that draws the line which completes the square gets to colour the square in their team's colour.

20 TPR answers
Give each learner one of the answers and learners put themselves in the correct order for the text.