Do Students Really Get It?

Sal Consoli

BAAL Testing, Evaluation & Assessment SIG

Cambridge, 8th May 2015

Email: sal.consoli@yahoo.co.uk

'Feedback has long been seen as essential for the development of L2 writing skills, both for its potential for **learning** and for **student motivation**'

(Hyland & Hyland, 2006: 83)

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Potential means :

'Not actual yet' - (Collins Dictionaries, 2015).

'Possible or likely in the future' - (MacMillan Dictionary, 2015).

*'Possible **when the necessary conditions exist**.'* - (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2015).

© Sal Consoli 2015

How?

- Helping students understand ***where*** *they have gone wrong* and ***what*** *they need to improve*.

- They also need feedback on ***what*** *they have done well*, help them understand **what** is good about their work and **how** they can build on it.

(Brown, 2005)

© Sal Consoli 2015

How?

'Feedback is a particularly complex and problematic form of communication which takes place within a **social context**'

(Higgins, 2000:2)

Social Context

Social = Personal involvement of different agents tutors, students, heads of departments, external examiners…

Context = Teaching environment with its own rules and regulations where it all happens.

© Sal Consoli 2015

Institutional Feedback Discourses

'This essay lacks criticality',

'Your written language is not sufficiently academic',

'Some arguments are underdeveloped'.

© Sal Consoli 2015

Present Study

Location: University of the West of England, Bristol

Context: Foundation and Graduate EAP Pathway Programmes

Participants: Students and Staff at the College

© Sal Consoli 2015

Research Aims

Research Aim 1: Do students have an active interest in feedback?

Research Aim 2: To what extent do students understand **our** institutional discourses underpinning feedback?

Research Aim 3: Do students like **our** current feedback system?

© Sal Consoli 2015

Today's Presentation

Phase 1

- **Participants:** 5 students and Staff.

- **Aims**: Investigate students' perception of our feedback system and collect ideas which will inform the design of a large-scale questionnaire.

- **Data:** Semi-structured interviews and assignments feedback.

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 - Results

<u>Research Aim 1</u>: Do students have an active interest in feedback?

Student ID number:_____ Module Code: __FC5012T_____ Assessment Date:_____

Criterion	Provisional Mark[1]	Comments
Structure: How well you planned your essay and how well you organised information in your essay, how logical and how easy is it to follow.		
Content: How relevant the information presented in your essay is to the essay topic. *How well and how in depth you are able to develop /discuss/ analyse issues relevant to topic*		
Support: How well you supported your opinions with examples and information from the notes and other sources. How well you referenced support from sources.		
Clarity of Expression: How well you controlled your written language so that the meaning did not impede the reader. How appropriate and clear your use of academic style, register and tone was.		
Any Penalty (up to 5 marks may be deducted for failure to follow assessment outline guidelines, poor formatting etc.)		
TOTAL PROVISIONAL MARK		

Tutor Name:_____

Tutor Signature:_____

Date :_____

2nd Marker Name:_____

2nd Marker Signature:_____

Date :_____

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 1

Q: When you receive feedback on an assignment, what is more important for you: A) The grade (e.g. 54%) or B) The comments written by your tutor?

S1: *'First, I look at the grade because the grade matters a lot then I go through the comments and make an analysis of what I did wrong in certain areas.'*

S2: *'They're equally important.'*

S3: *'I am interested in both. I think I may look at the mark first but the comments are important so I know why I lost points.'*

S4: '*I am more interested in specific categories so I give more importance to the comments.'*

S5: *'The most important thing is the score, then I will look at the comments to see why I had these results.'*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 - Results

Research Aim 2: To what extent do students understand the institutional discourses underpinning feedback?

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Q: *How easy is it for you to understand your tutor's comments?*

S1: *'For me it's always easy. If I misunderstand I can always ask when I have a one-to-one session with the tutor.'*

S2: *'It's understandable for me. I mean you guys use easy language for us.'*

S3: *'They're quite clear, there's no problem.*

S4: *'I think most of the comments are normally pretty straightforward.'*

S5: *'I think they're very easy and in simple language.'*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

CONTENT

- **Content frequently irrelevant**
- **Little coverage of expected issues**
- **Descriptive**

S1: '*The information in the text did not relate to the essay question. Little coverage means the student didn't write the essay with enough details. Descriptive, the student gave a lot of description which may not need to be there. '*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

<u>CONTENT</u>

- **Content frequently irrelevant**
- **Little coverage of expected issues**
- **Descriptive**

S2: *'The content is not related to the essay topic. Some issues have not been discussed properly. And it is descriptive, the student tried to describe things. (Is it positive or negative?) It is positive, I think.'*

© Sal Consoli 2015

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

CONTENT

- **Content frequently irrelevant**
- **Little coverage of expected issues**
- **Descriptive**

S3: *'The content doesn't really answer the question. The tutor expects more issues to be discussed. Descriptive, I'm not sure but it should be a good thing.'*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

<u>CONTENT</u>

- **Content frequently irrelevant**
- **Little coverage of expected issues**
- **Descriptive**

S4: '*The student made points which didn't really address the question. Little coverage means that the ideas were quite brief and probably just hit the surface. Descriptive, they described certain things (Is that positive or negative?) from the comments above I think it's negative. But I am bit confused, I think it's positive actually.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

CONTENT

- **Content frequently irrelevant**
- **Little coverage of expected issues**
- **Descriptive**

S5: '*The student didn't answer the question. Little coverage means the student didn't give enough details of the main issues discussed. Descriptive – I don't quite understand this.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Structure

- **Organisation needs work**
- **Lacks cohesion**

S1: '*The ideas in the text are maybe mixed, there is no structure, introduction, main body, and conclusion and is difficult to follow the ideas. Lacks cohesion because maybe some words were repeated many times* (any words you can think of ?) *no, not really, sorry..'*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Structure

- **Organisation needs work**
- **Lacks cohesion**

S2: '*The student didn't follow the rules of essay structure, so introduction, conclusion and paragraphs structure may not be clear. Lacks cohesion means that all the paragraphs do not add up and they do not talk about the same topic.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Structure

- **Organisation needs work**
- **Lacks cohesion**

S3: '*Organisation needs work means that paragraphs need to be topic-specific and clear. Cohesion I have no idea.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Structure

- **Organisation needs work**
- **Lacks cohesion**

S4: '*The structure is a little everywhere. So the introduction and main body and conclusion are not clear or logical. Cohesion – student didn't use those linking words to connect paragraphs.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

<u>Structure</u>

- **Organisation needs work**
- **Lacks cohesion**

S5: '*Maybe the structure of the essay is very difficult to follow so it's confusing to understand the ideas. Lacks cohesion means that it needs more language to link the content.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Support

Most ideas are unsupported and there is little attempt at in-text referencing. The reference list is incorrect. Overall, there is no evidence of breadth.

S1: '*Most ideas do not have any references, they are not backed up with examples or sources. No name of author. Probably the final reference list does not follow the Harvard style. Breadth probably means you haven't researched proper sources.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Support

Most ideas are unsupported and there is little attempt at in-text referencing. The reference list is incorrect. Overall, there is no evidence of breadth.

S2: '*Most arguments are not supported with any sources. No in-text referencing means that sources have not been used within the paragraphs. The reference list may not be in alphabetical order, or websites may not be well referenced. Not sure what breadth means.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Support

Most ideas are unsupported and there is little attempt at in-text referencing. The reference list is incorrect. Overall, there is no evidence of breadth.

S3: '*Ideas are not supported with sources or examples from sources. No in-text referencing means that the student doesn't know how to reference in paragraphs. The reference list may not be in alphabetical order. Breadth I have no idea what it means.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Support

Most ideas are unsupported and there is little attempt at in-text referencing. The reference list is incorrect. Overall, there is no evidence of breadth.

S4: '*The ideas weren't backed up with evidence. No in-text referencing means that not many sources were given to support arguments in each paragraph. And the reference list was probably not in line with the Harvard system. I don't really understand breadth.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

<u>Support</u>

Most ideas are unsupported and there is little attempt at in-text referencing. The reference list is incorrect. Overall, there is no evidence of breadth.

S5: '*There is lack of evidence from academic sources. No in-text referencing means that there is no paraphrased information. The reference list does not follow the Harvard style. Breadth not sure.*'

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Clarity of Expression

- **Limited command of written language**
- **Basic use of appropriate tone**
- **Errors in register**

S1: '*Limited command that the student didn't use enough good vocabulary which is relevant to the academic topic. Basic use of appropriate tone and errors in register – I don't know what these mean.*

© Sal Consoli 2015

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Clarity of Expression

- **Limited command of written language**
- **Basic use of appropriate tone**
- **Errors in register**

S2: '*Maybe the student doesn't have the right vocabulary. The use of appropriate tone means that you need to be formal and academic. Errors in register, I'm not sure.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Clarity of Expression

- **Limited command of written language**
- **Basic use of appropriate tone**
- **Errors in register**

S3: '*Limited command refers to little ability to use the English language. Tone maybe means the essay should be more formal. Register, I don't know.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Clarity of Expression

- **Limited command of written language**
- **Basic use of appropriate tone**
- **Errors in register**

S4: '*The student didn't use a wide range of vocabulary. Tone and register, I don't really understand what these mean.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Clarity of Expression

- **Limited command of written language**
- **Basic use of appropriate tone**
- **Errors in register**

S5: '*Very limited vocabulary and the language used is very simple (tone) and not sure what register means.*'

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 3

Do students like our current feedback system?

Do you like the feedback form we use currently? Would you like a different one?

S1: *'I think it's good but I think that tutors should show the students where exactly in the text the mistakes are, because being general won't help. '*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 4

Do students like our current feedback system?

Do you like the feedback form we use currently? Would you like a different one?

S2: '*I think it's pretty good. I do recommend giving students more examples of model answers so they can see how to write an essay.*'

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 4

Do students like our current feedback system?

Do you like the feedback form we use currently? Would you like a different one?

S3: *'The form is good enough. The comments are useful and I take advantage of them to improve my work.'*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 4

Do students like our current feedback system?

Do you like the feedback form we use currently? Would you like a different one?

S4: '*It is good to have different marks for different criteria so you can ask your tutor for further help with what you did wrong. I like the way it is.*

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 4

Do students like our current feedback system?

Do you like the feedback form we use currently? Would you like a different one?

S5: *'Maybe the feedback should be more specific, for example, the teacher says they can't understand the student's idea then perhaps the idea in the text needs to be underlined.*

© Sal Consoli 2015

Phase 1 – Results – Research Aim 2

Do Students Really Get It?

Provisional Conclusions

❖ Students' perception of their understanding of feedback was highly positive. However, this attitude did not always reflect an accurate understanding of the feedback provided.

❖ Students' understanding of key concepts is not clear (e.g. cohesion/coherence; evaluative/descriptive approach).

❖ Tutors should write in full sentences and avoid short, vague-looking comments (e.g. Overall, there is no evidence of breadth).

❖ Only terms which have been fully discussed and explained in class should be used. Terms which might not be transparent or student-facing should be avoided (e.g. Errors in register/tone).

❖ Feedback needs to be specific and provide clear examples of problems/errors identified in the assignment.

© Sal Consoli 2015

References

❖ Brown, S. (2004). Assessment for learning. *Learning and teaching in higher education*, *1*(1), 81-89.

❖ Higgins, R. (2000). Be more critical': rethinking assessment feedback, paper presented to British Educational Research Association Conference, Cardiff University, 7–10 September. *Studies in Higher Education*, *31*, 219-233.

❖ Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). Feedback on second language students' writing. *Language teaching*, *39*(02), 83-101.

www.uwe.ac.uk/internationalcollege

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College is operated by Kaplan UWE Limited (Registered in England, Company No. 08102562) with its registered office at 2nd Floor, Warwick Building, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London, W14 8HQ, UK.

Many Thanks!