

Corrective Feedback in the Immersion Context

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This guide supports the teaching of all languages and is relevant to all learning outcomes across the three strands.

- Oral Language/Teanga ó Bhéal
- Reading/Léitheoireacht
- Writing/Scríbhneoireacht

What is Form-Focused Instruction?

When we talk about ‘form’ we are referring to language structure, i.e., tense of verbs, the gender of nouns, the syntax of sentences, grammar points, such as, is there a séimhiú or urú? Children will naturally focus on the content or the meaning of the language. The challenge for the teacher is to draw children’s

attention to form. So, for example, when an immersion teacher is teaching a history lesson, it is not enough for the children to just understand what content they are listening to or reading, they need to pay attention to how it is been said or written.

Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) provides children with opportunities to attend to target language forms during content-orientated tasks (Ranta & Lyster, 2018). Basically, any planned or incidental instructional activity which directs children to pay attention to linguistic form, regardless of the content being taught or discussed, is considered FFI (Ellis, 2001). When we speak of FFI, we consider a broad range of pedagogical strategies immersion teachers may utilise to draw children’s attention to form during content-orientated tasks. In this sense, FFI may be considered an umbrella term for many teaching and

learning strategies available to teachers. Oral Corrective Feedback (CF) is one such strategy, which may aid teachers in establishing a ‘counterbalance’ (Lyster, 2007) between the teaching of content and form in the immersion classroom, in order to develop a more accurate L2 among immersion children.



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What is Corrective Feedback?

Oral Corrective Feedback (CF) may be explained as any reaction of a teacher (or a peer) to a child's inaccurate oral language production, during meaningful interaction that allows the child to attend to their inaccuracy and correct it immediately during communication. L2 inaccuracies are welcomed, in such an approach, as opportunities to 'focus' on language form. The use of CF, however, is not specific to an Irish language lesson. In fact CF was reported to be an effective language teaching strategy in promoting L2 among students (Harris & Ó Duibhir, 2011). With this in mind, teachers are recommended to capitalise on opportunities to utilise CF, in a friendly and supportive manner, throughout the school day, during content lessons, during language lessons and even during break-time. It is further advised that children become

active participants in establishing a collaborative corrective culture in the classroom. Such correction, however, must be sensitive, meaningful and systematic, creating a positive correction culture in the L2 setting. Guidelines provided in this support material may facilitate the creation of such a classroom culture.

What Corrective Feedback Strategies Can I Use in My Classroom?

Teachers may avail of numerous CF strategies, which fall within two categories of either Recasts or Prompts. Firstly, Recast CF strategies (*Table 1.1.*) correct the child's oral linguistic inaccuracy and provide them with the correct form. For that very reason, Recast CF strategies offer explicit or direct support to a child's error-correction process and overall L2 accuracy, provided the child recognises

and acknowledges the corrected form. Recasts are most commonly availed of by teachers to correct children's linguistic inaccuracies because they correct the linguistic form without interrupting the class flow, by swiftly 'recasting' the full utterance in its correct form to the children.

Table 1.1. provides an overview of the various Recast CF strategies and examples of how they can be applied in the classroom.



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| Recasts | | |
|--|---|---|
| Provide the Correct Linguistic Form to the Child | | |
| Recast Strategy | Definition | Example |
| Explicit Correction | The accurate form is provided to the child. | C (child): An bhfuil cead agam faigh deoch? T (teacher): An bhfuil cead agat deoch a fháil? C: An bhfuil cead agam deoch a fháil, a mhúinteoir? |
| Explicit Correction with Metalinguistic Feedback | The accurate form is provided to the child along with an explanation of the linguistic form. | C: Dhún mé an fuinneog sa halla. T: Dhún tú an fhuinneog sa halla. Is focal baininsneach í fuinneog, cosúil le cuileog agus bábóg. C: Is cuimhin liom sin – Chuir mé an bhábóg sa bhosca inné agus dhún mé an fhuinneog sa halla. |
| Conversational/ Didactic Recast | The teacher reformulates all or part of the child's utterance. Conversational Recasts aims to resolve a breakdown in understanding while Didactic Recasts aim to resolve inaccurate linguistic forms. | C: D'fhág Sorcha a mhála anseo. T: Is cailín í Sorcha. Nach gciallaíonn sé sin gur fhág sí a mála anseo? C: Tá an ceart agat – D'fhág Sorcha a mála anseo. |

Table 1.1. Recast CF Strategies
(Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster Saito & Sato, 2013; Sheen & Ellis, 2011)

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Prompts (*Table 1.2.*), on the other hand, withhold the correct form and elicit the accurate form from the child. It is often found, in immersion classes, that children focus on communicating their message without giving enough thought to how they are saying it. Prompts encourage children to pause and think about what they are about to say. However, Prompts require the child to attain a certain level of underlying grammatical knowledge in relation to the linguistic form, in order to correct their inaccuracy, which differs from Recast strategies. It could be argued that Prompts provide a child with less direct or explicit support than Recasts in correcting their linguistic inaccuracies.

Prompts may be considered more implicit or less direct in nature. It is noteworthy though that Prompts are suggested to be beneficial to a child's L2 acquisition process. Prompts, however, may disrupt the content of a class lesson as they may interrupt conversational flow to elicit the correct form from the child which may reduce popularity of application among teachers.

Table 1.2. provides an overview of the various Prompt CF strategies and examples of how they can be applied in the classroom.

| Prompts | | |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Withhold the Correct Linguistic Form From the Child</i> | | |
| Prompt Strategy | Definition | Example |
| Elicitation | Any technique used to directly elicit the correct form from the child. This may occur in three ways: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher may leave a gap in the repeated sentence, eliciting the child to 'fill in the gap'; The teacher may use questioning techniques (using a form of wh-questions) to elicit the accurate form; Or the teacher may simply request the corrected form. | C: Tá na bordanna ar fud an tseomra. T: Tá na céard ar fud an tseomra? C: Tá na boird ar fud an tseomra. |
| Clarification Request | A simple phrase ('Pardon? Excuse me? I don't understand') which indicates to the child that an inaccuracy has occurred in some form. | C: Rith mé timpeall an scoil inné le teachtaireacht an phríomhoide. T: Gabh mo leithscéal? C: Rith mé timpeall na scoile inné le teachtaireacht an phríomhoide. |
| Metalinguistic Feedback | The teacher provides a very brief statement or question in relation to the linguistic form but does not provide the accurate form to the child. | C: An rinne tú an cáca le do Mhamó? T: Céard a tharlaíonn leis an bhfoirm dhiúltach den bhriathar déan san aimsir chaite? Ní..? C: Athraíonn sé! An ndearna tú an cáca le do Mhamó? |
| Repetition Feedback | The teacher repeats, in isolation, the child's incorrect utterance. Teachers may adjust their intonation to focus the child's attention more directly on grammatical inaccuracy. | C: Tá mé múinteoir! C: Tá tú múinteoir?? (an glór ag ardú) S: Is múinteoir mé! |

Table 1.2. Prompt CF Strategies (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster Saito & Sato, 2013; Sheen & Ellis, 2011)

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In the example provided in *Table 1.1.*, *An bhfuil cead agam faigh deoch?*, it is fair to say that nearly all children from 2nd Class onwards, in an immersion school, could correct this utterance, if prompted to do so. The children have the underlying grammatical knowledge of what is the correct form. They may not always, however, produce the correct form, to the frustration of teachers, because they have internalised the incorrect form. A CF Prompt requires children to pause and think. Indeed, when children know that their teacher will prompt them when they use incorrect grammar, they may pay more attention to form before they speak and thus, make less errors.

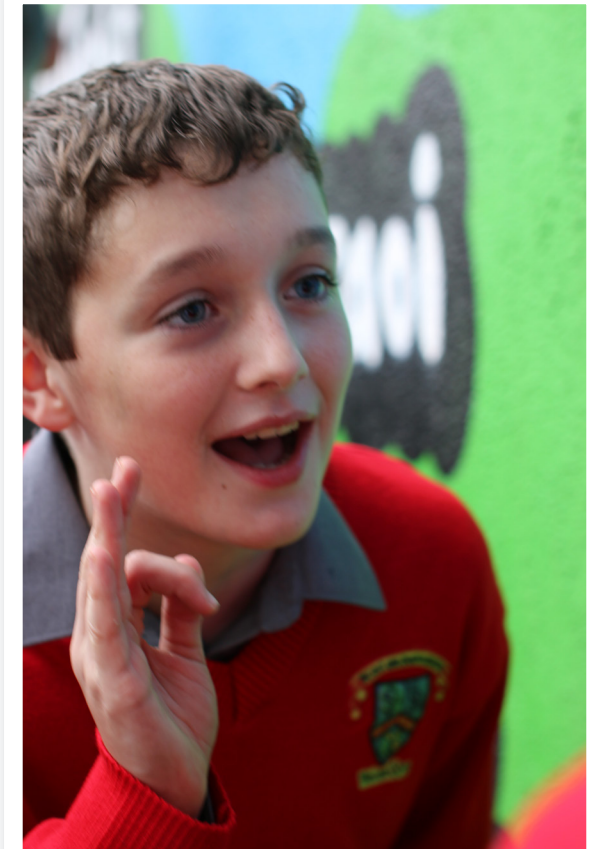
In another example in *Table 1.1.*, *Dhún mé an fuinneog sa halla*, many immersion children in 2nd class will not have learned that *fuinneog* is a feminine noun and takes a *séimhiú* after the definite article – *an fhuinneog*. A CF Prompt

from the teacher will not suffice in this case, more explicit instruction is warranted. This means that the child may require more direct support to correct their grammatical inaccuracy i.e., support from a Recast CF strategy.

In brief, given the range of linguistic strengths and needs, which exist in any given immersion classroom, we acknowledge that a “one size does not fit all” (Ammar & Spada, 2006, p. 566). Therefore, in embracing a counterbalance approach through the use of systematic CF, it is advised that a range of CF strategies, from Recasts to Prompts, are adopted to address the linguistic needs of all children in the immersion classroom.

The current support material encourages immersion teachers to utilise a continuum of CF strategies to support a continuum of linguistic strengths and needs. In other words, it is advised that teachers move from the

use of Recast CF strategies (explicit) to Prompt CF strategies (implicit) depending on the linguistic abilities of the children.



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A Continuum of CF Support for a Continuum of Linguistic Strengths and Needs

In order to establish a continuum of CF support, it is essential that the class teacher recognises and acknowledges children's linguistic strengths and their needs. It is advised that the teacher focuses on a target linguistic form (e.g. aidiacht shealbhach; inscne na n-ainmfhocal; bunuimhreacha, uimhreach pearsanta etc.) as the focus of CF for a fortnight/month (depending on the children's linguistic abilities and the teacher's planning practices). Correcting all linguistic inaccuracies may be too onerous on the teacher and on the children. The target form should be one the children regularly struggle with i.e., a priority linguistic learning need (e.g. briathra neamhrialta, an chopail, inscne na n-ainmfhocal, tuiseal ginideach). As the children become familiar with the target linguistic form, it is advised that

the teacher reduces the CF support provided to the child from Recasts (explicit correction) to Prompts (implicit correction). Such a fading process will vary from child to child depending on their linguistic strengths and needs. So, for example, some children may require Recasts for a longer period of time than others in order to accurately acquire the target language form required, depending on the linguistic abilities of the children.

As the children's L2 develops and the CF scaffold readily fades from Recasts to Prompts, children begin to engage in self-correction of their own linguistic inaccuracies and do so more frequently. With this, a gradual transfer of responsibility (Ní Aogáin, 2019; van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010) occurs from the teacher to the child, leading to an increased level of autonomy and responsibility among children as well as a greater overall

language awareness. Such a scaffolded approach further ensures that the child is consistently operating within his/her zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), which is crucial to a child's language development.



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Additionally, a child's language development is not linear and may progress or regress depending on a number different of factors (e.g., class activity/subject; communicative setting; audience; linguistic form etc.). Therefore, teachers need to use the full continuum of CF outlined in this support material, depending on varying factors which influence strengths and needs of children's linguistic development. Such a developmental process has implications for assessment of learning and assessment for learning. Teachers may find running records of the child's language useful to document progress and consequently, the CF strategies that are required to correct their linguistic inaccuracies.

Implementing a Continuum of CF in the Immersion Classroom

The following continuum of CF support (*Figure 1.1.*), along with the implementation guidelines (*Figure 1.2.*), may be useful to support teachers in implementing a continuum of CF support for a continuum of linguistic strengths and needs in order to facilitate a more accurate L2 among children in immersion classrooms. The continuum of CF support (*Figure 1.1.*) contains five levels, ranging from Level One, whereby the child relies heavily on the class teacher to notice and to correct their oral linguistic inaccuracy, to Level Five, a stage where the child is enabled to attend to their linguistic inaccuracies themselves and thus, engage in self-correction. Each level illustrates a different stage of language development in which individual children's ability can be located. As language ability is enhanced, children progress through

the continuum from Level One to Level Five. In the following continuum, each level contains language development descriptors, which are intended to aid teachers in assessing children's linguistic ability based on their oral linguistic inaccuracies. Additionally, the continuum provides teachers with the appropriate level of CF support which they may find beneficial to provide to children at each level. These recommended CF strategies are further supported with samples of children's language at each specific level, which may further scaffold the teacher in providing the most appropriate CF.

Intervention

1. Provide the child with an implicit hint that an inaccuracy has occurred: "Gabh mo leithscéal?"
2. Arising from the child's response, these guidelines may be utilised to assess the appropriate CF strategy to initiate with the child in order to scaffold their learning.

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| Level | Language Development Descriptors (Adapted from: Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994) | CF Strategy (Adapted from: Lyster et al., 2013) |
|---------|---|--|
| Level 1 | The child is unable to notice or correct the error, even with the intervention from the teacher (e.g. Gabh mo leithscéal? Céard?). At this level, the child does not have a sufficient understanding to interpret the teachers' CF strategy. It is possible that the child has no understanding of any problem in their utterance. The teacher must assume full responsibility in correcting the error and provide explicit correction. If the child cannot create their own linguistic samples of similar linguistic forms post metalinguistic explanation, it would be advised that the linguistic form is re-taught during the language lesson as a whole class activity or as a mini-lesson. | Recasts: Explicit Correction with Metalinguistic Explanation C (Child): Dhún mé an fuinneog sa halla. T (Teacher): Dhún tú an fhuinneog sa halla. Is focal baininsneach í fuinneog, cosúil le cuileog agus bábóg. C: Is cuimhin liom sin – Chuir mé an bhábóg sa bhosca inné agus dhún mé an fhuinneog sa halla. T: Maith thú – An fhuinneog! |
| Level 2 | The child notices the inaccuracy but cannot correct it, even with the intervention. Some development has been made from Level One as there is room for the teacher and child to begin to discuss the form. However, the child still relies heavily on the teacher to correct their inaccuracies. If the child cannot provide similar examples of the form, it would be advised to return to Level One and provide a metalinguistic explanation for the explicit correction. | Recasts: Explicit Correction C: An bhfuil cead agam faigh deoch? T: An bhfuil cead agat deoch a fháil? C: An bhfuil cead agam deoch a fháil a mhúinteoir? T: Maith thú! Tá cead agat cinnte! |
| Level 3 | The child is aware of an inaccuracy in their speech. They may struggle to locate to exact location of the error without guidance from the teacher or another peer. If so, it is advised that the teacher repeats the incorrect utterance, emphasising the incorrect form, in isolation, if required. Once this is provided, the child is immediately enabled to engage in self-correction. If this is unachievable by the child, it would be advised to return to Level Two and provide an explicit recast strategy. | Prompts: Repetition C: Tá mé múinteoir! T: Tá tú múinteoir?? (an glór ag ardú) S: Is múinteoir mé! T: Maith thú! Lean ort mar mhúinteoir. |
| Level 4 | At this stage, the child notices and corrects their own inaccuracy with very little help or CF from the teacher – after the intervention. The child is enabled to engage in error-correction. The child begins to take full responsibility for their own error correction. If this is unachievable by the child it would be advised to return to Level Three and provide repetition of the inaccurate form. The child may require the teacher to confirm the adequacy of the correction from time to time at this stage. | Prompts: Clarification Request C: Rith mé timpeall an scoil inné le teachtaireacht ón bpríomhoide. T: Gabh mo leithscéal? C: Rith mé timpeall na scoile inné le teachtaireacht ón bpríomhoide. T: Maith thú! An-mhaith! |
| Level 5 | Noticing/correcting of inaccuracies does not require an intervention from someone else. The child becomes more consistent in availing of correct target language forms in all contexts. This shows that the language has become automatized and the child may be able to self-correct and peer-correct. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-correction • Peer-correction No intervention needed at this stage. |

Figure 1.1. A Continuum of CF Support for a Continuum of Linguistic Strengths and Needs (Adapted from: Ní Aogáin, 2019)

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Figure 1.2. now provides a description of how to practically implement the CF continuum illustrated in Figure 1.1. in an immersion classroom.

In order to support and guide the children's language learning development in the most effective and beneficial manner, it would be useful to ensure that the CF guidelines, presented above, are adopted in a systematic manner in the immersion classroom. If children's grammatical inaccuracies are corrected in an ad hoc manner, children may struggle to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate linguistic forms, which in turn, may cause difficulty for them in their L2 learning journey. In this sense, it would be beneficial if the class teacher modelled and engaged in consistent and appropriate CF in the classroom throughout the immersion school day.

1. Upon hearing an inaccuracy, the teacher provides the child with a Prompt (e.g. Pardon?), referred to in Figure 1.1. as an 'intervention'.
2. The teacher then engages in 'on-the spot' assessment of the child's response to the Prompt.
3. If the child repeats the inaccuracy again and shows little to no sign of understanding his/her inaccuracy, a Recast should be provided to the child (Level Two).
- 3b. If the child cannot explain the linguistic inaccuracy or provide other examples of the linguistic form at this point, it would be beneficial to provide metalinguistic feedback to the child (Level One), i.e. explicitly explain/quickly re-teach the linguistic form. To further enhance the language acquisition process at this point, the linguistic form at hand could be explicitly revised as a whole class activity or as a mini-lesson later, during a language lesson.
4. If a child illustrates signs of understanding/attending to his/her linguistic inaccuracy once the Prompt (intervention) has been provided, another Prompt may suffice to encourage the child to self-correct (Level Three/Four).
- 4b. If an additional Prompt (Level Three/Four) does not suffice, it is recommended to return to Level Two and provide the child with a Recast in the form of an explicit correction.

Figure 1.2. *Practical Guidelines for Implementing a Continuum of CF Support for a Continuum of Linguistic Strengths and Needs*

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Figure 1.3. includes further practical advice for teachers:

In following these guidelines systematically, CF should evolve as part of the classroom ‘norm’. This will encourage the establishment of a counterbalance approach as children will become more aware of linguistic forms during content lessons and generally during meaningful interaction throughout the immersion school day. The evolution of such a normative culture of error-correction has key implications for a whole school approach.

Corrective Feedback as a Whole School Approach

The most effective approach to ensuring accuracy of L2 in the immersion context is to take a whole-school approach to CF. Enabling staff members to co-construct a collaborative and systemic plan towards CF may ensure cohesive practice across all classes in the school. In this light, error-correction may permeate all aspects of school life (i.e. tionól, am sosa, am lóin, etc.), thus enriching the L2 acquisition process at a whole school level. Mar a deir an seanfhocal, “Ní neart go cur le chéile”.

- Ensure all members of the immersion classroom community (class teacher, SNA, children) embrace the error-correction approach to encourage the creation of a collaborative corrective environment in the classroom.
- Encourage error-correction to become part of the classroom ‘norm’ in a friendly manner. This will increase children’s overall language awareness and in turn entice more peer-correction among children.
- Praise and encourage self-correction and peer-correction among children. This will further enhance children’s acquisition experience as they begin learning with and from one another.
- Provide children with rich environmental print. Display posters in the classroom, illustrating complex grammatical forms, using enhanced typology. This will serve as an additional aid to the children in their acquisition process and further enhance self-correction/peer-correction among children.
- Ensure that the CF focus for the fortnight/month coincides with the focus of formal Irish language lessons. This should strengthen the L2 acquisition process and accelerate the development of self-correction and peer-correction among immersed children.

Figure 1.3. *Practical Ideas to Enhance CF in the Immersion Classroom*

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