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Findings of the Action Research in ELICOS Program 2023

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Interrogating some myths about action research: Questions from language teachers

Anne Burns, School of Education, University of New South Wales

Introduction

This issue of *Research Notes* is devoted to practitioner action research (AR) conducted in the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sector in Australia. Over the many years that I have been involved in AR, both in Australia and elsewhere, it has been fascinating to watch the growth of interest in practitioner research, not just in AR but also in other valuable approaches such as exploratory practice, reflective practice, design-based (or systems) research, lesson-study and self-study (see Burns, Edward and Ellis (2022) for an overview of these). While AR is now much more readily known and recognised in the field of English language teaching (ELT) than it was in the 1980s and 1990s, the concepts and processes involved are still not always easily understood or accurately represented, and questions are still raised about what it is and how to do it. In this short article, I explore what I call 'AR myths,' most of which relate to questions or queries I have encountered that have been raised by both researchers and teachers in various debates and workshops. I aim to provide a perspective on these so-called myths which might be helpful for readers interested in AR but unsure what it's about and how it can be used. Before I proceed with this explanation, I first provide a brief discussion about why and how AR and other practitioner research has become more recognised and accepted in ELT and in educational contexts more generally.

Background

The growth of interest in AR, as with the other practitioner inquiry approaches mentioned, emerged from debates about the lack of a theoretical base for language teacher professional development and reconceptualisations of how it could be characterised (e.g., Freeman and Johnson 1998, Richards and Nunan (Eds) 1990). A fundamental question in these debates revolved around teacher learning – how language teachers learn to teach and therefore what kind of professional development would support such learning (Freeman and Richards 1996). A number of perspectives on teacher learning have been proposed. Manfra (2019) cites Russ, Sherin and Sherin (2016), who provide three different conceptualisations of teacher learning which, over the years, have influenced the ways teachers are prepared for the classroom. The first, a 'process-product' model, sees teacher learning as developing a prescribed set of actions for practice (e.g., Flanders 1970). Training teachers to follow these actions is viewed as central to good practice, while the classroom is viewed as a decontextualised space where these various types of behaviours and actions are predicted to produce appropriate results. The second type, 'cognitive modeling', focuses on teachers' mental maps about what characterises teaching (e.g., Borg 2007, Woods 1996). It is a contextual model situated in the beliefs of teachers in relation to teaching, learning and learners as mediated by their direct experiences. The third perspective is 'situative and sociocultural', based on the notions that teaching is located within larger social and cultural contexts and teachers' practices eventuate from how they mediate these settings and are mediated by them (Johnson 2009). This perspective takes in not only what teachers think or believe but also how their practices are the product of wider historical, ecological, political, physical and economic factors. In this respect, teachers' agency and identity are also influenced by how they perceive they are situated in these contexts.

However, Manfra (2019) argues that, based on findings from the AR literature, a fourth perspective on teacher learning should be added – the notion of 'teaching as inquiry'. She argues that missing from the other three perspectives is the inclusion of teachers in the arena of research and that doing research is a powerful form of teacher learning (see also Burns 2024), through which their perspectives and beliefs, as well as their practices, are open to critically informed change. Engaging in classroom inquiry motivates teachers to challenge taken-for-granted practices and preconceptions and to engage in deeper reflection based on evidence from what is learned from research in which they are invested. It also enables them to develop skills and tools to continue learning through situated curriculum change and continued interrogation of the teaching context. Through research inquiry, teacher learning and learner teaching can potentially become more finely and productively balanced. These various changes in perspective about how teachers learn and develop have led to reconceptualisations of what constitutes effective teacher education and increasingly, the notion of a reflective teacher who is open to undertaking research in their classroom contexts is now foregrounded.

Teacher learning about action research: Myths and realities

It was against this background of changing notions of teacher learning that my own interest in AR emerged in the early 1990s. Over the years that I have been involved in doing and facilitating projects and workshops in Australia, the UK, Cambodia, Chile, China, Japan, Pakistan, Thailand and elsewhere, teachers have shown enthusiasm for the idea of conducting AR and have raised many issues and questions which have stimulated my own thinking. Some of these issues have also revolved around the myths I mention above and in the interest of provoking discussion but also offering some clarity I address five of them here with some possible responses and suggestions. To illustrate my discussion, I provide comments made to me by teachers in different parts of the world.

Myth I: 'Research is about people doing experiments and collecting a lot of data'

When considering the concept of inquiry, many teachers may perceive what research is about in positivist (neutral, measurable, objective) and scientific terms (see Borg 2013). This is probably unsurprising as studies that long dominated the educational field, including the field of ELT, have until fairly recently usually focused on experimental methods and statistical data; teachers may have been exposed mainly to these ideas in their teacher preparation courses. There may also be a belief that if you are a real researcher you need to be doing a large study that involves quite a copious amount of data. These views are reflected in the statements below:

> *'How can it be made more authentic and scientific?'* (Pakistan)
>
> *'How can we ensure academic rigour in the action research process?'* (Singapore)
>
> *'How many/much testing do we need to use to consider the validity of the action research?'* (China)
>
> *'We've done a survey, interviews, observations and collected test results. Do we have enough data?'* (Australia)

These ideas, especially the first three, are reflective of the arguments around rigour versus relevance (Watkins, Nicolaides and Marsick 2016) in research and a lack of knowledge about 'the whole array of research methods' (Zeni 1998:10). I have found it helpful to first ask teachers to brainstorm their perceptions and beliefs about what research is or to pose 'burning questions' about AR. Working from there I can then introduce my participants briefly to the range of paradigms available to researchers, positioning AR as an approach that can potentially draw on the methodologies of different approaches, but with the underlying philosophy of focusing on small-scale situated and constructivist teacher learning. As one teacher from Chile subsequently commented: 'I gained an idea of what action research is (not).'

Myth 2: ‘Real research involves control groups and statistics’

This myth is related to the first one, reflecting again an experimental view of research. Many teachers have been taught, or believe, that to be ‘real’ research, studies have to set up control and experimental groups, and that statistical measurement is an essential component of research, as these comments imply:

> *‘If no pre-test [or] post-test, how do we say certain improvements is only on the plans and actions?’* (Japan)
>
> *‘If the AR doesn’t draw on pre-test and post-test and use control/experimental group, how does the AR researcher say his or her action really works?’* (China)
>
> *‘How can we measure what we want to do?’* (Australia)

In the views of these practitioners, pre- and post-testing is a fundamental element that would enable researchers to come up with sound evidence based on measures relying on quantification and perhaps further statistical analysis. Also, comparisons through measurement could be achieved by using control and experimental groups. Otherwise, researchers would have no way of ‘proving’ that their classroom actions and changes work. Fundamentally, these arguments are about the necessity of controlling classroom variables and the nature of evidence.

I have found it valuable to discuss with teachers the range of forms of evidence that can be drawn upon to do research, including quantitative measures such as surveys and pre-course/post-course test scores (in AR more likely to be analysed through descriptive rather than inferential statistics) but also qualitative approaches such as open-ended questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, recordings of class/group discussion, journals/diaries, student writing, and observation. Teachers can then get a sense of the scope of data tools that can be used, including sources that inevitably occur ‘naturally’ in the classroom (Dikilitaş and Griffiths 2017) such as discussions, teacher-student interactions, responses to materials, and samples of what students produce in written or spoken language. Drawing on the latter sources can also reduce the perception of data collection as a substantial additional burden to teaching. A Chilean teacher reflected this idea of manageable research in the comment ‘I’m more acquainted with “down-to-earth” research now.’

Myth 3: ‘Action research is just about classroom problems’

AR is often portrayed in the literature as simply focused on solving problems, which gives the unfortunate perspective that it works on a deficit model. It may be too that this notion is carried over from scientific and experimental research approaches where identifying the research ‘problem’ is an important starting point. As some teachers commented to me:

> *‘AR just seems to be about solving a piddling little classroom problem – what does it matter?’* (Australia)
>
> *‘What can you do with it (other than personal reflection) when you are done?’* (Singapore)
>
> *‘Isn’t it just thinking about a problem with your teaching?’* (Thailand)

While AR can involve identifying challenges or problems that occur in practice, its deeper purpose is to understand, change and optimise teaching and learning for the betterment of those involved through a systematic process of inquiry. As Dewar and Sharp (2006:221) argue, the purpose of AR is to look to change through 'the production of knowledge and action directly useful to practice and the empowerment of people, at a deeper level, through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge.' I have found that in addressing this issue, a collaborative approach to AR serves to demystify deficit concepts or assumptions that might underpin classroom practice. Through sharing, dialogue and exchange of ideas with peers and facilitators, teachers gain a more sophisticated evidence-oriented perspective on their classrooms and the teaching-learning dynamics within it. They begin to view doing AR as acquiring a productive 'tool-kit' (Edwards and Burns 2016) for probing and interrogating classroom issues and their own beliefs about how their classrooms operate. Through AR, many teachers I have worked with have come to understand, empathise with and admire their learners much more deeply and to appreciate the enormity of the learning trajectories they face. In some cases, teachers have overturned their previous deficit opinions of what were seen as 'weaknesses' or 'limitations' on the part of their students as they have responded to the changed teaching approaches. One Australian teacher commented to me, 'I wish I had video-ed my classroom years ago – then I would have been a very different kind of teacher.'

Myth 4: 'Action research is much too subjective'

Teachers who are interested in knowing more about AR are often puzzled or concerned about how conducting research in their own classrooms and on their own students will undermine their research. They might see AR as very subjective and therefore what they might do to investigate their practice will be highly unreliable and have little validity. These perspectives revolve around the idea of whether any research of this sort, which focuses on direct participation and intact, everyday social situations, can be trusted. These comments reflect this view of AR and how, in comparison with 'proper' research, it may not be worthwhile:

> *'Action research is a matter of personal perception.'* (Pakistan)
>
> *'As this research is subjective, how can we believe the result?'* (China)
>
> *'How objective can the researcher be about the subjects of action research while doing research on them?'* (Thailand)
>
> *'How can a researcher/teacher manage his/her role as an insider and remain impartial?'* (Cambodia)

Objectivity is highly prized in scientific experimental research, which originated in the natural sciences. It emphasises the impartiality of the researcher and seeks lack of bias in the use of the research methods. Scientific researchers aim to use deductive methods to analyse evidence and to draw conclusions based on objective measures that increase reliability and validity. However, particularly in the social sciences, questions have been raised over many recent decades, about whether complete objectivity can ever be achieved or is even necessary. The social sciences, of which education is a part, deal with unpredictable and complex realities of life and a social science researcher may be positioned partially or wholly as an interested participant in the research process. Inevitably, certain degrees of subjectivity become located in the research, be it from the particular theoretical perspective adopted by the researcher or the way their presence alters the site of the research. It can be said that AR is at the extreme end of this subjectivity as practitioners are intimately bound up with the day-to-day operations and interactions. Zeni (1998:10) expresses this aptly: 'We aren't outsiders peering from the shadows into the classroom, but insiders responsible to the students whose learning we document.' However, the systematicity of AR seeks to overcome potential problems of subjectivity by introducing the need for close investigation and evidence for findings and claims.

I have found it helpful to discuss reliability and validity and their role in scientific research with teachers, but then to also introduce the alternative perspectives used in non-scientific research such as credibility (does the research account ring true?) and trustworthiness (can the findings be believed?). Credibility can be increased through clear descriptions of the context, courses, participants (students and teachers), teaching-learning conditions, and the researcher's role and position in the process and the steps taken, both for teaching and researching. Trustworthiness relates to collecting and comparing different sources of data (triangulation), clearly outlining the processes taken in analysing these data and displaying the data sufficiently to back up any claims that are made. These steps give the reader the basis for relating to the research, evaluating its believability, and assessing the relevance or transferability of what was found. Ensuring that the data have been collected ethically, with permission and with reasonable explanation about its purpose given to those involved, also ensures that the AR is not merely based on assumptions and personal beliefs. Reflecting this stance is the comment of a Japanese teacher: '[my teaching] … is no longer simply a question of asking myself what I did well and what I could improve, but rather of developing hypotheses, gathering evidence, and drawing conclusions.'

Myth 5: 'Action research won't get published'

More and more language teachers, especially those working in tertiary contexts, are being required to publish as well as teach (Tran, Burns and Ollerhead 2017). However, teachers often express concern that if they do AR they will not be able to get their articles accepted in academic journals. In their pre-service and in-service studies, teachers are often introduced to seminal articles published in high-profile journals that are relevant to particular courses. These are then taken to be the journals that they should aim for but usually few of these journals publish articles incorporating AR. As a result, there has been a limited body of AR sources for teachers to use as exemplars, as these comments suggest:

> *'Are there steps I need to take as a researcher that will make my classroom results more valid (publishable) for others?'* (Singapore)
>
> *'What does a perfect AR paper or report look like?'* (Singapore)
>
> *'How to report action research?'* (Singapore)

> *'It appears that much qualitative research/AR is about documenting the existence of certain phenomena but how can we get that published?'* (Pakistan)

However, it is not the case that AR cannot be published. The situation has been changing and more international journals in the language field with a strong orientation towards linking theory, research and practice encourage AR methodologies. When I am asked about these possibilities, I echo the sentiments of Bradbury Huang (2010:109), who notes, 'for those who look for worthy journals beyond the top five A-ranked journals … they will find a multitude of vehicles for sharing what they have to say.' I suggest that teacher researchers focus their efforts on journals that particularly welcome practitioner-oriented research and have an understanding and empathy towards it (e.g., *Language Teaching Research*, *ELT Journal*, *Profile*, *RELC Journal*, *TESOL Journal*, *English Australia Journal*). Moreover, there are other journals specifically dedicated to AR in the wider educational field (*Educational Action Research*, *Action Research Journal*, *International Journal of Action Research*) that teacher researchers can consider.

There are also professional associations that have in-house publishing opportunities, such as the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Research Special Interest Group newsletter, *ELT Research* or the Japanese Association of Language Teachers (JALT) *JALT Journal*. These types of publication are quality-controlled and are an excellent way to gain experience for teacher researchers who may be new to publishing their research. Also, teachers who volunteer to join funded or sponsored projects, such as the Australian AR in ELICOS Program featured in this issue of *Research Notes*, may be given the opportunity to have their research published by the organisations concerned, as in this case. These avenues provide an excellent starting point in learning more about what is involved in getting published. The satisfaction of seeing one's work come to fruition in a publication is expressed by a teacher I worked with in Australia: 'it was amazing to see my AR in print and to realise I had written it!'

Reflections

In this brief article I have focused on five myths about AR that have surfaced at times when I have made presentations, facilitated workshops or mentored teacher action researchers. There are, of course, others such as 'AR is the same as qualitative research' or 'AR is not rigorous research' or 'the problem with AR is it's not generalisable'. Expressing these myths is valuable as it enables other teachers to consider the extent they agree or disagree with them and generates valuable discussion about the philosophies, processes and practices of practitioner-oriented research. For teachers contemplating doing AR but new to research and uncertain how to proceed, it can be a relief to find that this type of research is oriented to their own interests, concerns and situations. It focuses on areas they themselves can identify as highly relevant to their thinking, their curiosity about what can be modified, changed or enhanced in their classroom practices, and how they can go about finding evidence for its effectiveness. Teachers begin to engage in processes of hypothesising, theorising and generating self-knowledge. They can gain greater agency in their classrooms and investment in their classroom practices and bring to the surface their own theories of educational effectiveness to juxtapose with those from scholarly research. In the reports of AR that follow, readers will find compelling examples demonstrating how ELICOS teachers have successfully navigated some of these myths to offer valuable examples for other teachers in similar contexts to reflect upon.

Welcome to workshop 1
ENGLISH AUSTRALIA
ENGLISH AUSTRALIA
QUALITY | SUPPORT | ASSURANCE
Representing

Left to right: Zhaobin Dong, Jiaqi Li, Penelope Main, Brenda Torio, Filip Bigos, Liz Potarzycka, Sophie O'Keefe (English Australia), Terri Lowe, Vicky Chang, Professor Anne Burns. Missing from photo: Kapil Sharma

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Improving student engagement in the feedback process

Penelope Main and Brenda Torio, The English Language Centre (ELC), University of New England

Introduction

We work as teachers in the English Language Centre (ELC) of the University of New England, a centre that delivers English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs to international students to prepare for their degree program. Although students come from varied linguistic and educational backgrounds and possess diverse skill sets, our focus is straightforward – developing their English language skills and their understanding of academic culture so they are ready to participate in their degree work. This is a truly rewarding experience. EAP is high stakes – intensive language programs are aligned with the start of degree programs – and much of our success relies on building a good feedback process, i.e., a system of alerting students to the gaps in their knowledge or skills, and offering appropriate support to develop these skills. We have an experienced and dedicated teaching team providing detailed and sometimes extensive feedback (see Appendix 1), but we acknowledge that students do not always act on this. Some students produce the same errors repeatedly. In our action research (AR), we were looking to provide ***feedback that students could hear*** and, additionally, avoid teacher disengagement or teacher burnout.

Context

AR provided an excellent framework to explore our feedback process. We introduced AR to an EAP class of 14 students who, after their 10-week course, were heading into various degree programs. This course was delivered in a hybrid mode to five face-to-face students and nine students studying offshore from Nepal, India, Saudi Arabia and China. AR was introduced to our four-hour Writing lesson that is delivered once a week over a 10-week term.

In 2023, we were in our third year of our new curriculum, written by our teaching team and underpinned by task-based language teaching pedagogy. Our EAP lessons are four hours per day, five days per week. Each daily lesson consists of four strands of 60 minutes, inspired by Paul Nation's development of task-based language teaching in English language teaching (Nation 2007). Fluency of language is the goal in the first 60 minutes – students discuss, for example, familiar topics in real time. During the second hour, students read or listen to a text that will assist them to perform a task in the third hour or strand. The task is also known as Output, which may be in the form of a verbal or written summary, a set of notes, an essay etc., in response to the set question. In the fourth hour or strand, students review their task and are provided with consolidation activities to improve their performance. We call this final hour our Feedback Session. Our lessons use assessment rubrics to guide teachers and students alike. This approach is in line with our university's desire for assessment transparency. We also use student output to exemplify learning described in the rubric; in this way, we hope that students will engage meaningfully with the assessment rubrics. Teachers use the rubric to provide daily feedback, but as we reviewed and refined our new program, we recognised that our feedback process needed to be re-imagined.

Research focus and research questions

The aim of this research was to improve our student feedback process. Prior to the AR intervention, we used the assessment rubric to provide generic feedback to the class directly after they finished their task and discussed how student output could be altered to meet the rubric marking criteria. We also provided individual rubric feedback to each student after the class (see Appendix 1). In teachers' meetings, teachers frequently commented that students were not responding to their feedback, that is, students were not making the expected alterations to their output. Effective feedback, in our eyes, is when students address the issues you have pointed out. The quality of the changes they make is very important as well, but it was not the focus of this AR. What we were looking for, as we have mentioned, is *feedback that students can hear*. An obvious alternative to teacher feedback is peer feedback. Before this AR, peer feedback activities were not regularly employed; our experience was that students were reluctant to engage with peer feedback. Frankly, we were not convinced of its efficacy. However, we acknowledged that students were not always hearing our feedback, and having read that teacher feedback was 'if not harmful, not very useful to students' (Berberovic 2022:13), we were prompted to explore peer feedback more seriously. Perhaps peer feedback was our key to engaging students in the rubrics. Peer feedback itself fitted well with our Centre's teaching style, which has been influenced strongly by Vygotzky's sociocultural theory (Kunnel 2021:29), prioritising interaction in developing student skills. Recent peer feedback AR presented in the ELICOS EAP context in *Research Notes* 83 (2022) recommended scaffolding, training, accessible tools and building trust (Berberovic 2022, Clews 2022). These aspects of teaching resonated with our experience in developing challenging skills. Thus, with these pointers, our research aim spawned two questions (RQs):

1. Is peer feedback a process that improves engagement with the assessment rubric?
2. Can a more structured and routinized Feedback Session improve student engagement with the assessment rubric?

Research design

The AR focused on the fourth strand of the daily lesson. In this strand, student tasks are evaluated using a rubric. Historically, the teacher provided general feedback via the rubric during the feedback session, and then individual task feedback using the rubric via email. Our intervention was a redesigned fourth strand, which we call the Feedback Session, comprising a generic pattern of feedback activities.

Firstly, the teacher explains one or more aspects of the rubric and points to student samples (de-identified samples of former student writing) that exemplify the relevant aspect of the rubric to a greater or lesser degree, providing a grading for that aspect using the rubric. This first step should model appropriate evaluation language and focus.

Secondly, students are provided with another de-identified student sample and are directed to read and evaluate it according to the aspect of the rubric the teacher has focused the session on. In small groups, students discuss their evaluation of the sample. Students then regroup as a whole class and report their evaluations and justifications at which point the teacher can assist their understanding of the rubric and the grading of samples.

Having practised evaluating samples, students then move onto the third step, which is peer assessment of the lesson's writing task: students read and evaluate their partner's writing in terms of the aspect of the rubric the lesson is focused on which they then share with their partner. Once the peer assessment is complete, the students are then directed to report in writing the feedback they have received and the changes they will implement in their resubmission. This report is posted to the online learning platform for the teacher's oversight. The final step in this process is a resubmission of the student writing with the proposed amendments.

The procedure can be distilled into the following steps:

1. The teacher reviews one or more aspects of the rubric by evaluating student sample writing and providing a grading with an explanation.
2. Students evaluate another sample (in a small group), then join other groups to discuss points awarded.
3. Peer evaluation (pair work) is implemented using the same indicator focus, and students tell their partner their comments.
4. Students contribute to a discussion forum in their online Learning Management System (Moodle) by answering:

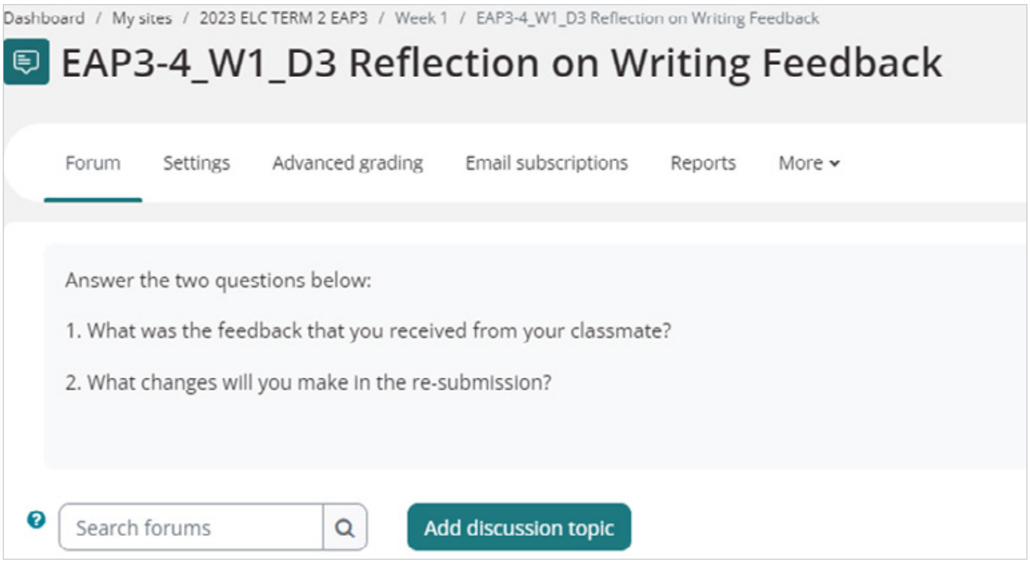
   a. What feedback did you receive from your classmates?
   b. What changes will you be making in the resubmission?

5. Students improve and resubmit their writing.

Data collection

We had three sources of data, initially, for this research. Firstly, we recorded our reflections after each class, with a specific focus on student participation in the Feedback Session, to understand student engagement with the assessment rubric and peer feedback.

We also reviewed the students' Forum Posts (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3). Directly after the peer feedback discussions, students posted the feedback they had received from their classmate and reported the changes they would make in the resubmission of their essay (see Figure 1). The first question encouraged students to listen to the opinions and suggestions of their peers. The second question encouraged students to reflect critically on how they would improve their essay. The Forum is an online feature in the Learning Management System:


Dashboard / My sites / 2023 ELC TERM 2 EAP3 / Week 1 / EAP3-4_W1_D3 Reflection on Writing Feedback
Forum
Settings
Advanced grading
Email subscriptions
Reports
More
Search forums
Add discussion topic

EAP3-4_W1_D3 Reflection on Writing Feedback

Answer the two questions below:

1. What was the feedback that you received from your classmate?
2. What changes will you make in the re-submission?

Figure 1: Forum Post questions in the Learning Management System Moodle

Another source of data for this AR is the student writing submissions (see Appendix 4) and resubmissions. Students were required to resubmit an improved essay after the Feedback Session. During the 10-week class, students submitted nine essays – one essay per week (the Week 10 essay was their Exit Writing Test), and we anticipated they would resubmit nine improved essays. Each week, the original submission was compared to the resubmission to see whether students were implementing the feedback they received from their classmates.

Findings: Cycle 1 (Weeks 1–5)

1. Feedback Session observations

Initially, engagement in the Feedback Session was mostly subdued, with students giving brief and agreeable comments, and refraining from criticism. Three of the 14 students actively engaged in the process. As Cycle 1 progressed, about half of the students participated more actively, asking relevant questions, and providing critical evaluations of the sample.

2. Forum Posting

Forum participation was notably low with only 6/12 and 6/9 posting in the first two weeks respectively, but as we integrated forum activities into class time, the numbers increased, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Quantity of Forum Posts

Week	Number of students who participated in the forum (of students in attendance)
1	6/12
2	6/9
3	10/13
4	9/9
5	10/13

While the quantity of Forum Posts started low, the quality was good. Those students posting reflected a good understanding of the process. From Week 1 of the AR, students made relevant comments (see samples below).

> *'When my classmate read my two paragraphs, he said topic sentences did not answer the question.'*
>
> *'She said my topic sentence answered the questions. However, my information and ideas just talk about the negative influence rather than globalization. That is the place I need to improve.'*
>
> *'My partner said that the structure of my article is clear and the content is good, with main sentences, sub-arguments and some examples, but I use some less connected words and some words are used not properly.'*

By Week 5, posts regularly detailed areas for improvement, an increased understanding of task requirements and confidence in giving and receiving feedback (see samples from this week below).

> *'My partner said my structure was good, because my thesis sentence was strong, I had topic sentense (sic) in each body paragraph and I can use revelant (sic)ideas to support my topic sentence. Furthermore, she said my ideas were correct and relevant but she don't know whether I can use questions in the essay? Finally, I still had some spelling mistakes and grammar errors in my essay that I need to correct.'*

> *'I got a lot of feedback from my partner. My article is good overall, but it also has some shortcomings. For example, I should not have put "This essay talks about" in the first paragraph. This is a mistake. Second, I should add 'in conclusion' to my last paragraph to make it look like a conclusion. It would look like a normal paragraph if I didn't add it. I can also add my connectives.'*

3. Student submissions

Surprisingly, in spite of the good quality and growing quantity of posting in the Forum, fewer than half of the students (20 out of 43) made improvements in their resubmission during Cycle 1 Weeks 1–5 (see Table 2).

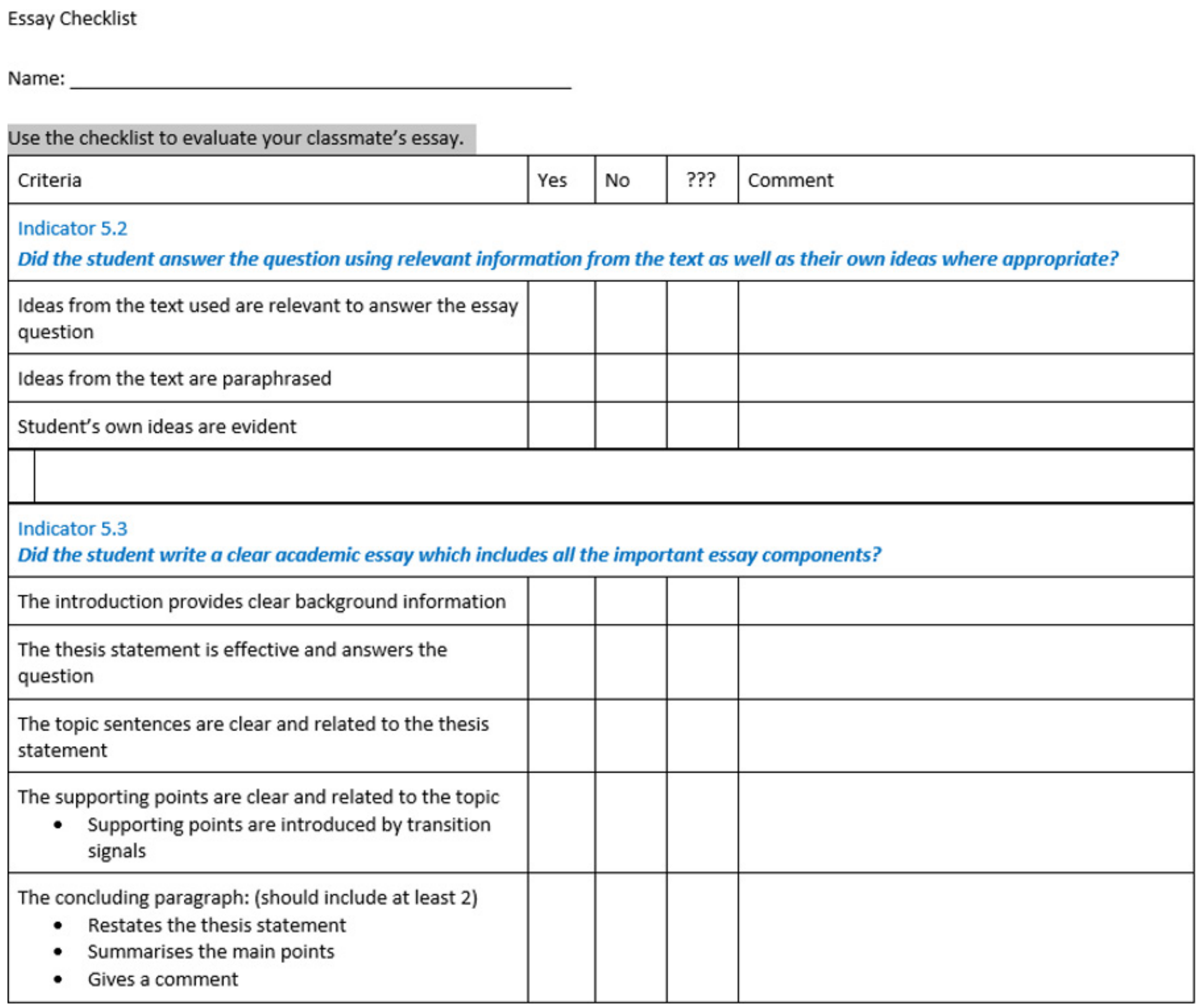
Table 2: Student Submission Cycle I Weeks I–5

Week	First submission	Resubmission	With improvements
1	10	8	2
2	12	12	3
3	13	8	5
4	7	7	5
5	13	8	5
Total (Weeks 1–5)	55	43	20

Cycle 2: Additional interventions

From our review of Cycle 1 (the first five weeks), the standout finding was the low number of improved resubmissions. Although students were engaging in the Feedback Session and the Forum Posting, they were not resubmitting their writing with the insights provided in the former. Given this, we added two further interventions in the second cycle (Weeks 6–9): Small Group Discussions about the Feedback Sessions and a Checklist to assist giving feedback. The Small Group Discussions prompted students to discuss their experience and expectations of the Feedback Sessions in a safe environment (see Appendix 5). We grouped students according to linguistic background or friendship group to maximise student comfort. The class of 14 was divided into three groups. The student discussions were audio-visually recorded. The teacher provided discussion prompts, and left students to discuss for 20 minutes.

The Checklist (Figure 2) corresponded to the Assessment Rubric, providing scaffolding for student use in the peer feedback discussion.



Essay Checklist

Name: ____

Use the checklist to evaluate your classmate's essay.

Criteria	Yes	No	???	Comment
Indicator 5.2 ***Did the student answer the question using relevant information from the text as well as their own ideas where appropriate?***				
Ideas from the text used are relevant to answer the essay question				
Ideas from the text are paraphrased				
Student's own ideas are evident				
Indicator 5.3 ***Did the student write a clear academic essay which includes all the important essay components?***				
The introduction provides clear background information				
The thesis statement is effective and answers the question				
The topic sentences are clear and related to the thesis statement				
The supporting points are clear and related to the topic • Supporting points are introduced by transition signals				
The concluding paragraph: (should include at least 2) • Restates the thesis statement • Summarises the main points • Gives a comment				

Figure 2: Checklist introduced in Cycle 2 to support the peer feedback discussions

Findings: Cycle 2 (Weeks 6–9)

I. Small Group Discussions

Week 6 discussions showed that, as a group, students understood the process; however, they overwhelmingly expressed that peer feedback was difficult. Students said they did not understand each other:

> *'Well, we don't have the same level of English and the different actions (accents) and different understanding of the questions.'*
>
> *'I can't copy because they have accents that I can't (under)stand.'*
>
> *'Yeah, I am not understanding this accent, and this extent I do not understand. That is sometimes complicated, but that's true.'*
>
> *'But sometimes I say, sorry I can't understand. And it is because again I can't understand, too. We have to give all of them a good marks.'*

Students also shared their concerns that, as students, they were not equipped to evaluate each other's work:

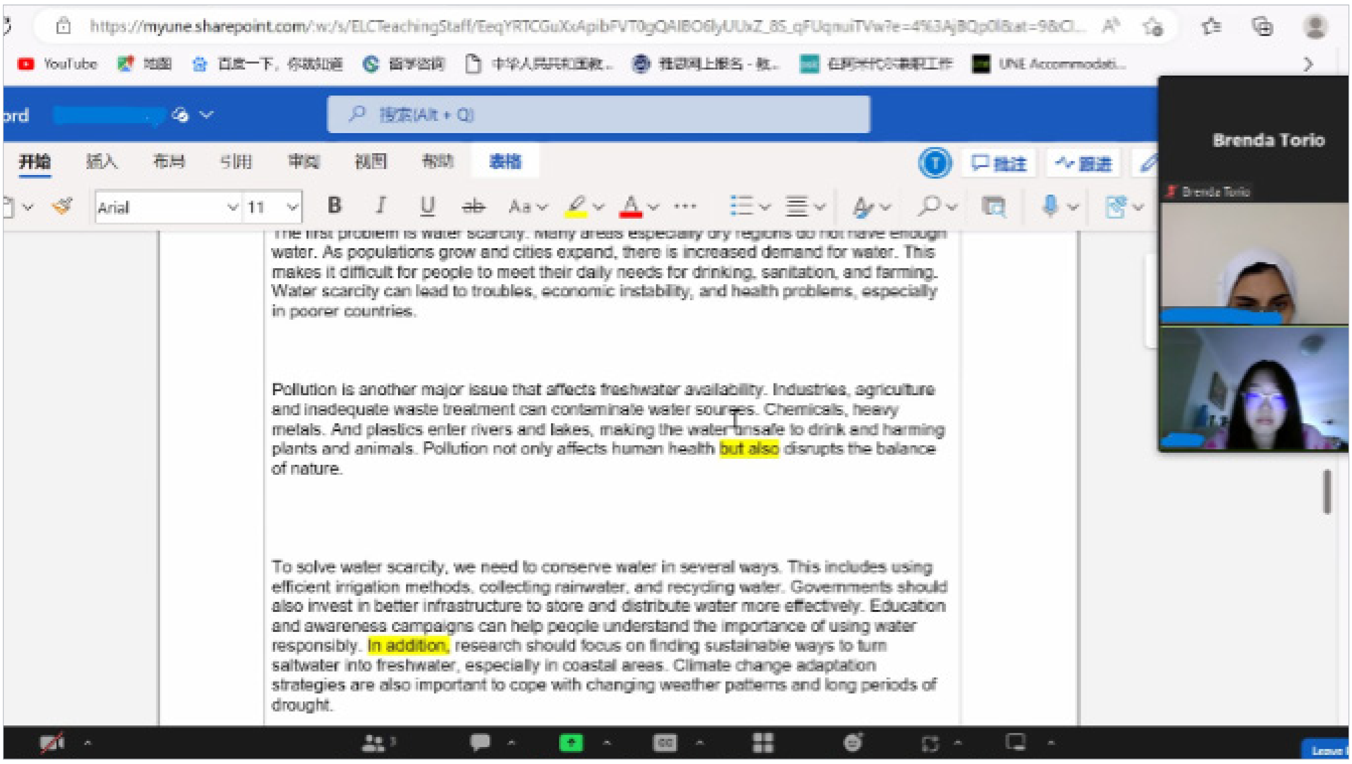
> *'Our classmates cannot evaluate our essay because we are in the same.'*
>
> *'They cannot evaluate their own, so how can they evaluate ours?'*
>
> *'It is more important to give feedback from teachers rather than students.'*
>
> *'We are all in the same phase.'*
>
> *'Yeah. In the resubmissions we haven't improve our essay.'*
>
> *'Because I don't know how to improve this essay, so I don't know I haven't understand. The teacher said so. We don't know how to give others the suggestion.'*
>
> *'So give the feedback, but he not exactly express the how, what to ..., but he is not expressed the how to way.'*

The Week 6 Small Group Discussion expressed a lack of confidence in the process due to an inability to understand their peers and to assess student work. However, three weeks later, a shift occurred. In the Week 9 Small Group Discussions, students spoke very positively of their experience with feedback in general and with peer feedback. Students frequently commented that this helped improve their resubmissions and know their mistakes. The extract below from one of the Week 9 Small Group Discussions also shows a change in student appreciation for feedback and its importance in their improvement.

> *'I think we don't really take that much serious about the feedback, but now, we are taking seriously and doing the submissions or reading the feedback very properly.'*
>
> *'Hmm, okay. For me also, experience is good by taking feedback from others and teachers, improved a lot special in writing and everything. And it's so that I have to improve this and improve my mistakes while doing anything, any subject, any concept. So, I think my experience is good. What about you?'*
>
> *'Looking at feedback, we are able to improve our mistakes, and as we, as we are able to learn something new.'*
>
> *'I think the friend's feedback is also important because they also have to know the mistakes of our paragraph, or any and help them to correct or analyse them.'*
>
> *'I think the classmate's feedback is also important.'*

2. Feedback Session Observations

In spite of the concerns expressed in Week 6 Discussions, during the second cycle, we observed a significant increase in student engagement in the Feedback Sessions. Although peer feedback was frequently delivered online in a breakout room, students became used to sharing screens and highlighting shared documents for discussion purposes (see Figures 3 and 4 below).

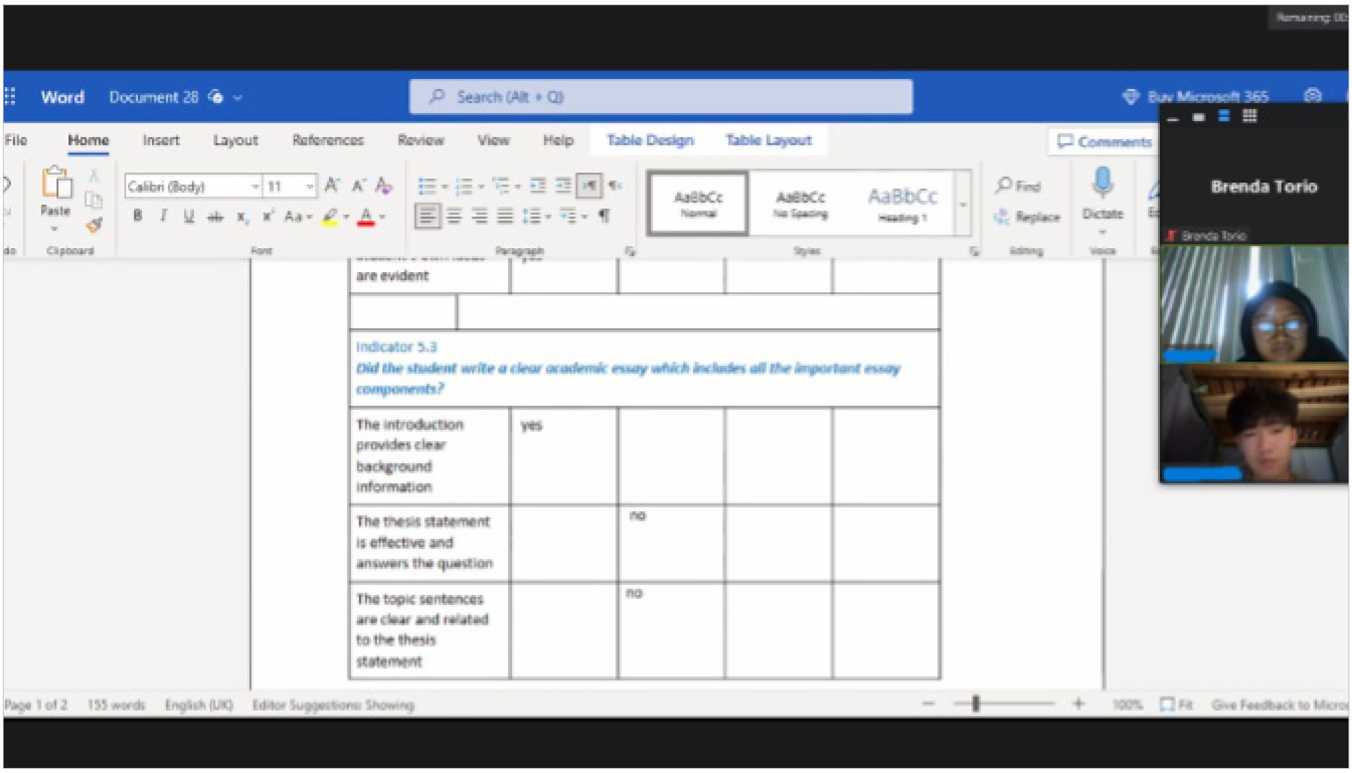


The first problem is water scarcity. Many areas especially dry regions do not have enough water. As populations grow and cities expand, there is increased demand for water. This makes it difficult for people to meet their daily needs for drinking, sanitation, and farming. Water scarcity can lead to troubles, economic instability, and health problems, especially in poorer countries.

Pollution is another major issue that affects freshwater availability. Industries, agriculture and inadequate waste treatment can contaminate water sources. Chemicals, heavy metals. And plastics enter rivers and lakes, making the water unsafe to drink and harming plants and animals. Pollution not only affects human health but also disrupts the balance of nature.

To solve water scarcity, we need to conserve water in several ways. This includes using efficient irrigation methods, collecting rainwater, and recycling water. Governments should also invest in better infrastructure to store and distribute water more effectively. Education and awareness campaigns can help people understand the importance of using water responsibly. In addition, research should focus on finding sustainable ways to turn saltwater into freshwater, especially in coastal areas. Climate change adaptation strategies are also important to cope with changing weather patterns and long periods of drought.

Figure 3: Two students in a breakout room discussing their essays using a shared screen



are evident				
Indicator 5.3 *Did the student write a clear academic essay which includes all the important essay components?*				
The introduction provides clear background information	yes			
The thesis statement is effective and answers the question		no		
The topic sentences are clear and related to the thesis statement		no		

Figure 4: Two students in a breakout room using the Checklist in the peer feedback discussion. Students were equally comfortable using the Checklist in their online peer feedback discussions.

3. Forum Posting

Additionally, Forum Posting in Cycle 2 continued to increase with almost 100% of students posting (see Table 3).

Table 3: Quantity of Forum Posts

Week	Number of students who participated in forum
6	11/12
7	10/10
8	8/9
9	11/11

The quality of peer feedback as expressed in Forum Posting continued to show productive engagement in the process as per these examples of students debating the strengths and weaknesses of their writing, and showing appreciation for their partner's feedback:

> *'My classmate, she said I have good structure and good signal words. Also we have argument about some sentence in paragraph 3 and I give her more explanation regarding my idea.' (Week 6)*
>
> *'My classmate prefers a structure with three body paragraphs, each addressing both problems and solutions. However, I prefer a different approach, where one paragraph focuses on problems and another paragraph focuses on solutions. She also recommended to add more linking words to improve my writing.' (Week 8)*
>
> *'My partner said I should have variety signal words in my topic sentences. And also I should change my thesis statement, because it looks more like an announcement.' (Week 6)*
>
> *'I followed my partner's feedback, which makes my essay more fluently, thanks to my partner.' (Week 6)*

4. Student Submissions

During Weeks 6–9, there was a significant turn-around in the number of resubmitted improved essays (see Table 4). Of the 40 first submissions, 39 were resubmitted with significant improvement. When compared to Cycle 1 (20 out of 43), this was very pleasing.

Table 4: Student Submission (Weeks 6–9)

Week	First submission	Resubmission	With improvements
6	11	11	11
7	10	10	10
8	8	8	8
9	11	10	10
Total (Weeks 6–9)	40	39	39

5. Checklist

In Week 9, we also asked students to comment on their use of the Checklist and to explain why it was 'easier.' Students made various comments on the checklist:

> *'Yes, it is very easy to give feedback using the checklist because all the criteria are already mention in the checklist and we have to only focus on that criteria and give feedback to our classmates.'*
>
> *'It can easily let me know my shortcomings and my strengths.'*
>
> *'Because we can know our problems clear.'*
>
> *'It is easy for me because I know how to common (comment) myself and my classmate's essay.'*
>
> *'It is easier because we can address the problem directly and to comment on the text is more easier.'*
>
> *'It is easier to give feedback using the checklist because it helps to find if the structure of essay is correct or not or if there are errors or not.'*

Conclusions

We wanted to test whether peer feedback and a structured Feedback Session would produce a more effective feedback process. Our vision of students discussing their work using the marking criteria in the rubric was realized over time. We learned that scaffolding, peer feedback activities and opportunities to reflect improved the feedback process and enabled students to engage with the assessment rubric. We found scaffolding particularly critical: the regular, structured feedback session (feedback modelling, guided feedback, peer feedback and reporting to the Forum) supported the students' ability to genuinely engage.

A key component of the scaffolding was the Checklist aligned with the rubric. This facilitated student engagement by providing a clear framework for offering feedback and suggestions for improvement. We had resisted re-imagining the assessment rubric into a checklist (given university students are increasingly required to work from a rubric), but its introduction to the peer feedback activity dramatically improved student engagement. We have concluded that their engagement with the Checklist was a realistic step to engaging with the assessment rubric.

Our students' acceptance of feedback as a learning tool grew over the nine weeks. This reminds us that giving and receiving feedback is challenging for most people. Our Feedback Session required students to be involved in peer- and self-assessment. This can be personally and culturally challenging. Therefore, modelling feedback as a learning opportunity and supporting students to value peer feedback are vital elements.

Through the Small Group Discussions, we discovered the challenge and unease many students felt providing peer feedback. It was however, through these discussions that understanding, acceptance and even appreciation of peer feedback developed. Thus, providing opportunities to reflect on peer feedback with others was an important part of the learning.

Beyond this learning, we are also closer to achieving our original aim of providing effective feedback. The Feedback Sessions provide a vehicle for engaging with the assessment rubric criteria: students were evaluating and communicating their evaluations. They were receiving peer evaluation verbally then recording these evaluations in writing. Then they were responding to these evaluations by stating their intended improvements and resubmitting their improved work. These actions constitute good examples of rubric engagement, and skills for giving and receiving feedback.

Finally, the AR has helped us grow our appreciation of the role of peer feedback. At the start of our journey, we viewed peer feedback as one of many tools for engaging students with our assessment rubric. Now we are more inclined to see a good Feedback Session as one in which the peer feedback discussion sits more centrally in the learning process and the teacher's unpacking of the rubric; the feedback modelling and Checklist simply set the stage.

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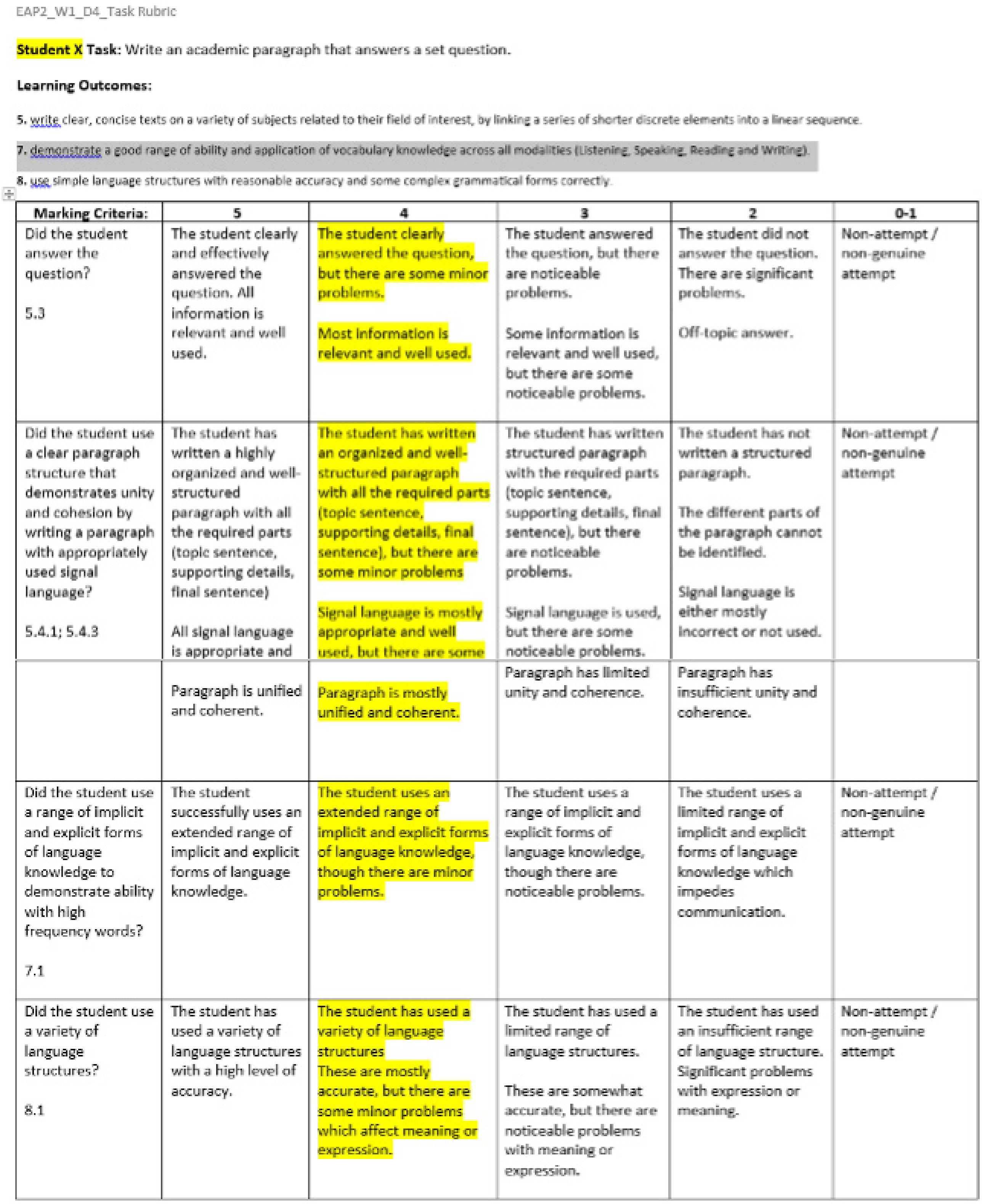
Appendix I: Sample Teacher Feedback



EAP2_W1_D4_Task Rubric

Student X Task: Write an academic paragraph that answers a set question.

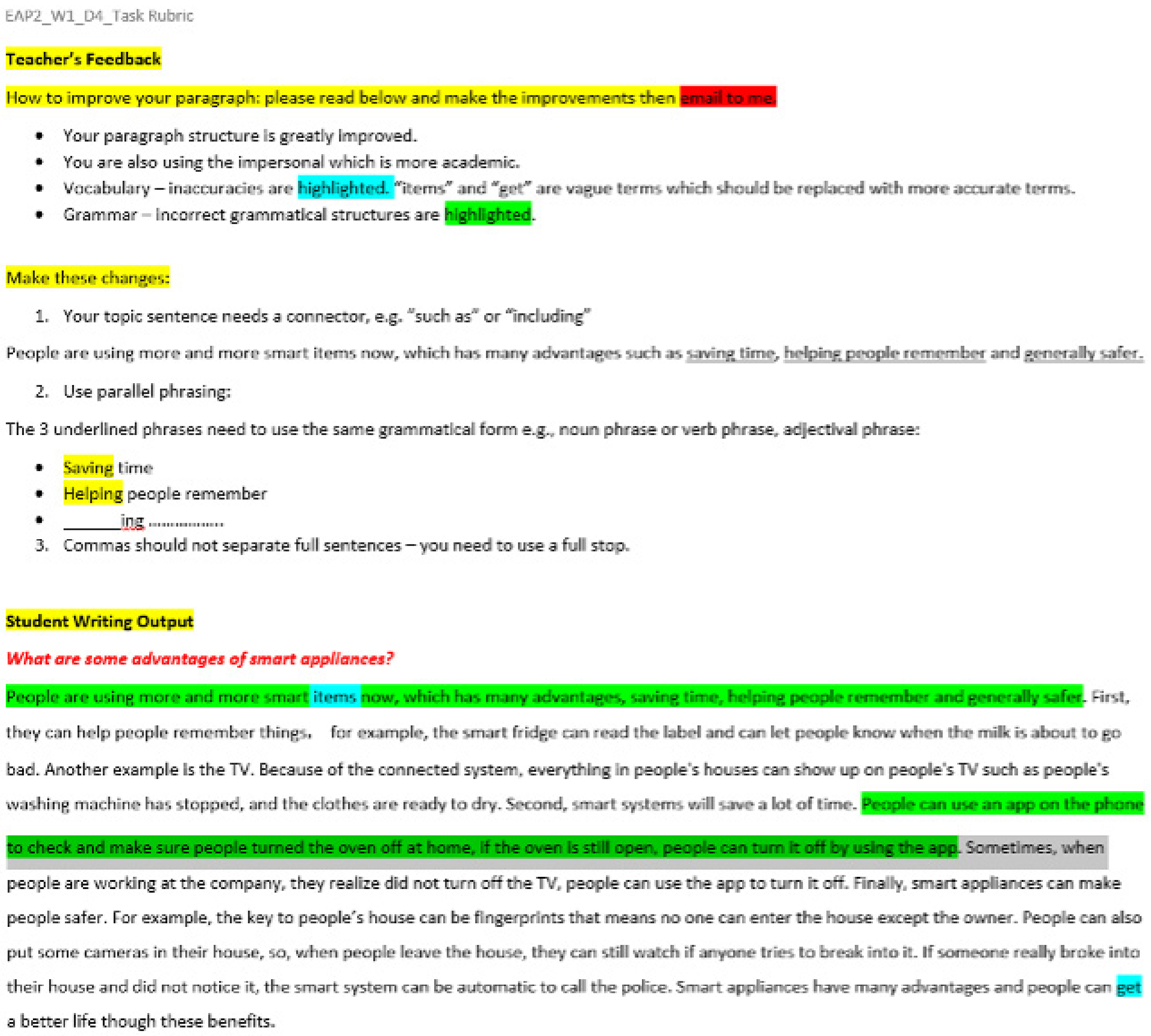
Learning Outcomes:

5. write clear, concise texts on a variety of subjects related to their field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.

7. demonstrate a good range of ability and application of vocabulary knowledge across all modalities (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing).

8. use simple language structures with reasonable accuracy and some complex grammatical forms correctly.

Marking Criteria:	5	4	3	2	0-1
Did the student answer the question? 5.3	The student clearly and effectively answered the question. All information is relevant and well used.	The student clearly answered the question, but there are some minor problems. Most information is relevant and well used.	The student answered the question, but there are noticeable problems. Some information is relevant and well used, but there are some noticeable problems.	The student did not answer the question. There are significant problems. Off-topic answer.	Non-attempt / non-genuine attempt
Did the student use a clear paragraph structure that demonstrates unity and cohesion by writing a paragraph with appropriately used signal language? 5.4.1; 5.4.3	The student has written a highly organized and well-structured paragraph with all the required parts (topic sentence, supporting details, final sentence) All signal language is appropriate and	The student has written an organized and well-structured paragraph with all the required parts (topic sentence, supporting details, final sentence), but there are some minor problems Signal language is mostly appropriate and well used, but there are some	The student has written structured paragraph with the required parts (topic sentence, supporting details, final sentence), but there are noticeable problems. Signal language is used, but there are some noticeable problems.	The student has not written a structured paragraph. The different parts of the paragraph cannot be identified. Signal language is either mostly incorrect or not used.	Non-attempt / non-genuine attempt
	Paragraph is unified and coherent.	Paragraph is mostly unified and coherent.	Paragraph has limited unity and coherence.	Paragraph has insufficient unity and coherence.	
Did the student use a range of implicit and explicit forms of language knowledge to demonstrate ability with high frequency words? 7.1	The student successfully uses an extended range of implicit and explicit forms of language knowledge.	The student uses an extended range of implicit and explicit forms of language knowledge, though there are minor problems.	The student uses a range of implicit and explicit forms of language knowledge, though there are noticeable problems.	The student uses a limited range of implicit and explicit forms of language knowledge which impedes communication.	Non-attempt / non-genuine attempt
Did the student use a variety of language structures? 8.1	The student has used a variety of language structures with a high level of accuracy.	The student has used a variety of language structures These are mostly accurate, but there are some minor problems which affect meaning or expression.	The student has used a limited range of language structures. These are somewhat accurate, but there are noticeable problems with meaning or expression.	The student has used an insufficient range of language structure. Significant problems with expression or meaning.	Non-attempt / non-genuine attempt



EAP2_W1_D4_Task Rubric

Teacher's Feedback

How to improve your paragraph: please read below and make the improvements then email to me.

- Your paragraph structure is greatly improved.
- You are also using the impersonal which is more academic.
- Vocabulary – inaccuracies are highlighted. "items" and "get" are vague terms which should be replaced with more accurate terms.
- Grammar – Incorrect grammatical structures are highlighted.

Make these changes:

1. Your topic sentence needs a connector, e.g. "such as" or "including"

People are using more and more smart items now, which has many advantages such as saving time, helping people remember and generally safer.

2. Use parallel phrasing:

The 3 underlined phrases need to use the same grammatical form e.g., noun phrase or verb phrase, adjectival phrase:

- Saving time
- Helping people remember
- _______ing ……………

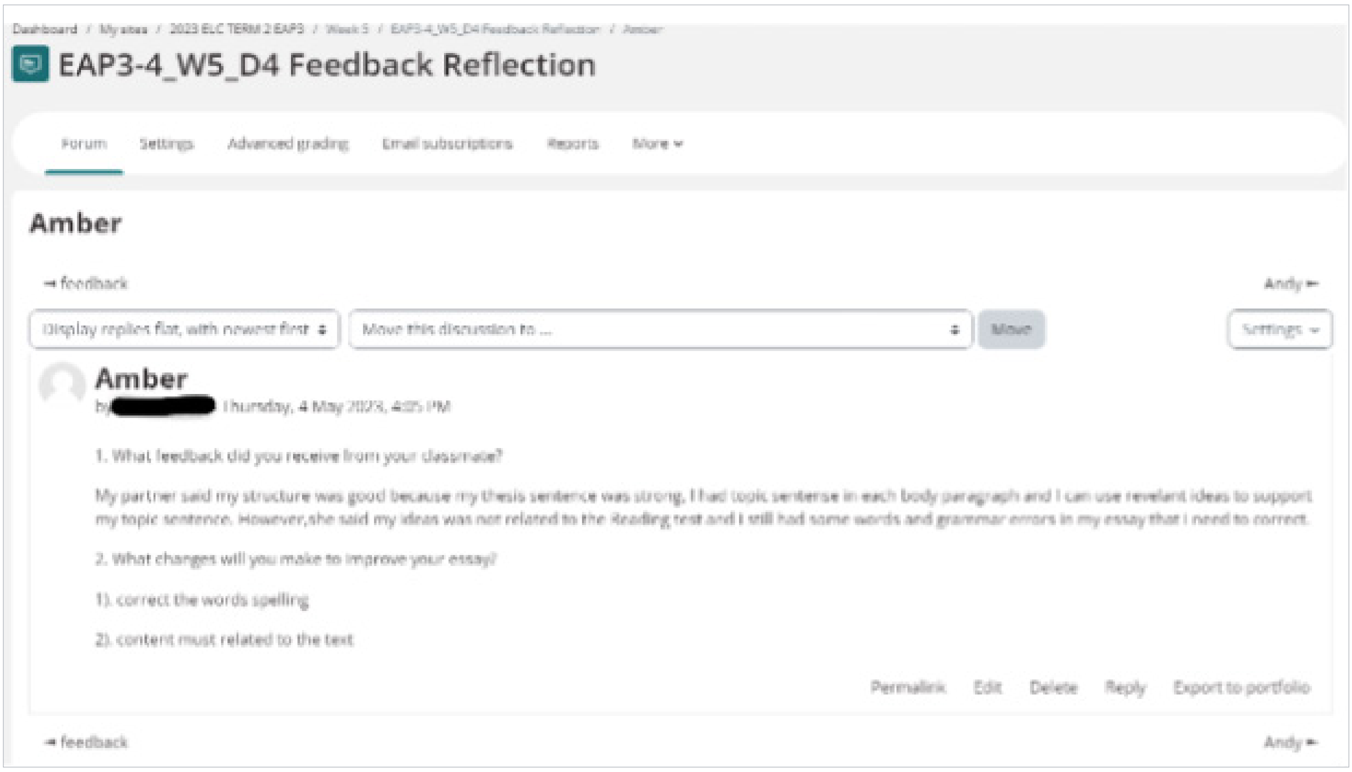
3. Commas should not separate full sentences – you need to use a full stop.

Student Writing Output

What are some advantages of smart appliances?

People are using more and more smart items now, which has many advantages, saving time, helping people remember and generally safer. First, they can help people remember things. for example, the smart fridge can read the label and can let people know when the milk is about to go bad. Another example is the TV. Because of the connected system, everything in people's houses can show up on people's TV such as people's washing machine has stopped, and the clothes are ready to dry. Second, smart systems will save a lot of time. People can use an app on the phone to check and make sure people turned the oven off at home, if the oven is still open, people can turn it off by using the app. Sometimes, when people are working at the company, they realize did not turn off the TV, people can use the app to turn it off. Finally, smart appliances can make people safer. For example, the key to people's house can be fingerprints that means no one can enter the house except the owner. People can also put some cameras in their house, so, when people leave the house, they can still watch if anyone tries to break into it. If someone really broke into their house and did not notice it, the smart system can be automatic to call the police. Smart appliances have many advantages and people can get a better life though these benefits.

Appendix 2: Sample Forum Post Week 5


Dashboard / My sites / 2023 ELC TERM 2 EAP3 / Week 5 / EAP3-4_W5_D4 Feedback Reflection / Amber
EAP3-4_W5_D4 Feedback Reflection
Forum
Settings
Advanced grading
Email subscriptions
Reports
More
Amber
feedback
Andy
Display replies flat, with newest first
Move this discussion to ...
Move
Settings
Permalink
Edit
Delete
Reply
Export to portfolio
feedback
Andy

Amber

by [redacted] Thursday, 4 May 2023, 4:05 PM

1. What feedback did you receive from your classmate?

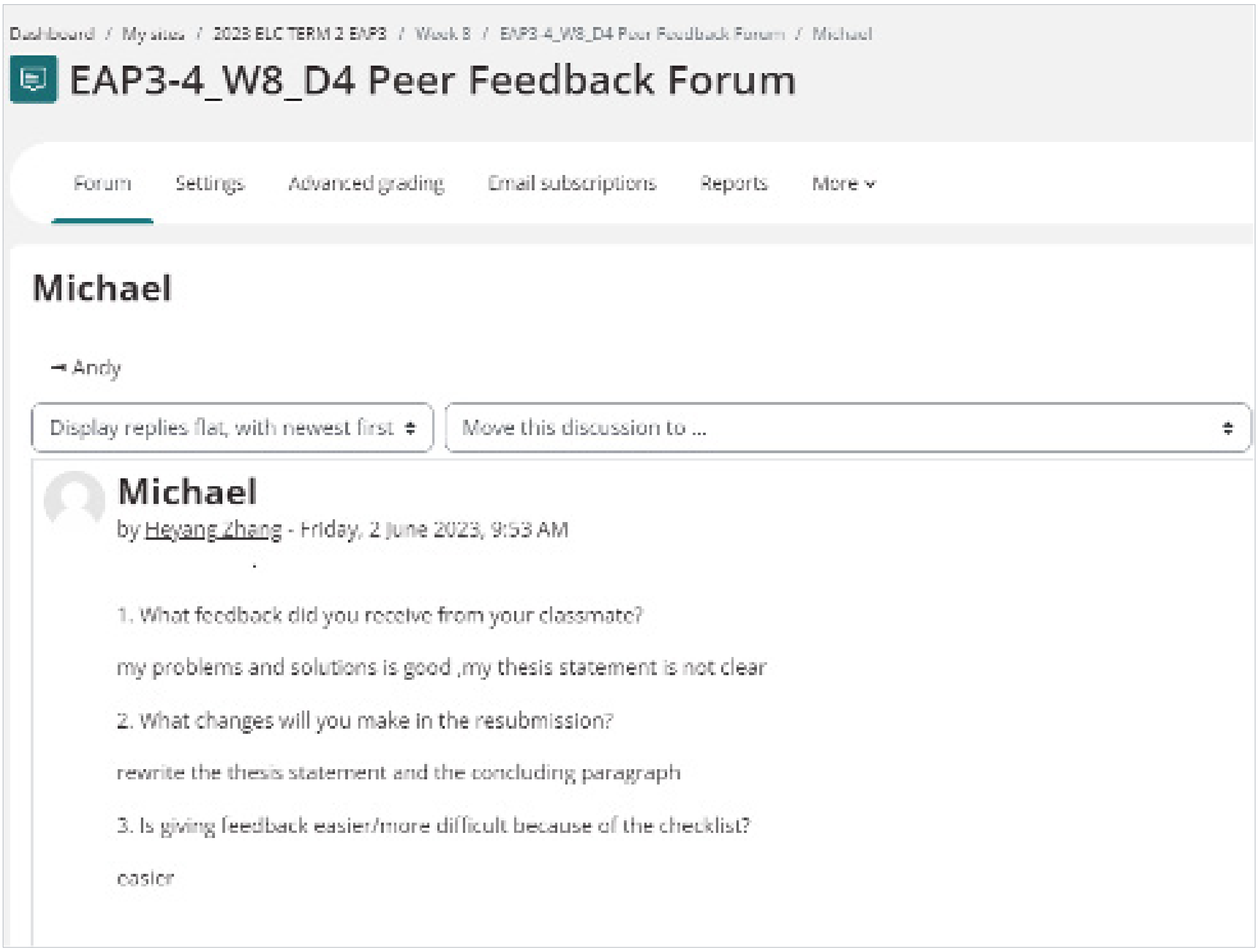
My partner said my structure was good because my thesis sentence was strong, I had topic senterse in each body paragraph and I can use revelant ideas to support my topic sentence. However,she said my ideas was not related to the Reading text and I still had some words and grammar errors in my essay that I need to correct.

2. What changes will you make to improve your essay?

1). correct the words spelling

2). content must related to the text

Appendix 3: Sample Forum Post Week 8


Dashboard / My sites / 2023 ELC TERM 2 EAP3 / Week 8 / EAP3-4_W8_D4 Peer Feedback Forum / Michael
EAP3-4_W8_D4 Peer Feedback Forum
Forum
Settings
Advanced grading
Email subscriptions
Reports
More
Michael
Andy
Display replies flat, with newest first
Move this discussion to ...

Michael

by Heyang Zhang - Friday, 2 June 2023, 9:53 AM

1. What feedback did you receive from your classmate?

my problems and solutions is good ,my thesis statement is not clear

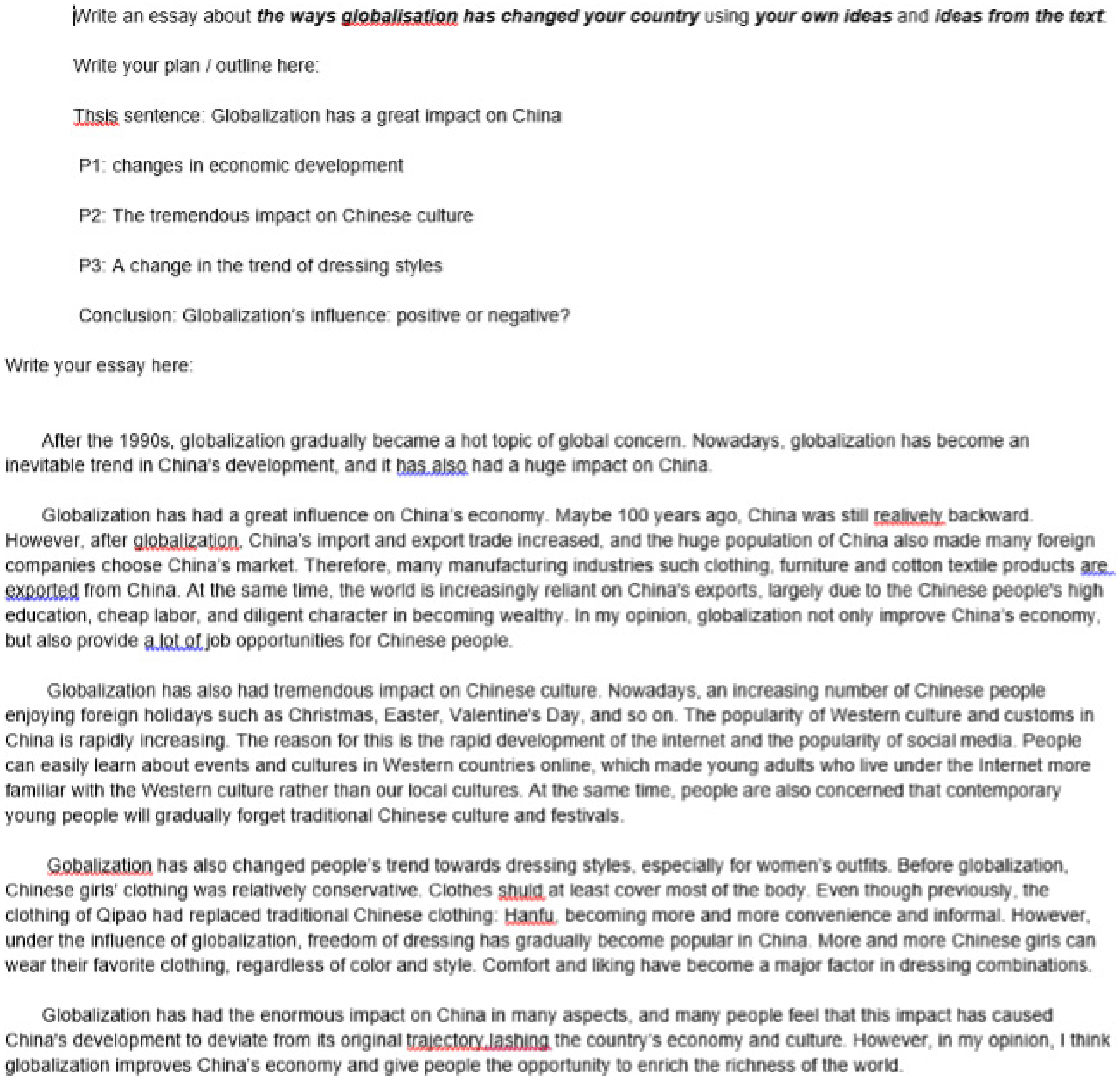
2. What changes will you make in the resubmission?

rewrite the thesis statement and the concluding paragraph

3. Is giving feedback easier/more difficult because of the checklist?

easier

Appendix 4: Sample Writing Task



Write an essay about ***the ways globalisation has changed your country*** using ***your own ideas*** and ***ideas from the text***.

Write your plan / outline here:

Thsis sentence: Globalization has a great impact on China

P1: changes in economic development

P2: The tremendous impact on Chinese culture

P3: A change in the trend of dressing styles

Conclusion: Globalization's influence: positive or negative?

Write your essay here:

After the 1990s, globalization gradually became a hot topic of global concern. Nowadays, globalization has become an inevitable trend in China's development, and it has also had a huge impact on China.

Globalization has had a great influence on China's economy. Maybe 100 years ago, China was still realively backward. However, after globalization, China's import and export trade increased, and the huge population of China also made many foreign companies choose China's market. Therefore, many manufacturing industries such clothing, furniture and cotton textile products are exported from China. At the same time, the world is increasingly reliant on China's exports, largely due to the Chinese people's high education, cheap labor, and diligent character in becoming wealthy. In my opinion, globalization not only improve China's economy, but also provide a lot of job opportunities for Chinese people.

Globalization has also had tremendous impact on Chinese culture. Nowadays, an increasing number of Chinese people enjoying foreign holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, and so on. The popularity of Western culture and customs in China is rapidly increasing. The reason for this is the rapid development of the internet and the popularity of social media. People can easily learn about events and cultures in Western countries online, which made young adults who live under the Internet more familiar with the Western culture rather than our local cultures. At the same time, people are also concerned that contemporary young people will gradually forget traditional Chinese culture and festivals.

Gobalization has also changed people's trend towards dressing styles, especially for women's outfits. Before globalization, Chinese girls' clothing was relatively conservative. Clothes shuld at least cover most of the body. Even though previously, the clothing of Qipao had replaced traditional Chinese clothing: Hanfu, becoming more and more convenience and informal. However, under the influence of globalization, freedom of dressing has gradually become popular in China. More and more Chinese girls can wear their favorite clothing, regardless of color and style. Comfort and liking have become a major factor in dressing combinations.

Globalization has had the enormous impact on China in many aspects, and many people feel that this impact has caused China's development to deviate from its original trajectory,lashing the country's economy and culture. However, in my opinion, I think globalization improves China's economy and give people the opportunity to enrich the richness of the world.

Enhancing student feedback literacy through peer feedback

Vicky Chang, Central Queensland University, Melbourne

Introduction

The concept and implementation of student-centred teaching and learning can be seen throughout English as an Additional Language (EAL) education. However, student-focused feedback in both EAL research and practice has not developed at a similar pace (Lee 2017). More recent EAL research has begun to emphasise the significance of EAL learners' roles in feedback processes (Han and Xu 2020, Lee 2017). These studies have drawn upon frameworks and findings from emerging research in higher education.

In higher education, Carless and Boud (2018:1,316) define student feedback literacy as 'the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies' to discuss students' ability or inability to negotiate with feedback. They proposed a student feedback literacy framework to emphasise the importance of students' responsibility to engage in feedback (see Figure 1). Developing students' peer reviewing proficiencies aligns with this framework, as it fosters the acquisition of skills necessary for each dimension (Han and Xu 2020). Engaging in peer reviewing allows students to enhance their feedback appreciation, sharpen evaluative judgement, manage emotions, and take effective actions for continuous improvement. This integration strengthens students' capacity to employ feedback from various sources, aligning with Carless and Boud's call for ownership of learning, thereby completing the feedback cycle.

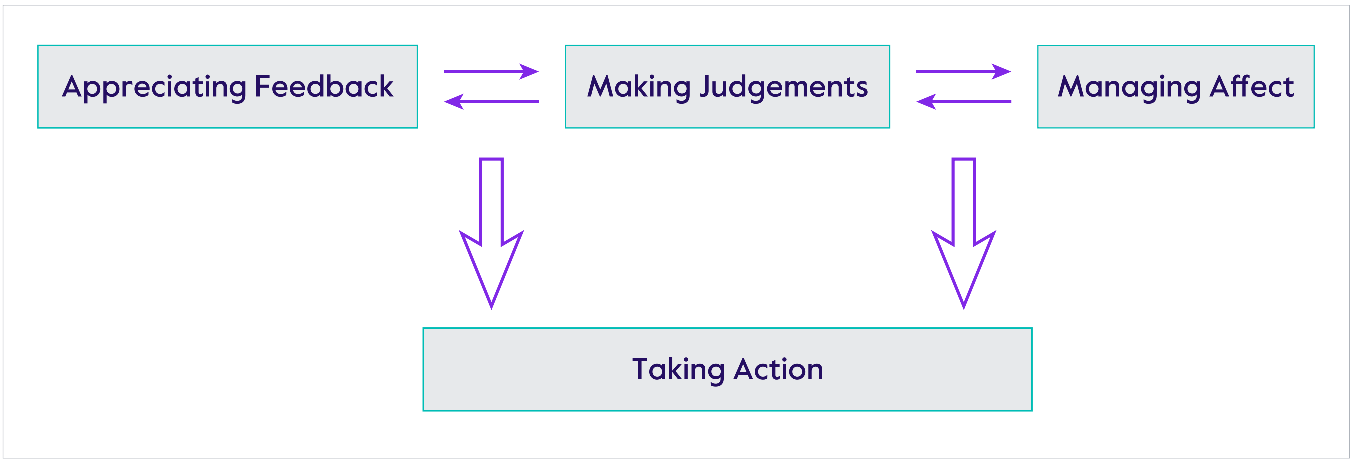


Figure 1: The features of student feedback literacy (Carless and Boud 2018:1,319)

Research question

In order to explore the relationship between student feedback literacy and peer feedback training, I proposed the following research question (RQ) for my action research (AR):

In what ways could features of student feedback literacy be enhanced through multiple engagements of peer reviewing?

Research context and participants

Conducted at Central Queensland University's (CQU) Melbourne campus, this study was carried out within an English for Academic Purposes 2 (EAP2) course. Spanning 10 weeks and comprising a variety of writing activities, the course was designed as a pathway to access Bachelor's or Master's programs at CQU. As a part of the learning outcome, students underwent assessment via two argumentative essays, mid-course and final, each comprising five paragraphs with a word range of 450 to 600. In addition, students were tasked with a 1,200-word research paper focused on problems and solutions, subject to teacher and peer evaluations and subsequent revisions for the final grade.

The EAP2 course had a total enrolment of 14 students, all of whom consented to participate in this study (see Figure 2). Around half of these students had progressed from EAP1, whereas the remaining half had recently come from overseas. Around two-thirds of them were pursuing Master's degrees, with the rest enrolled in Bachelor's programs. The students represented eight distinct Asian countries, with a majority from India. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the participants' demographic information.

Figure 2: Student participants and teacher

Research design and data collection

Through this research, I introduced an intervention to enhance students' engagement in peer reviews within the existing EAP2 course structure. The original course design included one peer review for the introductory paragraph of an argumentative essay in Week 6 and one for the draft of the research essay in Week 7. A peer review training session was also conducted in Week 7. Figure 3 illustrates the original course structure alongside the interventions. Elements of the original in-class essay activities are marked in blue, while components related to the original research essay are indicated in green. The interventions introduced as part of this research are highlighted in red.

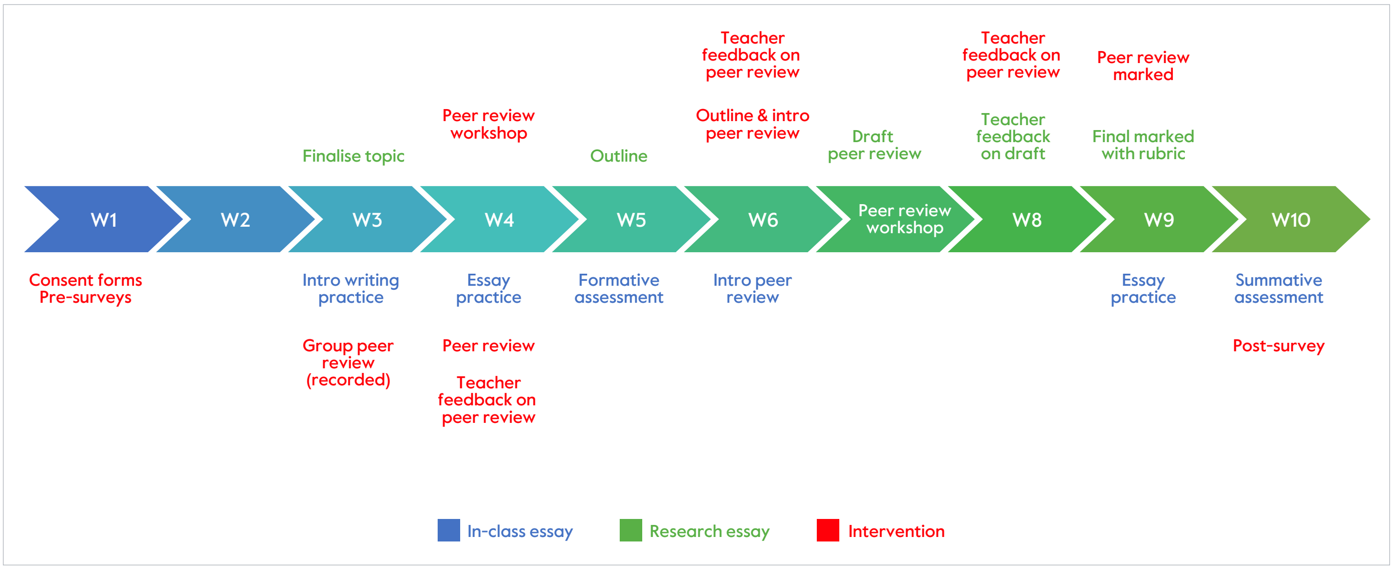

W1
Consent forms
Pre-surveys
W2
Finalise topic
W3
Intro writing practice
Group peer review (recorded)
Peer review workshop
W4
Essay practice
Peer review
Teacher feedback on peer review
Outline
W5
Formative assessment
Teacher feedback on peer review
Outline & intro peer review
W6
Intro peer review
Draft peer review
Peer review workshop
Teacher feedback on peer review
Teacher feedback on draft
W8
Peer review marked
Final marked with rubric
W9
Essay practice
W10
Summative assessment
Post-survey
🟦 In-class essay
🟩 Research essay
🟥 Intervention

Figure 3: Original course structure and the interventions

The intervention sought to introduce peer reviews at an earlier stage, incorporate more peer review practices, and provide guidance to ensure the quality of this type of feedback. To facilitate an earlier exposure, the peer review workshop was shifted from Week 7 to Week 4. During this workshop, students discussed the advantages and disadvantages of peer reviews and were equipped with necessary skills and etiquette for such reviewing. To provide students with more opportunities to practise peer reviewing, two extra sessions were introduced for the in-class essay, along with an additional session specifically dedicated to the research essay (see Figure 3). This increased students' exposure to peer reviews and allowed them to engage in more practices throughout the course. To enhance the formalisation of the peer review process and ensure its quality, all reviews were collected for teacher feedback. In addition, a grade was assigned to students' peer reviews of the draft research essay. This approach aimed to establish a structured and systematic evaluation of peer reviews, enabling students to receive constructive input from their peers as well as guidance and assessment from the teacher. All peer reviews during the course utilised guided worksheets, scaffolding students to provide feedback. Appendix 2 contains a sample worksheet and written comments on the research essay provided by student participant Aurora to Arthur.

I conducted a pre-survey at the beginning of the course to evaluate students' initial feedback literacy levels and gather their perspectives on peer reviews (see Appendix 3). After the 10-week intervention, I administered a post-survey to evaluate the extent of change in their literacy and perceptions (see Appendix 4).

To assess students' initial peer reviewing skills, I provided a peer reviewing worksheet with the session recorded and worksheet collected. This initial peer review took place before any specific instructions, allowing for an evaluation of students' original abilities in providing feedback. Similarly, the final peer review session in the course was also recorded and the materials collected, enabling me to make a comparison of students' peer reviewing skills after the 10-week intervention. This facilitated the observation of the intervention's effectiveness over the course duration. Appendix 5 shows all data collected and its affordance.

Research insights and findings

I. Shifting perspectives: Transformative views towards peer feedback

The investigation into students' prior encounters with peer reviewing in their native and targeted languages revealed that they were relatively novice to this practice. In their own language, a significant portion of students had engaged in peer reviewing fewer than five times, with a smaller fraction never having participated in such activities. This pattern extended to their experience with peer reviewing in English writing. Specifically, students who had attended the EAP1 course exhibited greater familiarity with peer reviewing compared to those who had recently joined from offshore. These findings collectively underscored the prevalence of limited prior experience in peer reviewing among the students, regardless of their language background.

A substantial finding that emerged from this study pertains to the students' self-confidence levels in offering peer feedback. A comparison of the pre- and post-survey shows that the intervention was very effective in boosting students' confidence in providing feedback to their peers. Before the intervention, not a single student reported feeling 'Very confident'. However, following the 10-week course, every participant expressed a sense of confidence, with all students categorising themselves as either 'Very confident' or 'Confident'. This was a notable shift among the 14 students, where 11 demonstrated a marked improvement in confidence during the course. Initially, confidence levels varied with none reporting feeling 'Very confident'; six students were 'Confident', seven students were 'Somewhat confident', and one student was 'Not confident at all' (see Figure 4). The post-intervention survey, however, revealed a dramatic change, with students unanimously reporting heightened confidence. Evidently, the peer review training played a critical role in empowering students to have increased belief in their own capabilities.

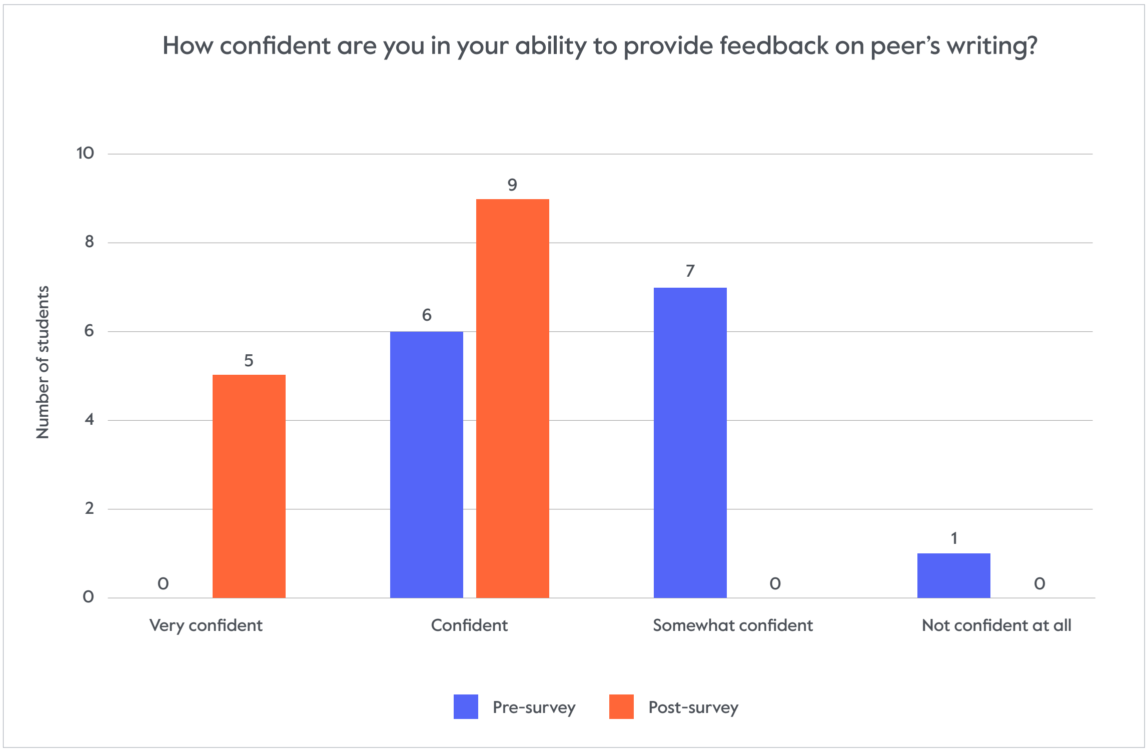


Figure 4: Student confidence levels in providing peer feedback before and after intervention

Another notable shift was in students' perceptions of the value of peer feedback. Initially, a minority of only three students regarded peer feedback as 'Very valuable', with the majority rating it as either 'Valuable' or 'Somewhat valuable' (see Figure 5). However, the post-survey revealed an elevated appreciation of peer feedback, with half of the students characterising it as 'Very valuable' and the other half as 'Valuable'. This shift signifies a meaningful enhancement in students' recognition of the significance of peer feedback in improving their writing skills.

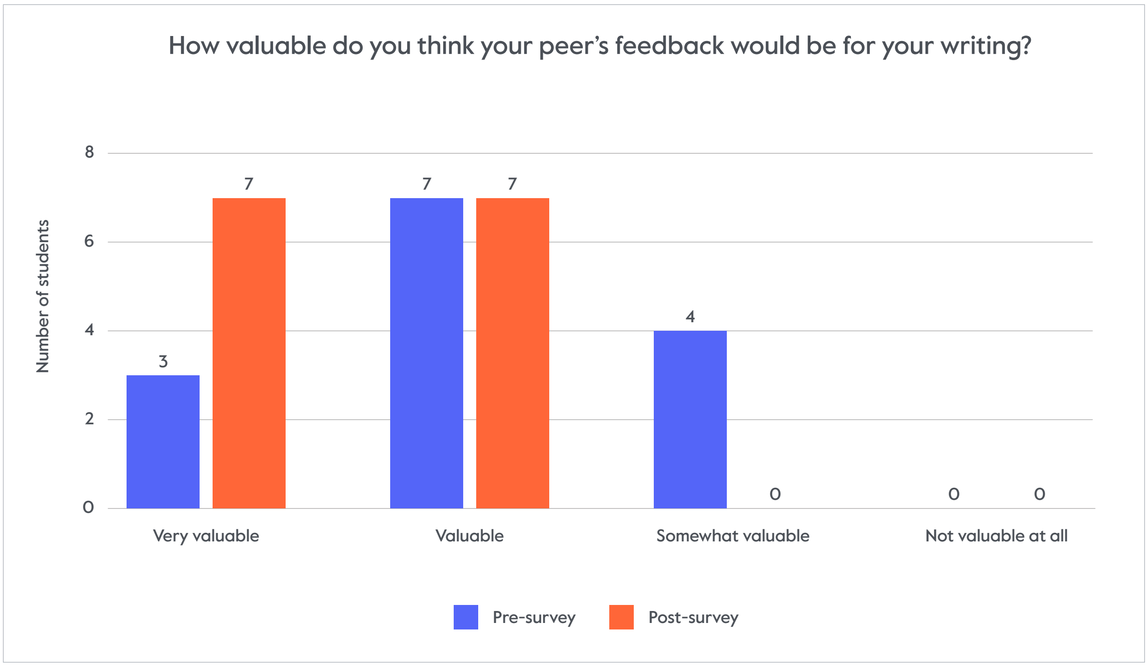


Figure 5: Perceived value of peer feedback before and after intervention

I. Developing peer review proficiency: evolution from initial to final practice

The analysis of students' initial and final group peer review sheets on in-class essay introductions offers valuable insights into the development of their peer feedback skills. During the initial peer review, students demonstrated their ability to check predefined boxes on the peer review sheet. However, when addressing the open-ended section designated for feedback provision, their responses were brief and limited to bullet-pointed suggestions, resulting in minimal peer feedback content. In contrast, a distinct transformation was evident in the introductory paragraph section of the final group peer review sheets for in-class essays. Not only did students offer a more substantial amount of feedback, but the suggestions also displayed a greater level of specificity aimed at assisting their peers in revising their writing. Table 1 presents a comparison between students' first and last attempts at providing peer feedback for open-ended items on the peer feedback form. Initially, 12 out of the 14 students engaged in the peer review and were organised into Groups 1, 2, and 3. In the final peer review, all students participated and were divided into Groups A, B, C, and D. Although the group compositions varied between the first and last reviews, the data indicates a significant improvement in both the quantity and quality of the peer feedback across these sessions.

Table I: Comparison of students' peer review responses for open-ended items

Initial peer review		**Final peer review**	
Open-ended item #1			
What are some strengths of this introduction?			
Group 1	Background and thesis statement	**Group A**	The strengths of the introduction is more complete from background info up to the thesis. However, the outlining sentence is not clearly grammatically correct and the outline parallel is not used.
Group 2	Closely selected	**Group B**	• Have the strong background information • Try to make parallel outlined sentence
Group 3	Outline	**Group C**	• Lead in is good • Thesis statement is good
		Group D	• Clear outline sentences
Open-ended item #2			
What are some parts that could be further developed for this introduction?			
Group 1	Clear lead-in statement	**Group A**	Can write the whole word so that audience understand clearly the words
Group 2	N/A	**Group B**	• Need to clear lead-in and thesis statement • Need to add more idea
Group 3	• Introduction • More specific about the topic	**Group C**	• Background • Outline not match thesis
		Group D	• Need background, thesis statement and clear argument

When examining the recordings of both the initial and final peer reviews, substantial disparities were also observed. In the first peer review, while students supported one another in navigating the peer review process, using a peer review worksheet to read and analyse their peer's writing, not all students fully grasped the task. The 15-minute recordings depicted frequent instances of re-explanations between group members, particularly within Group 2, to ensure comprehension. Students also displayed hesitancy in making critical judgements of writing and offering constructive feedback. Several students also utilised this peer review opportunity to seek clarification on introductory paragraph structure. In contrast, a substantial transformation was seen during the final group peer reviews. All groups engaged in focused discussions throughout the review of their peers' writing (see Figure 6). Group members participated in reflective dialogues concerning their own learning and consistently reminded each other of key points for effective essay writing. Unlike the initial peer review, where certain students remained silent, all students actively participated in the exchange of feedback.

Figure 6: Two groups reviewing their peers' in-class essays

2. Eric's journey: From silent participant to confident peer review leader

Student participant Eric (see Figure 7), exemplifies a remarkable transformation in both self-assurance and proficiency in providing peer feedback. In the first peer review, Eric was notably reticent, choosing to remain silent even when prompted to participate. This initial hesitation, however, gradually gave way to a robust engagement in the peer review process as the training progressed. His journey of transformation became evident as he transitioned from 'Somewhat confident' to 'Very confident'. This newfound confidence was not just a self-perception. It manifested in his actions and contributions during peer reviews. By the final session, Eric had not only found his voice but had also taken on a leadership role within his group (see Figure 8), guiding the peer review process with skill and assurance.

Figure 7: Student participant Eric

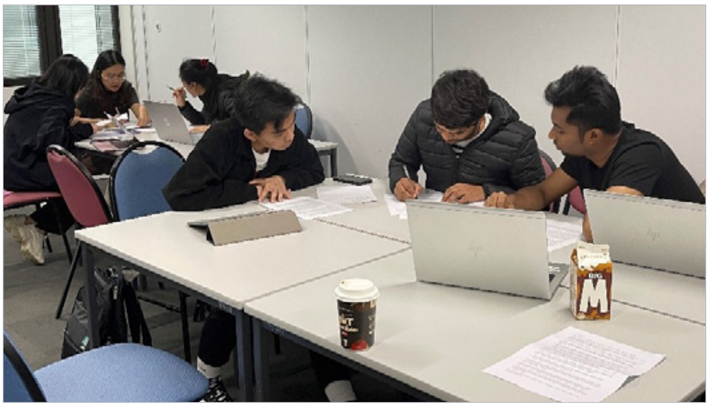
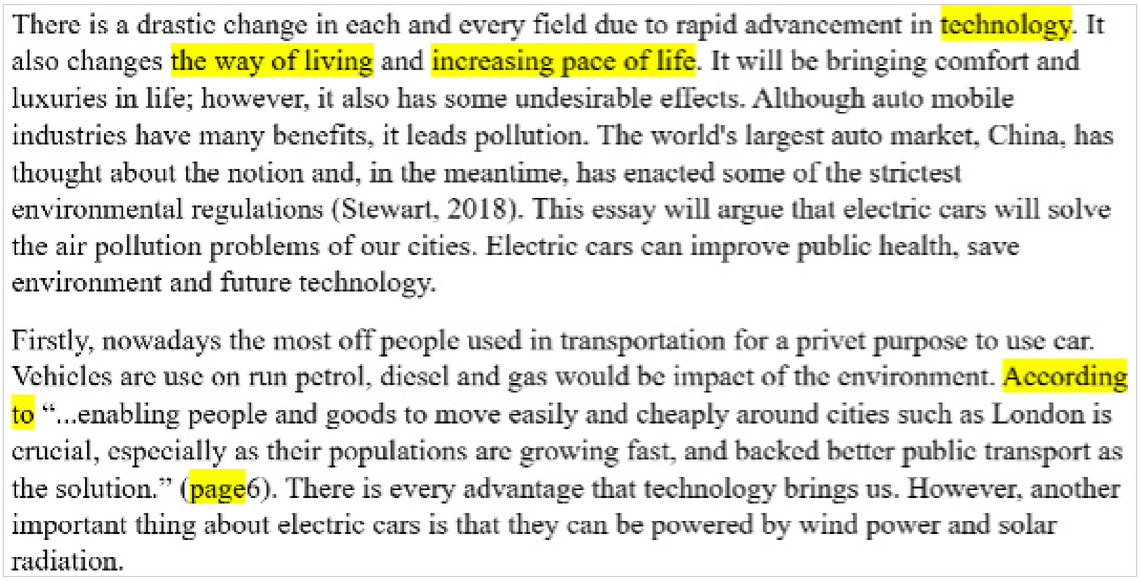


Figure 8: Eric's peer review group (from left to right, Jack, Eric and Henry)

To guide his team in the peer review, Eric confidently initiated the analysis by reading the introductory paragraph aloud to his group (see Figure 9, first paragraph). When his teammate Henry asked whether there was appropriate background information within the paragraph, Eric responded promptly and confidently: 'I think the background is good, because it talks about living, pace of life, technology. That's why.' His ability to justify his views with clear reasons marked a significant shift from his earlier silence. Eric's proficiency in peer reviewing was showcased when he quickly identified a referencing error, asserting: 'This is not "page", only "p"' (see Figure 9, second paragraph). He then pointed out a further error with referencing: 'This over here is not a paraphrase. It's a direct quote, but she did not mention the author's name' (see Figure 9, second paragraph). Such observations reflected his ability to provide insightful feedback.

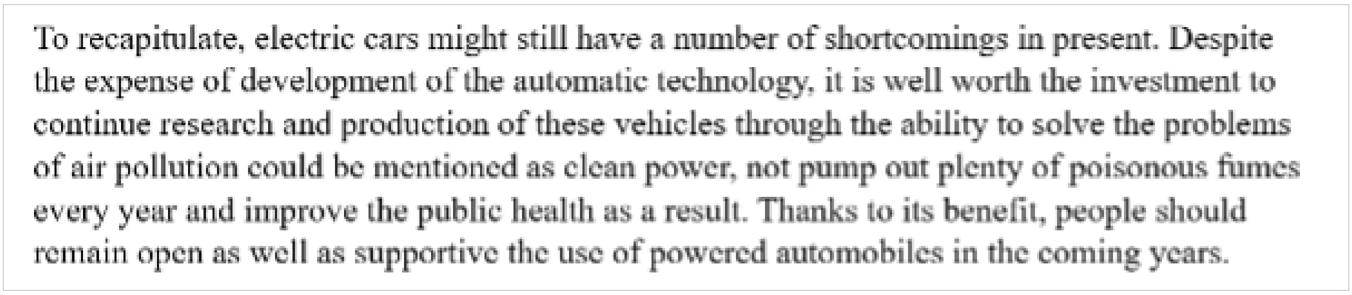


There is a drastic change in each and every field due to rapid advancement in technology. It also changes the way of living and increasing pace of life. It will be bringing comfort and luxuries in life; however, it also has some undesirable effects. Although auto mobile industries have many benefits, it leads pollution. The world's largest auto market, China, has thought about the notion and, in the meantime, has enacted some of the strictest environmental regulations (Stewart, 2018). This essay will argue that electric cars will solve the air pollution problems of our cities. Electric cars can improve public health, save environment and future technology.

Firstly, nowadays the most off people used in transportation for a privet purpose to use car. Vehicles are use on run petrol, diesel and gas would be impact of the environment. According to "...enabling people and goods to move easily and cheaply around cities such as London is crucial, especially as their populations are growing fast, and backed better public transport as the solution." (page6). There is every advantage that technology brings us. However, another important thing about electric cars is that they can be powered by wind power and solar radiation.

Figure 9: Peers' introductory and first body paragraphs which Eric's group reviewed

Perhaps most impressively, Eric demonstrated his capability for critical judgement and influence during the analysis of the conclusion (see Figure 10). When analysing the conclusion, Eric asked his group: 'Did they summarise the key points?' His teammates, Henry and Jack, said 'no.' However, Eric disagreed. While his teammates initially disagreed with the presence of key point summaries in the conclusion, Eric, after reading a part of the text, persuaded them to reconsider. They shifted their stance to a more agreeable 'maybe or yes.' This incident highlighted not only his analytical skills but also his ability to influence his peers' opinions through reasoned argument.



To recapitulate, electric cars might still have a number of shortcomings in present. Despite the expense of development of the automatic technology, it is well worth the investment to continue research and production of these vehicles through the ability to solve the problems of air pollution could be mentioned as clean power, not pump out plenty of poisonous fumes every year and improve the public health as a result. Thanks to its benefit, people should remain open as well as supportive the use of powered automobiles in the coming years.

Figure 10: Peers' concluding paragraph which Eric's group reviewed

Throughout these interactions, Eric consistently provided well-reasoned, articulate feedback. His journey from a silent participant to a confident, proactive leader in peer review sessions shows the transformative and enhancing power of structured peer review training.

Educational implications

1. Fostering an inclusive environment for peer feedback and learning

This AR explored the impact of peer reviews on learning, revealing both positive outcomes and challenges. A key challenge identified was the hesitation among some students to offer peer suggestions, potentially due to cultural, gender, or individual differences. This finding emphasises the importance for educators to cultivate an environment that supports and encourages all students to actively and comfortably participate in peer feedback. Figure 11 showcases a series of enjoyable events that were held throughout the course, including mid-term and final celebrations, along with moments of cultural share and dancing. These reflect the efforts made to establish a safe and inclusive environment for students to engage in feedback and learning.

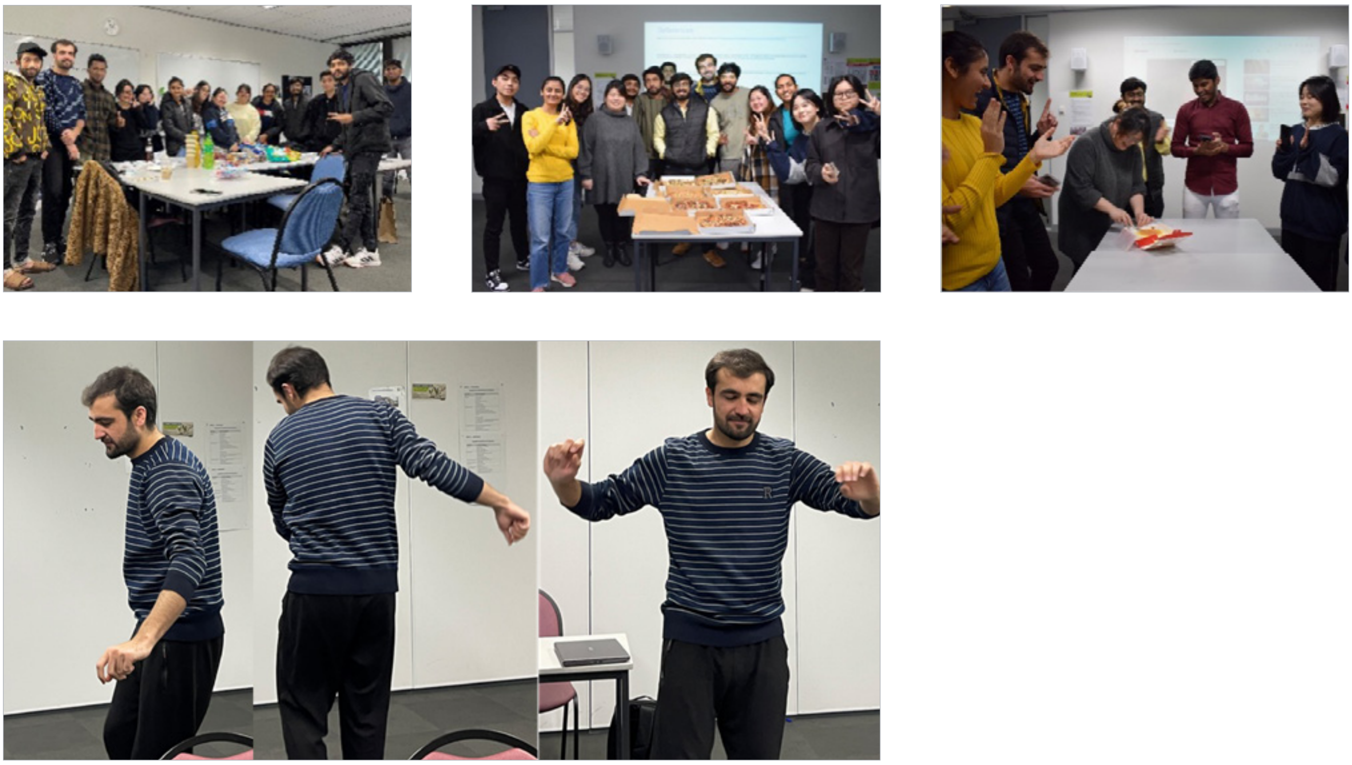


Figure 11: Class events to foster a supportive learning environment

Reflecting on this point as both a teacher and an action researcher, I learned the crucial role of cultivating a diverse and inclusive environment in peer feedback sessions. This experience has enhanced my understanding of classroom dynamics and the importance of a culturally sensitive teaching approach. It also highlights the need for further research into how cultural, gender, and individual differences affect learning and interaction, emphasising that a supportive learning atmosphere is as vital as academic content.

2. Aligning peer review activities with course content

Additionally, the research revealed that while students were adept at providing feedback on course-centric elements such as essay structure and referencing, they struggled with grammar and vocabulary aspects, which were not primary focuses of the EAP2 course. This insight suggests that aligning future peer review activities more closely with the course content could enhance the efficacy of the feedback provided and boost student confidence in these areas.

To achieve this, I intend to introduce students to resources and strategies that can enable them to independently enhance the skills of grammar and vocabulary. Such an approach could increase their proficiencies in these areas, thereby strengthening their confidence and abilities in conducting peer reviews.

3. Importance of a sustained and integrated approach to peer reviews

Another crucial factor that emerged was the need for extended time and effort to maximise the benefits of peer reviews. Implementing peer reviews as a superficial or one-off activity has shown minimal impact. This implication calls for a more sustained and integrated approach, possibly involving a collaborative effort across the entire EAP program, including courses EAP 1, 2, and 3. Such a collaborative approach could yield significant benefits for both educators and learners by embedding peer review practices as fundamental and recurring elements of the student's educational journey. This approach is anticipated to significantly enhance learning outcomes and student engagement in the peer review process.

Conclusion

In this AR, an intriguing transition was observed. On the day of the research essay submission, a significant contrast was evident compared to previous classes with previous student cohorts. This group of EAP2 students organically formed pairs and small groups, relying on peer collaboration for support rather than predominantly seeking my assistance (see Figure 12). This change could be attributed to the enhanced peer review skills they acquired and the collaborative culture cultivated during the course.

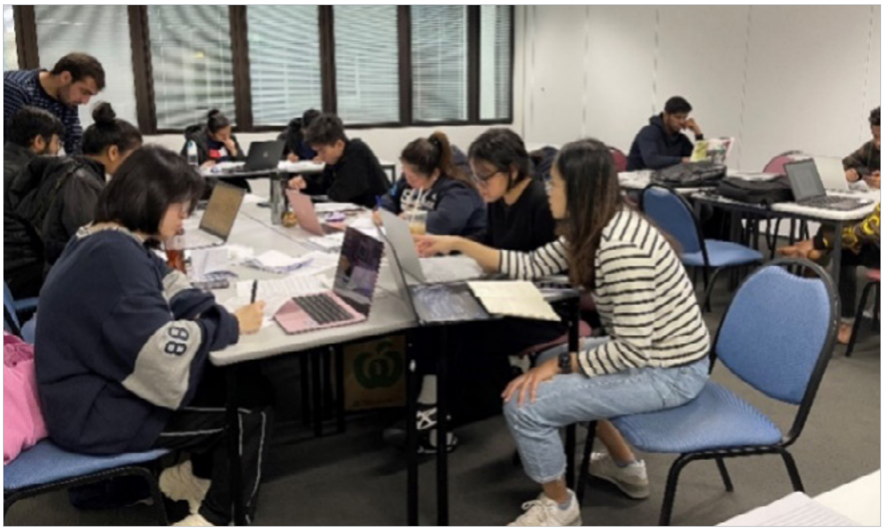


Figure 12: Students supporting peers before assessment submission

In this context, my role as an educator also greatly evolved. Rather than being the primary source of solutions, I shifted to a more supportive position, assisting only when student discussions were unable to fully address challenges. This shift, while making my role less demanding, underscores a critical educational insight: the empowerment of student autonomy through peer learning and the creation of a supportive and engaging learning environment.

This evolution was not an isolated occurrence but the result of a comprehensive approach over the 10-week period. The curriculum extended beyond academic instruction to include a variety of communal activities. These incidents fostered a community, leading students to call it a 'family' (see Figure 13). Such a supportive and inclusive environment played a crucial role in enhancing the impact of peer reviews, thereby aiding in the development of student feedback literacy. This highlights the necessity of an educational approach that balances academic learning with the creation of a conducive, nurturing environment for comprehensive student development.

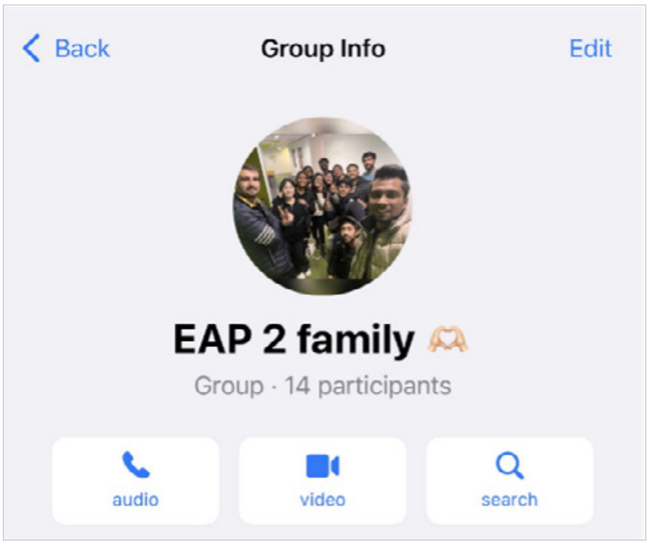


Figure 13: Students' WhatsApp group

This AR project has not only highlighted the transformative power of peer reviews in enhancing student learning and feedback literacy but has also illuminated the essential role of the educator in facilitating this transformation. The observed shift towards greater student autonomy and collaborative learning reflects a deeper, underlying change in educational dynamics, driven by both structured peer review training and the creation of a supportive, community-like atmosphere. These findings underscore the importance of adopting a holistic educational approach, one that interweaves academic content with a nurturing environment conducive to student growth and development. As we move forward, it becomes increasingly clear that the key to effective education lies in empowering students to become active, engaged learners within a collaborative and inclusive community. This approach not only enriches their academic journey but also equips them with essential skills and confidence for their future endeavours.

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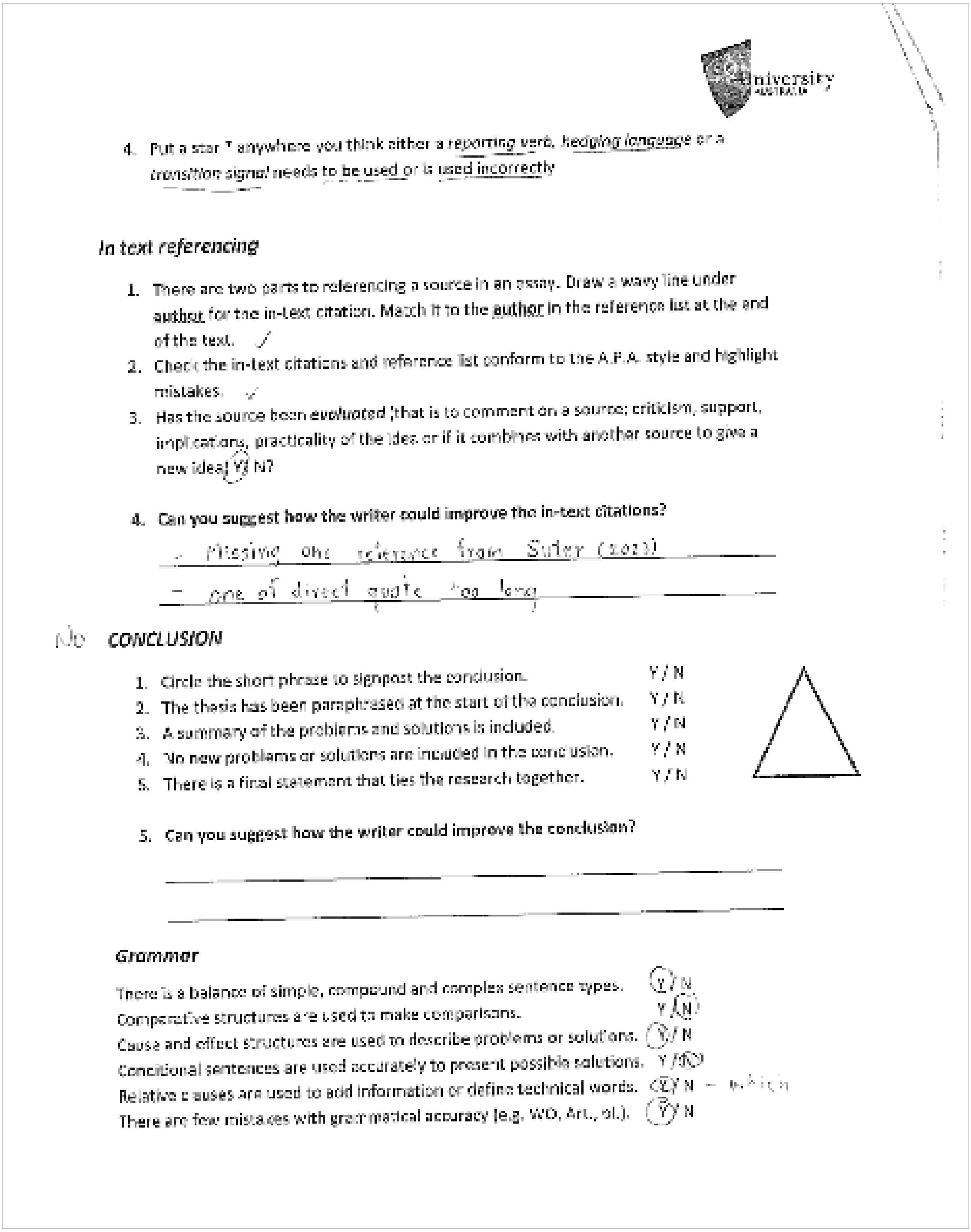
Appendix I: Details of student participants

Student	Entry	Exit	Country of origin
Adam	Repeating EAP2	Master of Public Health	India
Anna	Promoted from EAP1	Bachelor of Business	Vietnam
Ariel	Promoted from EAP1	Bachelor of Business	China
Marian	Promoted from EAP1	Bachelor of Business	Philippines
Tiana	Promoted from EAP1	Master of Professional Accounting	Sir Lanka
Aurora	Promoted from EAP1	Master of Management for Engineers	Thailand
Jack	Promoted from EAP1	Bachelor of Information Technology	Vietnam
Jasmine	Promoted from EAP1	Master of Public Health	India
Flynn	Promoted from EAP1	Master of Public Health	India
Eric	New to program	Master of Management for Engineers	India
Arthur	New to program	Master of Management for Engineers	India
Philip	New to program	EAP3 → Master of Research	Pakistan
Sabastian	New to program	Master of Professional Accounting	Bangladesh
Henry	New to program	Master of Business Management	Bangladesh

Appendix 2: Sample peer reviewing worksheet (Aurora's feedback on Arthur's writing)



4. Put a star * anywhere you think either a *reporting verb*, *hedging language* or a *transition signal* needs to be used or is used incorrectly

In text referencing

1. There are two parts to referencing a source in an essay. Draw a wavy line under author for the in-text citation. Match it to the author in the reference list at the end of the text. ✓
2. Check the in-text citations and reference list conform to the A.P.A. style and highlight mistakes. ✓
3. Has the source been *evaluated* ;that is to comment on a source; criticism, support, implications, practicality of the idea or if it combines with another source to give a new idea; [✓ Y] / N?

4. **Can you suggest how the writer could improve the in-text citations?**

- Missing one reference from Suter (2023)
- one of direct quote too long

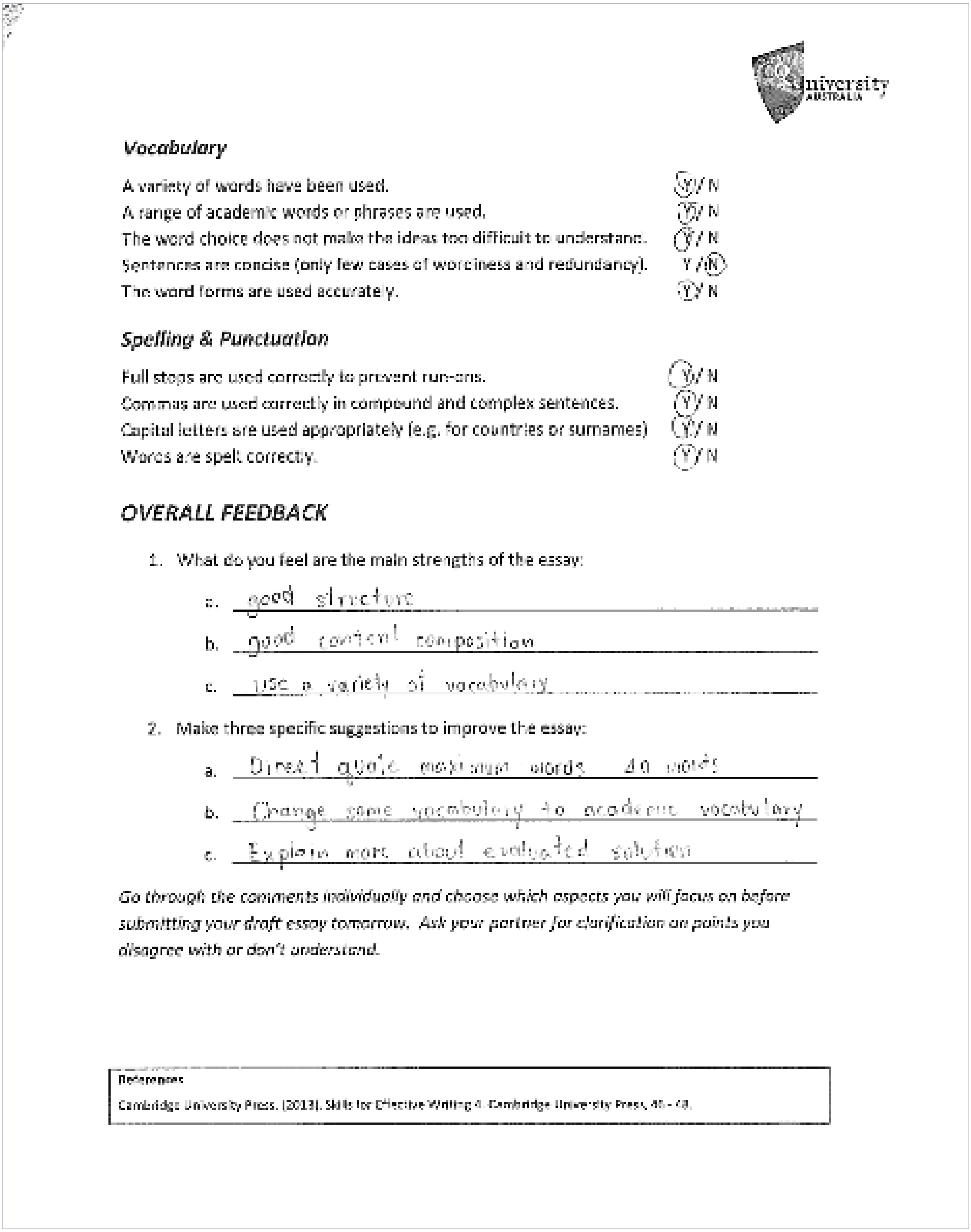
No **CONCLUSION**

1. Circle the short phrase to signpost the conclusion. Y / N
2. The thesis has been paraphrased at the start of the conclusion. Y / N
3. A summary of the problems and solutions is included. Y / N
4. No new problems or solutions are included in the conclusion. Y / N
5. There is a final statement that ties the research together. Y / N

5. **Can you suggest how the writer could improve the conclusion?**

Grammer

There is a balance of simple, compound and complex sentence types. [✓ Y] / N
Comparative structures are used to make comparisons. Y / [✓ N]
Cause and effect structures are used to describe problems or solutions. [✓ Y] / N
Conditional sentences are used accurately to present possible solutions. Y / [✓ N]
Relative clauses are used to add information or define technical words. [✓ Y] / N – which
There are few mistakes with grammatical accuracy (e.g. WO, Art., pl.). [✓ Y] / N



Vocabulary

A variety of words have been used. [✓ Y] / N
A range of academic words or phrases are used. [✓ Y] / N
The word choice does not make the ideas too difficult to understand. [✓ Y] / N
Sentences are concise (only few cases of wordiness and redundancy). Y / [✓ N]
The word forms are used accurately. [✓ Y] / N

Spelling & Punctuation

Full stops are used correctly to prevent run-ons. [✓ Y] / N
Commas are used correctly in compound and complex sentences. [✓ Y] / N
Capital letters are used appropriately (e.g. for countries or surnames) [✓ Y] / N
Words are spelt correctly. [✓ Y] / N

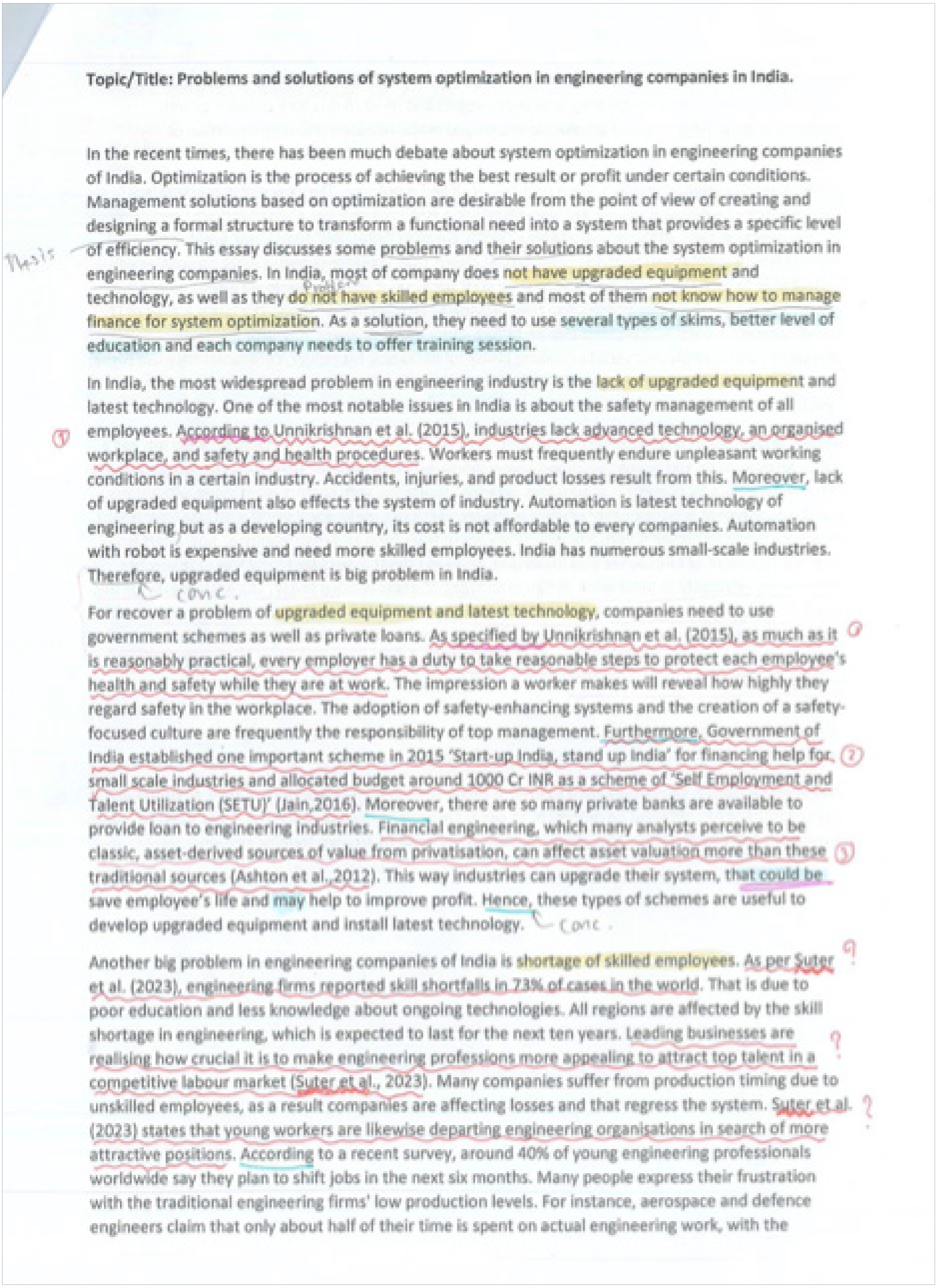
OVERALL FEEDBACK

1. What do you feel are the main strengths of the essay:
   a. good structure
   b. good content composition
   c. use a variety of vocabulary
2. Make three specific suggestions to improve the essay:
   a. Direct quote maximum words 40 words
   b. Change some vocabulary to academic vocabulary
   c. Explain more about evaluated solution

Go through the comments individually and choose which aspects you will focus on before submitting your draft essay tomorrow. Ask your partner for clarification on points you disagree with or don't understand.

References

Cambridge University Press. (2013). Skills for Effective Writing 4. Cambridge University Press, 40 - 48.



Topic/Title: Problems and solutions of system optimization in engineering companies in India.

In the recent times, there has been much debate about system optimization in engineering companies of India. Optimization is the process of achieving the best result or profit under certain conditions. Management solutions based on optimization are desirable from the point of view of creating and designing a formal structure to transform a functional need into a system that provides a specific level of efficiency. This essay discusses some problems and their solutions about the system optimization in engineering companies. In India, most of company does not have upgraded equipment and technology, as well as they do not have skilled employees and most of them not know how to manage finance for system optimization. As a solution, they need to use several types of skims, better level of education and each company needs to offer training session.

Thesis

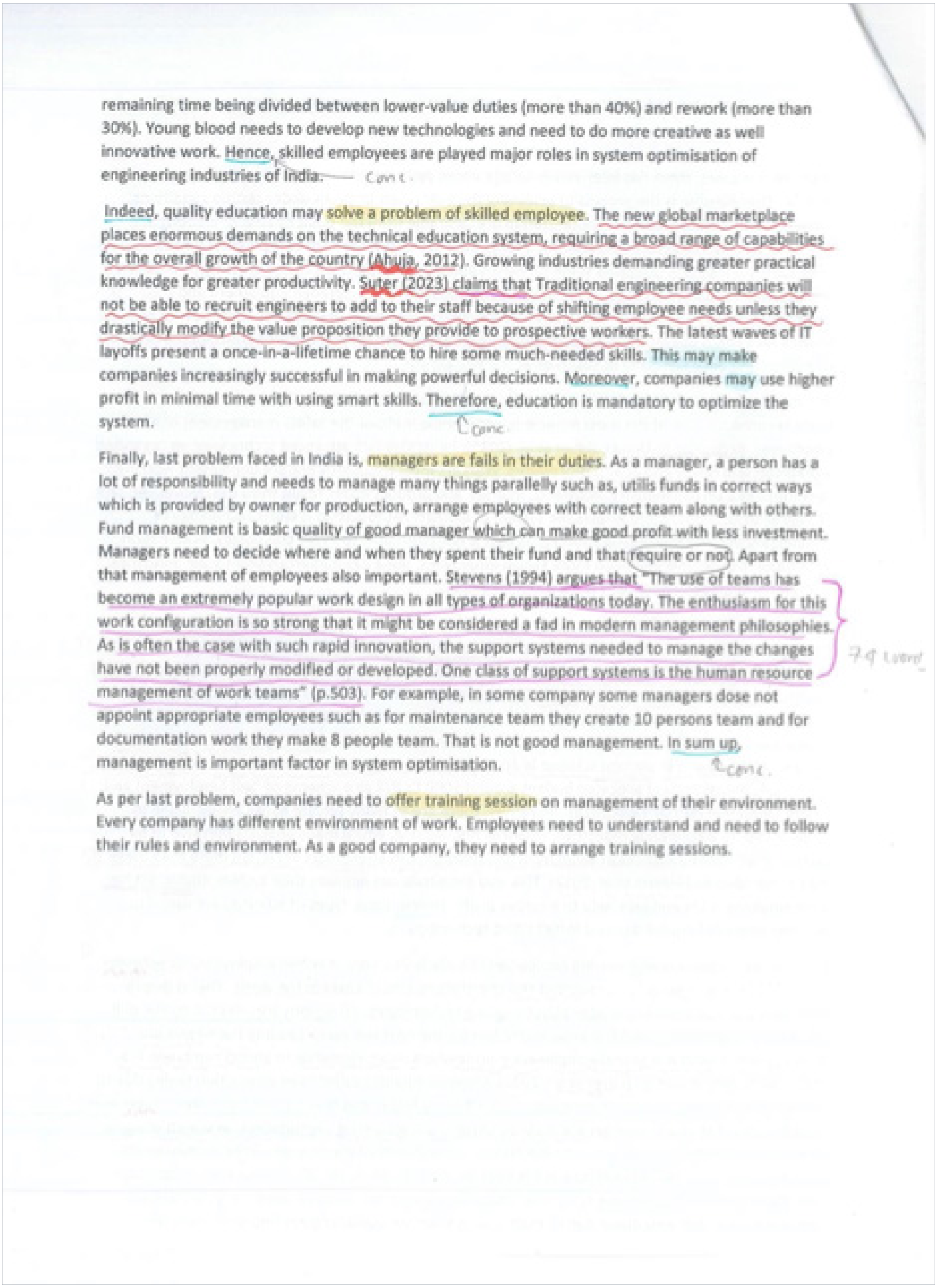
Problem

In India, the most widespread problem in engineering industry is the lack of upgraded equipment and latest technology. One of the most notable issues in India is about the safety management of all employees. ① According to Unnikrishnan et al. (2015), industries lack advanced technology, an organised workplace, and safety and health procedures. Workers must frequently endure unpleasant working conditions in a certain industry. Accidents, injuries, and product losses result from this. Moreover, lack of upgraded equipment also effects the system of industry. Automation is latest technology of engineering but as a developing country, its cost is not affordable to every companies. Automation with robot is expensive and need more skilled employees. India has numerous small-scale industries. Therefore, upgraded equipment is big problem in India.

conc.

For recover a problem of upgraded equipment and latest technology, companies need to use government schemes as well as private loans. ① As specified by Unnikrishnan et al. (2015), as much as it is reasonably practical, every employer has a duty to take reasonable steps to protect each employee's health and safety while they are at work. The impression a worker makes will reveal how highly they regard safety in the workplace. The adoption of safety-enhancing systems and the creation of a safety-focused culture are frequently the responsibility of top management. Furthermore, ② Government of India established one important scheme in 2015 'Start-up India, stand up India' for financing help for small scale industries and allocated budget around 1000 Cr INR as a scheme of 'Self Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU)' (Jain,2016). Moreover, there are so many private banks are available to provide loan to engineering industries. ③ Financial engineering, which many analysts perceive to be classic, asset-derived sources of value from privatisation, can affect asset valuation more than these traditional sources (Ashton et al.,2012). This way industries can upgrade their system, that could be save employee's life and may help to improve profit. Hence, these types of schemes are useful to develop upgraded equipment and install latest technology. conc.

Another big problem in engineering companies of India is shortage of skilled employees. As per Suter et al. (2023), engineering firms reported skill shortfalls in 73% of cases in the world. ? That is due to poor education and less knowledge about ongoing technologies. All regions are affected by the skill shortage in engineering, which is expected to last for the next ten years. Leading businesses are realising how crucial it is to make engineering professions more appealing to attract top talent in a competitive labour market (Suter et al., 2023). ? Many companies suffer from production timing due to unskilled employees, as a result companies are affecting losses and that regress the system. Suter et al. (2023) states that young workers are likewise departing engineering organisations in search of more attractive positions. ? According to a recent survey, around 40% of young engineering professionals worldwide say they plan to shift jobs in the next six months. Many people express their frustration with the traditional engineering firms' low production levels. For instance, aerospace and defence engineers claim that only about half of their time is spent on actual engineering work, with the



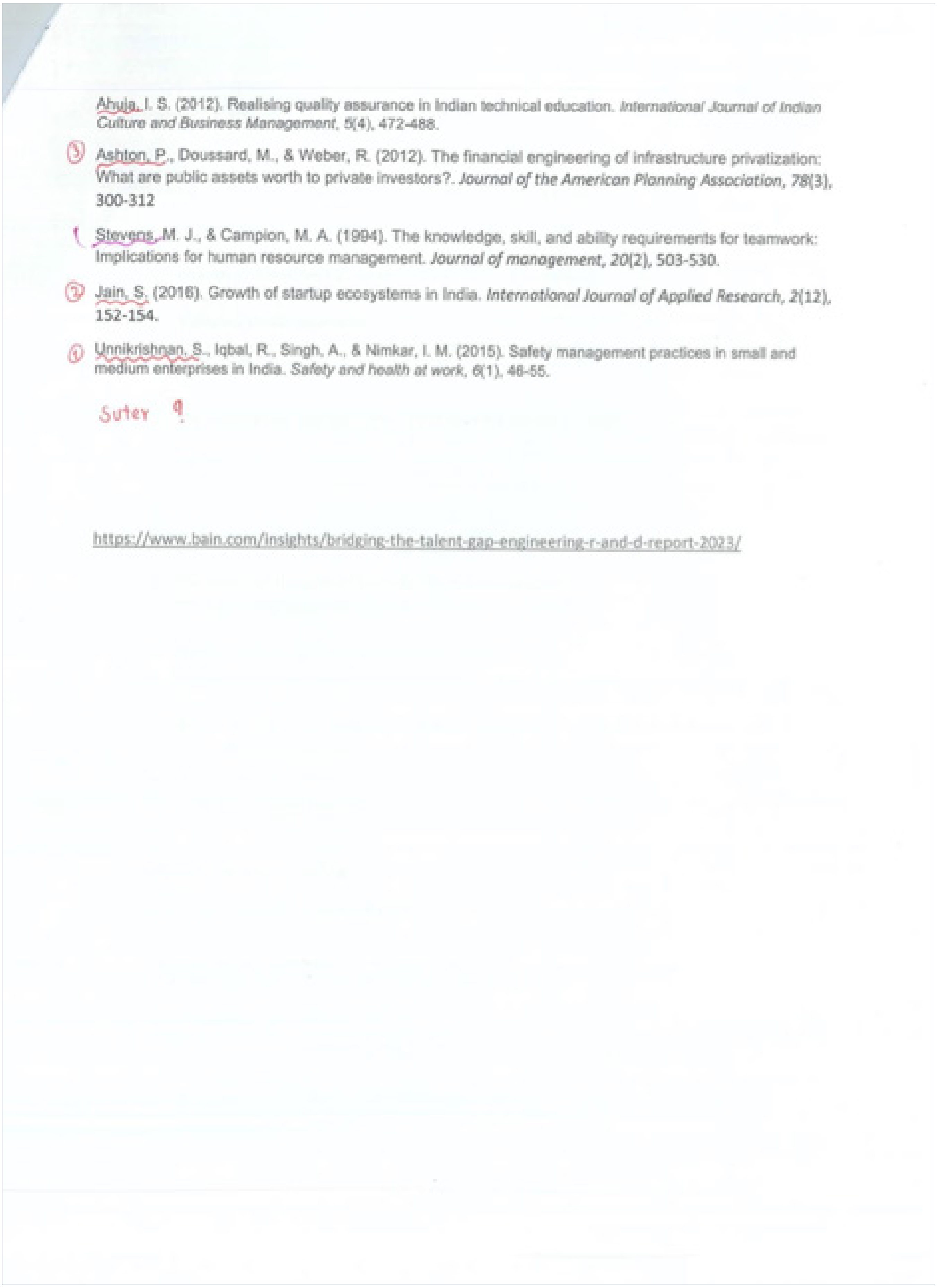
remaining time being divided between lower-value duties (more than 40%) and rework (more than 30%). Young blood needs to develop new technologies and need to do more creative as well innovative work. Hence, skilled employees are played major roles in system optimisation of engineering industries of India. — Conc

Indeed, quality education may solve a problem of skilled employee. The new global marketplace places enormous demands on the technical education system, requiring a broad range of capabilities for the overall growth of the country (Ahuja, 2012). Growing industries demanding greater practical knowledge for greater productivity. Suter (2023) claims that Traditional engineering companies will not be able to recruit engineers to add to their staff because of shifting employee needs unless they drastically modify the value proposition they provide to prospective workers. The latest waves of IT layoffs present a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hire some much-needed skills. This may make companies increasingly successful in making powerful decisions. Moreover, companies may use higher profit in minimal time with using smart skills. Therefore, education is mandatory to optimize the system. Conc

Finally, last problem faced in India is, managers are fails in their duties. As a manager, a person has a lot of responsibility and needs to manage many things parallelly such as, utilis funds in correct ways which is provided by owner for production, arrange employees with correct team along with others. Fund management is basic quality of good manager which can make good profit with less investment. Managers need to decide where and when they spent their fund and that require or not. Apart from that management of employees also important. Stevens (1994) argues that "The use of teams has become an extremely popular work design in all types of organizations today. The enthusiasm for this work configuration is so strong that it might be considered a fad in modern management philosophies. As is often the case with such rapid innovation, the support systems needed to manage the changes have not been properly modified or developed. One class of support systems is the human resource management of work teams" (p.503). For example, in some company some managers dose not appoint appropriate employees such as for maintenance team they create 10 persons team and for documentation work they make 8 people team. That is not good management. In sum up, management is important factor in system optimisation. Conc.

79 word

As per last problem, companies need to offer training session on management of their environment. Every company has different environment of work. Employees need to understand and need to follow their rules and environment. As a good company, they need to arrange training sessions.



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https://www.bain.com/insights/bridging-the-talent-gap-engineering-r-and-d-report-2023/

Appendix 3: Peer reviewing pre-survey

AR Peer Reviewing Pre-survey

1 How much experience do you have with peer reviewing in your own language on writing?

A Never
B Less than 5 times
C 5-10 times
D More than 10 times

2 How much experience do you have with peer reviewing in English writing?

A Never
B Less than 5 times
C 5-10 times
D More than 10 times

3 How confident are you in your ability to provide feedback on your peer's writing?

A Very confident
B Confident
C Somewhat confident
D Not confident at all

4 What type of feedback do you feel more comfortable when providing to your peers?
(Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

5 What type of feedback do you think is more challenging for you to provide to your peers?
(Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

6 How valuable do you think your peer's feedback would be for your writing?

A Very valuable
B Valuable
C Somewhat valuable
D Not valuable at all

7 What type of peer feedback do you think is more valuable for your writing? (Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

8 What type of peer feedback do you think is less valuable for your writing? (Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

9 What do you think are the benefits of peer reviewing?

10 What do you think are the challenges of peer reviewing?

Appendix 4: Peer reviewing post-survey

AR Peer Reviewing Post-survey

1 How confident are you in providing feedback to your peers after completing this course?

A Very confident
B Confident
C Somewhat confident
D Not confident at all

2 Which aspect(s) of peer reviewing did you improve the most? (Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

3 Which aspect(s) of peer reviewing do you still find challenging? (Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

4 How valuable did you find your peer's feedback on your writing?

A Very valuable
B Valuable
C Somewhat valuable
D Not valuable at all

5 Which type(s) of peer feedback did you find most valuable for your writing? (Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

6 Which type(s) of peer feedback did you find less valuable for your writing? (Select all that apply)

A Paragraph and essay structure
B Content development
C Use of source material
D Vocabulary and grammar

7 How effective do you think the peer feedback training and practices were in this class?

A Very effective
B Effective
C Somewhat effective
C Not effective at all

8 Overall, how would you rate the peer review process in this course?

A Excellent
B Good
C Fair
D Poor

9 How did you benefit from peer reviewing?

10 What are some challenges for you when peer reviewing?

11 Do you have any suggestions for improving the peer reviewing process in future courses?

Appendix 5: Data collection and affordance

Instruments	**Data targets**	***n***	**Affords**
Pre-survey	Conducted in W1	14	• Students' initial feedback literacy and perceptions of peer reviews
Post-survey	Conducted in W10	14	• Students' feedback literacy and peer review perception shift
Peer review worksheet	• In-class essay (intro) group review in W3 • In-class essay peer review in W4 • In-class essay peer review in W9 • Research essay (intro) peer review in W6 • Research essay peer review in W7	• 3 • 12 • 14 • 14 • 14	• Students' engagement and ability in providing peer feedback
Peer review recording	• In-class essay (intro) group review in W3 • In-class essay peer review in W9	• 3 (of 12Ss) • 4 (of 14Ss)	• Students' engagement and ability in providing peer feedback
Student writing	• In-class essay (intro) in W3 • In-class essay in W4 • In-class essay in W9 • Research essay (intro) in W6 • Research essay (draft) in W7 • Research essay (final) in W9	• 3 • 12 • 14 • 14 • 14 • 14	• Peers' ability in providing peer feedback • Students' use of peer feedback

The timing of student feedback – before or after…?

Terri Lowe, UTS College, Sydney

Introduction

Reflecting on my years of teaching in universities, I have often considered whether students understand, read, absorb and regulate their studying habits after receiving feedback on course content and completed assessments, thus leading to an improvement of student learning outcomes. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback refers to the process whereby students receive written corrective feedback (WCF) on their assessment, mainly from their teachers, for the purpose of improving their future performance. Hence, it has often occurred to me that the timing of feedback appears crucial if students are to improve their studying habits during the course, which in some cases may be a matter of only weeks, and that there should be a paradigm shift in terms of feedback from information to process (see Chong 2021). Therefore, the basis of this research is an attempt to reconceptualise WCF from a teacher-centered transmission to a more modern approach, which looks to include both written and oral constructive feedback being delivered not only by teachers but the student's peer group with the intention of enabling the process of learning and consequent regulation of student study habits. This could be construed as feedback being delivered on a continuum throughout the entire course. I have also considered that students are not a homogenous group in terms of cognitive capacity, learning styles and socio/cultural aspects, which therefore begs the question: should feedback be delivered at the commencement of the program and tailored to suit the learner's needs?

Context and participants

The Diploma program at UTS College comprises both domestic and international students who undertake courses in a range of disciplines which include Business, Design, Communications, Architecture, IT and Engineering. This is a direct entry face-to-face program that scaffolds content-based material on a learning platform called Canvas where English is the mode of instruction. The curriculum has been designed to foster a student-centric approach in preparation not only for rigorous undergraduate degrees but to enable the transference of language learning skills to students' future careers.

I deliver an 11-week program for four classes consisting of Engineering/IT streams, a total of approximately 75 students. The students appear to be highly motivated and exhibit varying levels of learning abilities and approaches to the program. They also need to have the ability to embrace an independent learning style as I do not teach course content during tutorials but monitor and aid students to deliver feedback on one another, peer teach and think critically, the latter being an important skill in 21st century language learning. Difficult concepts encountered in the pre-tutorial work are also clarified during group discussions.

The program consists of students completing approximately 12 hours per week of course content at home before attending class where they peer teach and negotiate course content. They form three discussion groups in tutorials based on the module skill, and are given sets of activities to complete and demonstrate understanding of the pre-tutorial content. It is at this point where I encourage student's engagement with written/oral feedback and observe factors that may influence their attitude to this approach. Not only does this encourage independent learning but also collaborative engagement aimed at peer level and a readier acceptance of feedback by lower-performing students.

Research focus and research questions

In order to understand the students' reactions to the approach described above and its effectiveness, I needed to have an awareness of both the positive and hindering factors that influenced student's engagement with feedback. The positive features might include the student's learning behaviour, my approach to the autonomous learner, the student/teacher partnership (particularly when introducing performance feedback early in the course) and the ability of students to critique one another. I was acutely aware of hindering factors such as students' apprehension to participate in group discussions and the fear of delivering incorrect responses to questions; thus support and empathy were continually rendered at the teacher's discretion.

In order to investigate these issues further, I developed the following research questions (RQs):

1. To what extent does the early delivery of feedback during the course enhance students' understanding of course content and enable students to meet learning outcomes?
2. To what extent does the predicting of potential errors that relate to assessments improve the quality of final submissions?

Reflecting on learners' needs and appropriate task design, I created a prompt card of linguistic features containing the imperative and other instructional words and placed copies of it on the tables during in-class discussion groups for the students to utilise when negotiating course content during peer teaching (see Appendix 1). The imperative is a grammatical component which consists of a command or instruction word generally requiring an action to be performed, in this context by the student, to revise their learning/study habits by responding to the questions on the prompt card. I explained the form, function and pronunciation of the more challenging terms and highlighted that many of these terms, such as 'provide examples', 'be explicit', 'justify your answer', were in the questions in the upcoming assessments. I stressed that this approach was to familiarise the students with WCF that may also appear on their final graded assessments.

During in-class tutorials, the Canvas course (accessed by students online), provides lists of activities broken down into time segments whereby concepts and exercises based on the pre-tutorial work are discussed. For all discussion groups, I appointed leaders to encourage students to engage in dialogue using Appendix 1. My first approach was to shift the paradigm of conventional one-direction information flow early in the course to a multi-directional process.

One-directional feedback (see Figure 1) represents a one-direction information flow of WCF from the teacher to the student which usually occurs either in class or final assessment submissions so that students will regulate their learning habits. Based on Chong's (2021) theory of contemporary feedback, which is a student-centered process-oriented approach to feedback, I developed a multi-directional feedback diagram (see Figure 2) whilst observing my two classes in tutorials. This model represents a revolving process of students delivering feedback on one another in groups and between groups whilst making sense of the information in the assigned worksheets. I only discreetly intervene when necessary to clarify misunderstandings and incorrect responses which I could usually pre-empt.

At first, most students were perplexed and did not embrace this procedure. However, during Weeks 4 and 5 of the course, they understood the benefits of familiarising themselves with the language in Appendix 1 and its use by providing more detailed responses and citing examples from the course material on Canvas which further enhanced their work or learning strategies. Henderson et al (2019:1,402) suggest that a socioecological approach enables learners' effective feedback 'at the task, subject, course and institutional level.' In other words, many students could freely make mistakes without fear of reprisal and more importantly engage in an 'interpersonal process mediated by cognitive ability, social relationships and emotions' (Chong 2021:93).

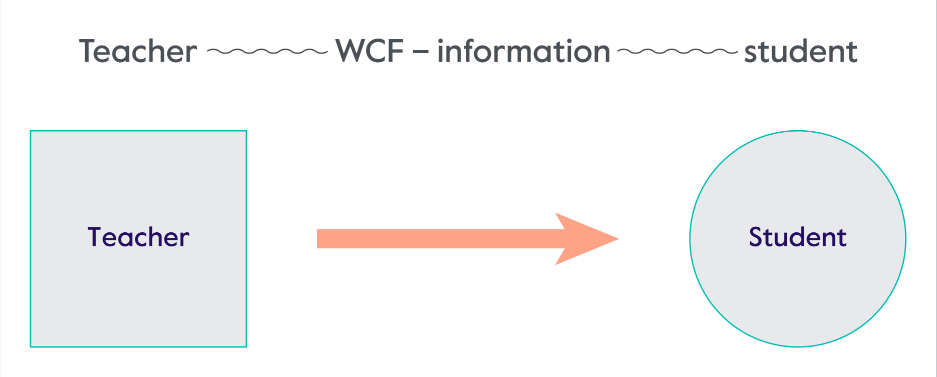
Teacher ~~~~~~ WCF – information ~~~~~~ student
Teacher
Student

Figure I: Conventional feedback delivery – information flow from the teacher to the student

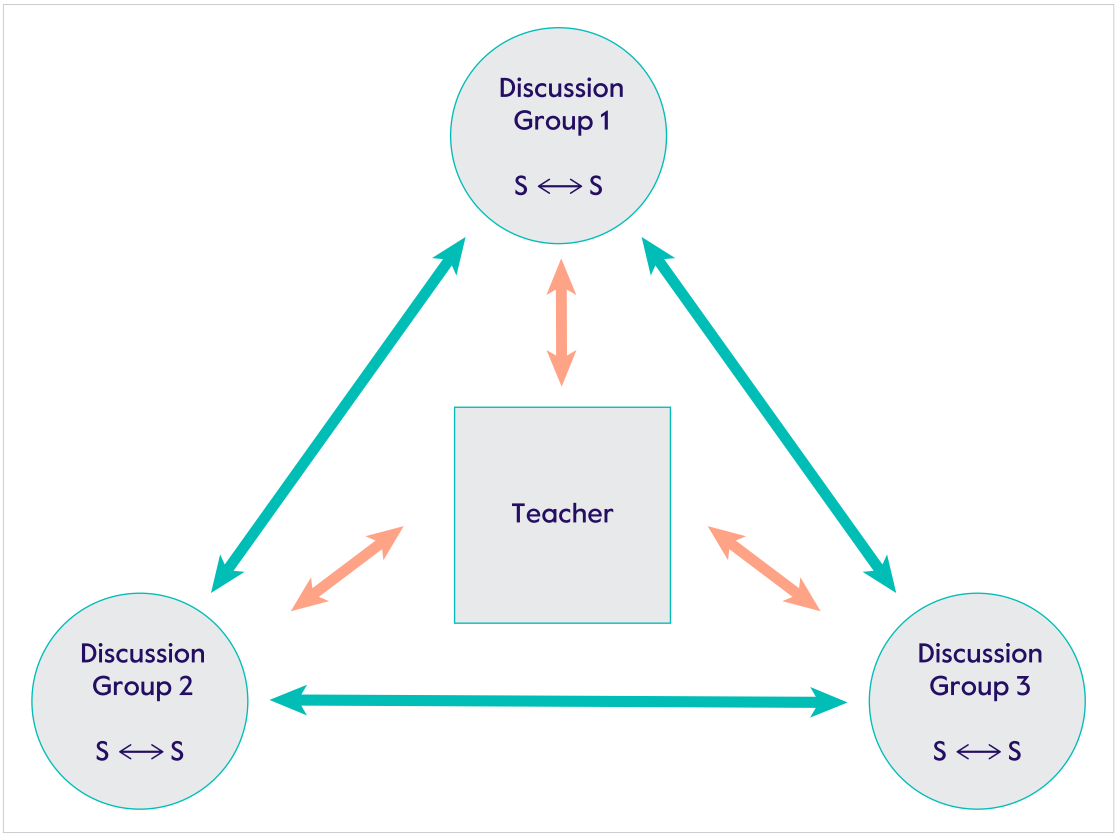
Discussion Group 1
S ⟷ S
Teacher
Discussion Group 2
S ⟷ S
Discussion Group 3
S ⟷ S

Figure 2: Multi-directional feedback – process of delivering feedback between groups, students and teacher

For the next type of feedback approach, I assessed the current performance of students 'in order to improve future work or learning strategies' (Henderson et al 2019:1,414). I designed a table (see Appendix 2) predicting the potential errors that related to academic writing in preparation for Assessment 3, which was a 1,200-word academic text. This was introduced to both classes in Week 6, which was the commencement of the academic writing modules. The genre submission for all 40 students was an essay, so I identified areas of the essay structure where major errors could occur in their draft submissions. My aim for this approach was to encourage students to 'make sense of the information about their performance and use it to enhance the quality of their work and learning strategies' (Henderson et al 2019:1,402). I asked the students to read, understand and explain to one another the terminology in Appendix 2 and clarify any misunderstandings under my guidance and observation during the group discussions. The majority of students in both classes closely examined the table while referring to course content and I also observed that most students photographed the document on their phones. When I questioned them later, the response to this feedback was that they found Appendix 2 very helpful and useful when editing their final essay submissions.

Research design and data collection

My action research (AR) project was conducted over one 11-week program and involved two Engineering/IT classes. The course is divided into units consisting of reflection and research followed by the four macros skills: reading, listening, academic writing, and speaking. My early intervention of the multidirectional feedback model was in Week 2, where I introduced Appendix 1 and formulated my observations and written journals on student's learning behaviour and peer feedback during in-class tutorials. All the activities for students are pre-set on Canvas and my role was to ensure that all students were collaboratively engaged and that misconceptions were addressed. I remained at a distance to discreetly observe, take notes and intervene when deemed necessary or to answer difficult questions posed by students.

In order to comprehend the students' attitude to my early delivery of feedback, I conducted two surveys in Weeks 1 and 7 respectively. This was to assess whether students understood, valued and desired feedback enough to regulate their learning habits. The second survey was to establish whether the implementation of both Appendices 1 and 2 was successful in determining how the final submissions of the academic writing text reflected an improvement compared to the draft submissions. To further substantiate my observations, I also conducted informal interviews to ascertain the usefulness of these resources in contributing to the students' learning outcomes, after which I reflected upon factors to improve feedback such as asking students how they felt about their own engagement in learning. Students are able to gauge their own performance and are more likely to make sense of the information to develop learning strategies that suit their learning style (Carless and Boud 2018).

Findings

This research offered a preliminary view of two approaches to the delivery of early feedback. The two surveys conducted with observations and semi-formal interviews on Class 1 indicated that the majority of students valued and desired feedback and were keen to participate, with 20 out of 20 students completing the survey. 70% of the students who completed Survey 2 in Week 7 thought that the early delivery of feedback via the multi-directional group model was mostly very effective (two lower-performing students did not respond). When interviewed, the majority of students found Appendix 1 helpful in re-conceptualising course content and for the opportunities to further engage meaningfully with feedback at peer group level.

Six lower-performing students, who initially struggled with the course content, were attentive to this feedback and eventually regulated their study habits by asking their peers for explanations of difficult concepts. Four students were non-responsive to my intervention despite being offered continual support from their peers to participate. This could indicate a lack of support for this approach by those four students and an area for my post-reflection.

The remaining students were actively engaging in group discussions using the linguistic terminology from Appendix 1 and on many occasions, I heard students' comments: 'hey man just give us some examples' or 'why don't you wanna give us more information, are you shy or something?' This type of friendly banter and humour was common in most tutorials whilst other groups displayed more serious approaches to engagement. Overall, the use of the imperative and other linguistic features calibrated in the form of instructional language seemed to be effective, as indicated by the final results of Classes 1 and 2 (see Tables 1 and 2).

Survey 3 (conducted in Week 7) showed that 15 out of 20 students found Appendix 2, which is pre-empting errors, very helpful in completing the academic writing assessment due in Week 8. The remaining students were either non-responsive or did not find the chart useful which again requires my post-reflection on using a different approach. Two students whom I interviewed in Week 11 stated that Appendix 2 was very helpful in editing and re-writing the final essay submission.

I reviewed the final results of the two classes to assess whether my intervention of early delivery of feedback and predicting the errors was effective.

The quantitative analysis of the final results in Classes 1 and 2 are shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table I: Class I

Assessment	High distinction	Distinction	Credit	Pass	Fail	No submission
1 Reflection research	0	7	7	2	4	0
2 Reading	1	6	6	4	2	1
3 Writing	2	3	6	6	2	1
4 Speaking	3	5	10	1	0	1

Table 1 shows that the failure rate in Class 1 diminished from four in Assessment 1 to zero in Assessment 4. In addition, the number of credit passes increased from 7 to 10. Overall, the results showed an improvement over the four assessments which could indicate that intervention of early feedback and the predicting of errors was successful. The results (six credits and passes) for academic writing indicate that most students consulted Appendix 2 to improve their final submissions, with a low failure rate of two.

Table 2: Class 2

Assessment	High distinction	Distinction	Credit	Pass	Fail	No submission
1 Reflection research	1	3	6	8	2	0
2 Reading	0	3	8	6	3	0
3 Writing	1	0	9	7	3	0
4 Speaking	2	12	4	0	1	1

Table 2 shows that the pass rate decreased from eight in Assessment 1 to zero in Assessment 4 but there was a corresponding increase in distinction passes from three to 12. Overall, the results indicated an improvement over the four assessments which could also indicate that intervention was successful. The results (nine credits and seven passes) for academic writing indicate that most students consulted Appendix 2 to improve their final submissions, with a low failure rate of three.

Conclusion and reflections

The transformation of the delivery of feedback from information to process proved to be insightful and challenging. Whilst the conventional method of WCF is seen as pedagogically useful as an information process, my research indicated that a move to a contemporary multi-directional approach could be highly beneficial in terms of students regulating their study habits during the program with the appropriate understanding of the value of feedback. In order to address the RQs the following could be deduced:

1. The early delivery of feedback during the course was highly valued by most students to understand course content, regulate their study habits and meet learning outcomes.
2. The predicting of potential errors table (Appendix 2) proved to be very useful and there was a strong indication that the majority of students reexamined their learning strategies and made sense of the information to perform beyond expectations.

Despite the positive results of my research, I had reservations regarding the future efficacy of my two approaches. As previously mentioned, these classes were highly engaged and motivated, and the findings cannot be generalised as this research was conducted on a small sample size in a limited timeframe. Needless to say, further research is required, and an eclectic approach to both methods and other sources could be considered, which is a project that I am currently pursuing.

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Hattie, J and Timperley, H (2007) The power of feedback, *Review of Educational Research* 77 (1), 81–112.

Henderson, M, Phillips, M, Ryan, T, Boud, D, Dawson, P, Molloy, E and Mahoney, P (2019) Conditions that enable effective feedback, *Higher Education Research & Development* 38 (7), 1,401–1,416.

Appendix I: The list of imperatives and linguistic features

Answer each other's questions

Argue your point

Be explicit/convincing

Counter-argue

Do not say I agree or yes/no – provide reasons

Explain your answer

Identify insufficient details

Identify the issue

Justify your answer

Locate the main ideas

Post comments to the Q & A

Provide evidence

Provide examples

Provide a summary

Read the instructions carefully

Read the headings

Read the question

Reflect on your answers

Research more academic texts

Review how to write a smart goal

State explicitly

Support the argument

Appendix 2: Predicting student's common mistakes in academic writing

Introduction	**Body paragraphs**	**Conclusion**
Background statement – missing	Topic sentence – missing or unclear	Thesis statement not paraphrased
Thesis statement – missing Issue/focus – unclear Counter-argument – missing	Evidence – no intext citation Reporting verbs – used incorrectly Evaluation – missing	Main points – poorly paraphrased
Definition – if needed	Coherence – poor Flow of ideas – lacks logic Relevance – excess repetition	
Main points/arguments – missing		Recommendation – missing Future direction – missing

Teacher feedback practice: Overcoming barriers to producing effective written feedback

Filip Bigos and Kapil Sharma, ILSC Sydney

Introduction

Focus and context

The aim of this study is to investigate existing barriers to effective teacher feedback practices, particularly in relation to written feedback on students' progress. The action research (AR) project, conducted at ILSC Sydney, aimed to explore these practices by focusing on Student Progress Reports (SPRs). These reports provide written feedback from teachers to students at the end of every four-week period.

Through staffroom discussions and teacher observations, it has been noted that teachers often struggle to provide students with satisfactory feedback in their SPRs. In some cases, SPRs are impersonal, generic, and lacking in key details which are critical for identifying areas requiring improvement. We have observed that in the majority of these cases these reports were produced by less experienced teachers, suggesting that there is a training gap which needs to be bridged.

The issues are, however, identified as such because of underlying expectations on our part as the Head Teachers at the school. These include expecting teachers to provide every learner with timely, personalised, and detailed feedback with clear guidance on what each learner should specifically do to improve their English language skills, and language knowledge. Although our evaluation is based on professional experience, we acknowledge that what constitutes effective feedback might be rather subjective, which gives rise to the need to identify what ILSC students deem 'effective'.

This AR therefore set out to explore student expectations of effective progress feedback, and to identify the challenges associated with producing SPRs, with the aim of developing a framework that could enable teachers to provide students with what they consider to be more effective feedback on their progress.

Participants and organisation

The majority of the school's student population comprises students from Central and South America, with teachers from a wide range of countries including Australia, the UK, the US, South Africa, India, Hong Kong, Italy, and many others.

The teaching is organised into 13 four-week sessions per calendar year where students have a Core class (Monday–Wednesday) and an Elective class (Thursday–Friday), meaning they are taught by two teachers every session. At the end of each session students receive written feedback in the form of SPRs on the progress made within that session. These SPRs are produced by students' Core teachers, and they prompt teachers to include comments on their areas of achievement and the areas that need improvement.

Due to the fast nature of each session, where students are assessed and change classes every four weeks, SPRs provide an opportunity to provide students with regular, detailed feedback which can inform them of their progress and outline how to improve their skills.

Methodology

Research questions

Based on the above, we sought to answer the following research questions (RQs):

1. What are student expectations with regard to written feedback on their progress?
2. What are the barriers to writing effective student progress reports, and how can these be overcome?

Procedure

Student expectations

To investigate the first RQ, which concerns student expectations of feedback, we conducted one-to-one interviews with open-ended questions to enable students to elaborate on their learning and feedback experience. The questions were as follows:

1. What type of feedback on your progress do you expect from your teachers at ILSC?
2. What kind of feedback do you expect from your SPRs that you receive at the end of each session?
3. Name three things that make teacher feedback effective. Why are these important to you?
4. What do you find more valuable: acknowledging your achievements or highlighting areas for improvement? Why?

5. What level of feedback detail would you find useful in your SPRs?

The interviews lasted between 6-12 minutes and were conducted by the second researcher. The interviews were recorded, and subsequently coded to extract the main themes.

Barriers to effectiveness

To investigate the second RQ, which concerns what challenges teachers experience when producing SPRs and how to overcome these, we held a teacher workshop. This was to enable teachers to share and discuss their experience and thoughts together, and, with our guided support, to collaboratively generate practical ideas to overcome the challenges they encountered. Eight teachers attended the workshop, which lasted for 45 minutes.

The workshop had the following staging:

1. Group exploration of barriers faced when producing SPRs.
2. Analysis of 10 SPR samples (based on our judgement, five effective and five ineffective ones).
3. Brainstorming of solutions to the barriers within institutional constraints.

The effectiveness of SPRs was linked to the emergent themes from the student interviews to make the outcomes of the workshop directly applicable to the context of the research and its participants.

Findings and discussion of student expectations

Nine students were interviewed, and the coded data is presented in Appendix 1. Upon analysis, we found that the most common expectation amongst respondents was the need for specificity and detail in feedback. None of the respondents were keen on receiving generic or brief feedback. They all strongly believed that detailed feedback plays a major role in shaping their learning outcomes. As one student said: '*I prefer feedback that focused on specific areas of achievements and improvement and not just a general comment. For example, not "grammar needs improvement", but "be careful with your use of past tenses because you sometimes use present tense for past actions."*'

Although only two respondents emphasised the importance of face-to-face over written feedback, all respondents identified a need for SPRs to be aimed at highlighting specific language points that students need to target in order to improve their language skills.

Another major expectation that almost all students expressed was the need for personalised comments. Students are capable of distinguishing generic and/or stock comments from ones that are targeted to individual needs. They appreciate comments which directly communicate with them and are conversational in tone. Additionally, the lower-level students (pre-intermediate and below) struggle to decipher comments which contain jargon, colloquialisms or sophisticated lexis. They much prefer simplified language.

A less common but important point raised by one of the students was the lack of awareness of the role an SPR holds in the students' learning journey. She suggested that briefing students about the concept of SPRs on the first day of the session could make a substantial difference in ameliorating the effectiveness of SPRs. One of the students said: '*In my first session, I did not know what is SPR. If teacher tell us on first day, we can use SPR to improve our language.*'

Exploratory intervention: Tutorials

Upon analysing the emergent themes from student interviews, it became obvious that students were envisaging highly personalised, detailed feedback. We believed that one of the most convenient ways of achieving this would be through one-to-one tutorials which would provide the students with the opportunity to discuss their progress and gain insight on the three areas of need highlighted above.

To investigate whether tutorials would, indeed, be an effective solution to meeting students' feedback expectations, it was decided to try them out as an exploratory intervention. The tutorials were conducted as part of a Core class held by the first researcher, Filip.

The intervention included the following steps:

1. A pre-intervention questionnaire to gain further insight on student feedback expectations.
2. One-on-one tutorials conducted during students' final Core class of a session.
3. Provision of SPRs to students based on the notes from the tutorials.
4. A post-intervention questionnaire to analyse student satisfaction with the feedback and SPRs.
5. A post-intervention interview with Filip carried out by Kapil (the second researcher) to investigate the teacher perspective and practical feasibility.

As the tutorials were conducted during a lesson, students who were not in a tutorial at any specific time were given an autonomous research task which they needed to present at the end of the lesson. This was to ensure students always had a task and were being challenged.

Findings and discussion from the tutorial

Fifteen students completed the pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix 2 for detailed answers) and as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, the results affirmed students' preference for personalised, detailed feedback focused on how to improve: 66% mentioned they wanted tips on how to improve (n=10), while just over a quarter stated they wanted 'very specific' feedback (n=4).

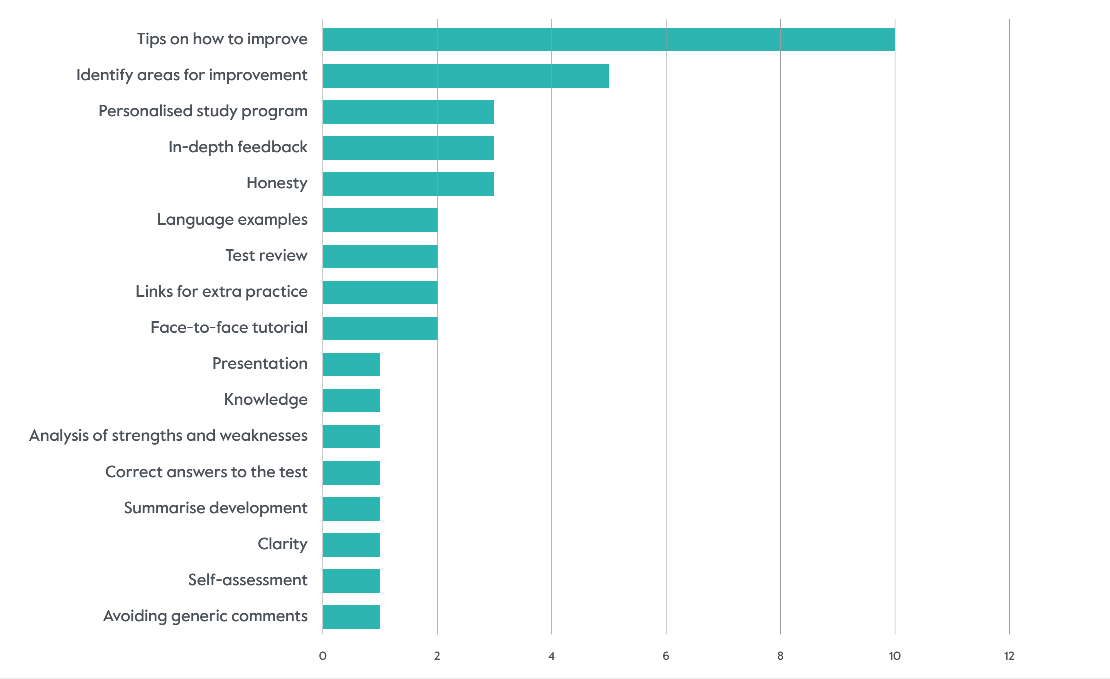


Figure 1: Q3. Name three things that could make teacher feedback useful in helping you learn English

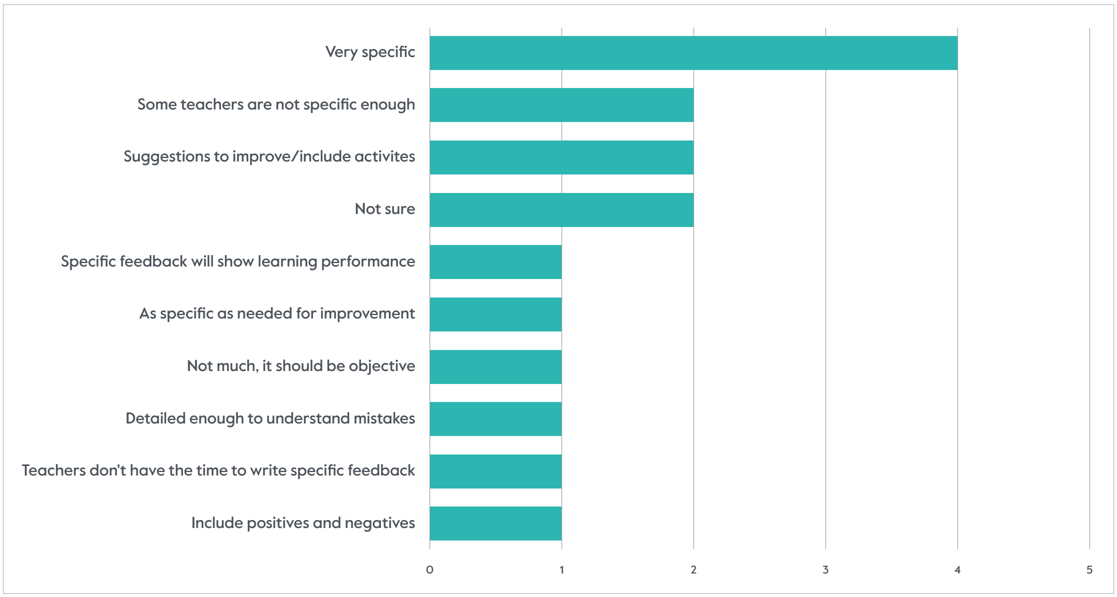


Figure 2: Q5. How specific and detailed should your teacher be in their SPR comments for you?

Interestingly, as can be seen in Figure 3, without being told what the intervention would be, 10 students suggested holding face-to-face tutorials, which is what they were offered the following day, on the last day of the session. Each student's tutorial was limited to 10 minutes to ensure fairness, and sufficient time for feedback on the group task at the end. The latter did not occur, as many students left after their tutorials – indeed, classroom management was highlighted as one of the challenges by the first researcher who conducted the tutorials (see Appendix 3 for further insight on the process by the first researcher).

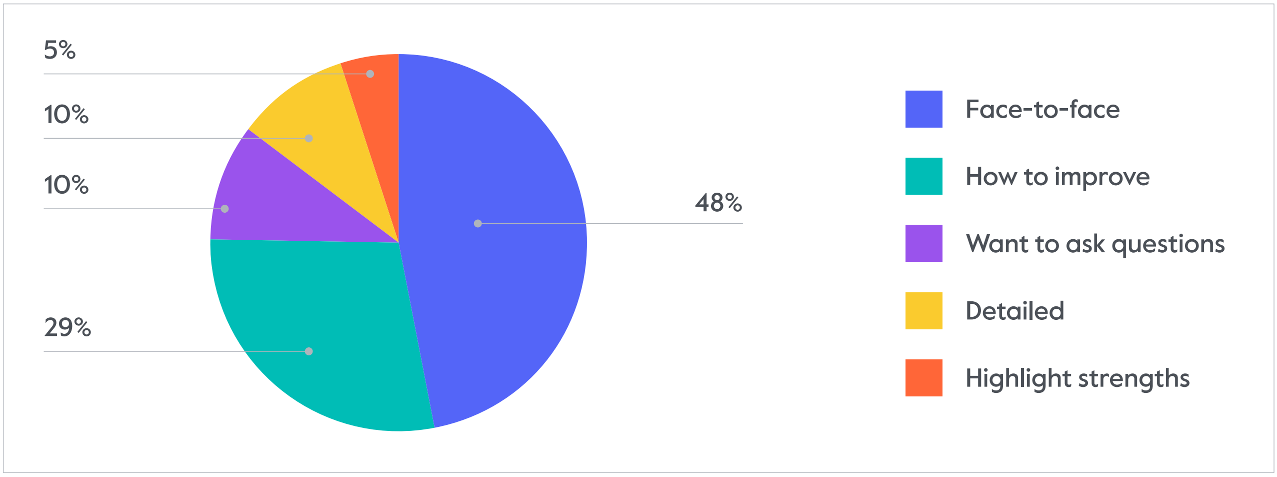


Figure 3: QI. How would you like your ILSC teachers to give you feedback to help you improve your English?

However, the tutorials were deemed a success by both students and the teacher/first researcher. The latter reported great student engagement and satisfaction and highlighted the importance of student involvement in the creation of their SPRs, as the students are mostly professional adults who possess awareness of their learning abilities, goals and outcomes. Tutorials were time-effective and accelerated the process of producing effective SPRs.

From the students' perspective, six students completed the post-tutorial questionnaire (responses to questions 1 to 4 are in Figure 4; responses to questions 5 to 7 are in Appendix 4). As can be seen in Figure 4, the feedback was overwhelmingly and unequivocally positive – students stated that the tutorials met their expectations and were helpful, offering practical ways to improve their English, and they all affirmed that they would be interested in having these tutorials every session. The reasons stated were as follows:

> '*They're helpful.*'
>
> '*Great way to get feedback.*'
>
> '*I like it.*'
>
> '*It's more personal.*'
>
> '*It's more focused and practical.*'
>
> '*The tutorial was the best in my experience.*'
>
> '*The tutorial was really good and helpful.*'

Students also wanted the tutorials to be supplemented by written feedback ('*Give feedback in writing, too*'), which followed in the form of an SPR after the post-tutorial questionnaire was administered. This was formatted using bullet-pointed notes from the tutorial. Further evaluation would need to be conducted to ascertain whether students were satisfied with the format of the written SPRs. Also, it needs to be noted that tutorials are not a regular part of the institutional feedback framework, so implementing them within the institutional context could be challenging. Below are the questions from the post-tutorial questionnaire.

Q1. The feedback/tutorial met my expectations.

Q2. Teacher's feedback was useful in terms of helping me improve my English.

Q3. Teacher's feedback provided me with practical tips and recommendations on how to improve.

Q4. Teacher's feedback was detailed enough.

NB. The participants were given the options to disagree, too, but no responses other than those presented above were recorded.

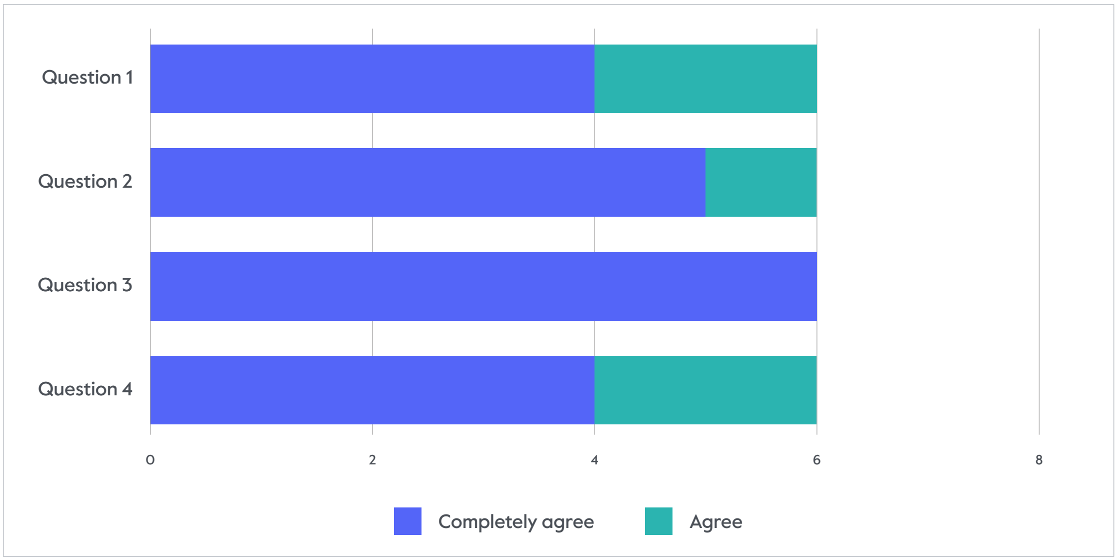


Figure 4: Positive feedback

Findings and discussion of teacher workshop

Based on the above outcomes of the interviews, the following student expectations were incorporated into the workshop for teachers:

a. feedback should be specific and detailed;

b. feedback should inform students why they make certain mistakes, and how to avoid them;

c. feedback should provide practical tips on how to improve students' English in real life.

Barriers to effectiveness

Several useful findings emerged from the teacher workshop. The most pertinent barrier to producing effective SPRs is time management. Outlining the sessional breakdown of the classes explains this issue further. Each session runs for four weeks and is comprised of three Core and two Elective classes. The Core class teachers are supposed to produce written feedback in the form of SPRs at the beginning of Week 4. Some teachers reported to have found it challenging to incorporate the feedback writing process into their regular administrative tasks outside of teaching hours. They also find it difficult to comprehensively understand an individual student's strengths, weaknesses and needs in the short time span. This ultimately leads to a general lack of detail and personalisation in the language of SPRs.

More reassuringly, all the teachers were able to unanimously segregate the SPR samples into effective and ineffective samples. The effective ones were detailed, specific and personalised, whereas the ineffective ones were vague, generic and brief. The teachers also posited the need for proofreading SPRs prior to submission as typos and errors deteriorated the quality of SPRs.

However, despite being able to distinguish effective from ineffective SPRs, some teachers reported other challenges relating to time management, e.g., difficulty in accommodating the SPR writing process into their official working hours which they preferred to dedicate to lesson planning. They questioned the effectiveness of SPRs in the actual learning process of the students and they raised their concern regarding the unawareness of the existence of SPRs amongst a few students who end up never checking them.

Conclusion

It is our belief that feedback plays an indispensable role in the student learning process. Students wholeheartedly value feedback, which not only acknowledges their achievements, but also highlights the areas which need improvement. However, they are more inclined towards having their areas of improvement delineated in detail with a special focus on specific language points that are problematic, along with suggestions on how to improve. They also appreciate feedback which is personalised and which caters to individual needs. One of the ways to achieve this is to adopt a student-led feedback procedure that could add great value to the overall effectiveness of feedback. This could be achieved by incorporating an SPR 'comments creation' procedure into the regular lesson plan which could potentially (and substantially) overcome the constraints that prevent teachers from producing effective SPRs. Although this does not entirely overcome the nuanced institutional barriers faced by teachers, it does offer a starting point to brainstorm ways to integrate SPR feedback procedures into classroom practices and enhance the effectiveness of feedback processes.

Reflections

To examine the effectiveness of the workshop, an analysis of the participants' SPRs from before and after the workshop could be conducted. This would enable us to ascertain whether the sharing of ideas has led to any significant change in the quality of the SPRs, which could be further evaluated by a student survey. Such a qualitative survey could provide insights on the extent to which the hopefully improved SPRs meet student expectations.

The research has helped us understand the importance of student participation in feedback processes. Not only were the student-led SPR writing sessions more effective and personalised, but also time-efficient. This also feeds into the progressive ideas in pedagogy pertaining to student autonomy.

Appendix I: Summary of student interview findings

1. What type of feedback on your progress do you expect from your teachers at ILSC?

a. The concept and purpose of SPRs must be explained to the class on the first day of the session.

b. Skills and system-specific feedback, focusing on the areas within those skills and systems that have to be targeted. For example, the minimal sound pair of L and R sounds.

c. Students like the present feedback system where the teacher chats face-to-face and corrects on the spot.

d. One of the respondents believes in stringent feedback which scrutinises students' habit of reverting to L1 instead of being sensitive to students' linguistic choices.

2. What kind of feedback do you expect from your SPRs that you receive at the end of each session?

a. Language must be graded in feedback to avoid ambiguity. Feedback should also be discussed verbally.

b. Focused on specific areas of achievements and not just a generic remark about what skill needs improvement. For example, not 'grammar needs improvement,' but 'be careful with your use of narrative tenses as you tend to slip back into present forms when speaking in a flow.'

c. Includes quotes from students' speech and analyses them.

d. Tips to improve outside of classroom. Real-life language application.

e. Scrutinising students' study methods and strategies.

f. Outlining not just the problems but also insight into the source of the errors and strategies to amend.

3. Name three things that make teacher feedback effective. Why are these important to you?

a. Feedback must be motivating.

b. Feedback must acknowledge specificity of students' academic achievements not so much their personality.

c. Attention to detail and goal oriented.

4. What do you find more valuable, acknowledging your achievements or highlighting areas for improvement? Why?

a. Both are equally important. The right balance to be struck. Areas of improvement must be highlighted in a sensitive way, so it doesn't impede the confidence and fluency of the student.

b. Their areas of achievement are generally known to students. Improvement areas need more attention.

c. Achievements are usually conspicuous, but shortcomings can only be pointed out by teachers.

d. Acknowledging achievements builds self-confidence when a student is surrounded by judgmental or critical peers.

5. What level of feedback detail would you find useful in your SPRs?

a. Almost all respondents don't expect the teacher to make detailed notes about each student's language points as it is not feasible. However, frequently recurring errors must be made known in the SPR.

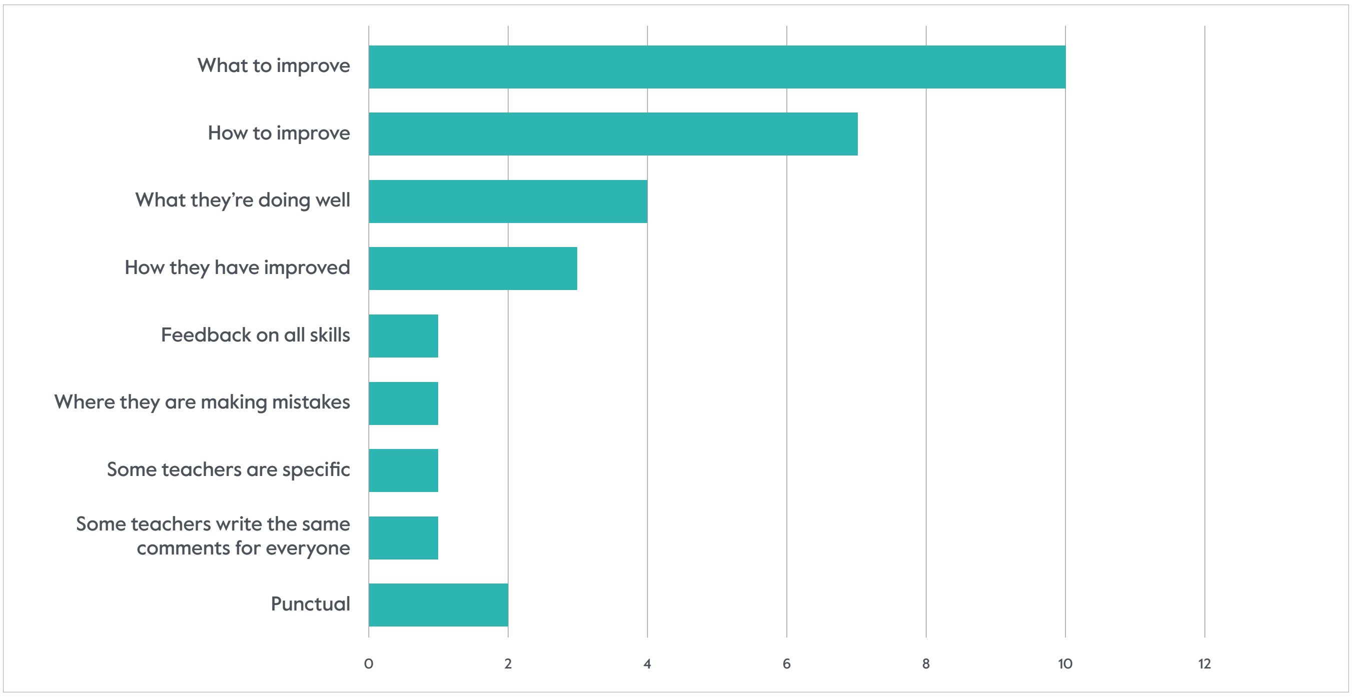
b. Detail is always appreciated as much as possible.

c. Detailed feedback is value for money.

d. Students acknowledge that it is not logistically possible for teachers to give deep insight, but achievements or errors related to the language point taught in that session must make it to the SPRs.

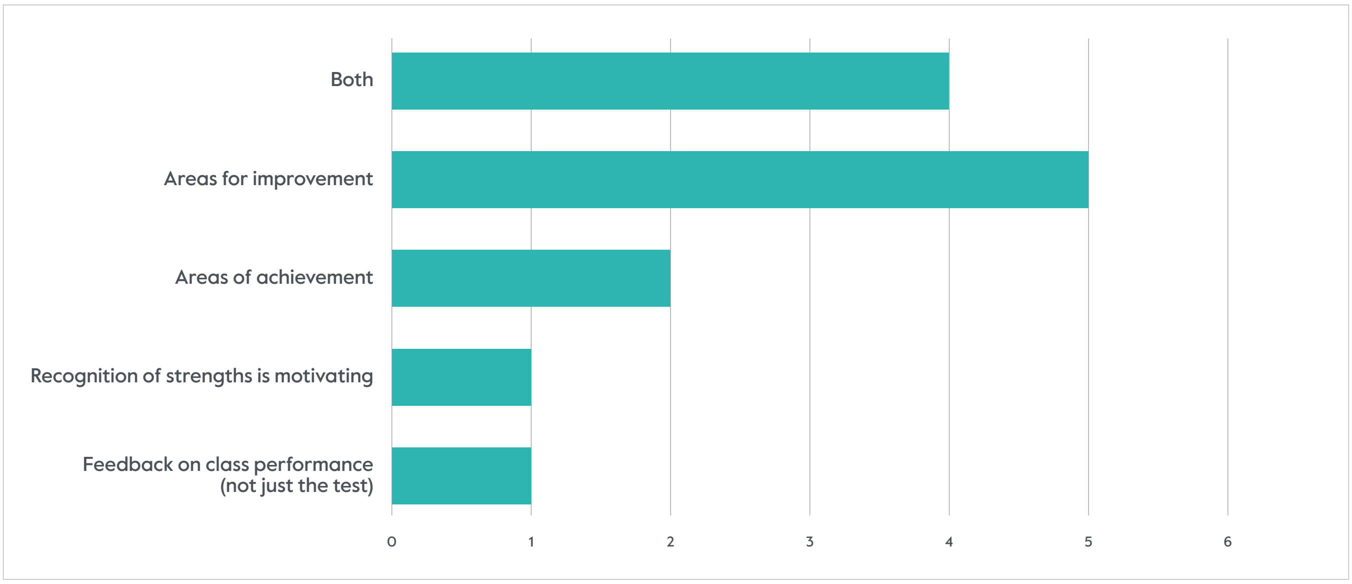
Appendix 2: Pre-tutorial questionnaire

Q2. What do you expect to find in your SPRs that you receive at the end of each session? What should the SPR comments include?

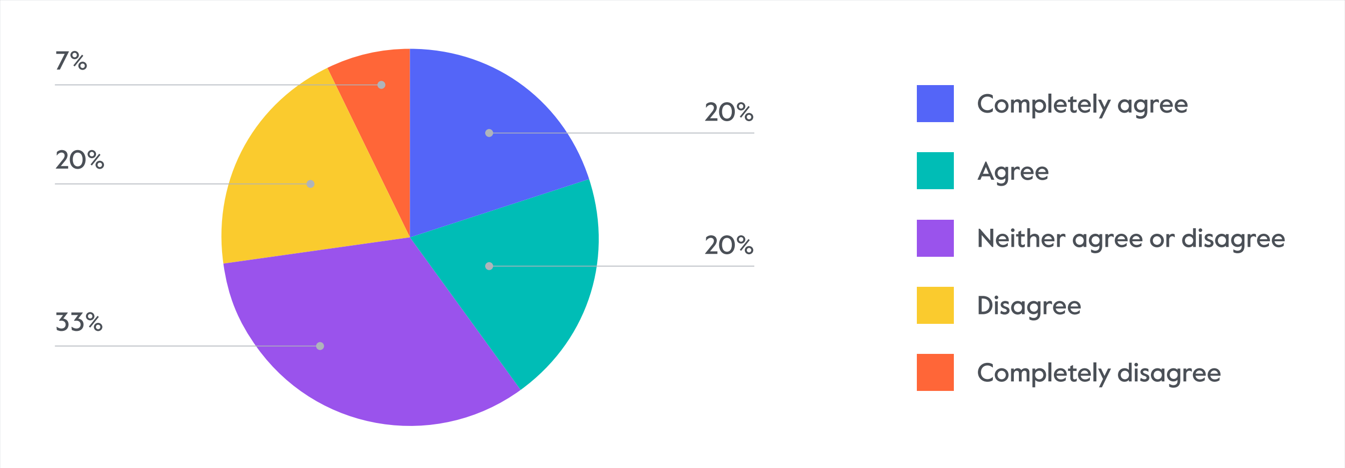


Q4. What do you find more valuable in your SPRs, acknowledging your achievements or highlighting areas for improvement?

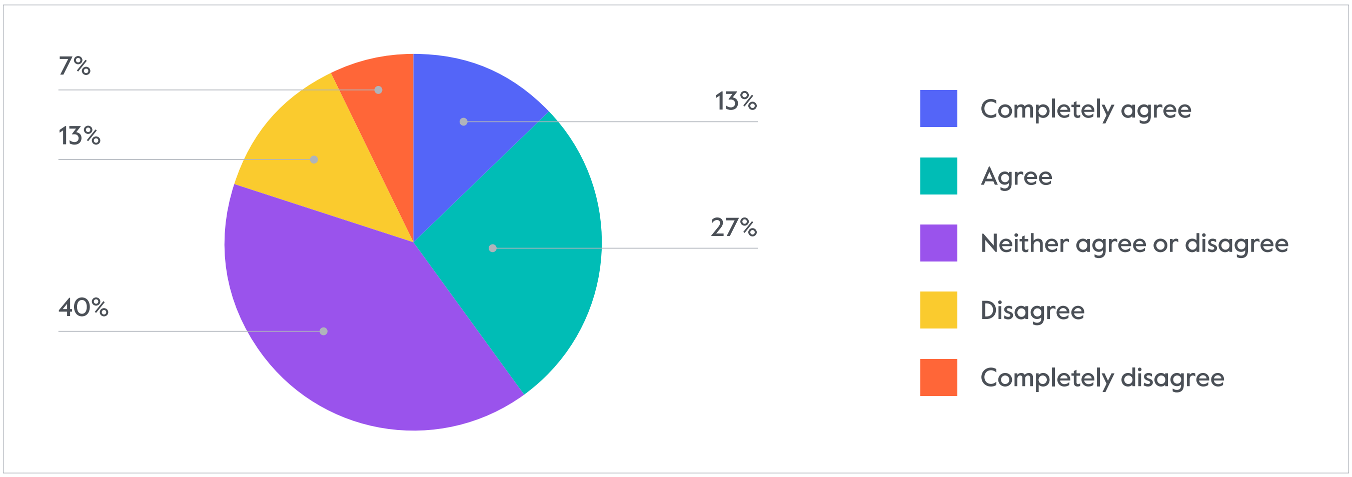
NB. Views expressed in other parts of the questionnaire have been removed from the responses in this section.



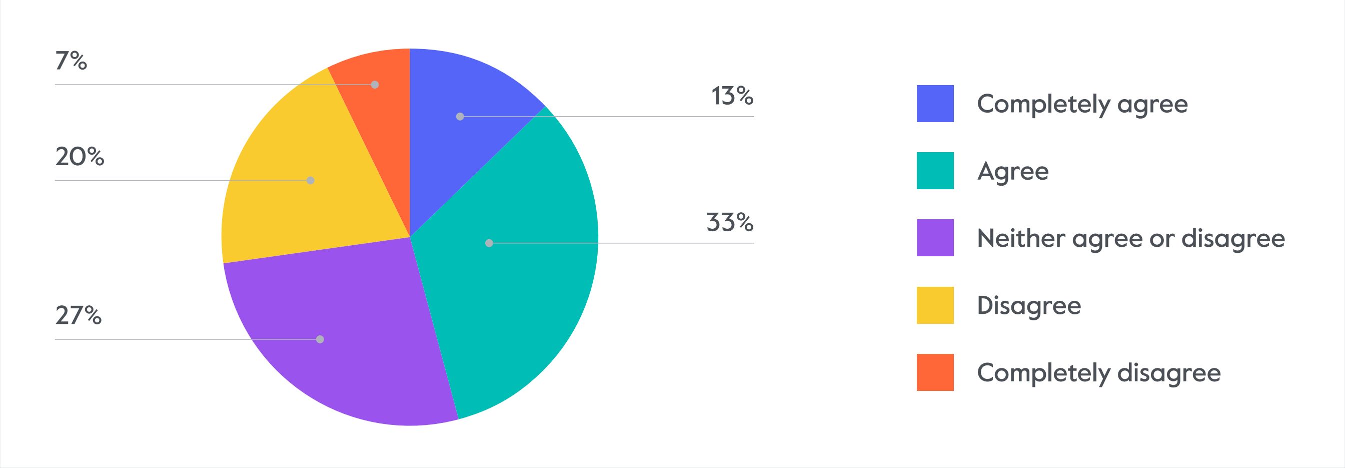
Q6. Teacher feedback at ILSC is what I expected.



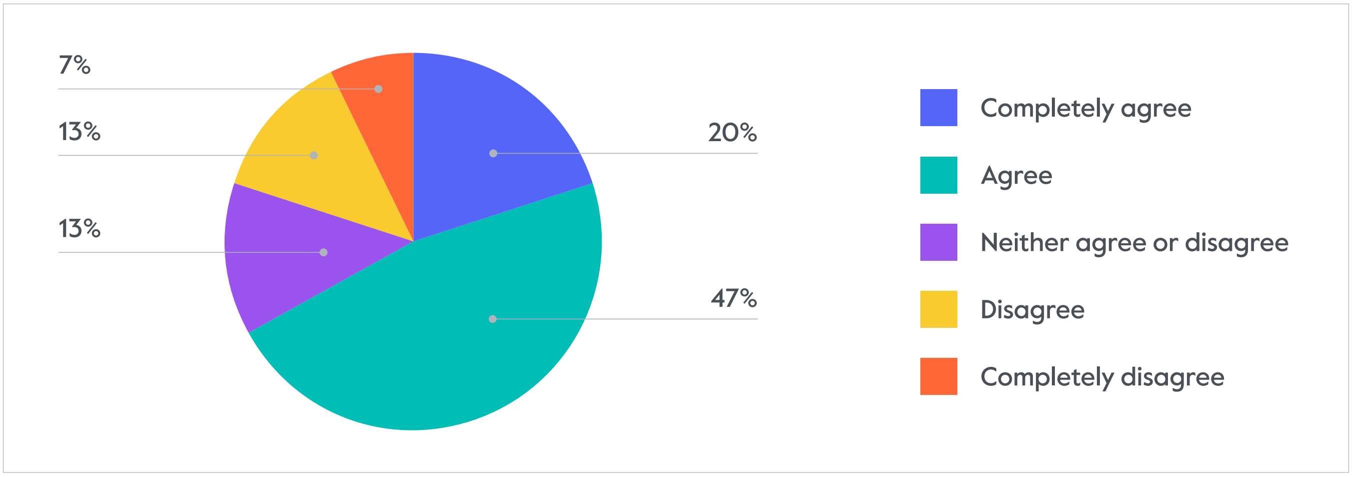
Q7. SPRs at the end of each session are what I expected.



Q8. SPRs I have received in the past were useful.



Q9. Teacher feedback at ILSC is valuable and useful.



Q10. Is there anything else related to feedback you'd like to add?

- Teachers should clarify the meaning of 'feedback' because students don't understand it.
- Tutorials could be useful.
- Each SPR should include 'complete feedback.'
- Would like to get an SPR at the end of each course.

Appendix 3: Post-tutorial interview with the first researcher

1. How was students' attitude towards receiving a feedback tutorial?

Students were open, receptive, and engaged.

2. How much time and effort went into preparing for the tutorial? Is it feasible to squeeze this into your lesson planning schedule outside of teaching hours?

The tutorials were student–led, there was lots of eliciting. Definitely feasible, planning took less than a normal lesson. Makes up for marking. Tasks must be planned whilst you do tutorials.

3. Were you able to find anything new about students' areas of achievement and improvement whilst speaking with them which you wouldn't have found otherwise?

Yes. Open questions prompted students to reflect, which shed light on new areas and their perception. This was supplemented by the teacher's insight.

4. Do you think students are more aware of their achievements and improvements than teachers, or vice versa?

You only see your students seven times per session, so students have a better idea. Teachers get a brief snapshot of them.

5. How important is the students' role in generating effective SPR comments?

Contrary to popular belief, they should be involved in their own learning and reflect. Teachers can help make aims tangible and achievable. Students' role here is indispensable.

6. What were some class management and planning barriers you faced whilst carrying out the tutorials?

Classroom management barriers: many students disappeared after the tutorial, didn't do the task assigned. Need to come up with a more engaging task.

7. Any technological barriers? Does the teacher need to be highly tech-savvy?

Notes can be copy pasted to SPR. Could be handwritten, too, but that's more work. SPRs could be a summary of the tutorial, nothing new.

8. How was students' response and feedback to the tutorial?

They were grateful, appreciative. Personalised feedback was appreciated.

9. Would you do this tutorial every session?

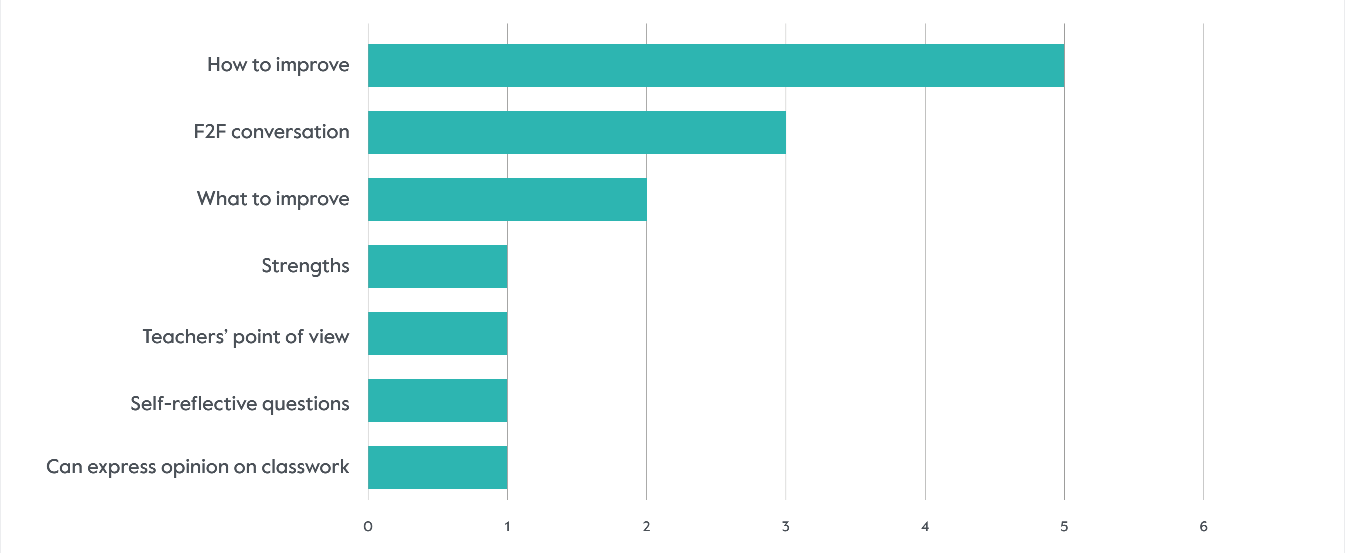
It's subjective: we work within institutional constraints. Tutorials are more manageable and preferable in terms of the workload. It replaces teaching. It's a paid lesson. Challenge: task needs to be engaging. Team teaching could be experimented with to overcome this challenge.

10. Anything you'd like to do differently if the tutorials were made official?

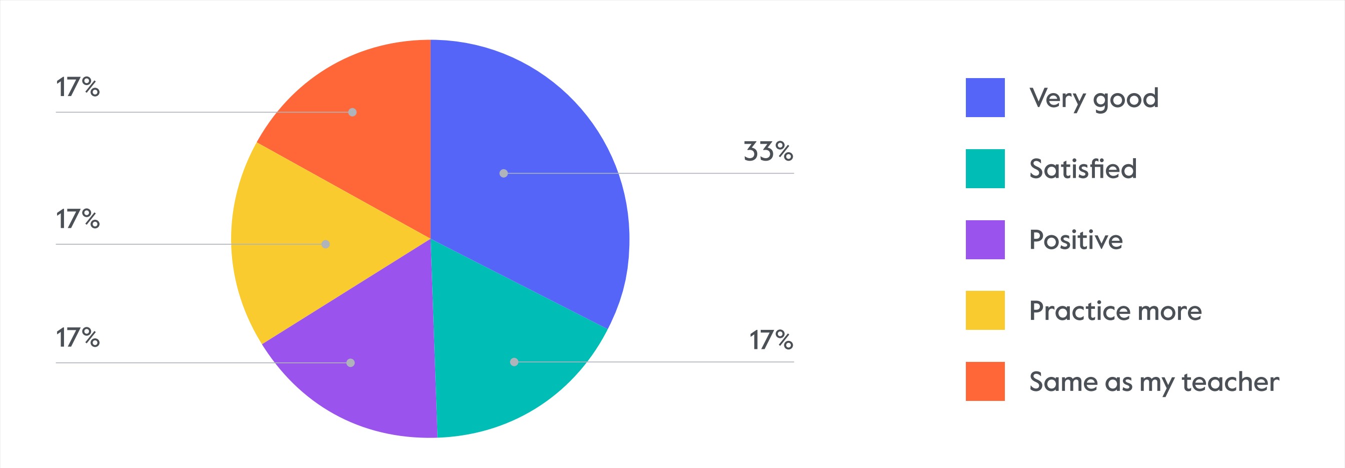
Class management: to make students more engaged.

Appendix 4: Post-tutorial questionnaire

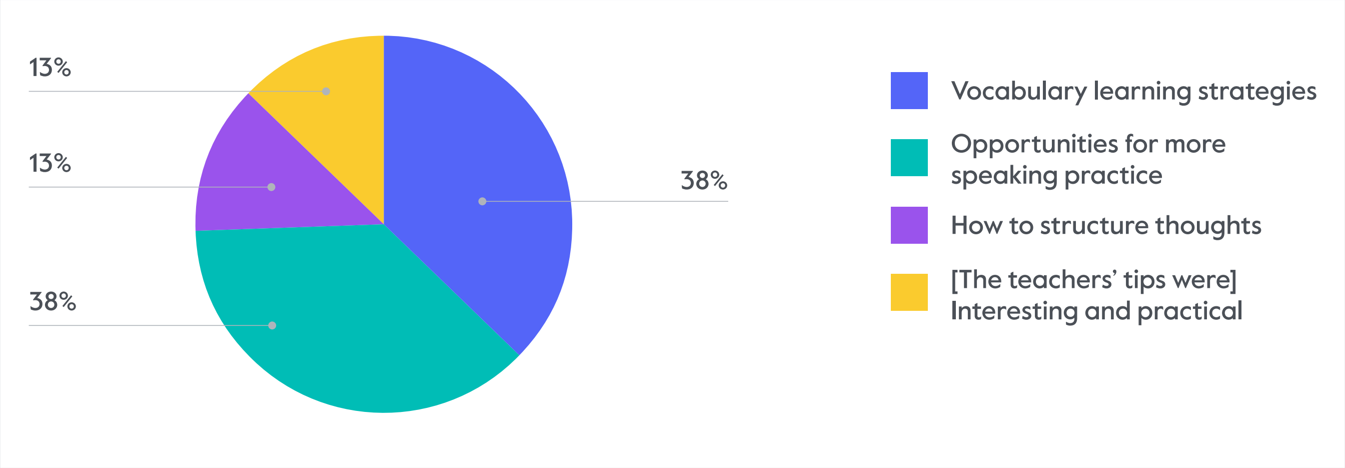
Q5. List three things that you found most useful in the feedback tutorial.



Q6. How do you feel about your performance and progress this session after your feedback session?



Q7. What practical tips or recommendations were provided by your teacher to improve your English during the tutorial?



Peer feedback in process writing instruction: Reflective practice for ESL General English writing classes

Jiaqi Li and Zhaobin Dong, Discover English, Melbourne

Introduction

Our research interest in investigating peer feedback in General English (GE) writing classes derives from the research gap encountered in the literature and professional experience. First, peer feedback has increasingly become an essential instructional method in ESL writing classrooms (Cao et al 2022). However, limited literature focuses on the diversity and discrepancy of peer feedback between learners of various cultural backgrounds, especially in the Australian ELICOS sector (Pham 2022). Second, teacher-led feedback is recognised to be relatively 'ineffective' in our teaching experience. For instance, although the first researcher, Jiaqi, continually highlighted the importance of containing one idea while writing one sentence in persuasive writing, it has been challenging for students to actually do this. She attributed this challenge to students' lack of writer and reader awareness, which can lead to errors such as inserting multiple ideas within one sentence.

Context and participants

The research was conducted at Discover English, a language school in Melbourne, specifically in GE classes. Jiaqi was teaching the upper-intermediate class, whereas Zhaobin was teaching in an intermediate-level class. Each class consisted of 15 to 17 ESL learners who were highly motivated to enhance their writing skills, as some were planning to pursue further studies or take the IELTS test in Australia. Based on Discover English's GE curriculum, learning outcomes, and aligned progress tests, persuasive writing is emphasised at the upper-intermediate level. In contrast, descriptive writing takes precedence at the intermediate level.

Due to the nature of the GE course at Discover, students had the flexibility to take level-up tests any week and progress to the next level. New students continuously enrolled in these two classes on a weekly basis, while some existing students progressed to the higher level of the GE class. Therefore, there was a disparity in the number of students participating in the pre- and post-surveys in our study. Table 1 below outlines the more detailed participation information of the research cohort over one teaching cycle.

Table I: Participation information in two levels

Assessment	**Jiaqi's upper-intermediate class**		**Zhaobin's intermediate class**	
Cycle	**Cycle 1**	**Cycle 2**	**Cycle 1**	**Cycle 2**
Number of students (pre-survey)	8	13	18	19
Number of students (post-survey)	10	10	11	15
Age range	19–32		19–32	
Nationality	Thai; Colombian; Russian; Vietnamese; Indonesian		Thai; Colombian; Brazilian; Japanese; Vietnamese; Chinese	

We conducted this intervention over the course of one teaching cycle, spanning five weeks. The research followed Kemmis and McTaggart's cyclical model (1988, as cited in Burns 2010:7), which involves the iterative process of planning, action, observation, and reflection. This action research (AR) acknowledged student agency through their reflective values as insiders, whereas we maintained the stance of facilitator to promote their reflections on peer feedback.

Research focus and research questions

The teaching practice of conducting peer feedback workshops also reminds us as authors of how we endeavoured to produce reader-friendly academic writing skills as ESL doctoral researchers – participating in a doctoral writing group to give feedback to peers. Therefore, we believed devising peer feedback workshops through *process writing instruction* as a reflective practice in our ESL writing classes could potentially contribute to improving students' English writing proficiency.

By exploring how ESL learners at the intermediate and upper-intermediate levels used peer feedback as a reflective space to improve their writing proficiency, this study sought to investigate the following research questions (RQs):

- What are the enablers and barriers for ESL students with different cultural backgrounds to provide feedback to their peers in ESL writing classrooms?
- What kinds of tasks or strategies will effectively equip students from different levels with writer and reader awareness?

For us, this study provided nuanced understanding of the similarity and diversity of peer feedback across cultures in the multicultural ESL writing classrooms. It also shed light on fostering students' writer and reader awareness, and demonstrated a transformative process that could facilitate teachers to understand how to instruct their students in terms of peer feedback.

Intervention

Figure 1 shows the process of conducting our intervention. As shown on the horizontal axis, it was designed by following three main stages: (1) the instruction of a writing process, (2) feedback training, and (3) feedback exercise. It followed a non-linear model of a writing approach named *process writing* (Graham and Sandmel 2011). This writing intervention contains four stages of writing including planning, drafting, feedback, and revising. The vertical axis presents the timeline of this five-week teaching cycle.

It is worth noting that, building upon the preliminary findings from the initial round of workshops, Jiaqi modified the approach to feedback training delivery. This transformation involved shifting from solely written feedback to a blend of written and spoken feedback. More precisely, she began by quoting excerpts from the written feedback. Subsequently, using specific scenarios, she guided students to connect peer feedback with communication skills. This approach aimed to assist them in practising how to present criticism gently.

Similarly, Zhaobin modified the approach to deliver writing workshops and train students in giving peer feedback. She incorporated more scaffolding processes, including visualising topics and structural frameworks, to assist students in better understanding the writing requirements. In addition, Zhaobin crafted feedback checklists organised into three separate sections and introduced progressively during the students' feedback training, instead of providing three checklists to students in the final workshop.

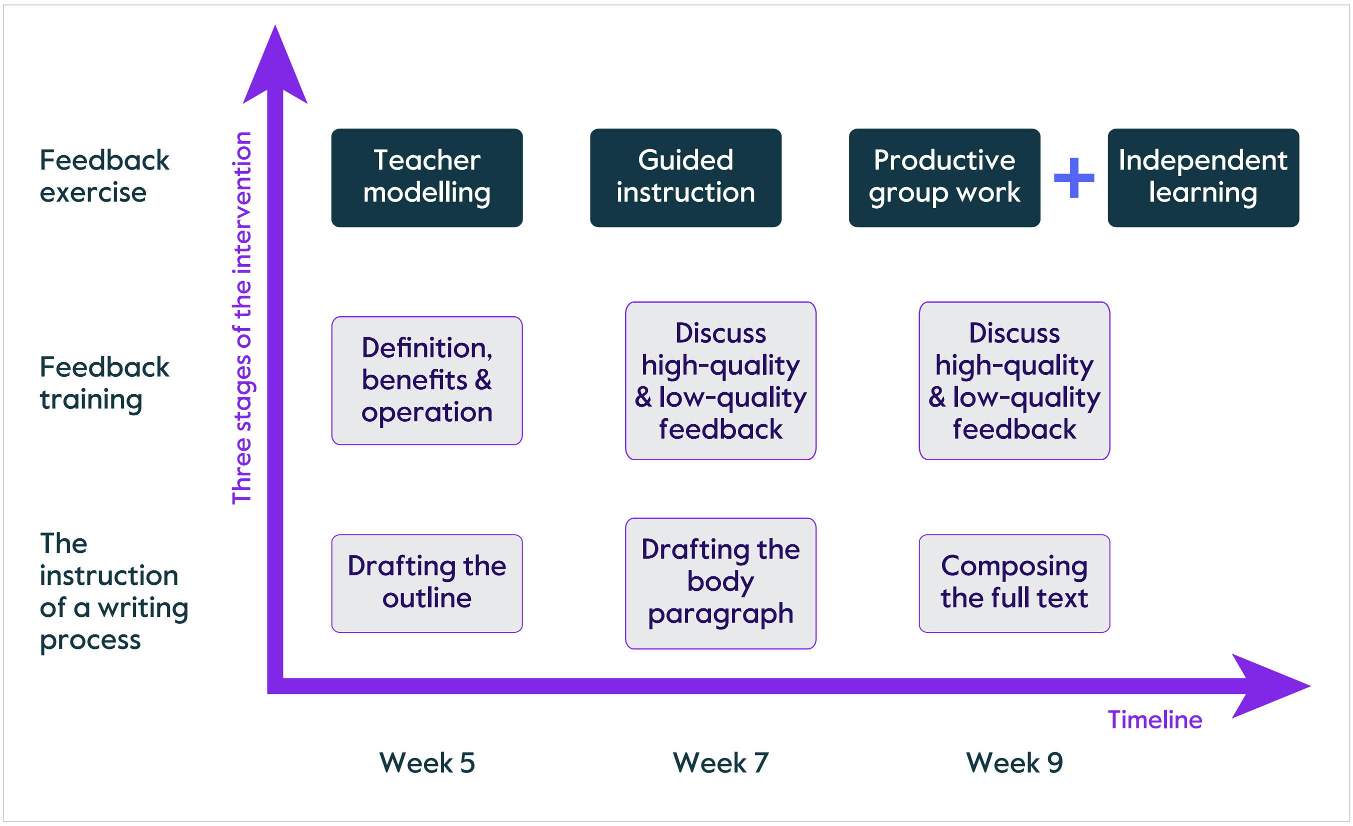

Feedback exercise
Feedback training
The instruction of a writing process
Three stages of the intervention
Teacher modelling
Guided instruction
Productive group work
+
Independent learning
Definition, benefits & operation
Discuss high-quality & low-quality feedback
Discuss high-quality & low-quality feedback
Drafting the outline
Drafting the body paragraph
Composing the full text
Timeline
Week 5
Week 7
Week 9

Figure I: The process of conducting this intervention

The first stage of devising the writing process instruction focused on facilitating students' planning and drafting. Students were engaged in various activities, including reordering a paragraph, reordering an essay, and identifying details. We designed the workshops to span a five-week period, with each workshop lasting two hours. To ensure continuity in designing the course, the complex writing drafting process was divided into three stages: (1) drafting the outline (introduction, topic sentences, and conclusion paragraph); (2) drafting the body paragraph; and finally (3) composing the full text.

Next, the intervention proceeded with a brief training session focused on introducing peer feedback. First, the session began by introducing the concept of peer feedback, followed by illustrating the advantages of utilising peer feedback in a writing class and workplace setting. Following this, students were given two peer feedback examples: one demonstrating high-quality feedback and the other showcasing low-quality feedback. The students engaged in an in-class discussion regarding effective ways to provide constructive written feedback to their peers.

The third stage of this intervention was a paper-based feedback exercise to consolidate students' feedback and revising processes. This exercise follows the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Fisher and Frey 2013), including (1) teacher modelling, (2) guided instruction, (3) productive group work, and (4) independent learning (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Teaching procedures of feedback exercise

Stage	Students are assigned to ...	Peer Checklist used	Appendix
Teacher modelling	Use Peer Checklist I (see Appendix 3) for reviewing outline, and its application was demonstrated by modelling its use on one previous student's anonymous practice essay.	Peer Checklist I for reviewing outline	Appendix 3
Guided instruction	Identify specific writing features discussed in class, such as topic sentences, supporting sentences, as well as grammar and vocabulary errors. Provide comments for each identified instance, including suggestions for improvement, by using Peer Checklist II and III.	Peer Checklist II (see Appendix 4) for reviewing the development of ideas; Peer Checklist III (see Appendix 3) for reviewing vocabulary and grammar.	Appendices 4 and 5
Productive group work	Collaboratively conduct their first peer review of a previous student's writing sample. Have a classroom discussion to share their approaches to the process, highlight challenges they encountered, and provide suggestions for future use of the checklist.	Peer Checklists II and III	Appendices 4 and 5
Independent learning	Independently conduct their second peer review after completing the full-text writing.	Peer Checklist II and III	Appendices 4 and 5

Data collection

During this intervention in both Cycle 1 and 2 data was collected containing: (1) pre-survey (Appendix 1) and post-surveys (Appendix 2); (2) field notes; (3) students' writing results.

First, Jiaqi developed a pre- and post-survey to gather students' demographic information, assess their confidence levels and attitudes toward providing peer feedback, and gather written reflections before and after the workshops. She subsequently conducted the surveys, while Zhaobin adapted these two surveys to her intermediate class. Second, we took field notes and pre-, mid-, and post-evaluations of students' writing in Weeks 5, 7, and 9. Third, we adapted the existing generalised writing rubric, splitting it into two distinct rubrics tailored to the specific characteristics of persuasive and narrative writing. We marked students' writing tasks through the Persuasive/Narrative Writing Rubric (see Appendix 6/7) both before and after the workshop. The intervention was revised in Cycle 2 based on initially analysing and reflecting on the data collected in Cycle 1.

Findings

While some students from both levels may have lacked confidence in their writing ability, most students from both classes remained positive towards peer feedback training and exercises.

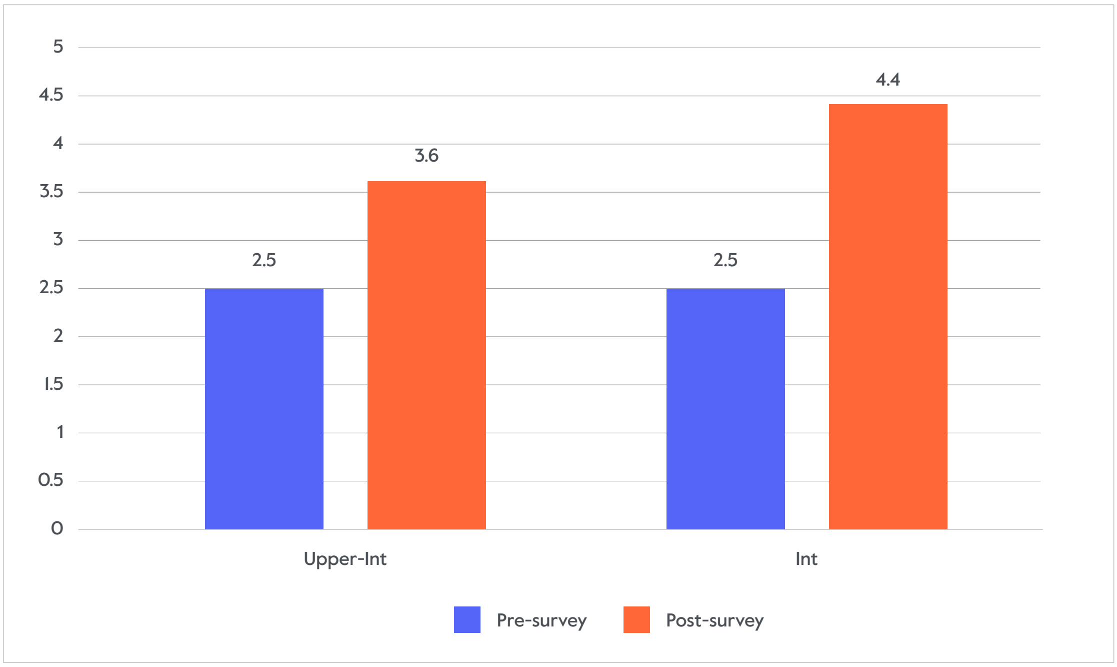


Figure 2: Student confidence in writing skills

There was a lack of significant change in students' confidence, but there was a stable increase in their understanding of peer feedback.

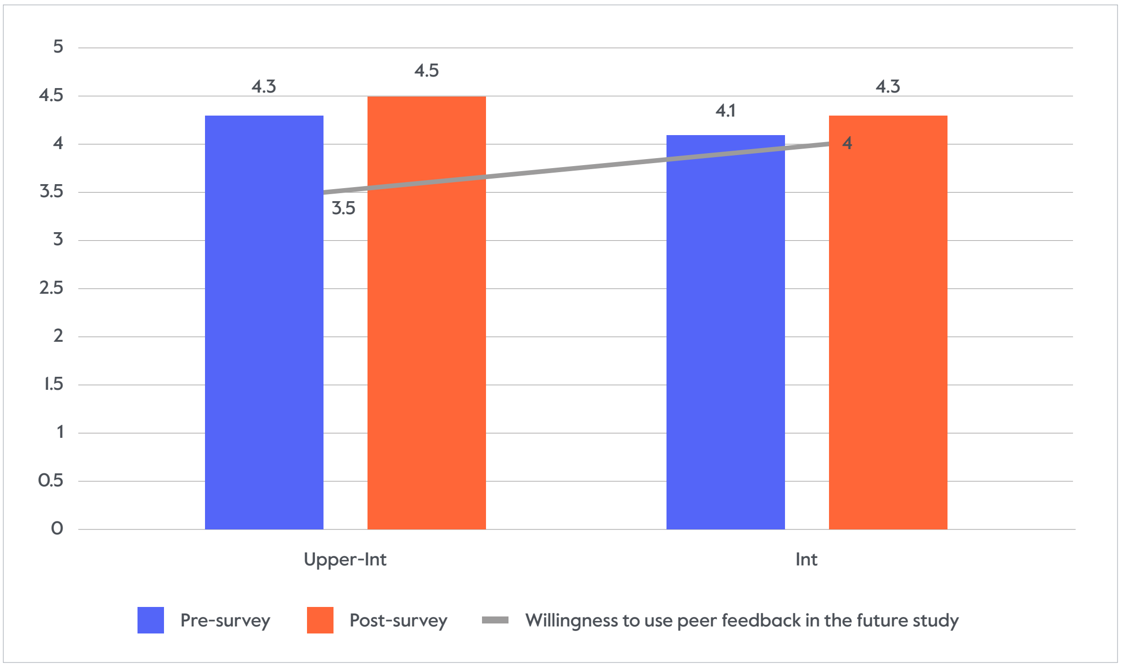


Figure 3: Student attitudes towards and willingness to use peer feedback training

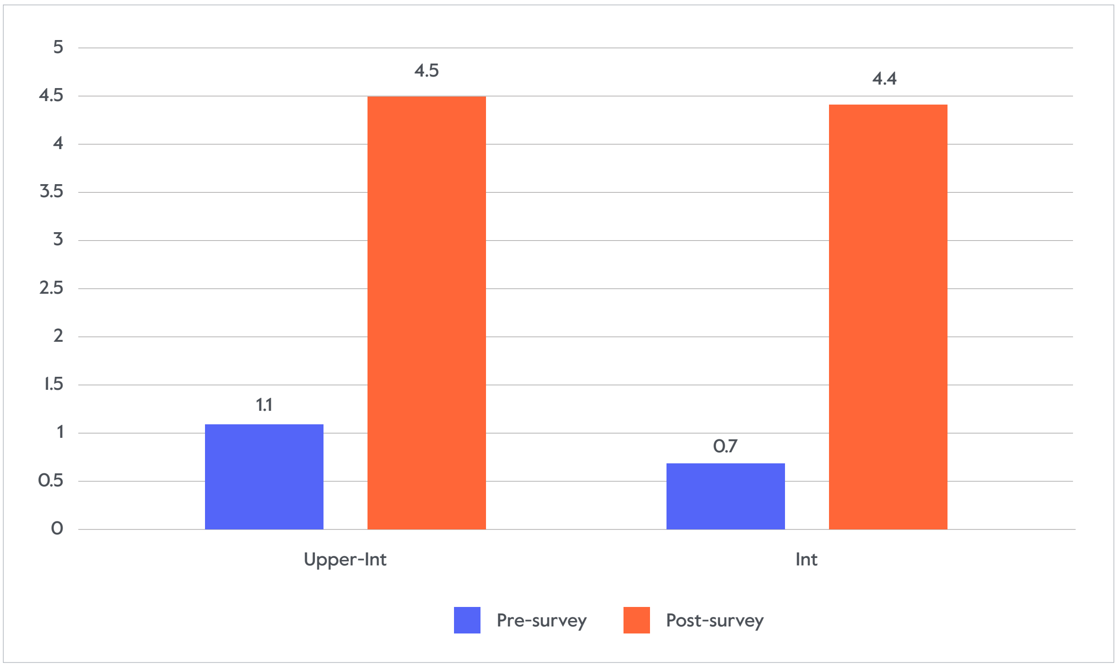


Figure 4: Student understanding of peer feedback training

While assessing the impact of peer feedback implementation pre- and post-introduction, a noteworthy improvement of student academic performance became apparent in both upper-intermediate and intermediate classes.

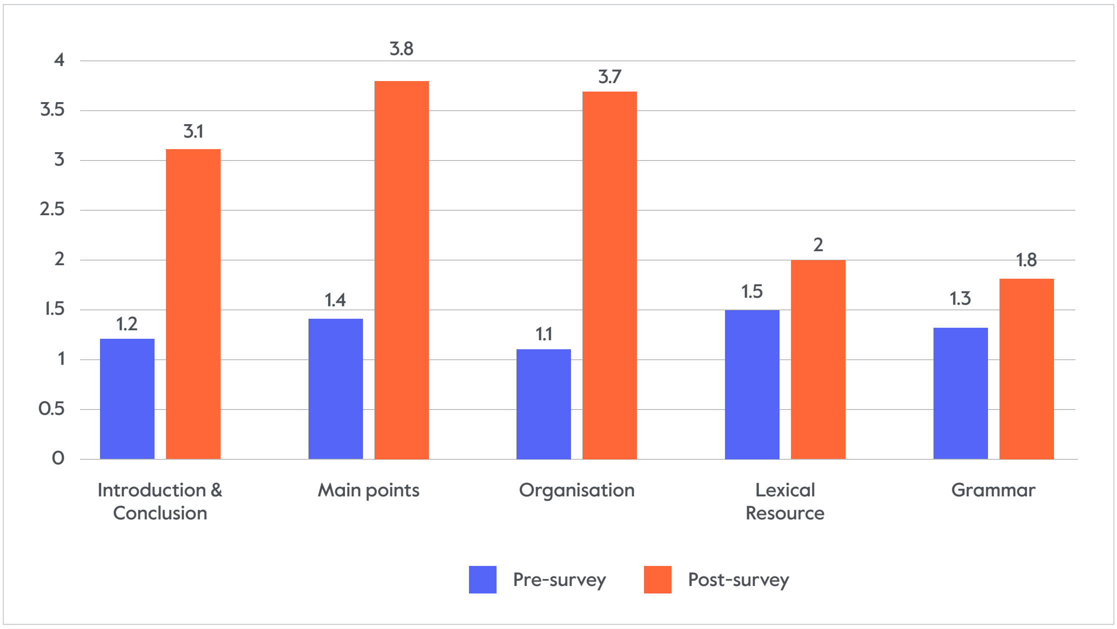


Figure 5: Upper-intermediate students' average scores based on each criterion in persuasive writing task

After the workshop, one participant expressed a sense of achievement as follows.

> *'The writing workshops help us improve our ideas and learn new vocabulary as well as focus on grammar.'* (Student A)

Similarly, another participant showed the benefit of using a written Peer Checklist to understand the organisation of persuasive writing.

> *'It's clear when I checked by using Peer Checklist.'* (Student D)

However, delving into some student reflections prompted a realisation that evaluating the effectiveness of the peer feedback workshop solely based on enhanced performance might be inadequate. Interestingly, students' reflection after introducing the written peer feedback revealed a prevalent misconception among students concerning the nature of peer feedback. Some associated it primarily with critiquing fellow students' written assignments.

> *'This is my first time to give feedback to others so that everything could be hard for me. Also I don't want to give a bad score to my peer, because I don't want them get sad.'* (Student B)

> *'It's good to share some of my ideas; however, it [giving feedback to my peers] can make them angry, because we have different ideas.'* (Student F)

Likewise, two other students shared the view that written peer feedback is ineffective, expressing a preference for feedback exclusively from the teacher rather than from peers who are still in the learning process.

> *'I don't think student feedback helps. Because they are also learning how to write the essay themselves. I'd better to give homework to write essay and check it the next day.'* (Student E)

> *'I think it's not the best idea for giving feedback to each other, because the teacher can give us feedback and maybe give more practice.'* (Student C)

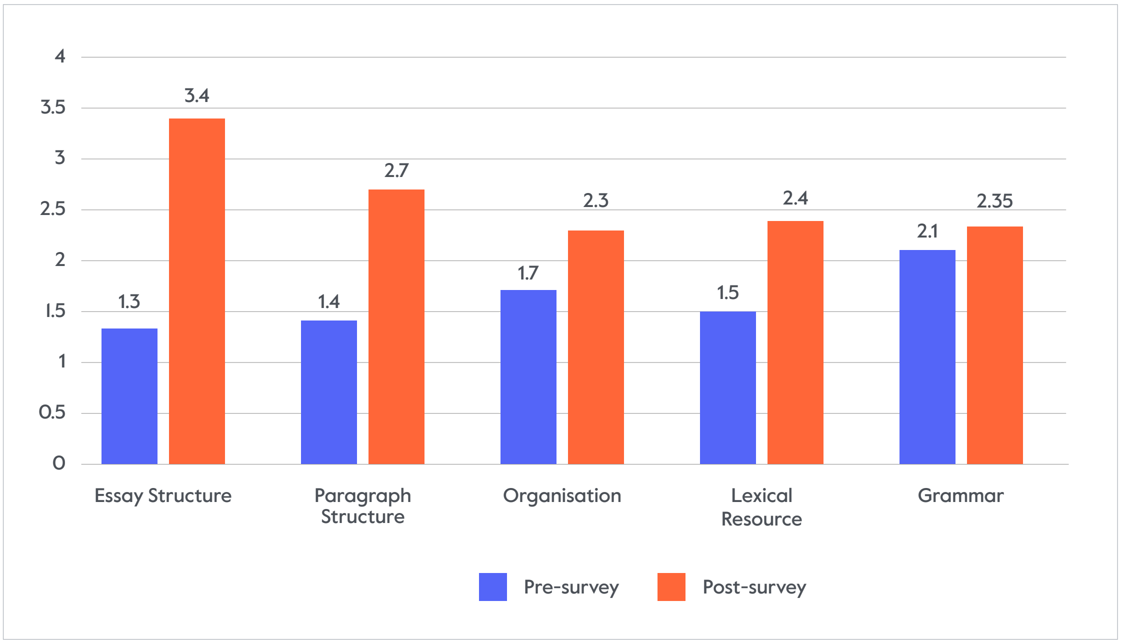


Figure 6: Intermediate students' average scores based on each criterion in the persuasive writing task

Conclusions and reflections

While the improved scores of students' writing assessment show that the intervention was relatively effective, students' reflections suggest their reluctance to conduct peer feedback and their preferences of learning from their teachers to correct the writing tasks. Table 3 synthesises the findings for RQ1, while Table 4 shows the responses to RQ2.

Table 3: Response to RQI

Stage		Upper-intermediate	Intermediate
Enablers	**Similarities**	• Consistent teacher scaffolding • Rapport and familiarity among participants	
	Differences	Maintained motivation because of witnessing the progress in writing by means of peer feedback	Limited changes in student's confidence, yet with a stable increase in their understanding of peer feedback
Barriers	**Similarities**	• Their preference to receive teacher feedback • Their lack of understanding the rationale for using peer feedback	
	Differences	Misconception of considering peer feedback as criticism	Different needs on grammar (e.g., word order for South American students; plural/singular for Asian students)

Table 4: Response to RQ2

	Upper-intermediate	Intermediate
Similarities	• Visualising the object • Applying essay outline • Introducing one checklist (e.g., outline; develop ideas or the use of grammar and punctuations) in each workshop	
Differences	Related spoken and written peer feedback not only to the classroom but also future lives as well as workplaces	Detailed scaffolding based on each criterion of the rubric

Seemingly, the straightforward training of written peer feedback is inappropriate for both intermediate and upper-intermediate students. One cannot deny the fact that when Jiaqi devised the peer feedback training in the first round of workshops, it covered the definition of this feedback and the wide range of ways its written form can be used. Despite the focus of the workshops on peer feedback, the participants primarily adhered to the instructions given by the teacher. The analysis of students' reflections after introducing the written feedback illuminated that the students' engagement largely adhered to prescribed guidelines, without fully grasping the potential advantages of integrating peer feedback into their professional development, both within and beyond the classroom setting.

Additionally, the contrast between the improved outcomes experienced by students and the negative comments received may arise from the unique profile of the study cohort. This profile pertains specifically to the participants enrolled in Discover's GE program – students aiming to enhance their spoken English skills for improved workplace proficiency rather than focusing on language-related examinations. Consequently, placing sole reliance on written feedback might not be in perfect alignment with their educational objectives.

For this particular group, a primary concern emerges: cultivating an understanding of the significance of peer feedback. During the second round of workshops for Jiaqi's upper-intermediate class, a blended feedback approach was employed. This involved citing excerpts from written feedback and subsequently contextualising them within communication skills scenarios. These additional sections aimed to assist students to provide peer feedback through softening their criticism.

As for intermediate classes, the character of the participants and the level of trust between them did have an impact on the feedback process. Zhaobin noticed that the students displayed different characteristics in one of the intermediate cycle workshops. Some students were relatively quiet and needed more time to get used to the feedback process, especially new students who had just joined the course. One of the new intakes, who had been involved in the course for a fortnight, seemed hesitant towards feedback, expressing some slight resistance. She mentioned to Zhaobin that she did not want to be labelled as a 'bad person' in her interactions. She felt unsure about receiving feedback because she had been on the program for a shorter period and had yet to build enough trust and a sense of belonging.

Jiaqi and Zhaobin's reflection

Peer feedback had a positive impact on the majority of students, as well as on classroom instruction. Overall, it fostered students' autonomy and improved their authorial thinking. It was especially gratifying to observe students who occasionally ignored the teacher's suggestions but made efforts to catch up through feedback. For upper-intermediate classes, teachers are supposed to elucidate the rationale for conducting peer feedback sessions before the formal implementation. While students could offer each other advice and guidance, grammar proved to be a significant challenge for intermediate-level students during peer feedback.

In future teaching, both of us plan to incorporate peer feedback as frequently as possible while addressing some of the issues encountered in our AR. For instance, in intermediate classes, providing examples that illustrate correct and incorrect grammar usage will help students understand grammar rules and apply this knowledge during peer feedback. Additionally, for students in upper-intermediate classes, organising small group discussions is optimal to integrate spoken and written feedback. This approach provides additional opportunities for them to share knowledge and experiences and address each other's confusion. Importantly, allocating more time for peer feedback will allow students to delve deeper into grammar and essay structure discussions through one-to-one consultations or group discussions.

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Appendix I: Pre-survey

Self-perception survey of student peer feedback in General English writing classes

1. Where are you from?

2. How old are you?

3. What is your first language (L1)?

4. How long have you studied English at Discover English?

5. Approximately how long did you study English in your country before coming to Australia?

6. What is your highest level of qualification? Please circle.

   a. Completed high school certificate
   b. Bachelor's degree
   c. Master's degree
   d. Other (please specify) ____________________

7. Students' understanding of peer feedback

   1) How often are you required to complete peer feedback in Discover English?
   a. At least once in some classes
   b. In most of their classes
   c. In very few classes

   2) How often did your previous teachers use peer feedback in the English writing classes in your home country?
   a. At least once in some classes
   b. In most of their classes
   c. In very few classes
   d. Never

   3) What is your experience with peer feedback?
   - reading a student's comments on my paper/project without discussion
   - a live face-to-face chat with peer to discuss the peer feedback
   - a live chat (text) with peer to discuss the peer feedback
   - an exchange of emails or other (non-live) written comments with peer
   - anonymous feedback

8. Self-perception survey of student peer feedback

		Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
a)	I am confident in giving feedback to peers from a grammatical perspective.					
b)	I am confident in giving feedback to peers from a vocabulary perspective.					
c)	I am not confident in giving feedback to peers because I am a non-native speaker.					
d)	I am not confident in giving feedback to peers because I am not a teacher.					
e)	I would love to provide feedback to my peers.					

9. Self-perception survey of students' persuasive writing

		Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
a)	I am confident in organising persuasive writing.					
b)	I am confident in sentence structure, punctuation and capitalization when writing persuasive texts.					
c)	I am confident in developing an introductory paragraph.					
d)	I am not confident in developing details to support my argument.					
e)	I am confident in developing a conclusion paragraph to summarise my main points.					

Appendix 2: Post-survey

Self-perception survey of student peer feedback in General English writing classes

1. Where are you from?

2. How old are you?

3. What is your first language (L1)?

4. How long have you studied English at Discover English?

5. Approximately how long did you study English in your country before coming to Australia?

6. What is your highest level of qualification? Please circle.
   a. Completed high school certificate
   b. Bachelor's degree
   c. Master's degree
   d. Other (please specify) ____________________

7. Students' understanding of peer feedback
   1) How often are you required to complete peer feedback in Discover English?
   a. At least once in some classes
   b. In most of their classes
   c. In very few classes

   2) How often did your previous teachers use peer feedback in the English writing classes in your home country?
   a. At least once in some classes
   b. In most of their classes
   c. In very few classes
   d. Never

   3) What is your experience with peer feedback?
   - reading a student's comments on my paper/project without discussion
   - a live face-to-face with peer to discuss the peer feedback
   - a live chat (text) with peer to discuss the peer feedback
   - an exchange of emails or other (non-live) written comments with peer
   - anonymous feedback

8. Self-perception survey of student peer feedback

		Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
a)	I am confident in giving feedback to peers from a grammatical perspective.					
b)	I am confident in giving feedback to peers from a vocabulary perspective.					
c)	I am not confident in giving feedback to peers because I am a non-native speaker.					
d)	I am not confident in giving feedback to peers because I am not a teacher.					
e)	I understand what the peer feedback is after the training.					
f)	I think giving feedback to my peers can help me change my role as a reader.					
g)	I think receiving feedback from my peers can help me develop reader awareness and writer awareness.					

9. Self-perception survey of students’ persuasive writing

		Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
a)	I am confident in organising persuasive writing.					
b)	I am confident in sentence structure, punctuation and capitalization when writing persuasive texts.					
c)	I am confident in developing an introductory paragraph.					
d)	I am not confident in developing details to support my argument.					
e)	I am confident in developing a conclusion paragraph to summarise my main points.					
f)	The peer feedback was supported by examples/suggestions for improvement.					
g)	The peer feedback was specific and clear enough that I understood what exactly to revise.					
h)	I felt that receiving peer feedback through checklists engaged me actively in the revision process.					
i)	I felt that receiving peer feedback through checklists helped me reflect my writing process.					
j)	I have a positive attitude toward receiving feedback through my peers.					
k)	I would like to continue receiving peer feedback on my writing.					
l)	I prefer hearing the voice of my teacher to reading their words when receiving feedback.					
m)	I prefer video feedback to written feedback on my writing.					

10. Personal reflections

1) Which part do you think is the most impressive during the writing workshops? Why?

2) Which part do you think is the most effective during the writing workshops? Why? (From which part did you learn a lot?)

3) Can you share some of your feelings or emotions when you were giving feedback to your peers?

Appendix 3: Peer Checklist I — Reviewing the Outline of Persuasive Writing Essay

Essay's Writer:	**Reviewer's Name:**
Essay's Topic:	**Date:**

Introduction	**Excellent**	**Getting There**	**Not Yet**	**Writer's Note**
Is there background information given to the reader?				
Does the introduction identify the author's statement?				
Does the statement clearly cover the two topic sentences?				
Development of Ideas				
Is the first topic sentence an opinion not a fact?				
Is the first topic sentence clear and concise (usually less than 10 words)?				
Is the second topic sentence an opinion not a fact?				
Is the second topic sentence clear and concise (usually less than 10 words)?				
Conclusion				
Does the conclusion highlight and support the claim?				
Does the concluding statement follow from and support the topic sentences presented?				
Does the conclusion bring closure to the piece?				

Appendix 4: Peer Checklist II —Reviewing the Development of Ideas in Persuasive Writing Essays

Essay's Writer:	**Reviewer's Name:**
Essay's Topic:	**Date:**

Topic Sentences	**Excellent**	**Getting There**	**Not Yet**	**Writer's Note**
Are topic sentences opinions not facts?				
Are topic sentences clear and concise (usually less than 10 words)?				
If there is improvement about writing topic sentences in this article, can you show the revised part of the author's topic sentences? ____				
Reasons and Evidence				
Do reasons and relevant evidence logically support the topic sentence?				
Are the reasons and evidence presented in a clear and straightforward way? (Not one sentence within the whole body paragraph)				
Why do you think reasons are effective shown in the body paragraph? ______________________________				
Transitions				
Does the author try to use some transitions, such as on the other hand, because, therefore, as, as a result, although, etc.?				
What transitions does the author use? Please circle the transitions above. If not mentioned above, list the other transitions the author used. ____				
Are transitions used appropriately to link between topic sentence, reasons, and evidence?				
Pronouns				
Does the author try to use some pronouns, such as they/he/she?				
What pronouns does the author use? Please circle the pronouns above. If not mentioned above, list the other pronouns the author used. ____				
Are pronouns used appropriately?				

Appendix 5: Peer Checklist III — Reviewing Vocabulary and Grammar

Essay's Writer:	**Reviewer's Name:**
Essay's Topic:	**Date:**

Use of Vocabulary	**Excellent**	**Getting There**	**Not Yet**	**Writer's Note**
Is vocabulary appropriate to the level and task?				
Is a wide range of vocabulary used (e.g., adjectives, phrasal verbs, synonyms)?				
Is the repetition of words avoided (e.g., repeating the same word)?				
What is the level of accuracy when using a vocabulary? • Use of wrong word (e.g., I *made* a car accident yesterday) • The word is in the wrong form (e.g., My friend is very *kindness*) • Use of articles (e.g., *an* university) • Use of prepositions (e.g., I am interested *at* English)				
Is the spelling correct in the writing?				
The Use of Grammar				
Is the proper tense used in writing (e.g., present tenses, past tenses and future forms)?				
Does the verb match with the subject (e.g., He *don't* like bread)?				
Is subject-object agreement used currently? (Subject+ Verb+ Object)				
Are sentences in the correct word order (e.g., A movie last night I saw)?				
Punctuation and Capital Letter				
Is the punctuation correct and appropriate in writing (e.g., I ordered 3 books a table and 4 chairs)?				
Is the capital letter correctly used (e.g., my sister studies at monash university.)?				

Appendix 6: Persuasive Writing Rubric

	4	3	2	1	0	Score
A. **Introduction (Background & thesis statement)** **Conclusion**	Background info is relevant; clearly develops into thesis Thesis statement is strong; clearly stated; correct location Conclusion stays on topic; provides closure (2 parts)	Background info is relevant; partially develops into thesis Thesis statement is stated Conclusion mostly stays on topic; somewhat provides closure (2 parts)	Background info leaves reader with questions Thesis statement is missing 1 part or in the incorrect location Conclusion strays from topic or missing 1 part	Background info is missing important topics for clarity Thesis statement is confusing Conclusion excessively strays from topic despite mentioning some sentences	Background information is missing Thesis statement is vague or unclear Conclusion is missing	
B. **Main points (Body paragraphs)**	Two or more main points are well-developed with supporting details	Two or more main points are present but may lack detail and development in one or two	Two or more main points, but all lack development	One main point mentioned, but lack development	Less than two main points, with poor development of ideas	
C. **Organisation (Coherence & cohesion)**	Uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention Skilfully manages paragraphing	Logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout Uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use Presents a clear central topic within each paragraph	Presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression Makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices May be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution May not write in paragraphs, or paragraphing may be inadequate	Does not organise ideas logically May use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas	Fails to communicate any message	
D. **Lexical resource**	Uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'	Uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision Uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation May produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation	Uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task May make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader	Uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling Errors may severely distort the message	Can only use a few isolated words	
E. **Grammatical range and accuracy (Punctuation & capitalisation)**	Uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy Rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'	Uses a variety of complex structures Produces frequent error-free sentences Has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors	Uses only a limited range of structures Attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences May make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader	Attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning	Cannot use sentence forms at all	

Appendix 7: Descriptive Writing Rubric

	4	3	2	1	0	Score
A. **Essay structure** **- Introduction** **- Main body** **- Conclusion**	Introduction paragraph is presented with fully relevant background info Two or more main points are well-developed with supporting details Conclusion paragraph is presented; stays on topic; provides closure (2 parts)	Introduction paragraph is presented with partially relevant background info Two or more main points are present but may lack detail and development in one or two main points Conclusion paragraph is presented; mostly stays on topic; somewhat provides closure (2 parts)	Introduction paragraph is presented with little background info Two or more main points, but all lack development Conclusion paragraph is presented; conclusion strays from topic or missing 1 part	Introduction paragraph is presented without background info One main point mentioned, but lack development Conclusion paragraph is presented, but with less than two sentences	Introduction paragraph is not presented Less than two main points, with poor development of ideas Conclusion paragraph is not presented	
B. **Paragraph structure** **- Introduction** **- Details** **- Concluding sentence**	The paragraph exhibits exceptional clarity, depth, and coherence. The topic sentence is compelling, and the supporting details are rich and insightful.	The paragraph includes a strong topic sentence that effectively sets the focus of the paragraph. The supporting details are well-developed and provide strong evidence.	The paragraph includes a clear and effective topic sentence supported by relevant and specific details	The paragraph includes a topic sentence but lacks sufficient and relevant supporting details	The paragraph lacks a clear topic sentence and contains minimal or irrelevant supporting details	
C. **Organisation (Coherence & cohesion)**	The organization is sophisticated, guiding the reader seamlessly through the paragraph Demonstrates exceptional sentence variety Skilfully manages paragraphing The relevance to the overall purpose and theme is strong	The organization is clear and coherent, with smooth transitions between sentences Uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use Presents a clear central topic within each paragraph The relevance to the overall purpose and theme is evident	The organization demonstrates a logical flow of ideas, and there may be some variety in sentence structure Makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices The relevance to the overall purpose and theme may be somewhat weak	The organization may be somewhat disjointed May use a very limited range of cohesive devices The connection to the overall purpose and theme is weak	Fails to communicate any message; The organisation is unclear or illogical There is no connection	

	4	3	2	1	0	Score
D. **Lexical resource** **Sensory details:** Use of vivid and appropriate sensory details that evoke the reader's senses **Figurative language:** Use of appropriate and effective figurative language to create a clear and imaginative picture in the reader's mind	Uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' The writing demonstrates exceptional mastery in utilizing sensory details and figurative language. The sensory details are vivid and immersive, and the figurative language is imaginative and adds depth.	Uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision Uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation May produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation The writing skilfully uses vivid and appropriate sensory details and figurative language to create a vivid and engaging description	Uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task May make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader The writing effectively incorporates sensory details that appeal to the reader's senses and figurative language that enhances the description	Uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling Errors may severely distort the message The writing includes some sensory details and figurative language, but they are limited or lack specificity and impact	Can only use a few isolated words The writing lacks the use of sensory details and figurative language, or the ones used are vague, inconsistent, or inappropriate	
E. **Grammatical range and accuracy (Punctuation & capitalisation)**	Uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy Rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'	Uses a variety of complex structures Produces frequent error-free sentences Has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors	Uses only a limited range of structures Attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences May make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader	Attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning	Cannot use sentence forms at all	

The use of visual feedback for active listening skills

Liz Potarzycka, English Language Centre (ELC), The University of Adelaide

Introduction

Active listening skills can be described as the ability to show another speaker you are listening, through use of verbal and non-verbal cues, reflecting messages and questioning techniques (based on Weger, Castle and Emmett 2010). They are widely agreed to be an essential element of successful communication, and are required by students in order to participate in discussions and to build relationships both in and out of the classroom. More broadly, these skills are highly valued both by universities and future employers. Over the past few years, I have become interested in how to teach these skills effectively. This interest originated in watching too many students simply 'switch off' when others are speaking, passively waiting their own turn. This tendency appeared even more strongly among the first cohorts to return to face-to-face teaching after the Covid-19 pandemic, having lost their skills of interaction, or perhaps never having developed them during the years of lockdowns and online study.

Improved communication skills and effective group participation are stated aims of the programs at my centre, and the ability to show active listening skills is included in our assessment rubrics. Despite this, they are often not taught formally, instead often being something students are expected to 'pick up', and I have found myself telling students to 'improve your active listening skills' without telling them how. In addition to the lack of direct teaching, there often seems to be a lack of direct and timely feedback, which can lead to a lack of student awareness of their progress in this skill area.

Research focus, context and participants

This initial aim of this research was to identify classroom strategies to help learners develop their active listening skills, and to analyse their effectiveness. With a previous cohort of students I had begun developing a series of lessons explicitly identifying and teaching these skills. As part of this I tried out the use of 'conversation maps' (based on Simmons 2020) as a method of providing timely feedback. Students responded well to this intervention, prompting the idea of conducting further research. Therefore, the aim of this project was to investigate the following question: How does visual feedback impact active listening skills?

The participants in this research were students on a 10-week full-time program, known as the Pre-Enrolment English Program (PEP), at The University of Adelaide English Language Centre. With an exit level of IELTS 6.5, the course is a direct-entry pathway to the university, with students preparing to enter a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate majors. The participants were aged between 20 and 36 with most coming from mainland China, in addition to Japan, Hong Kong, Mexico, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Research design and data collection

Procedure

Participants were first introduced to active listening skills through awareness-raising input in class, using videos to model 'good' and 'bad' listening skills and identifying specific aspects, following the RASA model developed by Treasure (2021) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Active listening skills (adapted from Treasure 2021)

Receive	Appreciate	Summarise	Ask
Give full attention **Make eye contact**	**Body language** (Nod/smile/shake head/shrug) **Utterances** (Uhuh/Mm/Right/Uhh/OK/Sure)	**Ask for clarification, check understanding** So you're saying...? So what you mean is...? So it sounds like...?	**Extend** So why do you think that? Why is that then? So what do you think about...?

Students on this course take part in weekly seminars lasting around 40 minutes each, where groups of four read a set text and prepare to take part in a discussion (Figure 1) facilitated by one member in a 'leader' role each week. I observed each group in turn and drew a simple conversation map (Figure 2) capturing approximately 10 to 12 interactions (covering a few minutes of discussion time).

Participants were then asked to reflect on the conversation map and how it could be used to improve their next seminar discussion. Further input teaching was conducted based on skill areas requested by students following their reflective discussions. Initial and final surveys were also conducted with Microsoft Forms (Appendices 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Students taking part in a seminar discussion

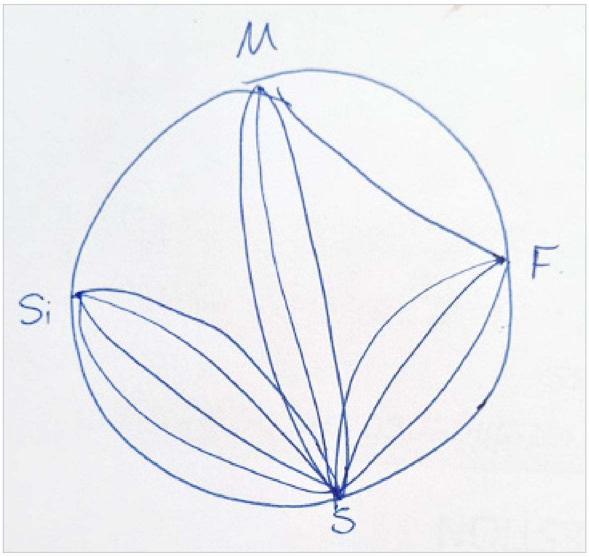

Figure 2: Sample conversation map

Data collected and analysis

The main forms of data I collected were initial survey responses, final survey responses and audio recordings of post-seminar reflective discussions. Other data included conversation map drawings and audio recordings of seminar discussions, whose analysis was beyond the scope of this current project.

Findings

An effective tool for reflection

The clearest initial finding was that participants were able to use the conversation maps as a tool to reflect effectively on their skills. On receiving their map, typical initial comments were observations such as:

> *'Looks like I have talked a lot with Sam, but not with Chris, actually this is very interesting.'*
>
> *'Actually, I think between you two, the conversation it's quite balanced.'*
>
> *'This part look like I didn't do too much communication with Frank at that time.'*
>
> *'For me, I think the map looks more equality than last time.'*
>
> *'I think this time we fix something because you can see the second one is really equal.'*
>
> *These observations were quickly and naturally followed by analysis:*
>
> *'OK, so why we don't talk?'*
>
> *'Maybe this is because you guys are very close and you can use some eye contact to replace some words or sentence?'*
>
> *'I think in this part Chris said a long sentence so that we cannot interrupt too much.'*

The discussions showed that students use the maps to reflect on both personal and group skills:

> *'Maybe I don't ask too much to others, maybe I should try.'*
>
> *'Everyone, I think we all participate equally and make great contributions.'*

There was also frequent evidence of students providing both positive and constructive peer feedback, such as:

> *'You're good at asking further questions.'*
>
> *'You guys are talking more frequently than before.'*
>
> *'I think we were discussing really great topic and you cut the conversation, so maybe in another time you should have let us discuss more.'*

Another key impact of the reflection that took place was an ability to identify needs and ask for specific input. Although recorded only in teacher's notes rather than as formally collected data, one of the most significant moments of the research was students asking, after reflecting:

> *'Can we study some phrases to agree and disagree?'*
>
> *'Can we learn how to summarise complex ideas?'*
>
> *'Can we watch some videos of excellent discussions?'*

All of these requests were very appropriate and were used to inform future classes with the group.

The survey results also showed that participants felt reflecting had been useful, and strongly agreed that their reflective skills had improved (Figures 3 and 4). They did not perceive reflection to be as useful as direct teaching input, which is perhaps due to a lesser focus on reflective skills and their value during teaching sessions.

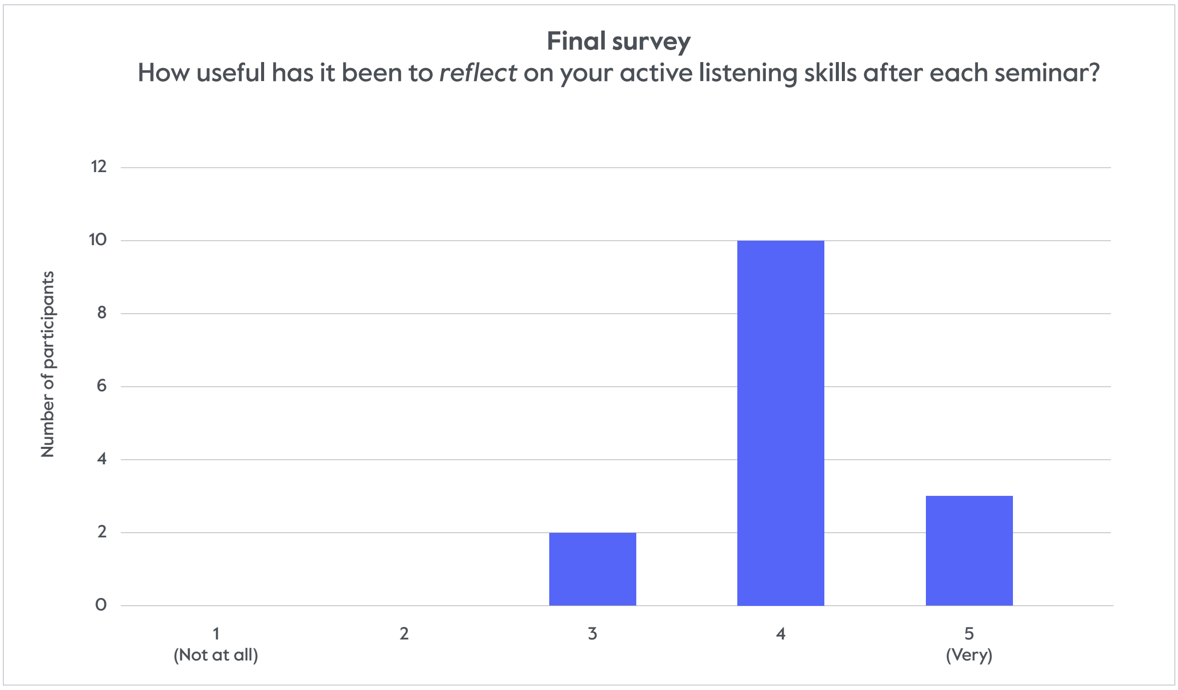

Figure 3: Usefulness of reflection

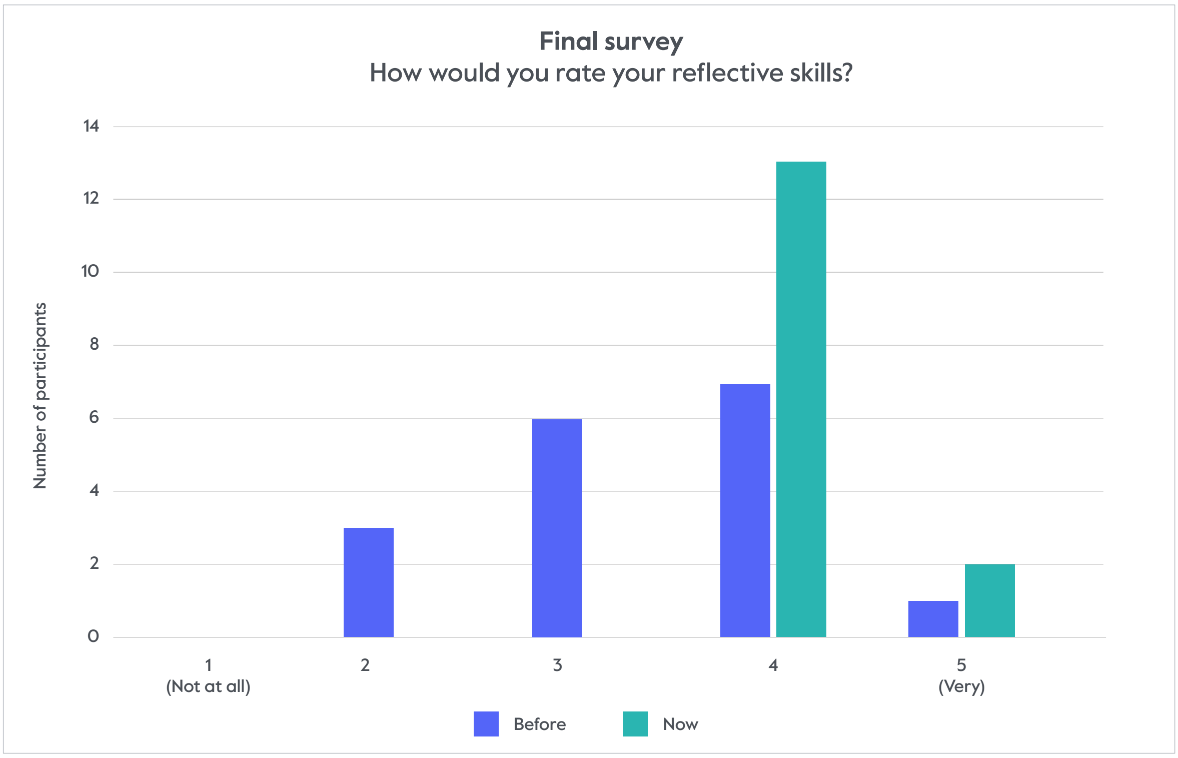

Figure 4: Reflective skills before and after project

Key themes of discussion

Analysis of the reflective discussion showed that participants focused on four key skill areas.

Balancing interaction

The most frequent area of discussion was concerned with interaction, with students suggesting strategies to help others participate, regulate the lengths of their turns and ensure they speak with others equally:

> *'We should interact each other... not only wait, not only answer one question.'*

They also speculated on reasons for longer or shorter turns or lack of interaction, for example:

> *'Maybe this is because you guys are very close and you can use some eye contact to replace some words or sentence?'*

Leader's role

Participants also reflected on the role of the leader, often with contrasting views:

> *'I think the leader had better give more explanation or elaboration of the answer.'*
>
> *'It's not my duty to give you the full answers and you shouldn't copy that.'*

They also suggested strategies to encourage participation other than directly asking, such as body language, use of silence, and setting expectations at the beginning of the discussion.

Cultural considerations

A key consideration was the concept of interrupting, which dominated discussions despite not having been focused on by me as the teacher. Students reflected on the difference in cultural norms regarding interruption, reasons for interrupting more or less, the challenges they faced and strategies to interrupt effectively, with comments including:

> *'When you speaking we should interrupt you… in China, it's impolite.'*
>
> *'It's strange I think… you need to have lots of brave to do that.'*

Use of language

The final area of discussion was the functional language studied in class. Students often referred to these phrases and commented on how useful they found them:

> *'"Could you be more specific" and "don't quite follow", it's very useful for me.'*
>
> *'Can help me… if I have something confusing problems or something I can ask correct.*
>
> *'Sounds like professional.'*

A sense of positivity and motivation

A final, overarching theme that emerged was that students felt a sense of positivity, pride and motivation when working with the maps, with many comments such as:

> *'Look at this beautiful, beautiful one.'*
>
> *'We get better than before… Yeah, we improve every time.'*
>
> *'We make obvious progress.'*
>
> *'We do really well but I'm hoping that we can make great progress.'*
>
> *'We can do better… Yeah, the second one will be better, I believe that.'*

Improved active listening skills

This sense of progress is supported by the survey results, which indicated that participants believed their general conversation skills in English had improved over the six-week period (Figure 5). Interestingly, their perceptions of their conversational abilities in their native language fell across the same period (Figure 6), perhaps as a consequence of increased awareness. As one participant commented:

> *'It was very useful for me and also for other students to improve this area not just in English also in our own language.'*

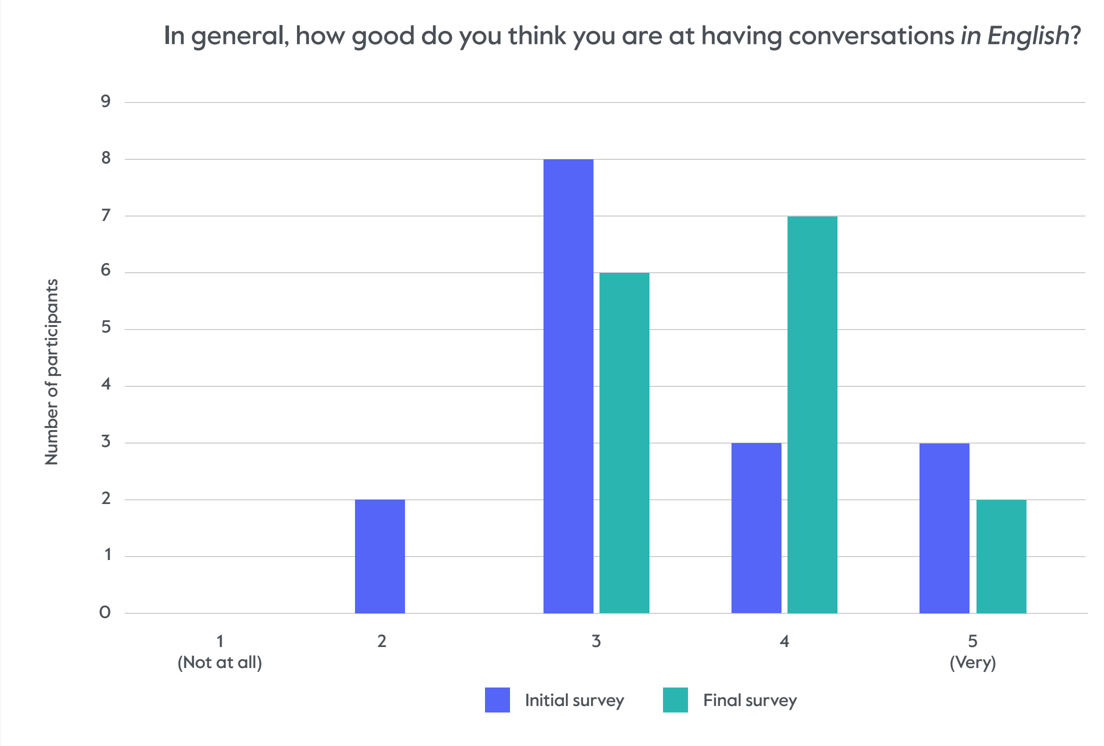

Figure 5: Conversation skills in English

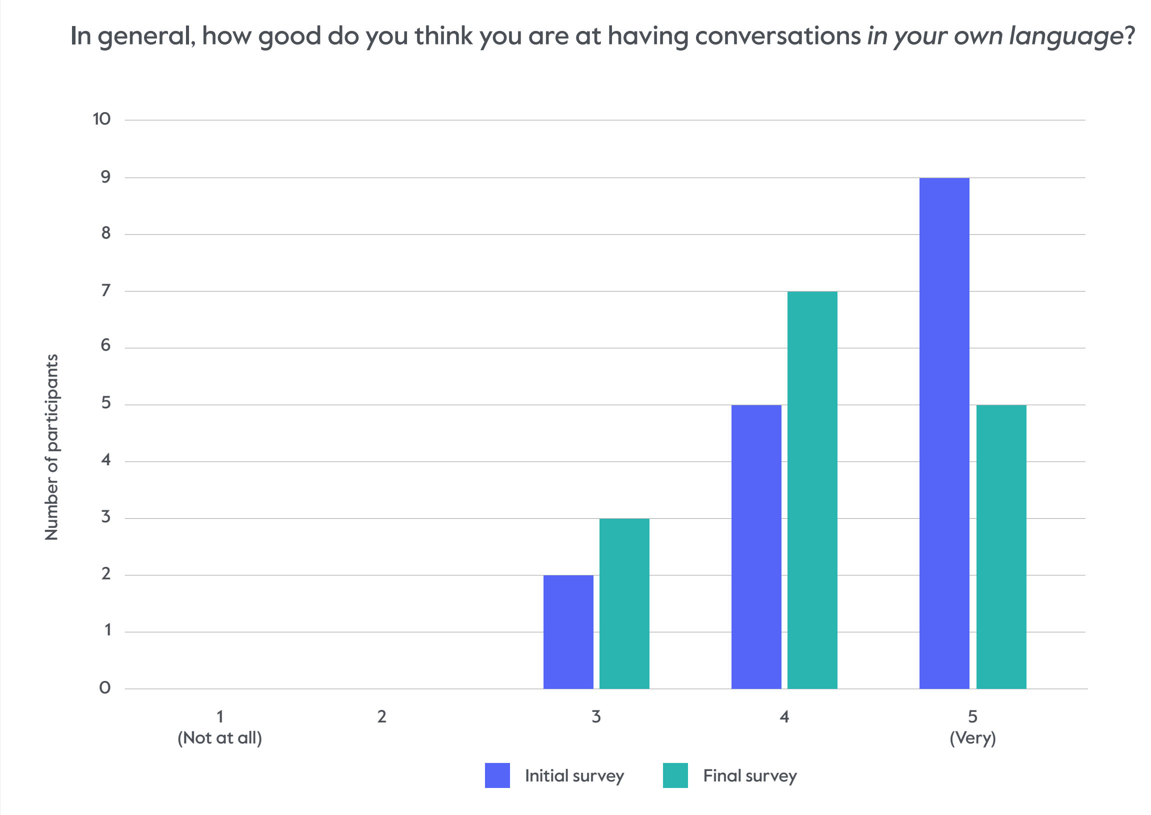

Figure 6: Conversation skills in own language

Participants also responded strongly in favour of studying specific active listening skills in class (Figure 7).

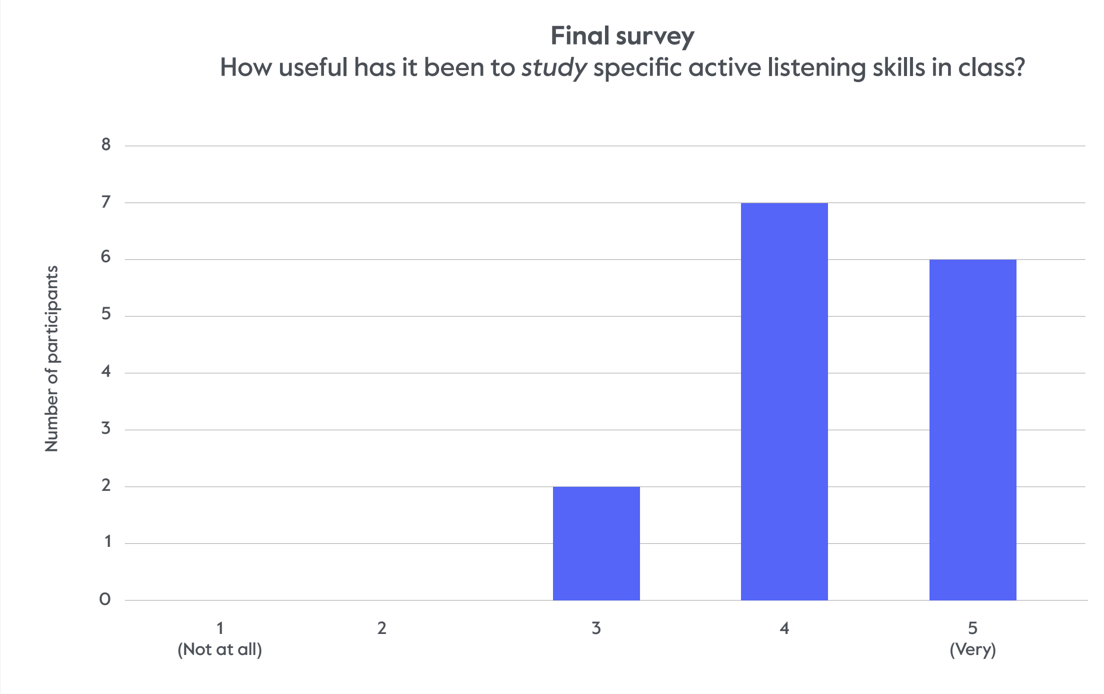

Figure 7: Usefulness of studying active listening skills

When asked to identify the most useful skill studied, comments reflected each skill area equally, indicating that different skills resonated with different students. Students' responses to the question 'What was the most useful active listening skill that we studied in class?' included the following:

> *'Focusing on the attention.'*
>
> *'Use ears, eyes, even gut to listen, understand what others say.'*
>
> *'Body language.'*
>
> *'Confirming if the idea was what we understand and asking to clarify if we have doubts of what we understand.'*
>
> *'Summarize others said.'*
>
> *'Use own words and opinions to interrupt others.'*
>
> *'If we have some question we can ask others.'*

Evaluation of the tool

In the final survey, most students commented that they found the use of conversation maps beneficial:

> *'Useful tool, I can according the map to improve my language skill next time.'*
>
> *'Is interesting to know the interaction between the participants and realize which areas are important to improve.'*
>
> *'Conversation map could be a guide to join in the discussion, helping to find the areas where the improvement is needed.'*

Overall, these comments demonstrate the value of this simple tool as an aid to awareness of skill areas, which can then be used to make improvements. However, not all comments were positive and some interesting criticisms were made. Participants were quick to point out that the map was only a brief snapshot of the conversation, for example:

> *'There should be someone keeps recording from beginning to end. Rather than recording just only few moment.'*
>
> *'Enlarging the discussion time covered by conversation maps would be more comprehensive.'*

Others mentioned that the tool did not provide a deep analysis of what was really taking place in the conversation, with comments including:

> *'It indicates how frequently we talk with each other. From conversation maps, we can't know our communication problems, thus I don't think it really helps improve individuals' communication skills.'*
>
> *'Just in my opinion not very useful for me because I believe I can communicate well and the connection with each members is depends on the topic. Sometimes I just feel a little boring but I also know how to pretend I am listening.'*

These comments can be seen to indicate that the value of conversation maps lie not just in using the tool at face value, but in the reflective process. The individuals making these comments would gain far more from the task if they were using the tool to reflect. It may also be worth mentioning that the student who said they know how to pretend they are listening developed an excellent understanding of active listening skills and will surely go far in the future!

Discussion and reflection

The aim of this research was to investigate how conversation maps can be used to improve students' active listening skills. During the project it quickly became clear that there were three key components to this process, as illustrated in Figure 8. Visual feedback, reflection, and skills development all formed part of a cycle of learning, and none would have been as effective without the others.

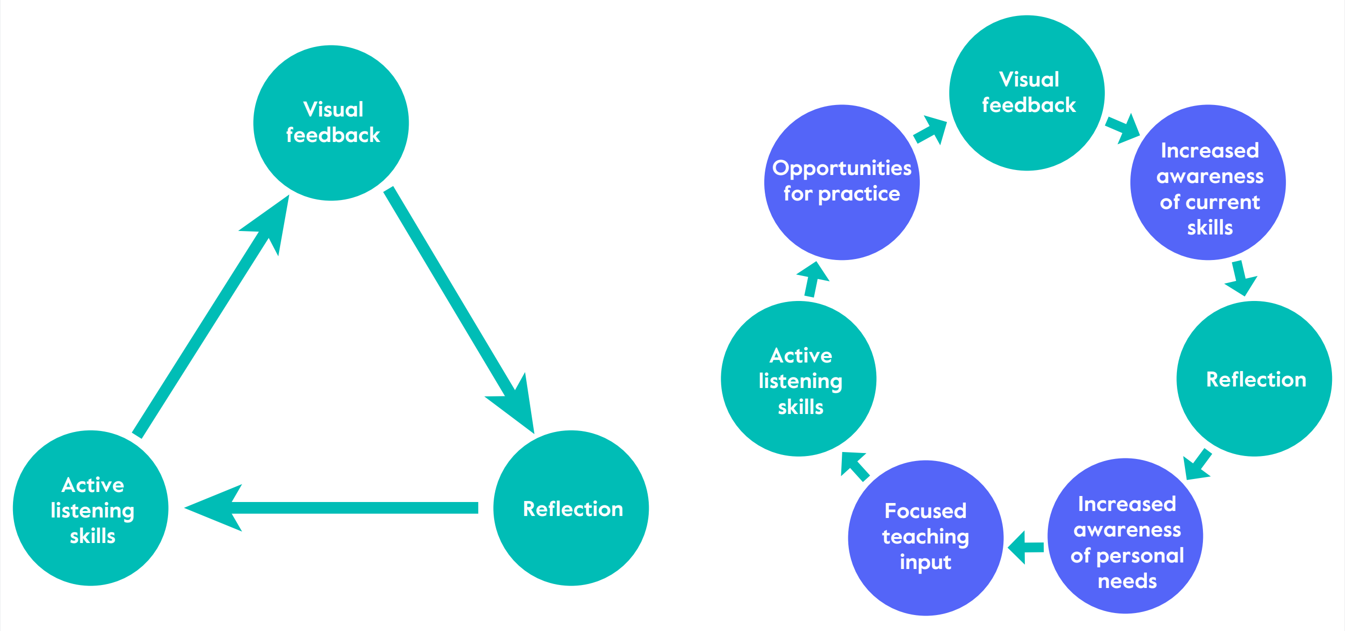

Figure 8: The relationship observed between active listening skills, visual feedback and reflection

The impact of visual feedback

Evidence from students' discussions shows that, as a tool, visual feedback is an accessible and effective form of feedback. It was evident that students were immediately able to understand what the conversation map showed without difficulty. In addition, it had the benefit of being immediate, received directly after finishing the task. This is in strong contrast to the usual feedback method for this seminar discussion task, for which students receive a rubric five weeks later, written in complex academic language, which often focuses on what is lacking or what they cannot do effectively.

Another downside of the traditional feedback rubric is that it makes a judgement on students' skills and progress, which can cause stress, anxiety and demotivation for those with low self-esteem (Wiliam 2011). In contrast, this simple feedback tool seems to lead to a sense of positivity and student agency. In this way, it promotes engagement with feedback and a growth mindset among students, with a focus on improvement rather than success or failure. This finding is in line with work of Hattie (2015), who advocates increasing descriptive rather than evaluative feedback and its use as part of an ongoing conversation. It was also notable that students were comfortable using the tool to give peer feedback, as they felt competent in interpreting the non-evaluative visual feedback of the conversation map.

Overall, the accessibility and immediacy of the conversation map tool seemed to promote engagement with feedback and effective reflection on skills. Despite this, students did point out some weaknesses of the tool, the most frequent of these being that only a short snapshot of the conversation is captured. However, this in itself seemed to contribute to the reflective process by prompting students to discuss the interactions taking place at varying stages of the conversation. One interesting suggestion for further development could be the Equity Maps app (equitymaps.com), which can be used to digitally create similar visual feedback over a longer period of discussion.

The impact of reflection

As discussed above, the conversation map tool appeared to prompt students to analyse their conversation patterns, which tended to be followed by reflection. This seems to be a result of the lack of words or grades, empowering them to make their own interpretations. Participants effectively reflected on their own skill areas, weaknesses and improvements, as well as those of other individuals and the conversation group as a whole. The freedom to self-evaluate and speculate about reasons for certain conversation patterns seems to have led to a strong increase in skills, which they were able to experiment with in a non-evaluative environment on a regular basis. One of the most interesting parts of the study was students spontaneously requesting input after diagnosing their own conversational needs. In this way, students were able to effectively identify their own needs and directly inform input, bringing to mind the reflection that 'the feedback students give teachers can be more powerful than the feedback teachers give students' (Tovani 2012). It is notable that students ranked the importance of reflection as lower than that of direct input, perhaps due to less of a teaching focus on reflection, and a cultural educational background of relying on teacher input. However, it was clear to me as the teacher that reflective skills were a crucial part of the process, and future use of conversation maps would benefit from more direct teaching of reflective skills and language.

The impact of direct teaching input

Students clearly benefited from having lessons focusing on developing active listening skills, showing an increased ability to both identify and use them in their interactions. Although they would usually be taught conversation skills, such as how to agree or disagree with someone, the vast majority of conversation in our classrooms is still teacher-led. Simmons (2020) argues that, although we as teachers tend to believe that a discussion is happening because students are participating, we may not realise that we are still dictating the 'shape' of the conversation – who takes the next turn, how long they speak for, and how and when to move the conversation on. One of the most illuminating parts of the research project was seeing students make realisations about how to do this themselves without any teacher input. Their awareness grew of how to genuinely lead a conversation, engage all participants, monitor speaking time and turn-taking, interrupt others and use silence as a tool. Their reflective discussions also highlighted the value of teaching functional language for these skills, such as how to interrupt, move the conversation on politely, check understanding or summarise. These two areas go hand-in-hand, as this language would have been redundant without regular opportunities to practice without teacher involvement. As a result, these findings show that dedicating teaching time to functional language for leading and taking part in conversations, as well as allowing students regular time to develop these skills independently, are both very worthwhile.

Conclusion

The findings of this project show that, by providing easily accessible and non-evaluative feedback, conversation maps can be an effective tool for learning. Learners are empowered to engage with the feedback without barriers, and prompted to reflect on their own skills and needs and those of their classmates without judgement. It was also found that the teaching of active listening skills and functional language were a vital part of the process, as well as opportunity for practice.

This tool requires little preparation and could be easily integrated into classrooms in a range of contexts. More generally, short reflective discussions after participating in a range of tasks can effectively boost students' engagement and awareness of skills and needs. Further research could be conducted on other forms of simple visual feedback and their use as reflective tools in the classroom.

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Appendix I: Initial survey

Section 1						
	Participant consent					
Section 2		**Not at all**				**Very**
1	In general, how good do you think you are at having conversations with people in English?	1	2	3	4	5
2	In general, how good do you think you are at having conversations with people in your own language?	1	2	3	4	5
3	How would you rate your communication skills in the following areas?					
	a) Making eye contact	1	2	3	4	5
	b) Using body language e.g., nodding	1	2	3	4	5
	c) Using utterances e.g., uhuh	1	2	3	4	5
	d) Checking what the speaker said e.g, So you mean...?	1	2	3	4	5
	e) Asking questions e.g., So why do you think that?	1	2	3	4	5
4	What listening skills do you currently use for communication? You can add any skills or ideas here that you can think of.					

Appendix 2: Final survey

Section 1		**Not at all**				**Very**
1	In general, how good do you think you are at having conversations with people in English?	1	2	3	4	5
2	In general, how good do you think you are at having conversations with people in your own language?	1	2	3	4	5
3	How would you rate your communication skills in the following areas?					
	a) Making eye contact	1	2	3	4	5
	b) Using body language e.g., nodding	1	2	3	4	5
	c) Using utterances e.g., uhuh	1	2	3	4	5
	d) Checking what the speaker said e.g., So you mean...?	1	2	3	4	5
	e) Asking questions e.g., So why do you think that?	1	2	3	4	5
Section 2: Conversation maps						
4	How useful did you find the conversation map tool to help you reflect on your active listening skills?	1	2	3	4	5
5	Would you like to use conversation maps again to reflect on your discussion skills?	1	2	3	4	5
6	Do you have any other comments about using conversation maps?	1	2	3	4	5
Section 3: Reflective skills						
7	How useful has it been to reflect on your active listening skills after each seminar?	1	2	3	4	5
8	How would you rate your reflective skills BEFORE you started reflecting on each seminar?	1	2	3	4	5
9	How would you rate your reflective skills now?	1	2	3	4	5
Section 4: Studying active listening						
10	How useful has it been to study specific active listening skills in class?	1	2	3	4	5
11	What was the most useful active listening skill that we studied in class?	1	2	3	4	5
12	What other active listening skills would be useful for you to study in class?	1	2	3	4	5
13	Do you have any other comments about the focus on active listening skills during your PEP course?	1	2	3	4	5

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