

The discourse of feedback

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Session outline

Feedback – some definitions

My research into post-observation feedback

Giving feedback

Workshop

Feedback – some definitions from dictionaries

“advice, criticism etc. about how successful or useful something is”

(Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995)

“comments about how well or how badly someone is doing something, which are intended to help them do it better”.

(Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2002)

“information given in response to a product, performance etc., used as a basis for improvement”.

(The Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2006)

Feedback – further definitions

From the field of education, more specifically within the context of classrooms:

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

(Hattie and Timperley, 2007:81)

From Management Theory; used widely in education contexts:

“information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way” (Ramaprasad, 1983:4).

“training and teaching are both ‘caring’ activities”

(Wright and Bolitho, 2007, p.233)

Teacher educators “require knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the field of human development (adult development, social psychology, counselling, and the like)”

(Korthagen and Russell, 1995, p.191)

My research

Student teacher learning experienced as a result of feedback received on teaching practice / practicum

The role of feedback

Sadler's (1998) view:

Feedback should enable learners to recognise gaps between current and desired performance.

William's (1998) view:

The uptake of feedback is evident only when the information about the gap has been used to address that gap.

The research – the setting and the participants

Two one month, 100-hour,
**initial teacher training
courses in a UK university,
with TP element** (teaching real
language learners who join English
classes on a voluntary basis)

21 student teachers (trainees)

3 teacher trainers



The research data

- Student teacher diaries
- Researcher's diary
- Observation of the student teachers in class
- Field notes
- Audio recordings of feedback sessions, all transcribed
- Written feedback from all the trainers
- Student teachers' "critical incidents" from teaching practice
- End-of-course questionnaires

Data extract

- 001 Marie **You're SO natural.**
- 002 Lisa Yeah (4.0) I was saying to Marie earlier, that to think about cutting up the, I don't know whether you thought about that yourself or whether it came from a book I don't know.
- 004 Jake No, no, it wasn't. I=
- 005 Lisa =It wasn't, no, cutting up the telephone numbers, getting them to meet with each other, and then to do a different=
- 007 Nur+Sam =Hmm
- 008 Lisa **I thought it was just EXcellent.**
- 009 Nur **Yes, it's a ↑ LOVEly idea.** The only thing was that it actually took longer than it should've been.
- 011 Jake YES ((*instant agreement*))
- 012 Nur Because of the instructions – it comes down to the instructions as you were saying, whereas **the idea's ↑ wonderful. Very creative.**
- 014 Marie **Yes.** You're going to get=
- 015 Nur =**You should write a book about classroom management techniques, ((laughter from all group)) grouping activities. Really. It's lovely yes.**
- 017 Marie **Its variance as well.**
- 018 Nur [xxxxx] That was Claire's activity, but he'd adapted it.
- 019 Lisa **EXACTly.**
- 020 Marie **It's wonderful.**

Kurtoglu-Hooton, N. 2016. *Confirmatory Feedback in Teacher Education: An Instigator of Student Teacher Learning*. Palgrave Macmillan.

From the end-of-course questionnaire

7. Please comment on the following questions with regard to the **Teaching Practice feedback** sessions:

Think back to all the six teaching practice feedback sessions you have had. Choose one piece of feedback you received (from tutor or peer) that you found significant in some way. Comment on why you found it particularly significant and what effect the feedback may have had on you.

From the end-of-course questionnaire - Jake

This may seem minor BUT to be told I am 'creative' has had enormous effects! This creativeness hasn't obviously just happened. However in the past probably because of others' feedback, I would have described myself as a 'bit of a plodder' who needed permission to do anything out of the mainstream. To find I am perceived creative by people has been a bit of a 'life changer'.

Excerpt from Marie's diary

Jake has been praised for his creativity. It makes his lessons lively, enjoyable and different. **I have observed how well his creativity works**, and that Nur, as an experienced EFL teacher, agrees. **I will now make a conscious effort to be more creative myself**, as I have discovered how successful it is. If my peers and I take hints and tips from each other, we can all help each other become better teachers.

Excerpt from Lisa's diary

During the feedback sessions, I watch one of my peers teaching and I think to myself 'he is so imaginative'. We had a discussion about this in one of the feedback sessions and **I realised how important it is to be creative as it helps to stimulate the students and helps to reinforce points.** However, I know that I am not a creative person. I am a methodical person and prefer to have things set out and simply follow instructions. Unfortunately, sticking rigidly to the workbooks is not always effective. It is good to be creative and use a variety of activities to keep students interested. Therefore, this is an area I know I will have to work very hard on as it does not come naturally to me.

(Lisa, at the end of the second week of the course)

From the end-of-course questionnaire - Jake

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Jake – a few months after the course

I have always been perceived as a "Plodder". "Want something doing?" ask Jake, he'll stick at it, get it done and it will be done in the "correct" way, not quick, because he sticks to "the rules" is probably how I have always been seen. Well that is my perception of how I have been seen! **To be suddenly, and it was sudden to me! described as "Creative" not once but a number of times, and not by just one person (honest!) changed the whole way I think about myself. It has not only restored some of my self respect but also given me confidence to actually put forward ideas, and opinions, that in the past I would have kept to myself.** I would have kept them to myself on the basis that I was a "plodder" and plodders' ideas whilst not worthless are never new, inventive, creative [...] so not worth airing, who would listen anyway! **The "Creative" comment has also given me confidence to try out new ideas, whether I am confident they will work or not.** Something I would have been loath to do prior to the course.

Jake – seven months after the course

Spooky you should write today. Have just been practising my classroom management skills on a group of hard nosed Border Army Guards. We have been given the task of turning them from soldiers to Police Officers inside three months! With a wave of the hand the [...] Government decreed that the borders would be manned by Police and not Army. [...] I used pictures of vegetables to divide them up. [...] It was great to see the change in attitude once I had attributed the various vegetables [sic.] characteristics to each group (Peppers group, hot stuff, Cool Cucumbers etc.) **I am not showing off, just another example of new found confidence!** “You did what? Made these hot headed [...] blokes with guns get into groups by choosing pictures of vegetables!” Believe you me they loved it!

During the research it became clear that ...

Confirmatory feedback is a catalyst for student teacher learning and change

Studies into Counselling, Social Psychology, Appreciative pedagogy, good affect, good mood show that ...

“energy tends to be heightened and more productively invested when directed toward discovery of what works rather than what does not work – for what works contains the seed that might transform.”

(Yballe and O'Connor, 2000, p.476)

“positive affect tend to promote exploration and enjoyment of new ideas and possibilities, as well as ways of looking at things” (Isen, 1993, p.274)

“Being in a good mood facilitates creative problem-solving and opens up social interaction.” (Batson, Coke, Chard, Smith and Taliaferro, 1979)

Defining confirmatory feedback

“**Confirmatory feedback** involves positive feedback in the form of praise, or confirmation and / or reassurance that something went well. This ‘something’ can involve a teaching skill, a teacher quality, some teacher behaviour, or even a decision the teacher may have taken during teaching practice. It provides ‘a pat on the back’.”

(Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2004, 2008, 2016)

“Provide positive feedback and make it as specific as corrective feedback. Positive feedback strengthens client’s self-efficacy by emphasizing their strengths and reinforcing what they do well. This is especially true when feedback is specific.” Egan (2002:303)

Examples of moves from the data - *cataphoric references*

As teachers / teacher educators we can make confirmatory feedback specific by choosing lexical items that promote the giving of detailed feedback. Some examples from my research data were:

- What's quite striking in his lesson is ...
- Another thing I was very impressed with in the lesson is ...
- It was good to see ...
- I have to say I was very impressed.[...]
- I think it was a good idea to ...
- A very nice thing came up. [...]
- So you did the right thing by ...

Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2010, 2016

Examples of moves from the data - *anaphoric references*

- *[explanation of what was done well]* **Well done.**
- *[.....]*, **which I think is wonderful.**

Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2010, 2016

Confirmatory feedback and its potential effect

- ✓ Confidence boost
- ✓ Confidence to try out new ideas
- ✓ Insight into new perspectives
- ✓ Motivation to do better
- ✓ Motivation to try alternatives



Divergent change

... the kind of growth that, triggered by positive feelings and / or positive self-image, motivates a teacher to explore alternative techniques in their own practice, encourages her/him to pursue alternative ways of doing or achieving something, and enables her/him to set challenges to move forward.

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Some conclusions

- Avoid the “**I liked it but ...**”, “**That worked well but ...**” syndrome.
 - Be specific with praise. Explain rather than skip.
- ➔ It's what we say next that might make a difference.