

# Self-Observation

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## ABSTRACT

This paper describes how my feedback practices in discussion classes have changed from 2013 to 2016. I reanalyzed the previously recorded videos by transcribing the post Discussion 2 feedback. This self-observation project indicates that my focus of post discussion feedback has shifted from the target language functions to more discussion content, and the feedback interaction became more teacher and student collaboration style over the course of four years.

## INTRODUCTION

Zeichner and Liston (2014) state that “the process of understanding and improving one’s own teaching must start from reflection on one’s own experience” (p.6). Fortunately, instructors at Rikkyo University’s English Discussion Center (EDC) have chances to watch their recorded teaching videos at least once a year to reflect on their own teaching. All EDC instructors have access to their previous teaching videos and other instructors’ videos for teacher development purposes. Self-observation, self-reflection, or self-assessment have been found to be useful in guiding teachers to think about their own standards for quality teaching, helping them to set goals for development, figuring out classroom dynamics (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Indeed during my four years at EDC, self-observation practice has been one of the most valuable opportunities for me to be aware of my shortcoming, strength, and teaching belief and to determine what I would like to change in my instructional practice.

In my first year at EDC, I had three chances to watch my lessons and talk about my lessons with program managers. The main goal of the self-reflection and the observation conference was to make sure I could conduct proper lessons that fulfilled the goals of the unified curriculum and seek advice on the EDC lessons if I had any concerns or issues. In my second year, I had two chances to watch my own teaching videos. In this year, my main goal for the self-reflection was to try different styles of feedback and practice activities. After spending one year at the EDC, I was getting comfortable with executing basic EDC lessons; thus, I wanted to experiment with diverse teaching methodologies. In my third year, I had two chances to do peer-observations. I watched two different teachers’ lessons, and gained insight on other teachers’ techniques, strategies, and management skills. In my fourth year, I did one self-observation. In this year, I transcribed my feedback and tried to improve my ability to communicate with students. Although I would like to believe my feedback has got better from my first year, I am not so sure if my feedback practice is much better or much different. Since feedback practices are one of the precious and significant teaching moments for language teachers, it seems worth reconsidering own feedback practices (Hargreaves & Dawe, 2011). Therefore, I would like to investigate how my feedback practices have changed from the first year to the fourth year at the EDC.

## OBSERVATION

### Process

I conducted self-observation through recorded videos from 2013-2016. I reviewed the recorded lessons while taking descriptive notes and making short transcripts of my feedback. I paid extra attention to the feedback after the 16 minutes extended discussion executed in each class. This is because by reviewing all the previous videos it was found that I tend to touch upon points that I thought the most significant in each lesson after Discussion 2. However, the interesting findings

were that what I thought the most important learning for students in the EDC has changed over the period of four years. In the finding section below, I would like to describe the content and interaction style of my feedback practice in each year and how my feedback practices have changed.

### **Findings**

In my first year, I attempted to try as many different feedback practices as possible. As to the content of the feedback, I tried to talk about both good points and points to improve on both language use and the content of discussions. I often mentioned how the target language was actually used in the context and explained the missed opportunities to use the target language. I wrote a lot of comments on the board and recycle the feedback theme from earlier lesson stages. Regarding the interaction style of the feedback, I used both teacher-fronted feedback and student-centered feedback. Before I gave my feedback, students used self-check sheets to reflect on their function and communication skill use. By reviewing the three videos of my first year classes, I felt the classes were very hasty because I tried to cover so many things. My feedback did not seem concise for students.

In my second year, my feedback practice became more language-use focused and student-centered. I tended to emphasize the language use more than content. After brief summary of the discussion content, I talked about how they can use the target function more. Unfortunately, I did not spend much time to mention good points about students' language use. Regarding the interaction style of the feedback, after my teacher-centered quick feedback on language use, students got chances to practice the function again. More time was spent on the formative practice than on my feedback, thus, I would like to say this year's feedback was more student-centered. However, my teacher-centered feedback seemed a little too critical. I was trying to improve students' language skills, but I felt I should have talked about positive points more.

In my third year, my feedback became more balanced. I covered both language use and content of discussions. I touched upon two unique discussion ideas, two examples of good language use, and three points students can improve. Because of my ambitious feedback practice of covering many points, my feedback was very teacher-centered. Although I tried to elicit some interesting ideas from students, it did not work so well because of time constraints. I tend to spend three to four minutes to give long feedback, thus, I was not able to give much time to students to answer my questions. I thought my third year feedback was more balanced and meaningful to students than my first and second year feedback. However, it could be more interactive in a way that students have chances to think about their performance and learning at the end of each class.

In my fourth year, my feedback tried to integrate different feedback strategies I tried in the past three years. After the second discussion, I gave about two and half minutes to students to discuss what they thought about the topic of discussions, what they found interesting and boring, and how they can improve their discussions more. After these quick wrap-up student discussions, I gave my feedback covering one good use of target language and one point they can improve about target language, and two example ideas from the discussions. In this way, I could use both teacher-centered and student-centered feedback. This year's feedback practice seemed meaningful from a classroom management point of view. By listening to students' wrap-up discussions, I could gain insight into what each class cares about and what kind of things they find interesting. I could use this information to make my communication with students more effective.

By reviewing and reanalyzing my previous classes, I could observe the changes of my teaching practices and teaching beliefs. I was especially surprised by the second year recorded video. I put so much more emphasis on the target language in my second year than in any other years and because of this; the classes seemed more formal and dry. However, I did not think my

second year classes are worse than classes in other years. My students in this year have probably got more chances to practice the target language and more corrective feedback on their language performance. I actually thought I would like to incorporate more formative practice activities when necessary. I have not utilized formative practices for a long time mainly due to time management issues. Thus, this self-observation project gave me a chance to reconsider and possibly moderate my feedback practices for the EDC.

Table 1. Summary of Feedback Practice.

Year	Performance Objectives	Types of feedback	Self-reflection
1 <sup>st</sup> year	Cover as many points as possible: Discussion content, functions, and communication skills.	Teacher-fronted feedback and student-centered feedback (Self-check sheet).	Covering many points made the feedback difficult to follow. Giving many examples of student utterances to illustrate my points.
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Explain how and why to use the target function in meaningful way.	Quick teacher-fronted feedback followed by form-focused activities.	Trying too hard to improve students' language skills. Feedback focused mainly on things to improve, not so much on things done well.
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Give feedback both on the target language and content.	Teacher-centered. Almost no students' involvement.	Consistent but ambitious. Telling two unique discussion ideas, two examples of good language use, and three points students can improve.
4 <sup>th</sup> year	Integrate all the previous feedback strategies and give concise but meaningful feedback.	Student-centered feedback followed by short teacher-fronted feedback.	Teacher-centered feedback had meaningful connection with students' discussions.

## CONCLUSION

This project reanalyzed how I implemented feedback practices over the course of four years at the EDC. Reviewing of the previously recorded observation videos illustrates how my feedback content and feedback interaction have changed. My feedback content has gradually shifted from target-language focus to more content focus; while, interaction style has gradually become more teacher and student collaboration style in a way. This project gave me a chance to reconsider my teaching practices, and in the next year, I would like to try a few different things from the fourth year, such as giving more corrective feedback on the target language and formative practices.

**REFERENCES**

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