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## Feedback in On-line Foreign Language Teaching

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### Abstract

Feedback is an important element of eLearning. The term itself occurs in the connection with this new form of learning very early. The eLearning program producers were interested in the level of users' satisfaction with their products. They were gaining and collecting user's both positive and negative criticism calling such information a feedback. The information course was running from a program user to a program author, designer or producer.

In section one of this article we briefly review the contents of this concept in eLearning system from the historical point of view. Next section outlines the scope of feedback use at present. Section three brings some suggestions of feedback adaptation and lists some conditions of such and individualization. The conclusion of the article shows methodological resources of the individualization.

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### 1. Introduction

From "feedback" we understand information for the student to get know his learning process goes (Mareš, Křivohlavý, 1995). Through the feedback student is informed about quality of his learning, based on which he can regulate this process. Feedback is basic principle of formative evaluation. Given valuating information is supposed to show strengths and weaknesses of student's performance. (Průcha a kol., 2009).

Feedback should help the student, not intimidate nor discourage him from further activity. While giving feedback is without a doubt necessary to avoid irony, superiority or ridiculing to avoid repression of its primary meaning.

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Students often require feedback from the teacher themselves, so it is appropriate to give the feedback immediately after the student's performance. Efficiency of feedback is reduced with time delay because student doesn't have to recall his performance as clearly as right after it.

Zlámál (2008) distinguishes eight basic criteria of efficient feedback:

- Systematic approach, which assumes thinking the feedback through with regards to student's development.
- Complexity, which is determined by the use of broader spectrum of information sources.
- Continuity, which points to giving feedback in context.
- Clarity determining the use of appropriate language and the way the feedback is given.
- Acceptability, which ensures that feedback sounded positively to the student.
- Factuality that emphasizes the use of real arguments.
- Objectivity guaranteeing evaluating the given performance only.
- Practical use, thanks to which the student is offered the suggestions how to improve his performance.

Some authors distinguish four different functions:

- Regulative function (through the feedback the teacher can regulate student's activity).
- Social function (the teacher and the student form kind of relationship).
- Cognitive function (the student can get to know himself and the teacher better and so easier understand the topic).
- Development function (the student learns how to process the feedback and use it for his own development) (Mareš, Krivohlavý, 1995).

We consider it appropriate that in educational institutions the positive feedback method prevails. It is very strong motivational factor, it awakes student's interest and strengthens his self-confidence.

## 2. Feedback in on-line foreign language teaching

Feedback is an important element of eLearning. The term itself occurs in the connection with this new form of learning very early. The eLearning program producers were interested in the level of users' satisfaction with their products. They were gaining and collecting user's calling such information a feedback. The information course was running from a program user to a program author, designer or producer. We meet this interpretation also in older Czech tradition, when eLearning had been used in teaching process within higher education. The university students were answering to many questions about their experience with new learning devices by means of questionnaires. Their information had been – as feedback – used in new program production. We can read about such process e.g. in (Jablonská, Rysová 2003). We can find similar term interpretation also in another paper (Mechlová 2003). The author uses feedback also in a program's evaluating, but at the same time she points out that feedback must be incorporated in a way in the eLearning program itself.

The practice of such incorporation is then described (or mentioned) in several articles: (Černá 2003, Mls 2003, Ponce 2003). All have two points in common. They give the means used as a feedback: explanation, rule, formula, but also short test or self-test. All of them bring information about the right and correct solution of task the students should pass. Each of the means listed brought the necessary information after the students' tasks had been finished. The students was supposed to study the solutions carefully, to identify his possible mistakes, to consult them with his tutor or his peers and to do its tasks right. Many subsequent articles concerning the role and use of feedback in concrete programs continue on the practice dealt with here. If some contributions describing the work with programs do not mention the use of feedback at all, it does not mean, that a feedback is missing within them.

However, there is one paper published only a couple of years later that must be dealt with in our brief overview. The paper was written by Jana Vejvodová and published in 2007. The author's explanations given in it reflect the views of several western scientists. It is pointed out that „feedback plays more important role in eLearning courses than in face-to-face teaching, and therefore it should be incorporated in a program and elaborated with all possible care. Poor feedback results in learners being more likely to “lose their way” in the on-line learning environment than in conventional education” (Vejvodová, 2007). Good feedback has a positive influence on students' motivation. Of course, more important is the author's opinion, that „feedback should be focused on improving learners' skills in creating the final product rather than on the final product itself“, (46). It is therefore not surprising that her paper

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