

## **STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK GIVING**

Nordplus project “Teaching and learning in Multicultural Classroom”

### **REPORT**

Seminar: February 4, 2021

Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences, Vilnius, Lithuania

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## STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK GIVING

## AGENDA OF THE SEMINAR

<b>Time</b>	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Institution</b>
13:00-13:15	Introduction. Overview of Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences multicultural experience	<b>Greta Gruodė</b> , head of Creativity and Business Innovations Department, lecturer	Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences Faculty of Business Management
13:15-13:30	Implementation of Culturally-Responsive Students Assessment	<b>Lina Žirnelė</b> , head of Advertising and Communication Department, lecturer	Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences Faculty of Business Management
13:30-13:45	Giving and receiving quality feedback matters	<b>Aušra Turčinskaitė-Balčiūnienė</b> , vice-dean, lecturer	Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences Faculty of Business Management
13:45-14:20	Groupworks for discussions, introducing common problems and solutions, cases, success stories		
14:20-15:00	Summing up the groupworks and seminar		

## I. INTRODUCTION. OVERVIEW OF VILNIAUS KOLEGIJA / UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCE

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Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences  
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VIKO is a national ranking leader in higher professional education with 6558 students (Oct. 2019), 452 members of teaching staff, 7 faculties and 39 study programmes. There are 8 study programmes, carried out also in English (*Tourism management, Hotel and Restaurant Business, International Business (Double degree with DK, FI), Creativity and Business Innovations (Joint Degree with PT and ES), Software Engineering, Business Economics, Banking, Management of Cultural Activities*).

### 1.1. Network and partnerships

Partnerships in academic society are a key part of strategic approach to engagement and constant improvement. Whether the partnerships are focussed on offering venues for activities and new forms of teaching; sharing expert advice or input; or are the focal point of the engagement in collaborative research and study process – it is important for academic community to work in a network and maintain various partnerships. **Currently VIKO is engaged into activities with more than 300 partner institutions in 42 countries.**

### 1.2. The internationality of studies

The main VIKO internationalisation goals for 2021-2025 are (Internationalisation Strategy, 2021):

- **To further develop internationalisation of the study process** via ensuring the contemporary curricular content and innovative methods of learning and teaching with focus on work-based learning, flexible learning pathways, blended and online teaching and learning possibilities, recognition of prior learning, automatic recognition of learning outcomes gained through Erasmus mobility. To achieve the outbreak by encouraging the creation of multidisciplinary programmes in English and attracting significant numbers of foreign students, broadening study accessibility paths through digital systems, enhancing access to higher education for students from less traditional, disadvantaged and vulnerable target groups.
- **To further develop students and staff competences** via international mobility, Internationalisation at Home (IaH) activities, including temporary or permanent employment of foreign experts in teaching and learning, organisation and active participation in the international events, constant development of foreign language and intercultural competences.

To achieve the outbreak by developing students and staff competences in the context of the 21st century challenges and stakeholders' expectations.

- **To further develop the efficient strategic partnerships** via participation in the joint international projects, international HE and professional networks, innovation and development through user-oriented research. To achieve the outbreak by sharing expertise of the developed areas, such as creativity platform, project management, teaching and learning, etc., among European and non-EU partners in particular.
- **To further develop the multicultural study and research environments** via friendly organisational culture and financial resource investments in the physical and electronic environments. To achieve the outbreak by digitalising the study support services and the mobility management.
- **To achieve significant international visibility, recognition and reputation of the institution** via orientation to sustainable development in all institutional activities, addressing world of work needs through regional engagement.

Internationalisation is one of VIKO's priority areas that is why all the faculties are actively involved in various projects. at promoting all possible mobilities providing students with the best opportunities to study at foreign education institutions and finding placements in companies abroad, as well as opening prospects for teachers to enhance their competence through staff trainings and international research projects, to exchange knowledge and experience with colleagues from different countries (Vilniaus kolegija / University of Applied Sciences, 2021). In 2019 more than 140 students from other countries came to VIKO to study **part-time** (see Figure 1). 85 of them came with the Erasmus programme and 63 participated in other projects and programmes.

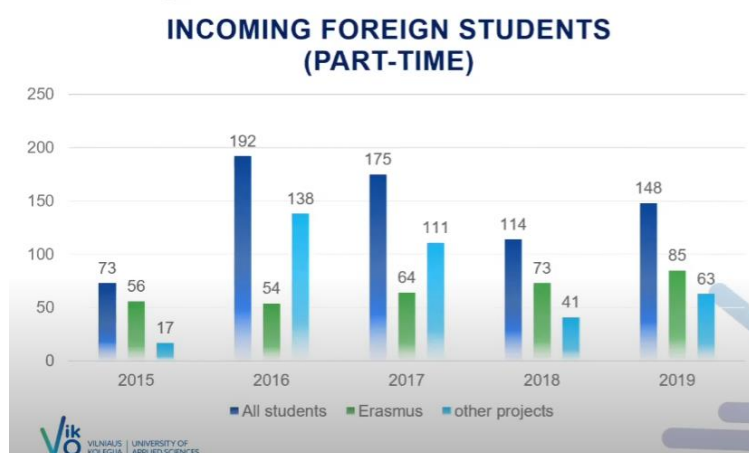


Figure 1. Incoming foreign students (part-time)

In 2018-2019 there were 97 students who chose to study full time at VIKO (see Figure 2). Most of them came from such EU countries as Spain, Portugal and France and non-EU countries as India, Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus.

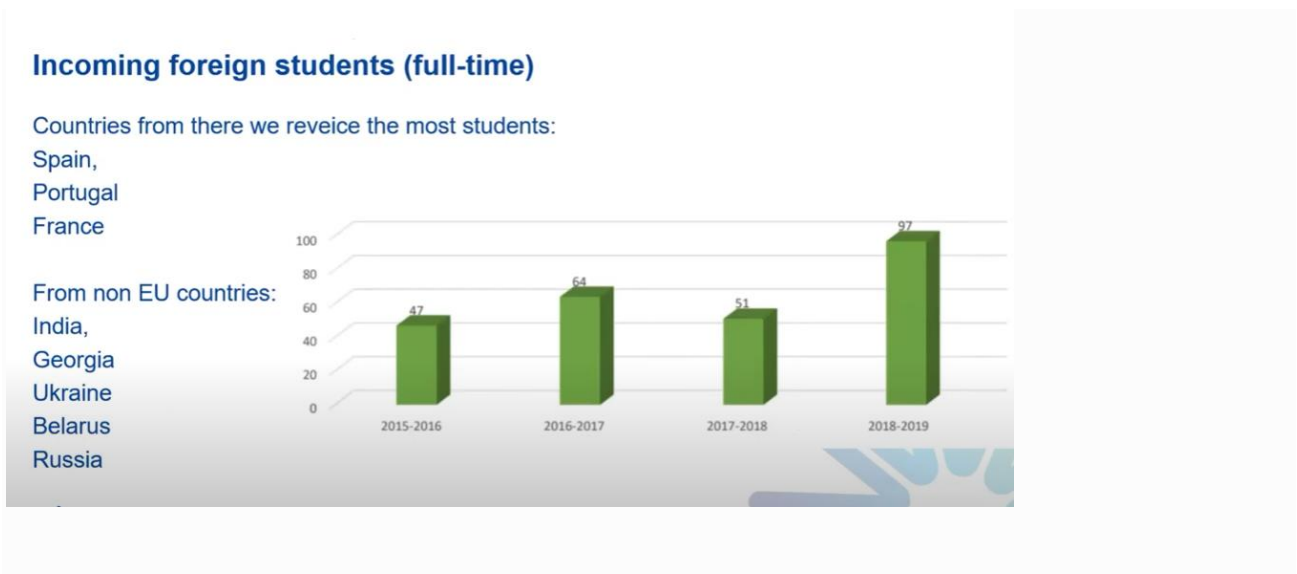


Figure 2. Incoming foreign students (full-time)

## II. IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT

Lina Žirnelė

Head of Advertising and Communication Management Department, lecturer  
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Faculty of Business Management

Learning is a universal feature among humans, whereas specific information-processing abilities (i.e., learning styles) are acquired via culture and the socialization process. If we know and understand how people learn, we can then adapt our teaching methods to accommodate them.

According to Erich Montenegro and Natasha A. Jankowski (2017, p. 9), **culture** could be understood as:

1. the explicit elements that makes people identifiable to a specific group(s) including behaviors, practices, customs, roles, attitudes, appearance, expressions of identity, language, housing region, heritage, race/ethnicity, rituals, religion;
2. the implicit elements that combine a group of people which include their beliefs, values, ethics, gender identity, sexual orientation, common experiences (e.g. military veterans and foster children), social identity;
3. cognitive elements or the ways that the lived experiences of a group of people affect their acquisition of knowledge, behavior, cognition, communication, expression of knowledge, perceptions of self and others, work ethic, collaboration, and so on.

There are **seven key themes** created to strengthen and guide the implementation of culturally responsive assessment that involve (see Figure 3): the relation between culture and assessment (1), assessment and fairness (2), assessment and cultural dimensions (3), students' benefit from culturally responsive assessment (4), possibility of culturally responsive assessment (5), challenge for teachers (6), supports needed by teachers (7).

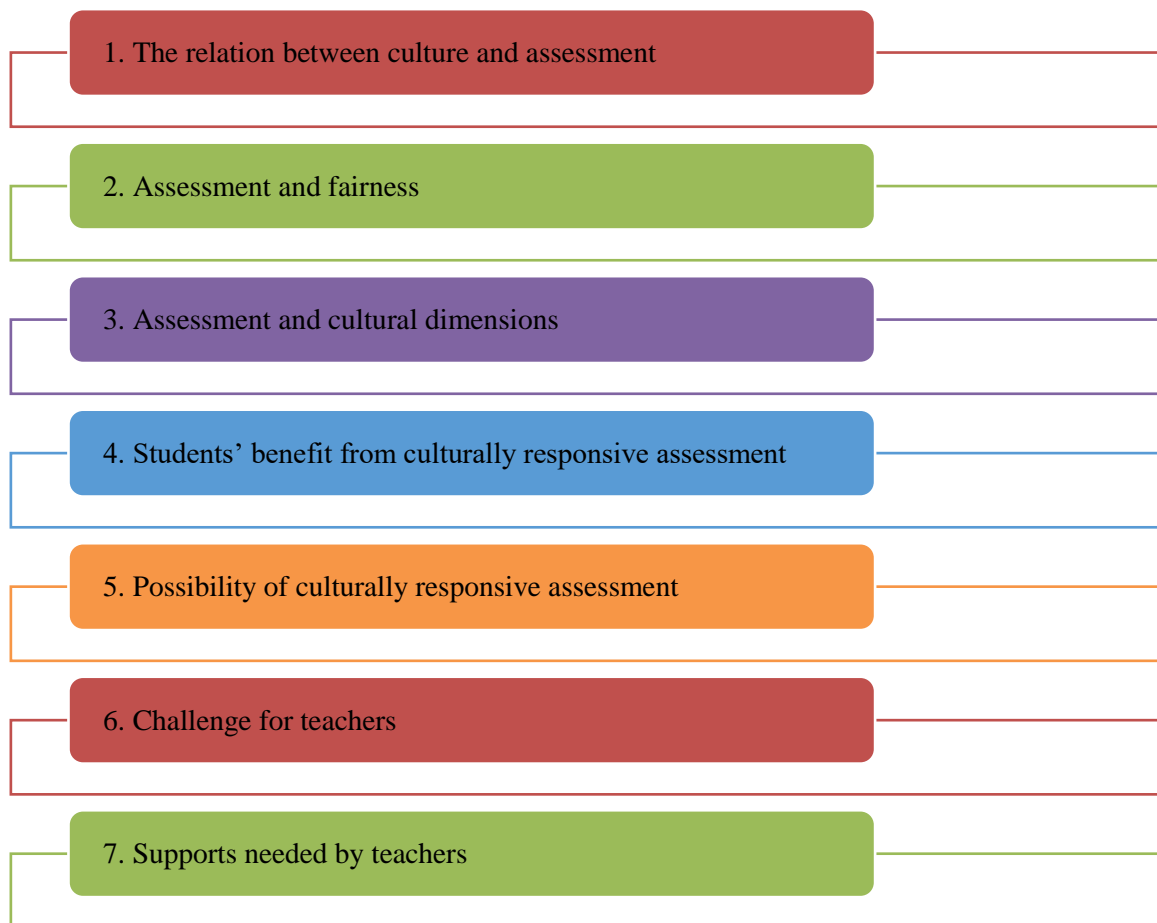


Figure 3. Seven key themes to strengthen and guide the implementation of culturally responsive assessment

### 1.1. The relation between culture and assessment

The culturally relevant component is to employ assessment methods appropriate for different student groups by concentrating on their personal and cultural differences. Students should be fully involved at every step in the assessment process and reflect their lived experience. In this context **culturally responsive assessment** could be defined as assessment *design, processes* and *outcomes* that help to recognize cultural variations in ways of behaving / socializing and thinking.

### 1.2. Assessment and fairness

Fairness has become a central concept for culturally responsive assessment, as well as it is **necessary for valid measures of learning outcomes**. Fairness in assessment means such aspects as recognizing diversity of culture, acknowledging the information and the skills that students bring with them, being free from bias toward a particular group and respecting and showing construct validity.



The research highlighted several challenges in assessing learning outcomes in higher education for all student groups in the context of commonly used standardized assessments and established examination practices (Tierney, 2013):

- finding a suitable way to communicate the importance of fairness and ethical integrity during assessment process;
- heterogeneity of student bodies due to migration and overall internationalization processes.

### 1.3. Assessment and cultural dimensions

**Cultural dimensions.** The most cited author that analyzed culture and its dimensions is Geert Hofstede (Bond, 2002) whose analysis provides a great insight into developing cross-cultural relationships and its dynamic environment. G. Hofstede in 1967-1978 made a research that comprised 116,000 questionnaires from 60,000 people living in more than 50 countries. By analyzing the data, he identified 5 bipolar dimensions such as Power / Distance; Individualism / Collectivism; Uncertainty / Avoidance; Masculinity / Femininity; Long/Short Term Orientation. Hofstede (Jones, 2007).

For learning it is very important to take into consideration different values and perceptions. Parrish and Linder-VanBerschoot (2010) identifies 3 groups of them: social relationships, epistemological beliefs, temporal perceptions (see Figure 4).

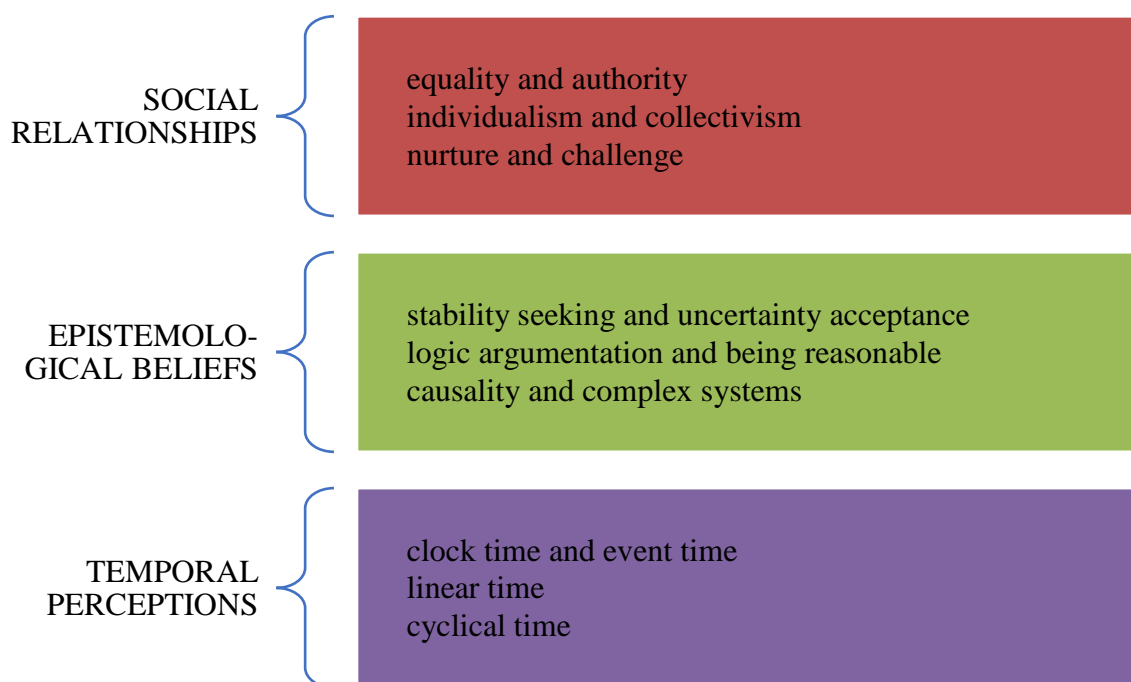


Figure 4. Identified cultural dimensions (Linder-VanBerschoot, 2010)

#### **1.4. Students' benefit from culturally responsive assessment**

Globalization which Portera (2008) describes as “spread of the mass media in our daily lives, the growth of information technology, profound geo-political changes, and the establishment of new markets” (p. 481) requires to work in multicultural environment as well as to improve our intercultural communication competences. The need for all young people to learn the normality of diversity and to develop the skills of living in diversity is urgent (Portera, 2008). The main benefits for students working in a multicultural environment help to increase their (Burns O’Hara, 2019):

- language awareness (helps to learn different languages faster);
- well-being (learning about other cultures and people, we increase our ability to better understand ourselves as well);
- self-efficacy and motivation (cultivating an open mind inspires curiosity);
- learner autonomy (allows a student to create and follow their own learning process).

#### **1.5. Possibility of culturally responsive assessment**

The American Psychological Association prepared *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* (2004). It provides guidance both for test developers and test users in four critical areas (Joint Committee on Testing Practices, 2004):

- Developing and selecting appropriate tests;
- administering and scoring tests;
- reporting and interpreting test results;
- informing test takers.

#### **1.6. Challenge for teachers**

The challenges that teachers face working in a multicultural environment are both conceptual and methodological and “remain complex, multi-faceted, context-rich” (Thompson-Robinson, Hopson, & SenGupta, 2004). The American Evaluation Association (AEA) (2011) stated that “Cultural competence is not a state at which one arrives; rather, it is a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning”. The task requires “awareness of self, reflection on one’s own cultural position, awareness of others’ positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others” (AEA).

According to Burns, O’Hara (2019), “<...> the challenge for teachers is to engage in reflection on practice to be culturally competent in a diverse classroom: to reflect deeply on their own enculturation

and practice, to research their own students, to affirm the diverse cultural affiliation and life experience of their own students, to be a facilitator of multilingualism in the classroom, to consider the diversity of experience and language in their classroom as a resource for enrichment for all students in the class. These are the requirements for teachers to become competent in designing, conducting and using the outcomes of valid culturally responsive assessment” (p. 42).

### **1.7. Supports needed by teachers**

The depth of the challenge of working in a multicultural environment requires supporting institutions to be more responsive to the needs of teachers: “All levels of leadership in the education system need to appreciate the vision for the culturally competent teacher in a multicultural classroom and support teachers to meet the challenge” (Burns, O’Hara, 2019, p. 42).

The following support is needed (Burns, O’Hara, 2019):

- state level recognition of the needs;
- policy formulations at national and local levels,
- professional development and trainings,
- resources for classroom assessment developed centrally and available online,
- language support.

### III. GIVING AND RECEIVING QUALITY FEEDBACK MATTERS

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#### 3.1. Shannon Weaver Model of Communication (1948)

Shannon and Weaver's model defines communication as a simple linear process – transmission of messages. The key elements of the model are: sender, receiver, channel, noise and feedback. Sender in the model is a decision maker who decides which message to send to the receiver. The channel is telephone, email letter or another medium that helps to transmit the message. Noise in the context of the model could be understood as “anything that is added to the signal between its transmission and reception that is not intended by the source” (Fiske, p. 8). This can be, for example, a noisy environment that makes it hard to hear what people are talking about, lack of interest in the subject of the conversation or such technical issues as the distortion of sound or crackling in a telephone wire.

**Feedback** is another important element of the model which tells us if the communication process was effective or not. According to John Fiske (1990, p. 22), feedback “has a number of subsidiary functions. Perhaps the most important of these is that it helps the receiver to feel involved in the communication. Being aware that the communicator is taking account of our response makes us more likely to accept the message: being unable to express our response can lead to a build-up of frustration that can cause so much noise that the message may become totally lost. Though feedback inserts a return loop from destination to source, it does not destroy the linearity of the model. It is there to make the process of transmitting messages more efficient.”

### 3.2. EPIQ Feedback Model (Victor Cessan)

The EPIQ Feedback Model has 4 primary dimensions: Empathy, Quality, Position and Intention (see Figure 5).

#### The EPIQ Feedback Model



Figure 5. The EPIQ Feedback Model (Cessan, 2021)

**Intention.** Discovering the intention is the most important element that needs to be considered before giving feedback (what you want to say or why you want to say it). V. Cessan says that there are four intentions that a person seeks to achieve by giving feedback. They are to:

1. improve performance;
2. develop the relationship;
3. raise self-awareness;
4. boost (confidence, self-esteem, inspiration, motivation).

**Position** consists of three components:

- power dynamics (self-esteem and role under certain circumstances – we can feel superior, inferior or equal to people around us);
- permission to give feedback (it can help to create a safer space for speaking sincerely);
- strength of the relationship (refers to expectations and trust. Having the same expectations for the feedback helps to avoid misunderstandings in communication while trust lays the foundation for a meaningful and constructive conversation).

**Quality** consists of clarity (making sure the other person fully understands what you are saying), format (choosing the most appropriate format of feedback giving – advice, coaching or evaluation) and purity (to separate facts and your opinion / interpretation – what actually happens and how we interpret something).

**Empathy** is important to deliver the feedback in a caring way and also to be sure if it was accepted well by the receiver. The empathy could be emotional (based on feelings) and cognitive (based on understanding how the other person is reasoning and thinking about a situation).

### 3.3. HEAR Model for Feedback Reactions (Rebecca Zucker, [nextsteppartners.com](http://nextsteppartners.com))

The HEAR model is an effective way to deal with different emotional reactions and to avoid possible miscommunication in the process. The model consists four steps (Figure 6):

1. H – HEAR (or notice) the reaction in a non-judgmental way;
2. EXPLORE what’s driving the reaction;
3. ACKNOWLEDGE what the receiver is saying;
4. REFOCUS on what could be done.

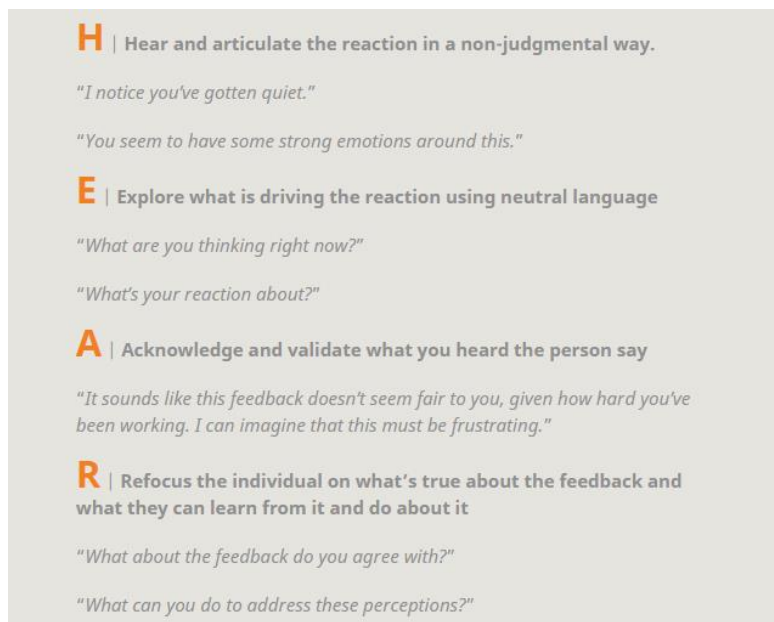


Figure 6. HEAR Model for Feedback Reactions (Zucker, 2021)

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