Response to your feedback

(Semi-unintentional) experiment: setting aside time for feedback forms during class (last year) vs using online survey (this year).

- Response rate last year: 85%
- Response rate this year: 16%

So, although I’m happy to address this year’s feedback, I don’t take it as necessarily representative.

Also: I won’t discuss every comment, only those that came up several times.

Level of challenge

- 83% said “suitably challenging” (67%) or “I’m managing” (14%).
  - Actually very similar to last year.
- Remainder evenly split “too hard” or “too easy”.

Course is too easy?

- We added extra optional readings based on last year’s feedback. Please make use of them!
- Consider attending these (Google them to get on mailing lists):
  - ILCC seminar series: external speakers, usually Fri at 11am.
  - Edinburgh NLP group meetings: mostly internal speakers (PhD students). Tue at 1pm.
Course is too hard?

- Make sure you are actually spending the recommended time outside lectures: 8-10 hours/wk minimum!
- “I’ve done the readings and exercises, but I still don’t get the point”, or “I just feel lost and don’t know what to ask.”:
  - We do try to explain the bigger picture in lecture and in tutorials (check the answer sheets too!).
  - If you are still confused, (a) talk to your fellow students, and (b) come to TA hours! No, really!

Side note: linguists versus others

- We usually get somewhat higher difficulty ratings from students with linguistics background.
- However, whenever we have looked at the final exam marks, we haven’t found any differences.
- Previous students on SLP degree said later that they appreciated being pushed in the first semester, to better prepare for sem 2.
- If you feel the linguistic parts are going too slowly, use the time to catch up on the other parts! (Linguistics isn’t as easy as you think for everyone else.)

What works well and what doesn’t?

- Students mentioned many positive points (thank you!)
  - labs, tutorials, assignments
  - textbook/reading
  - course organization
  - lectures and lecture videos
  - discussing/working with other students
- The most common issues were related to:
  - labs
  - lecturers
  - working with partners

Labs: logistics

- Please do more to get the non-ANLP students out. It’s hard for me to find a seat/partner.
  - Thanks, we’ll try to do better with this.
  - But maybe: instead of immediately sitting down, consider waiting by the door for a partner and sitting down with them.
  - And we’ll probably try for more smaller labs next year.
**Labs: Content**

- Labs are too hard.
- Labs are too easy.
  - Inevitable difference between student backgrounds.
  - Attendance is not compulsory. If you really don't like them, don't go. But you are still responsible for the content, so **do** look over them on your own.

- Labs should be more connected to assignments.
  - Some of the labs already are (Lab 3 and 8).
  - But we’ll consider possible improvements for next year.

**Lectures: delivery and logistics**

- Please make slides available in advance
- Please don’t skip over slides or rush through them
  - We try but it is sometimes hard, especially in the sections where lots of content is being updated from last year. We will continue to do what we can.

- Please don’t talk so fast
  - I’m aware I do sometimes; I’ll try not to!

**Lectures: content**

- Please say more about your own experience with NLP/research.
  - SG won’t be doing that this year, but DG probably will. Also we have some other guest lecturers to do this.

**Partners**

- My partner didn’t do any work.
- My partner wouldn’t let me do any work.
  - We’ve found that most students like working with a partner, but it is expected that not all partnerships will work well (one reason we make you switch). Nevertheless...
Why partners?

Dealing with difficult partnerships is unpleasant, but also important.
(You don’t often get to choose your coworkers, and these experiences do come up in job interviews!)

- If your partner really refuses to work, not much you can do.
- Others want to help, just need more patience.
  - Practicing explaining things will improve your own communication skills.
  - It may help you discover your own mistakes.
  - They may very well have good ideas and you will likely end up with a clearer report if you both understand it.
- You do have the option of working alone, however we have found lower average marks in the past for singletons.