26   Correction and feedback online

> Learners expect to be corrected, and to receive feedback on their work. Providing this for your learners is not just about meeting their expectations; receiving feedback – and acting on it – is an essential part of the learning process. But if we teach fully online, how can we best correct and provide feedback?

Many of the real time correction and feedback practices that teachers use in the physical classroom can fairly easily be done in a live online class. For example, imagine that your learners carry out a speaking activity in pairs or small groups in the physical classroom, while you walk around and monitor, noting any common or important errors on a piece of paper rather than interrupting the learners while they are talking. Once the activity has finished, you hold a brief correction slot, writing the errors you noted down on the board, and inviting the class to correct each error together. A correction slot can be carried out in a live online class too. Your learners can carry out the speaking activity in breakout rooms while you monitor, moving from virtual room to virtual room and noting down the common errors. You can note down these errors in a word processing document on your computer, or in Google docs or on a slide, so that you can easily share the errors with the learners after the speaking activity, once they are back in the main video-conferencing room. In this case, we use the technology to mimic how we deliver personalised correction/feedback in the physical classroom.

Technology can also provide us with ways to provide automated and more generic feedback. For example, you can create an online grammar or vocabulary quiz for your learners, in which they need to choose or type the correct answers. Some online quiz tools will allow you to add tips or hints to help learners, and if they get an answer wrong, the quiz can display feedback that gives them further help or information, and encourages them to try again to improve their score. By creating your own quizzes for your learners, you can write automated feedback to

address the mistakes you know they are likely to make. For example, if you create a quiz about personality adjectives for learners who are Spanish speakers, you know that they may confuse the adjectives *sensible* and *sensitive*, because *sensible* in Spanish is a false friend (it means *sensitive*). For a quiz question that asks learners to choose the correct personality adjective, you can write a hint like, 'Remember that *sensible* in English has a different meaning to *sensible* in Spanish!'

If you're teaching online, you may also need to provide feedback on your learners' writing in online discussion forums. Providing feedback on this kind of asynchronous written interaction is not the same as providing feedback on an individual learner's written assignment or essay. Communication and interaction are key elements of successful online forum discussions; with this in mind, you should give your learners feedback not just on their use of language, but also on whether they are interacting effectively or not. If effective interaction/ communication is part of your online assessment criteria (see **28**), it is only fair to give your learners ongoing feedback about how successfully (or not) they are communicating, with advice on how to improve this. Indeed, effective feedback provides learners with the information they need to do things more successfully next time – essentially *feedback* becomes *feedforward*, with learners able to apply lessons learned to what they do next.

Finally, if your learners submit their written work in a word-processed document, you can add comments to provide feedback or suggestions, or you can use 'track changes' to reformulate or correct their writing. You can also use screen capture software (e.g. Snagit or Camtasia) to provide spoken feedback on a piece of written work; in this case you essentially video record yourself talking through a learner's written work while highlighting areas for improvement and providing suggestions and corrections.