

**Feedback: A Conversation About ‘The Work’
Between Learners and Colleagues**
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Introduction

Feedback is an invaluable communication skill. It is information that flows between at least two people and relates to observations about what transpired during a given event. For the purposes of this article, the events being discussed are interpreted events and the observations are about the effectiveness of the interpreting work. The most useful observations are those based on knowledge of Sign Language, the interpreting process, the complexities of the process, and a desire to discuss language and process issues in order to enhance the effectiveness and productivity of working interpreters.

The focus of this article is how feedback can be useful and empowering. Specific strategies and considerations related to providing meaningful feedback as part of a dynamic learning environment will be addressed. These strategies and considerations are based on the belief that feedback is an invitation to interact and discuss observations as part of a dynamic communication process (Porter, 1982.) It is a process that does not assume that the giver is totally right and the receiver wrong. Rather, it promotes the learning of basic concepts for providing effective feedback, that when applied among individuals who are committed to professional growth and development, creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect (Porter, 1982.)

Collaborative learning, such as occurs in the FRCC Educational Interpreting Certificate Program (EICP), requires that learners interact with one another for the purpose of sharing observations and experiences. Collaborative learning is designed to foster student’s self-awareness, exploration, and sense of themselves as ‘knowers’ capable of discovering answers and solutions through critical thinking and analysis (Slavin, 1988). Collaborative learning is designed to foster mutual respect and appreciation between and among learners, and among learners and teachers (Bruffee, 1987). To this end, the process of peer review and feedback is an integral part of the collaborative learning experience. As well, EICP students participate in and receive feedback from mentors and facilitators for the same purpose.

There are also practitioners who agree to create a collaborative learning environment within the context of their work relationships. This can occur when interpreters commit to engaging in professional discussions about their work, to review of the effectiveness of the work product, and to share feedback related to observations about each other’s work. This can happen within the context of interpreting assignments involving teams of interpreters, within the context of study groups, or in a mentoring relationship. Again, the goal of the activity is to enhance overall effectiveness and productivity in the interpreting work.

