Evaluating assignment e-feedback in Higher Education

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Languages in Higher Education 2012
Rationale

- Assignment feedback is consistently reported by students as an area for improvement.
- Technology can provide better ways of delivering feedback, but how much does it really help?
- The OU provides a good context for evaluating the actual strengths and weaknesses of different modes of e-feedback.
- The University of Manchester provides a good context for determining to which extent the lessons learnt within the OU are applicable to other educational settings.
Aims

- To examine the ways in which students and tutors use spoken and written e-feedback

  *Today → Introducing the FACT analysis method*

- To evaluate the perceptions and preferences of tutors and students in relation to spoken and written e-feedback

  *Today → Preliminary results from OU tutor & student surveys*

- To investigate the ways in which students engage with the written and spoken e-feedback that they receive

  *Today → Evaluation of peer feedback at University of Manchester*
Analysing assignment feedback

- Analysis criteria based around two dimensions:
  - Whether feedback focuses on strengths or weaknesses
  - How much information the feedback provides, cf ‘depth’ of feedback
    (Brown & Glover 2006) → layers of scaffolding

- Analysis tool: Feedback Analysis Chart for Tutors (FACT)
  Provides a visual ‘profile’ of a tutor’s feedback
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layers</th>
<th><strong>Comments focusing on weaknesses</strong></th>
<th><strong>Comments focusing on strengths</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Error identified only</td>
<td>Strength identified only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Manos blancos</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Error categorised, but not corrected</td>
<td>Strength categorised or described as per marking criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Manos blancos → Agreement</strong></td>
<td><strong>You use a wide range of language structures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Error corrected</td>
<td>Illustrated with specific example from student’s performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Manos blancos → blancas</strong></td>
<td><strong>No digo que quieran... → Good use of the subjunctive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Explanation given</td>
<td>Explanation given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Although it ends in O, ‘mano’ is a feminine noun.</td>
<td>This connector makes it very clear that a new section is starting here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advice given on how to prevent errors in future performance</td>
<td>Advice given on how to develop existing strengths in future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Revise section 6.1 of your grammar book</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good, you could also look up...</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Every year, OU language tutors return...
- 36,600 electronic feedback summary forms
- 19,000 annotated word-processed scripts
- 18,000 audio files containing spoken feedback

Our sample:
- 100 writing assignments
- 100 speaking assignments
- 4 levels (9 tutors per level)
- 108 students (3 per tutor)

Feedback consists of:
- 200 e-feedback forms
- 100 annotated scripts
- 100 audio files
# Student and tutor surveys

**OU students:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Lower Int.</th>
<th>Upper Int.</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>378</strong></td>
<td><strong>239</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>736</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OU tutors:** N=96 (same modules as above)
Survey preliminary results
Most important aspect of feedback for the students

According to the tutors:
- Feeling supported: 27%
- Getting a good mark: 33%
- Gauging own progress: 13%
- Advice for future: 14%
- Seeing what they got wrong: 13%

According to the students:
- Getting a good mark: 21%
- Gauging own progress: 19%
- Advice for future: 17%
- Seeing what they got wrong: 35%
- Feeling supported: 8%
Survey preliminary results
Medium preferences for giving and receiving feedback

- **Most useful medium?**
  - e-form: 34%
  - Written script: 34%
  - Sound file: 9%
  - No preference/Not sure: 23%

- **Least useful medium?**
  - e-form: 14%
  - Written script: 5%
  - Sound file: 19%
  - No preference/Not sure: 62%

**Tutors’ choices**

**Students’ choices**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes and perceptions: % of agreement with survey statements</th>
<th>Student survey</th>
<th>Tutor survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on the use of language is useful to students</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on the content and structure of assignments is useful to students</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback helps students see what they got right</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback helps students see what they got wrong</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback shows students how they can improve</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can remember most of the feedback given to them</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students generally make efforts to act upon the feedback</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors should correct every single error, even minor ones</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors should explain every correction they make</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback does indeed help students learn</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback makes students feel supported</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback helps students understand the marks they get</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback boosts students’ confidence</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken feedback should be given on written assignments too</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students normally look forward to seeing their feedback</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback helps students see what they got right
Feedback helps students see what they got wrong
Feedback on the use of language is useful to students
Feedback on the content and structure of assignments is useful to students
Feedback shows students how they can improve
Students can remember most of the feedback given to them
Students generally make efforts to act upon the feedback
Tutors should correct every single error, even minor ones
Tutors should explain every correction they make
Feedback does indeed help students learn
Feedback makes students feel supported
Feedback helps students understand the marks they get
Feedback boosts students’ confidence
Spoken feedback should be given on written assignments too
Students normally look forward to seeing their feedback

Attitudes and perceptions: % of disagreement with survey statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Student Survey</th>
<th>Tutor Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback helps students see what they got right</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback helps students see what they got right</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on the use of language is useful to students</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on the content and structure of assignments is useful to students</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback shows students how they can improve</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can remember most of the feedback given to them</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students generally make efforts to act upon the feedback</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors should explain every correction they make</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors should correct every single error, even minor ones</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback does indeed help students learn</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
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<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken feedback should be given on written assignments too</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students normally look forward to seeing their feedback</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Manchester, students:

- Receive paper-based feedback
- Receive audio-feedback
- Are involved in peer-to-peer feedback
  - Beginner and finalist groups
  - Composition / paraphrase work
  - Students provide corrections on paper
  - Students provide comments on work (audio or written) + mark
  - Tutor revises mark and gives further inputs
## Peer feedback: How do students engage with feedback?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback type</th>
<th>Tutor to Student 1</th>
<th>Student 1 to Student 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morphology + Syntax</strong></td>
<td>Italian reads very well, particularly you have used – <strong>ING forms</strong> (gerunds) very well; Italian is correct but mistakes in spelling and gender of x is feminine. Language is coming on; I am pleased</td>
<td>Essay reads well, morph and syntax generally correct. Small mistakes: you use article <strong>la</strong>; Italians don’t use articles with cities. Two examples of lack of agreements (quotes them) Syntax: here I would say x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lexis + Register</strong></td>
<td>Appropriate lexis: high vocab</td>
<td>Lexis is excellent (<strong>gives examples</strong>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Good to divide texts in two areas: <strong>data + opinion</strong> I was expecting more personal engagement! Very clinical!</td>
<td>Addressed q. properly. Appropriate structure (<strong>short intro</strong>,** I like conclusion**). Very Italian question in intro, well done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples used</strong></td>
<td>Good percentages and opinions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional comments</strong></td>
<td>Good work, for future mind <strong>‘small’ mistakes</strong></td>
<td>I really enjoyed reading your essay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peer feedback: How do students engage with feedback?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback type</th>
<th>Tutor to Student 2</th>
<th>Student 2 to Student 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Morphology + Syntax           | Pleased to see Italian is consistent with last 2 pieces. Language is fluent. Morphology is correct but careful with prepositions and articles | Italian reads well.  
You use subjunctive a lot: good! Use more paragraphs |
| Lexis + Register              | Several ticks to highlight appropriate vocab. Good effort in vocab selection       | Used appropriate lexis: words such as x, lots of formal words; x I wasn’t sure about; could have phrased more clearly |
| Content                       | Good job: coherent argument and personal interpretation. Reader is engaged         | Addressed q well, but you answered more the quote than q.; you talked about x instead of y |
| Examples used                 | Good balance between figures and reported opinions                                 | Examples are good: real-life examples. Structure good (gives explanation) |
| Additional comments           | Very pleased; for future mind prepositions. Carry on!                              |                        |
What is your favourite way of receiving feedback? (audio / written)

- **Beginners (N=16)**
  - SLLC: 33%
  - Tutor: 64%
  - Audio: 3%
  - No Pref: 3%

- **Yr 2 Post-beginners (N=17)**
  - SLLC: 18%
  - Tutor: 67%
  - Audio: 15%
  - No Pref: 8%

- **Yr 2 Post-A level (N=9)**
  - SLLC: 22%
  - Tutor: 28%
  - Audio: 11%
  - No Pref: 39%

- **Finalists (N=16)**
  - SLLC: 12%
  - Tutor: 16%
  - Audio: 72%
  - No Pref: 0%
Evaluation of peer feedback (audio / written)

- **Helped me understand how giving f/b works**
  - Strongly agree: 4%
  - Agree: 14%
  - Neutral: 34%
  - Disagree: 2%
  - Strongly disagree: 46%

- **Has made me more interested in the f/b process**
  - Strongly agree: 9%
  - Agree: 13%
  - Neutral: 23%
  - Disagree: 18%
  - Strongly disagree: 37%

- **Has helped me understand the language of f/b better**
  - Strongly agree: 12%
  - Agree: 19%
  - Neutral: 32%
  - Disagree: 13%
  - Strongly disagree: 24%

- **Has made me more aware of the tutor f/b I receive**
  - Strongly agree: 7%
  - Agree: 15%
  - Neutral: 47%
  - Disagree: 9%
  - Strongly disagree: 22%
What happens next?

So far…
- Student and tutor surveys completed
- Sample of tutor feedback collected & anonymised
- Peer to peer feedback data collected
- Project blog up and running: [http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/efep/](http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/efep/)
- Three conferences attended

In the next year…
- Further analysis of survey results
- Analysis of feedback collected (FACT profiles, student/tutor rapport, etc.)
- Student screencast recordings (‘feedback on feedback’)
- Evaluation report on different e-feedback modes
- Guidelines & training materials for tutors and students
- Online open workshop for HE tutors across the UK
- Article for peer-reviewed journal
- New collaborations based on project findings
Project blog: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/efep/

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