



# **SHARMED Policy Brief Series**

## **Issue 3**

### **Facilitation: Giving feedback**

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## 1. About this policy brief

This policy brief series regards the activities conducted in the 48 classes selected for the SHARMED project. These activities concerned the use of photography to stimulate children's narratives about their memories and to promote dialogue in the classroom, as a way of innovating education in multicultural classrooms. During the SHARMED project, the activities were coordinated by facilitators, with the task of:

- (1) Enhancing children's active participation, and in particular children's agency (autonomous contributions influencing the structure of the interaction)
- (2) Promoting narratives and dialogue.

The SHARMED project was implemented to show if and how these activities can become part of education in multicultural classrooms.

The SHARMED Policy Brief Series highlights what these activities can suggest for policies and interventions in the education system.

Facilitation of production of narratives and dialogue requires the enhancement children's agency in choosing how to act and orient their stories. The analysis of the activities allows the identification of some important facilitative actions that can accomplish this function.

This policy brief regards the ways in which facilitators can give feedback to children during classroom activities: it includes explanation and examples about both minimal types of feedback and a more complex type of feedback, i.e. formulation.

## 2. Continuers and repetitions

Minimal types of feedback are very frequent ways of showing attention to children's contributions. Minimal feedback has two functions: (1) supporting children's active participation and production of narratives; (2) recognising the importance of specific aspect of children's stories and comments.

The function of supporting active participation is accomplished through the use of **continuers**, i.e. very short signals of attention, and **repetitions** of previously uttered words or parts of sentences. Continuers are very short feedback that invite children to continue to tell. They include interrogative confirmations, short confirmations and para-verbal signals. Examples 1-4 show how continuers (in bold) can effectively enhance children's narratives.

### Example 1

1. FAC: ein paar Klassen höher? Magst du mal erzählen wie das, wie das war das Spiel?  
*a couple of year groups older than you? Would you like to tell how, what the game was like?*
2. M5: mhm. gut. ja.  
*mm-hm. Good. Yeah.*
3. FAC: **ja?**  
*yeah?*
4. M5: ja.  
*yeah.*

### Example 2

1. FAC: seit neun Jahren. Ich weiß gar nicht, whatsapp gibts das so lange.  
*for nine years. I don't even know, has Whatsapp even been around that long.*
2. M1: nee, äh. Früher haben wir halt immer telefoniert.  
*nah, er, before that we always spoke on the phone.*
3. FAC: **mhm.**
4. M1: und dann haben wir irgendwann so geschrieben.

*and then at some point we just texted like that.*

### Example 3

1. F1: Um, I think it was the day before Halloween and I had a (cannot hear) red mask and um, I was underneath the cot at the time and my sister, I think I was about three...
2. FAC: **Yeah**
3. F1: I can't remember and my sister was in the cot and back when we lived in (names area) and she was in the rocking thing ((does motions with hand)) and I started rocking the thing because I was on the other side and she was sleeping on her tummy
4. FAC: **Uh huh**
5. F1: and then I came out and I put the mask on (..) when she saw my face, my actual face, she started crying and when I put my mask on, the scary mask on, she stopped crying

### Example 4

1. FAC: ma che rapporto avevi col nonno? Ti ricordi?  
*But what relation did you have with your grandfather? Do you remember?*
2. F9: e di solito perché cioè le ultime: l'ultimo mese è stato in ospedale  
*e usually because the last: the last month he has been in hospital*
3. FAC: **ah**
4. F9: e poi dopo e: una dopo una [settimana-  
*Then after e: one after one [wee*
5. FAC: [quindi è morto con una malattia  
*[so he died with a illness*
6. F9: sì cioè la polmonite [credo  
*Yes well pneumonia [I believe*
7. FAC: **[ah**
8. F9: poi dopo è tornato a casa però non a casa sua a casa nostra, perché se no cioè da solo non con la nonna non riusciva a stare, cioè nel senso non:  
*then he came back home but nota at his home, at our home because if not I mean alone didn't with my grandmother he couldn't stay, I mean as he didn't:*
9. FAC: aveva bisogno di essere [accudito  
*He need to be looked after*
10. F9: [sì  
*[yes*
11. FAC: **mh**
12. F9: e: e dopo una settimana però se n- è andato in cielo  
*And and after a week however he went to heaven*
13. FAC: **ah**
14. F9: e: quindi cioè tipo avevo quella foto stavo guardando le foto la mattina: perché se n'è andato la mattina presto, e quindi dopo cioè e: c'eravamo io e mio fratello che non capivamo perché e: mia mamma non ci svegliava, e: che dovevamo andare a scuola  
*so well I had that picture I was looking at the photos in the morning because he died early in the morning and therefore after I and my brother didn't understand why and my mum didn't wake us up e. that we did go to school.*
15. FAC: **((nods))**
16. F9: e quindi dopo un po' andiamo giù a cercare e troviamo la mamma e mio pa- e: mia nonna che piange  
*So after a while we go downstairs to look for and we find our mum and my fa- and my grandmother who was crying.*
17. FAC: **((nods))**
18. F9: e quindi dopo ci spiegan tutto e: insomma e va beh e succede  
*And so then they explain us everything and: well it happens*

Repetitions reproduce the previous turn or part of it, thus showing listening and encouraging further talk. Examples 5 and 6 show the use of repetitions (in bold). In example 4, the function of repetition is emphasized by the interrogative tone, which highlights the facilitator's interest.

#### Example 5

1. FAC: e: la cosa che ti ha colpito di più a Roma?  
*And: what impressed you the most in Rome?*
2. F7: il Colosseo  
*The Colosseo*
3. FAC: **il Colosseo?**  
*The Colosseo?*
4. F7: ((annisce)) sì io sì mio padre no perché ha detto che l'ha un po' deluso ma a me sì  
*((nods)) yes me yes my father not because he said that it disappointed him a bit but me yes*

#### Example 6

1. FAC: jetzt erstmal zu dem mit den Beleidigungen, okay?  
*first of all the one with the insults, okay?*
2. F5: nee, eigentlich ist so gemischt, manchmal is egal, manchmal nicht.  
*no, actually it's mixed, sometimes it doesn't matter to me, sometimes it does.*
3. FAC: okay, **manchmal egal, manchmal nicht.**  
*okay, sometimes it doesn't matter, sometimes it does.*
4. F2: mir ist eigentlich voll egal. Jetzt wollte ich natürlich noch was fragen.  
*it doesn't matter to me at all actually. Now I wanted to ask something of course.*

Continuers and repetitions are very similar in all settings of SHARMED activities. This means that they can be used independently from social and cultural contexts. They display "active listening", i.e. sensitivity for the expressed contents or intentions, in particular for expressed needs and feelings. Repetitions of words or parts of sentences show listening more explicitly than continuers do. This however does not mean that they are more effective in enhancing narratives.

### 3. Acknowledgment tokens

The function of recognizing the importance of specific aspect of children's stories and comments is accomplished by **acknowledgment tokens**. These are claims of receipt of the prior utterance, stressing interest, surprise or affect. Acknowledgment tokens can show positive feedback more clearly than continuers and repetitions. This type of minimal feedback has the function of showing recognition of the interlocutor's right of talk. It shows interest or concern for the child's contribution. Examples 7-9 show different types of acknowledgment tokens (in bold), which may be used in different linguistic contexts and by different facilitators. In example 7 (Italian setting), "ah però" shows emphasised surprise for the story, followed by a second type of acknowledgment ("aia"), which shows understanding of the negative part of the story, in this case the death of the child's grandmother. Examples 8 and 9 show a similar acknowledgment token ("oh"), used in both the German and the UK setting.

#### Example 7

1. M2: e è affondato con tutto il sottomarino  
*And he sank with the whole submarine*
2. FAC: **ah però!** E quindi sono rimaste le due nonne da sole  
*Just guess! And so the grandmothers remained alone*
3. M2: sì  
*Yes*
4. FAC: che però tu non hai conosciuto  
*That however you didn't know*

5. M2: no no no queste qua ci sono cioè la mia nonna quella di quello che è morto nel sottomarino è morta quest'anno  
*No no these ones are still there well my grandmother that of the one who died in the submarine died this year*
6. FAC: **aia**
7. M2: e invece l'altra è mort- cioè l'altra invece cioè è ancora viva  
*And instead the other one is d- I mean the other one is still alive*

#### Example 8

1. F7: war die Katze auch schon länger bei euch?  
*did the cat live with you for a long time?*
2. F10: ja, die war schon ganz schön lang bei uns. So ein und ein halbes Jahr war die bei uns. pff. und dann wurde sie überfahren  
*yes, she was with us for a really long time. About one and one half years she was with us. Pfft. and then she got run over.*
3. FAC: **ohh.**
4. F10: und dann haben wir sie auf der Straße gefunden, wo sie überfahren wurde.  
*and then we found her on the street where she had been run over.*

#### Example 9

1. FAC: Yes? ((nods)) it's cool, isn't it?
2. F1: Yeah (..) but there was a green cup (..) and I was so scared because she was shaking around and screaming
3. FAC: **Oh!**
4. F1: and then I was crying and my brother started laughing at me and calling me a scaredy-cat

Continuers and acknowledgements can be combined, showing listening and stressing important aspects of narratives: Extracts 10 and 11 show this combination (“mhm” and “oh”; “uh uh” and “oohh”; “uh uh” and “aaah”).

#### Example 10

1. M1: So I was in Portugal
2. FAC: **Uh huh**
3. M1: and I was four years old and my sister was six
4. FAC: **Uh huh**
5. M1: and um (..) my sister was with my cousin but I didn't know how to swim and then she pushed me into the water because I couldn't swim but I ended up drowning
6. FAC: **oohh!**
7. M1: so my sister had to rescue me

#### Example 11

1. F3: ähm, mein Pap-, mein Bruder hat drei Mal gewonnen in fünf Kämpfen und ich hab fünf Mal und dann hat mein Bruder (?) weil er nur Bronze gekriegt hat.  
*emm, my da- my brother won three times out of five matches and I won five times and then my brother did (?) because he only got bronze.*
2. FAC: **mhm.**
- F3: und ich hab Gold. und dann war mein Bruder lang drei Tage lang auf mich zickig.  
*and I got gold. My brother was bitchy with me for three whole days after that.*
3. FAC: drei tage lang?  
*three whole days?*
4. ((F3 nods))
5. FAC: **oh**

#### 4. Formulations

In many circumstances, much more elaborated types of feedback, i.e. **formulations**, are more effective than minimal feedback to support and recognise children's stories and comments. Formulation is a type of utterance that elaborates the gist of previous utterances. Formulations are a powerful type of support for children's utterances. In the SHARMED activities, facilitators have used two types of formulations to give feedback to children's stories and comments: (1) **explications** of children's utterances, which clarify their contents; (2) **developments** of children's utterances, which add information to their content while preserving a clear reference to it. Explications can also be summaries when the formulated turn is long. Developments are more risky than explications, as their degree of elaboration of children's utterances is higher: they take the gist of previous utterances as point of departure for relevant expansions.

Example 12 shows two explications. In turn 3, the facilitator explicates the child's sacrifice in doing sport, which was previously described by M11. This explication enhances M11's confirmation and expansion (turn 4), which is again explicated by the facilitator (turn 5). The second explication enhances another expansion of the child's narrative (turn 6). Example 12 clearly shows the effectiveness of explications in enhancing expansions.

##### Example 12

1. FAC: e cosa ti ha spinto a fare questa fotografia?  
*and what led you to take this photo?*
2. M11: perché cioè volevo comunque ricordarmi anche tipo in futuro che: comunque se non avevo smesso di nuotare oppure avevo tipo litigato con i miei compagni una cosa del genere che comunque (.) avevo fatti molto sacri- avevo fatto molti sacrifici e: da quando ero ragazzo per: nuotare così tanto: fare:  
*because well I also wanted to remember in the future that: anyway if I had not left swimming or I had fought with my playmates or something like that anyway (.) I had made many sacri- I had made many sacrifices and: since I was a boy to: to swim so much: to make:*
3. FAC: **perché è lo sport del nuoto implica sacrifici**  
*Because swimming implies sacrifices*
4. M11: sì cioè com- io faccio cinque giorni a settimana cioè e fra compiti, scuola, e: e: nuoto non riesco [molto a:  
*yes well li- I practice five days a week and with homeworks, school, and: and: swimming I am [not able to*
5. FAC: **[quindi lo fai a livello agonistico**  
*[so you do it competitively*
6. M11: sì non riesco molto a vedermi con i miei amici tipo molte volte i miei amici mi chiedono esci stasera oppure (.) a: oggi pomeriggio e io gli devo dire di no perché ho: nuoto  
*Yes I'm not able to see much my friends as many times they ask me are you going out tonight or (.) a: in the afternoon and I have to say no because I have: to swim*

Example 13 regards a development. The place where the child's relatives live is developed as an opportunity to see them more frequently (turn 3). This formulation enhances the child's further comment about the time he passes with them (turn 4).

##### Example 13

1. FAC: e invece gli altri vivono qui a Modena?  
*And what about the others they live here in Modena?*
2. M3: sì a Modena  
*Yes in Modena*
3. FAC: **quindi li vedi più spesso**  
*So you see them more frequently*
4. M3: beh sì anche se non è che ogni giorno sto con loro

*Well yes even if I don't stay with them everyday*

Examples 12 and 13 show that formulations frequently follow question-answer sequences: the facilitator starts with a question, then s/he formulates the child's answer to this question. These examples also show that facilitators' pay attention to children's story successfully. Children's expansions of stories and comments signal that formulations are successful in enhancing the interactional production of narratives.

However, formulations can also be followed by very short confirmations. Children's short confirmations signal that the gist of their utterances has been correctly understood and interpreted by the facilitator, as in example 14 (turn 3, development) and example 15 (turn 7, explication).

#### Example 14

1. FAC: and how old is your sister?
2. F1: Twelve
3. FAC: **so she's quite a bit older then**
4. F1: Yeah

#### Example 15

1. FAC: ma: la fotografia per quale motivo era stata fatta? Perché vedo che avete degli abiti articolari tutti uguali che cosa raccontaci che cosa significa  
*But: for what reason was the photo taken? Because I see that you have the same special dresses what tell us what does it mean*
2. F7: eh che: siamo uniti, cosa che non è vera perché quello non è mio padre ma è mio zio,  
*eh that: we are united, which is not true because that is not my father but my uncle,*
3. FAC: sì  
*yes*
4. F7: e: (.) mettendo i vestiti con lo stesso tessuto,  
*e: (.) wearing dresses made of the same tissue,*
5. FAC: sì  
*Yes*
6. F7: sembra che siamo tutt'uno  
*It seems that we are one*
7. FAC: **ah l'idea di avere lo stesso abito lo stesso: tessuto è l'unione**  
*Ah the idea that you have the same dress the same: tissue it's union*
8. F7: ((nods))

Developments are more frequently followed by children's **disclaimers**. Children can take the opportunity offered by the formulation to assert their authority about knowledge. In example 16, the child narrates that his two grandfathers were killed in war. The facilitator, after an acknowledgement, formulates the development of the two grandmothers as left alone. The child confirms. Then, the facilitator adds another development, guessing that M2 did not know his grandmothers (turn 4). The child rejects this second development, clarifying that he has known them.

#### Example 16

1. M2: e è affondato con tutto il sottomarino  
*And he sank with the whole submarine*
2. FAC: **ah però! E quindi sono rimaste le due nonne da sole**  
*Just guess! And so the grandmothers remained alone*
3. M2: sì  
*Yes*
4. FAC: **che però tu non hai conosciuto**  
*That however you didn't know*
5. M2: no no no queste qua ci sono cioè la mia nonna quella di quello che è morto nel sottomarino è morta quest'anno

*No no these ones are still there well my grandmother that of the one who died in the submarine died this year*

In the previous examples, formulations are provided in specific and dedicated turns. In other cases, they may be encapsulated in longer turns, in which they can be prefaced by acknowledgement tokens and followed by questions. In example 17, turn 2, the facilitator acknowledges the child's utterance, explicates the child's telling about her brother who wrote her name when he was four, then she asks an open question about the reason of the child's choice of the photo. The child explains the reason with a long expansion.

#### Example 17

1. F1: Well this was when my little brother ((name)) wrote my name when he was four (..) um (..) and (..) I was eight (..) and I was at my desk so he made it for me to put on my desk
2. FAC: And is that (..) **so your brother, your younger brother ((name)) was four when he wrote your name** and how come you brought that in today?
3. F1: because I was just looking at my desk this morning and I thought it looked a little bit dull and then I started putting stickers on it and when I was putting stickers on it this (points at the photo on the projector) fell off and then I saw it and then I remembered that it was the SHARMED project today and it would be nice to bring it in

In example 18, turn 10, the facilitator develops the narrative about Christmas meetings as a “nice way of getting the family together”, then she asks a focused question to know if the children have family in the area; one child confirms.

#### Example 18

1. M4: trink ich auch gerne  
*I like to drink them too*
2. F1: ja, trinken wir gerne.  
*yeah, we like to drink those.*
3. FAC: **ein Eisgetränk.** Mögt ihr das alle gerne?  
*an ice drink. Do you all like that?*
4. M4: ja  
*yes*

Questions enhance children's reactions. With few exceptions, focused questions enhance short confirmations and open questions enhance expansions. Therefore, adding questions after formulations does not seem particularly effective in enhancing children's contributions when questions are focused. It seems more effective if questions are open. In any case, combining formulations and questions is a way to speed the interaction up, rather than to give more space to children's contributions.

Sometimes, explications and developments are combined in short sequences, aiming to enhance children's expansions. In these sequences, children's last contribution is frequently a short confirmation, signalling that both mutual understanding and joint construction of the narrative have been completed. Frequently, this confirmation follows a development. In example 19, after two preliminary continuers, the facilitator explicates the meaning of the child's utterance (turn 5) in interrogative tone (turn 6). The child confirms and adds details to her story. In turn 7, the facilitator develops the story (“to keep her happy”) and the child provides a short confirmation.

#### Example 19

1. F1: Um, I think it was the day before Halloween and I had a (cannot hear) red mask and um, I was underneath the cot at the time and my sister, I think I was about three
2. FAC: Yeah
3. F1: I can't remember and my sister was in the cot and back when we lived in ((names area)) and she was in the rocking thing ((does motions with hand)) and I started rocking the thing because I was on the other side and she was sleeping on her tummy



4. FAC: Uh huh
5. F1: and then I came out and I put the mask on (..) when she saw my face, my actual face, she started crying and when I put my mask on, the scary mask on, she stopped crying
6. FAC: ((laughs)) **so she (..) it was the other way round? ((laughs and F1 nods)) so she thought you looked better with the mask on? ((laughs))**
7. F1: Yeah ((laughs)) and I had the mask on for literally all day until I went to bed
8. FAC: **to keep her happy**
9. F1: Yeah ((giggles))

Example 20, which is an expansion of example 16, shows a combination between different types of formulations enhances a series of short confirmation, expanded rejection, expansion and new short confirmation. After M2's preliminary narrative on his grandfathers, supported by the facilitator's continuers (turns 2, 4 and 6), the facilitator develops this narrative through a formulation (turn 8). As M2 has narrated that his two grandfathers have been killed during the war, the facilitator, after an acknowledgement stressing the importance of the situation, formulates the development of the two grandmothers as left alone. The child confirms this formulation and the facilitator adds the development that M2 did not know the grandmothers (turn 10). This time the child rejects the formulation, clarifying that he has known them. After the facilitator's question about the existence of other photographs (turn 14), M2 tells of old habits about photography (turn 17), and the facilitator adds a development that confirms the child's contribution (turn 18). This formulation is confirmed an expanded by M2 (turn 19), then expanded again by the facilitator's development (turn 20), until the child's final confirmation (turn 22).

#### Example 20

1. M2: ((annuisce)) sì perché due i cioè io avevo due nonni no?  
*((nods)) yes because two the well I had two grandfathers right?*
2. FAC: sì  
*Yes*
3. M2: che hanno combattuto il primo è stato ucciso in guerra  
*Who fought the first one was killed during the war*
4. FAC: ah
5. M2: il secondo è: sempre in guerra lui era andato in una spedizione con con un sottomarino che si chiamava il gorgo,  
*the second one is: in war too he took part in an expedition with with a submarine that was called "il gorgo"*
6. FAC: sì  
*yes*
7. M2: e è affondato con tutto il sottomarino  
*And he sank with the whole submarine*
8. FAC: **ah però! E quindi sono rimaste le due nonne da sole**  
*Just guess! And so the grandmothers remained alone*
9. M2: sì  
*Yes*
10. FAC: **che però tu non hai conosciuto**  
*That however you didn't know*
11. M2: no no no queste qua ci sono cioè la mia nonna quella di quello che è morto nel sottomarino è morta quest'anno  
*No no these ones are still there well my grandmother that of the one who died in the submarine died this year*
12. FAC: aia
13. M2: e invece l'altra è mort- cioè l'altra invece cioè è ancora viva  
*And instead the other one is d- I mean the other one is still alive*
14. FAC: ho capito ma delle foto dove loro sono insieme le hai oppure solo quelle di guerra?  
*I understand but do you have some photos in which they are together or do you have only the war ones?*
15. M2: no solo quelle di guerra

- No only the war ones*
16. FAC: ho capito  
*I understand*
17. M2: perché non ci son mai state perché loro stavano cioè stavano insieme fino a cioè in quel tempo lì a quei tempi lì c'era comunque la guerra se ne stavano insieme prima di essere richiamati a fare: la guerra vera e propria e quindi cioè non avevano: la macchina fotografica  
*Because there's never been because they were already well they were together until well at that time at that time there was the war and they were together until they were called for the real war and then I mean they had no camera*
18. FAC: **sì non c'era abitudine a fare le foto[grafie]**  
*Yes there was not the habit to take pi[ctures]*
19. M2: guerra e: [cioè non  
[esatto e poi è diventata abitudine quando eran già in  
*[exactly and then it became an habit when they were already*  
*at war and: [well didn't*
20. FAC: **[e quindi restano solo quelle foto lì]**  
*[and so only that photos remain*
21. M2: sì  
*Yes*

## 5. Final reflections

Use of minimal feedback allows effective support and recognition of children's stories. These types of feedback work well in two conditions: (1) when children's stories are fluid and do not need relevant support; (2) when facilitators prefers to avoid interrupting children's narratives through questions or comments. However, while minimal feedbacks are effective and useful in some circumstances, they cannot be the generalised way of supporting narratives. When the complexity of the interaction is higher, formulations are more effective.

Formulations are powerful actions, with three important functions: (1) showing the facilitator's attention (above all explications); (2) enhancing the children's narratives and comments (more frequently developments); (3) offering the children the opportunity to assert their perspectives, rejecting the formulation (developments). Developments are more risky than explications and sometimes are rejected. However, the difference between these two types of formulations in showing attention and enhancing expansions is not relevant, as both can enhance narrative expansions. Rejections are interesting as they show children's agency as lack of acquiescence for facilitator and interest in claiming their rights of telling the story. Facilitators can decide if and when using formulations as explications or developments, according to the way in which the narrative is told by the child: explications can clarify aspects of the narrative and sometime summarise them, while developments are useful to carry the narrative on. Facilitators can also decide if and when it is useful to provide series of formulations, thus checking when children's interest in expanding comes to end.

While questions can enhance and support the narrative production, types of minimal feedback and formulations show that narratives are listened to, enhance their continuation and, in the case of formulations, enhance co-construction, thus showing the facilitators' active participation and involvement in the narrative.