Researching Models of Dialogic Feedback Between Lecturers & Students

*Dr. Edd Pitt*

Centre for the Study of Higher Education
State of Play

• One-way monologic forms of feedback
  • Self-regulators

• Processing & using feedback troublesome
  • Passively received or told to them
    – (Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick, 2006; Winstone and Pitt, 2017)

• Dialogic Feedback
  – (Carless, 2013; Nicol, 2014)

• Development of Feedback Literacy
  • Develop understandings, capacities & dispositions towards learning & feedback
    – (Carless & Boud, 2018)
Research
Dialogic Feedback in Humanities

Learning Environment

- Exemplars
- Evaluative Judgement
- Peer Feedback
Learning Environment

Culture → Failure Acceptable → Formative Tasks
The Environment

“I try to create an environment where you could really mess up but that’s the point, it’s giving them a safe space to experience adversity so they can learn from this.

It's absolutely fine to fail, because it's about the journey, it's about the trajectory. And the idea is that in 12 weeks’ time you get it and you perform and you don’t fail.

If you're going to fall flat, you're going to do it now, and there's time to make adjustments before the big assessment.”
Learning Environment

“At first year they’re so frightened by the idea of trying something and failing in a way that’s visible to all. To overcome this, you just break it down, you give them simple exercises. I mean I'll give them a warmup in the first week “Why was there a laugh there?” Then they have to explain it, and quite often they're really good at that.

By the end of that you can say, well you were frightened you weren't going to get a laugh, but all of you got a laugh already.”
Learning Environment

Culture ➔ Failure Acceptable ➔ Formative Tasks

Learning - Own & Others Adversity, Failure or Disappointment

Feedback Timely Close Gap

Improve work Affective Domain
Exemplars


- Exemplars - distinguish (Tai et al, 2017)

- Lecturers’ expertise more developed
  - Students into their thought processes
  - Foster ability to make judgements (Sadler, 2010, Boud et al. 2015, Boud & Soler 2016).
Professional Exemplars
- Teacher Led
- Calibrate Standards
- Understanding of quality - professional level

Live Exemplars
- Moves on from teacher led exemplars
- Safe Space to Fail or Succeed
- Affords students more agency

Peer Assessment & Feedback
- Peers evaluate level of performance
- Referential to professional exemplars
- Construct emotionally sensitive feedback
- Instant actionable feedback for student
“After we have done the exemplars from professionals, they get a series of practical workshops, and most of those workshops, the majority of time in those workshops is taken up with students presenting a small piece of stand-up they've been working on, to the class, just like a gig. This is like a live exemplar really.

So one of them will go down and then the next one will come up after them and the next one and so on. The audience then report back on lines that have worked, sometimes we'll talk about why the line has worked. We also talk about specific moments of performance, so something they did that worked. We talk about gags that don’t work. The reason that we talk about things that don’t work, is not to say that we think it isn't good, but how could it work better. They are able to apply what they have learnt from the exemplars and the quality of other students work they have seen here.”
Developing Students Evaluative Judgement

Constant Appraisal Of Peer’s Work
Referenced To Their Own = Normalise

QUALITY + + +
SUSTAINED OPPORTUNITIES OVER TIME
Developing Students Evaluative Judgement

“I think the students, having gone through the period & the continuous assessment stuff, they're able to see different levels of quality and apply it to their own performance. You see that in the quality of the comments & how each student responds to them in the later weeks of the module.”

- Formative ongoing - practice, refine & apply
- Student agency - develop feedback literacy over time (Carless and Boud, 2018)
- Environment, tasks & culture replicate disciplinary norms in professional world (Tomlinson, 2012).
Developing Students Evaluative Judgement

- Not linear & progressive
  - Students develop understanding of quality in discipline
  - Construct helpful & useful feedback for others

"What I'll often say to them is, "Don’t forget when you're giving advice, you're also learning for yourself." So, for example there's a student who gives lots of good suggestions to other students, and actually her own writing is a bit underdeveloped.

So, I said, “Look you need to give yourself the advice you're giving to other ...” Which I know is hard, because it's your own stuff, you've got very close to it. But just come up with the ideas and then say to yourself what you would say to others."
“There can be sessions where it's like getting blood from a stone. But I'm not sure that’s lack of engagement as such, I think it's not knowing exactly how to spot what they should be getting or giving feedback on maybe. The part of what you're doing as a lecturer is helping them to develop a better understanding of what is good and the feedback skills as you go along.

So, in the first couple of weeks, it's quite hard to get beyond students just kind of looking at each other’s work and going, “Oh that’s nice, I enjoyed that.” Or, “Yeah that was good.” And you have to push them quite hard to elaborate on what they mean by good. Then the next barrier is getting them to give each other what we’d phrase as suggestions for improvement, but identifying negatives about work.”
Peer Feedback Not Easy For All Students

- Sense of Quality Within Discipline
- Make Evaluative Judgements
- Somewhat Feedback Literate

Giving & Receiving Feedback Biggest Challenge
“Ideally you want to get somebody who’s more cerebral and material based matched with somebody who’s more instinctive and performance based. Because they learn more from each other. If you have people with the same strengths and weaknesses working together, they can just reinforce their weaknesses. You have to give feedback to that one person, and then they have to give feedback to you on what you do. So not only do they get feedback from me, but they also get a chance to give each other feedback. It's good if they learn incrementally, so the first one goes on, gets feedback and then the next person can learn from that feedback and so on. So they're then throwing in ideas, and of course what I say to them then is bear in mind, you've been giving her ideas, but you've also been learning how to write for yourself, because you see how it works. So, that interactivity between peers is crucial, it's massively important, it's hugely important. I think it's very productive to have an atmosphere where they can give each other useful, well directed feedback.”
Script Writers Forum – Film Studies

This Week

Short Film Script

Pitch

Quality + Learning = Change 

Improve

University of Kent
“In the script writer forum you are going to get 10 comments from your screenplay or on your film. None of them might be terrible, but one of them will be gold dust. So that’s oral feedback from me, but also from people sitting round the table each week on the work they produce.

The peer feedback is usually very good quality, critical and tactfully given. As the weeks go by, you can see how they are using the feedback, they are making more developed judgements and learn from each other on that and really help each other to improve.”
“In week 10, I do what I call speed dating feedback. So, as the weeks have gone by they have all taken notes on everybody’s act, and then they move round so that each performance group or soloist talks to every other performance group or soloist. Each person spends three minutes with each act, so they get really detailed feedback and actually the quality of feedback they produce is really good, which suggests to me that there are people with brilliant feedback for each other who aren't always piping up with it in the group based discussions that happen earlier in the term.

It’s also about their actual skill of giving feedback, of identifying what's really ticking and being able to articulate it to someone else which helps them with their own performance moving forward.”
Conclusions

• Feedback dialogue gives students more & demands more of them as learners.

• Demands on lecturer in early developmental stages larger than normal
  • Reduced as feedback literacy & evaluative judgement develops

• Pedagogical practice to allow time for students
  • Develop evaluative judgement
  • Professional exemplars, live exemplars & peer feedback

• Scaffolding strategically - positively influence the culture surrounding feedback in learning environment.
References


