

FEEDBACK DIALOGUES

Irina Bokun, Ukrainian Academy of Banking of NBU, Sumy

“Feedback dialogues” is the name we give to the exchanges and conversations which develop between students and teachers about their English classes. It is not something which just happens, but is an integral, planned part of each course. The guidelines to follow in setting up a feedback dialogue are:

1. Create a climate of trust and confidence where students feel comfortable expressing their opinions.
2. Feedback dialogues seem to work best where there is a task to give the dialogue a structure and a goal.
3. You will need to be very objective throughout the dialogue. When students criticize it can be hard not to become defensive or even aggressive, but it is important that you adopt an accepting attitude. For your students this is their time to say what they liked/didn't like and what they found useful/didn't find useful. Each person's experiences will be different, so this also gives them the opportunity to find out the views of other people in the group. It is through hearing these differences of opinion that the group learns tolerance.
4. In some cases, give students the choice of anonymous feedback. This will depend largely on the level of trust they have, not necessarily in you, but in, for example, the institution where the classes take place.
5. There must be evidence in the days which follow a feedback session that some of their suggestions are being taken on board. Having feedback dialogues, however, doesn't mean that you have to fulfill all the wishes and desires expressed. It is important that you indicate that you have heard and understood everyone's point of view.

We generally hold a formal feedback dialogue every twelve to twenty hours, depending on the length of the course. The procedure is:

1. Give everyone an individual written task to do in which they think about what they are doing in class.
2. Students compare with one another what they have written.
3. Students discuss their own impressions and those they have heard others express and have found thought-provoking.
4. You summarise as objectively as you can what has been said and ask students to leave their written feedback papers behind at the end of the class. Once again, make it clear that these papers can be left anonymously.

One such individual written task is “The Feel Wheel”. The procedure is the following:

1. Ask students to draw a wheel and divide it into four parts.

Tell them to write in their wheel four “emotions” they are feeling at the moment in relation to their class. For example: good atmosphere, hard work, fulfilled moments and lots of new people.

Next, for each emotion they write a sentence explaining why they are experiencing that particular feeling.

Students mingle and note any similarities or differences.

Bring the group back together and ask each person to share one part of their feel wheel with the whole group.

Bokun, I.A. Feedback dialogues [Text] /I.A. Bokun // Проблеми і перспективи інноваційного розвитку економіки України: матеріали міжнародної науково – практичної конференції (21-23 вересня 2005 р.). – Дніпропетровськ: НГУ, 2005. – С.136 – 138.