INCREASING LEARNER ENGAGEMENT WITH WRITTEN FEEDBACK

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feedback

"information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding"

(Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

an inquiry

- **How do you give feedback to your group of learners on their written work?**

- **After giving them feedback, what do you *hope* they will do with that information?**

- **What do you *think* they do with that information? How do you know?**

Course context:
- Professional Writing Skills
- Advanced C1-C2 level EFL writing course
- Responses from 2 classes, approx. 24 students per class
- Austrian & international students
- Genre writing
- Assessment: exam

Post-semester questionnaire (SS 2023)
"What did you find the most helpful about the feedback you received on your writing?"

"The level of detail of the comments showed me how deep writing skills really go and also what to look for later as a teacher."

"I find it extremely helpful to be able to click on the exact error in MS Word and see the comment."

"The positive comments. I want to know what I have done right as much as what I can improve."

"Suggestions for idiomatic language, advanced vocab, correct usage that's difficult to self-teach at this level"

"I work best with examples."

Post-semester questionnaire (SS 2023)
"What did you do with the feedback you received on your written assignments?"

"Read it and try to incorporate it in the next assignment (I have the file open when writing a new text, so I can check)."

"I read it and try to improve, but it's hard to change after 8 years of writing the same way."

"Review it before another assignment and again before the exam."

"I don't rewrite the text but when I read the comments I try to think of how I would correct the mistakes."

"I don't look at it for a while, and then I read it a few days before the exam to prepare."

our findings suggest…

Learners have a positive perception of feedback and its potential to increase their performance, but they are not actively using it for continuous learning.

What is feedback literacy?

Teacher Feedback Literacy

"the knowledge, expertise and dispositions to design feedback processes [to] enable student uptake of feedback and seed the development of student feedback literacy"

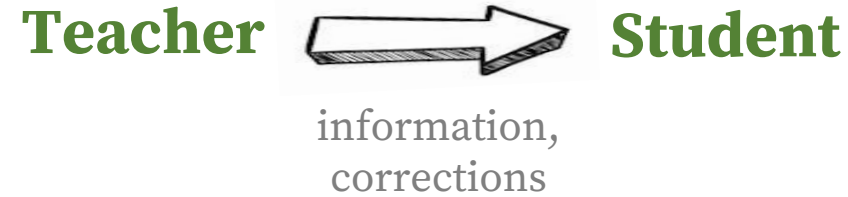(Carless & Winstone, 2020)

Student Feedback Literacy

"the ability to read, interpret and use written feedback"

(Sutton, 2012)

"the understandings, capacities, and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies"

(Carless & Boud, 2018)

A shift from feedback solely as transmission...

Teacher ➡️ **Student**

information,
corrections

...to feedback as a process using multiple channels of communication, through which teachers and students collaborate (Mamad, 2023)

**Feedback Literate
Teacher**

**Feedback Literate
Student**
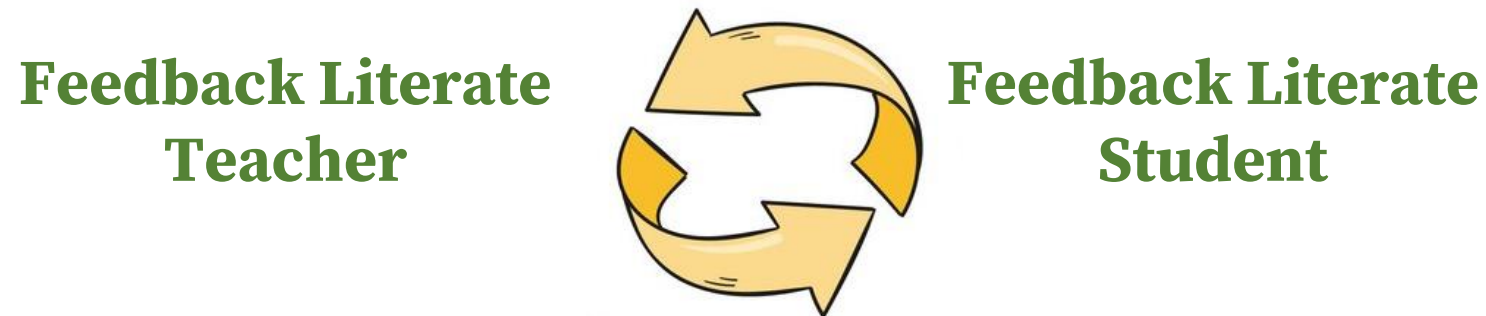
Feedback Literate Students
(Carless & Boud, 2018)

1. **Appreciate feedback**
   - understand the role of feedback in improving work
   - recognise that feedback comes in different forms
   - use technology to access, store and revisit feedback

2. **Make judgements**
   - can evaluate their own work and that of others
   - participate productively in peer feedback
   - improve self-evaluation capacities

3. **Manage affect**
   - maintain emotional balance and avoid defensiveness
   - elicit suggestions and dialogue from peers or teachers
   - develop habits for continuous improvement over time

4. **Take action**
   - are aware of the imperative to act upon feedback
   - draw on a range of feedback experiences for continuous improvement
   - develop a repertoire of strategies for acting on feedback
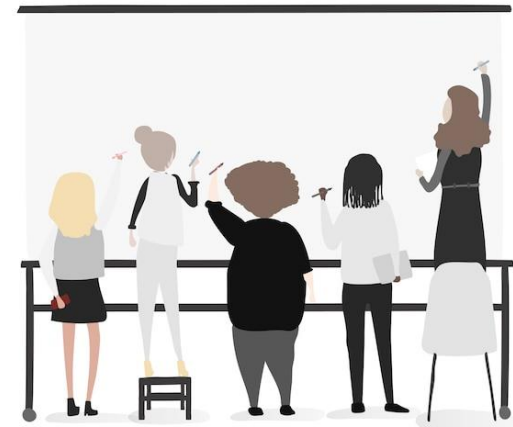
Feedback Literate Teachers
(Carless & Winstone, 2023)

1. **Design for uptake**
    *   design tasks and assessments to encourage student generation and reception of feedback
    *   support learners in judging their own work and that of others, through activities such as peer feedback and evaluating examples
    *   use feedback timely and make expectations for feedback clear
    *   deploy technology, as appropriate, to facilitate feedback engagement

2. **Have relational sensitivities**
    *   show support, approachability and sensitivity in how feedback is shared
    *   envision feedback processes as partnerships between teachers and students
    *   use technology to strengthen relationships and communication with students

3. **Manage practicalities**
    *   navigate between different types of feedback (formative and summative)
    *   manage disciplinary factors in feedback
    *   balance their feedback workload with what is useful to students

Insights from Professional Writing Skills

Recent changes to the course

- **SS 2023 - Genre Writing**
  - Text types: Critical Review and Article
  - Assessment: Midterm and final exam

- **WS 2023-24 - Genre + Process Writing**
  - Text type: Critical Review
  - Assessment: Final exam

Learners' Writing Experiences

Promote discussion on the first day of the course about learners' writing and past feedback experiences, their feelings about writing and the writing process

- What are the most important things you have learned about writing in your first language? in English?

- How have teachers in first- and second- language classrooms responded to your writing? (For example, have they commented on content, made suggestions for revision, corrected errors?)

- How confident do you feel about writing in your first language? in English?

- Describe how you normally write. How much time do you spend thinking and making notes before writing a draft? How do you generate ideas? What do you do when you revise a draft?

Learner-directed Feedback Questions

(Campbell & Schumm-Fauster, 2013)

- Instruct learners to ask 3-5 questions about their written piece for the teacher to respond to

- Provide guidelines on what kind of questions they can ask and where to write them (endnotes, footnotes, in the margin)

"I know where I struggle the most, so I appreciated the teacher's answer to my questions."

Here are some areas which you can ask for feedback on:

- **Textual competence** – effectiveness of thesis statement, topic sentence, development of argument...

- **Vocabulary & Expression** – effective usage of a word or phrase, register and appropriacy, collocations...

- **Grammar** – tense use, sentence structure, articles...

- **Mechanics** – punctuation, marking of paragraphs...

Challenges: learners may need to be redirected to a more urgent aspect of their writing; time needed to write responses; in some cases no questions asked

Code-marking

- To set up learners for **self-correction** of their written work

- Mark errors with the abbreviations that correspond to assessment categories on exam rubric

  C = Content

  O/C = Organization and Cohesion

  V = Vocabulary

  G= Grammar

- Add brief comments depending on the nature of the error: prompt with a language cue or suggestions, but may occasionally need to directly correct errors

- They submit a second draft applying the teacher's feedback comments

Challenges: learners need to have relevant metalinguistic knowledge to work with feedback and self-correct; they may need more direct input (correct the error for them)

Code-marking

When marking papers, English teachers must ensure they has a sufficient supply of coffee to prevail fatigue. Taking regular breaks are also recommended to mitigate the risks of burnout and sustain optimal cognitive function when giving feedbacks.

Commented [MS1]: G: agreement

Commented [MS2]: V: incorrect word

Commented [MS3]: G: countability

Not a real example :)

Checking in after writing

Feedback slips were distributed in class after students submitted their first drafts of a new text type (42 respondents)

1. What was easy/challenging?

Easy: Summary writing 24%, Structuring my text 12%, Writing the introduction: 12%

Difficult: Incorporating research information 17%, Developing arguments 12%, Writing for a long time 10%

2. What strategies did you use for planning, writing, and finding relevant research information?

"I wrote a long bulleted list of ideas first"

"I wrote the summary first, then the introduction, then the critique"

"I took notes about each part of the text before formulating it"

"I looked at the model texts"

3. What aspect of writing the text type would you like to revise in class together?

Using research information 25%, Finding points to critique 17%, Supporting my arguments 12%

Try it out: Respond to learner-directed questions

1) Read the two sample paragraphs along with the questions the student writer has asked.

2) Give written feedback to at least one of them and try to answer their questions. Feel free to correct or code-mark any language mistakes…

3) Then compare your feedback response to with a partner. Discuss your considerations and choices when answering the student's questions.

Thank you!
Your feedback is appreciated ☺

Sources

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