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Are we Dialogical or Sociomaterial in Our Written Corrective Feedback? A Reflection by Two Academic Writing Instructors

Daron B. Loo
National University of Singapore, elcdbl@nus.edu.sg

Rowland Anthony Imperial
University of Oxford, rowland.imperial@jesus.ox.ac.uk

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Abstract

Despite the growing movement to embrace sociomaterial approaches to feedback practices (e.g. Gravett, 2020), dialogicity remains the prominent and dominant approach, especially in the teaching of introductory or compulsory writing courses at the tertiary level. To examine this in our own practice, we reflected on and compared our written corrective feedback (WCF) provided to our students. Based on our WCF practices, we contend that feedback practices may range from dialogic to sociomaterial. The former aims to ensure students' learning of expected academic skills or objectives of a module, while the latter promotes students' pursuit of content knowledge. These observations are noteworthy for other higher education instructors, whether subject experts or academic literacy instructors. In particular, we recommend that instructors need to carefully identify temporal and spatial contexts where either or both dialogic and sociomaterial feedback practices can be utilized to enhance students' learning experiences.

Keywords

Written corrective feedback, dialogic feedback, sociomaterial approach, academic writing, teacher reflection

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A Reflection by Two Academic Writing Instructors

Daron B. Loo[1] and Rowland Anthony Imperial[2]

[1] *National University of Singapore*
[2] *University of Oxford*

Despite the growing movement to embrace sociomaterial approaches to feedback practices (e.g. Gravett, 2020), dialogicity remains the prominent and dominant approach, especially in the teaching of introductory or compulsory writing courses at the tertiary level. To examine this in our own practice, we reflected on and compared our written corrective feedback (WCF) provided to our students. Based on our WCF practices, we contend that feedback practices may range from dialogic to sociomaterial. The former aims to ensure students' learning of expected academic skills or objectives of a module, while the latter promotes students' pursuit of content knowledge. These observations are noteworthy for other higher education instructors, whether subject experts or academic literacy instructors. In particular, we recommend that instructors need to carefully identify temporal and spatial contexts where either or both dialogic and sociomaterial feedback practices can be utilized to enhance students' learning experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have considered the potential of written corrective feedback (WCF) beyond the setting where it is provided. Pitt (2017) discusses this as a cyclical model where students are supported to develop the propensity to utilise feedback to regulate learning. This model coincides with the sociomaterial approach, which postulates that learning can be supported through encounters with materials not necessarily found within a particular learning setting (Mulcahy, 2013). Drawing from such perspectives, and from our desire to improve our feedback practices, we examined and compared how our WCF practices may be supportive of students' learning, particularly knowledge regarding academic writing. To this end, we aim to highlight recent pedagogical practices and research inquiries regarding WCF, followed by personal reflections regarding our WCF practices. By situating this examination within current scholarship on feedback, we hope to offer resonance of our concerns and experience with that of others' (see Cook-Sather, Abbot, & Felten, 2019). Furthermore, considerations that arise from this essay may benefit others who are keen for their feedback practices to have a wider impact.

WCF AS DIALOGIC PRACTICE

The dialogic approach to WCF provision is a prominent practice especially in higher education (HE). It attempts to veer from merely providing instructions based on students' needs or deficiencies seen in their written tasks. Through dialogic WCF, students are expected to actively negotiate areas for further improvement with their instructors. As discussed by Han and Xu (2020) the practice can nurture empathic communication skills, such as seeking clarification and negotiating alternatives that are useful when students are working through uncertainty caused by open-ended or vague feedback (Steen-Utheim & Wittek, 2017). For writing instructors, the ability of students to work through WCF can offer insights into the challenges that they encounter in writing. This facilitates the identification, planning, and implementation of appropriate cognitive and affective support for students (Hill & West, 2020).

Within the dialogic feedback approach, instructors may think of WCF as a precursor for revisions initiated by students themselves (Dawson et al., 2019). However, this should not be a blanket expectation for all students, as there may be those who will require additional support and time to interpret WCF and develop strategies to address them (Gravett & Winstone, 2019). Also, students may hold differing perceptions towards WCF: while some students believe that addressing feedback should always lead to an improvement in their written work, others may find this unnecessary, especially when feedback is given only after marks for an assignment have been awarded. Other potential factors that affect students' perceptions on feedback practices also include task motivations (Yu, Jiang, & Zhou, 2020), beliefs about feedback types and the timing of feedback provision (Han, 2017), as well as students' perceptions of their instructors – especially when students become aware of the lack of training in dealing with WCF (Wingate, 2019).

WCF is seen to be useful in improving certain learning tasks, but educational researchers are still looking for ways to promote a more encompassing view – by treating the process of interpreting and acting on feedback as experiential and emergent. This view recognises not only the presence of multiple and competing variables that may positively or negatively impact learning (see Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009), but also the 'messy' and non-linear nature of the feedback mechanism itself. Such a view naturally concerns itself with how students actually manage WCF. For one, students experience and respond to WCF differently. Also, the effects of WCF within a course may spill over to other learning contexts. And perhaps more crucially, they may encounter things from beyond the classroom that may invariably influence their perception of the feedback process. Thus, by acknowledging the complexity of WCF, teachers might better bear in mind the importance of student agency, and of maximising their students' use of their contextual knowledge and learning experiences to interpret and negotiate feedback practices (Gravett, 2020).

BEYOND DIALOGICITY:
WCF AS SOCIOMATERIAL PRACTICE

Even though dialogic feedback aims to account for student involvement in the learning process, Gravett (2020) argues that a dialogic interaction between student and instructor assumes that the student is a free-floating agent capable of deciphering feedback independently. Viewing feedback as dialogic also assumes that students' learning trajectory is based on a deficient model, in that the student lacks academic literacy skills to interpret and act on feedback. It also discounts the significance of competing variables found in a student's learning ecology, which may shape their treatment of WCF. Gravett states that dialogic feedback can be restrictive, even though it is grounded in humanist principles. She thus provides an alternative view, one that recommends treating feedback as a sociomaterial practice, wherein feedback is "entangled with social, material, spatial and temporal actors" which has an "impact upon the feedback interaction, and upon the student's engagement with feedback, as opposed to simply existing as a backdrop to learning activity (p. 9). In this view, feedback can be examined as part of a "broader education assemblage" (p. 9) that takes into account factors beyond the interaction of student and instructor. As such, feedback is invariably affected by significant objects observed in a learning environment. These objects may not be from courses designed specifically for academic writing. For instance, in Yu's (2020) study on giving genre-based peer feedback, it was found that language and content feedback was common, as well as their peers' theses organisation (according to the standards of the university). The students who gave peer feedback reported that their feedback was shaped by the reference materials they read for their own theses, and from observing academic interactions with their supervisor. Feedback practices that were introduced in the writing course, on the other hand, were minimally adapted. Based on Yu's (2020) findings, we can observe how feedback is affected by the broader educational environment, which includes learning experiences drawn from other contexts or from the past.

Viewing feedback as interaction that extends beyond the student and instructor recognises that learning is not necessarily confined in an isolated context. Instead, it acknowledges that students can evaluate the relevance of learning points found in feedback for their broader study experience (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017). It is then necessary to expect an 'interplay' of variables that impact feedback. Resources such as subject content knowledge or knowledge (co)-construction, or the artefacts that contain these, will mediate and influence the understanding or uptake of feedback (Esterhazy & Damşa, 2019). Furthermore, when feedback is viewed as a sociomaterial endeavour, learning can include other symbolic and material artifacts.

MAXIMISING STUDENT LEARNING
THROUGH WCF

In this paper, we explore our WCF practices and subsequently, our beliefs, in an attempt to determine whether we provide a space for a dialogic or sociomaterial learning environment. We do this by comparing our WCF practices within a course we taught: FAS1101 *Writing Academically*, an introductory and compulsory course for higher education (HE) students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. As FAS1101 tutors, our main objective was to introduce first-year university students to fundamental academic writing and argumentation skills that are required at the tertiary level.

FAS1101 students are tasked to write a 1,800-word argumentative essay on a scholarly topic that they must draw from a reading list given to them at the beginning of the course. To prepare for this assignment, they are required to submit two smaller writing tasks – a 300-word research proposal, which outlines their working thesis and supporting arguments, and an 800-word overview essay, which includes the updated version of their proposal (revised based on tutor feedback) and a short review of relevant literature.

Some pedagogical approaches employed in this module are genre and academic literacies. Since students come from varied disciplines and study backgrounds, a writing-across-the-curriculum pedagogical approach was employed, wherein students are guided to be receptive towards peculiar writing contexts (Hyland, 2008; Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Wingate 2016). According to Hyland (2008), this approach would strive "to demystify the genres that matter to students by making their key features salient … through noticing and reflection, guiding students to explore key lexical, grammatical and rhetorical features of representative samples of target genres, and then to use this knowledge to construct their own examples of the genre." (p. 560). Opportunities were also created for students to develop other academic literacy skills, such as the internalisation of revision and editing processes, which may be applicable in other learning settings (Zhu, 2004), and students' raised awareness of knowledge construction and reconstruction through process writing (Wingate, 2012).

In the next section we reflected on and compared our WCF practices, which were taken verbatim from our students' drafts. While these examples are not entirely representative of all the WCF we had given to our students, they serve to emphasise and substantiate two claims. The first is that the dialogic approach to WCF remains valuable to both teachers and students, especially when feedback is required at the initial stages of learning. Second, teachers, over time, should grant more affordances to students as they forge new learning pathways for themselves and acquire more symbolic and material artifacts at their disposal.

REFLECTIONS ON WCF PRACTICES

Daron

In general, I view feedback as another form of teaching. Instead of addressing students directly and verbally in the classroom, feedback is a teaching moment that is linked with a lesson and/or a task. In a writing module, I view feedback as a means to communicate with my students regarding the quality of their written work. Feedback on a written work is personalised as it addresses specific issues found in a student's work. As a result, my feedback can be quite varied and comprehensive, in spite of some research findings recommending that feedback types should be lessened and streamlined in order to avoid students' cognitive overload. I do take this into account if I know that my students' writing capabilities are still developing; nonetheless, with students whose language proficiency is high, I become more liberal in my feedback provision. Yet, I still revisit the rubrics to ensure my feedback is aligned to the evaluation criteria. This is especially true when the topic is familiar or interesting (to me). In such occasions, I have had to rein myself in as my expectations went beyond the scope

of the course. In such situations, I also need to be cognisant of what students can do, and what their motivations are.

In examining my feedback, I noticed those that clearly aligned with the rubrics were dialogic, in that they directly required students to address issues found in their writing. Because these feedback could be linked to the rubrics, I could count on students to address the feedback independently. This illustrates the importance of being transparent about how students are being evaluated, and making sure that these evaluations can be understood through the feedback provided. Furthermore, as these feedback addressed issues that were related to the rubrics, it was possible to consolidate them and their corresponding issues for discussion in a subsequent lesson. Some examples of this feedback are seen in Table 1.

dation was inherently similar, that is, for the students to identify information beyond what they had, in order to provide a clearer picture or a more definite explanation. It may be the case, then, that my provision of WCF that was sociomaterial in nature leaned towards students' further exploration of content. At this juncture, it would be have useful to be able to capture what my students thought of my WCF, especially in relation to students' writing tasks in other modules or their understanding of the topic they had selected.

Table 1. Sample dialogic-oriented feedback given by Daron on his students' work	
WCF	**Writing Concern**
Year of publication?	Format
Would it be possible to draw in examples from broader social science studies which address the issues raised in your essay?	Relevance with the broader field
In your final essay, how then, does this whole section affect your thesis statement?	Organisation of arguments
Does this section add anything new to what had been discussed earlier?	Development of argument
What larger issue, then, does this address? What broader implications would your discussion suggest?	Relevance of argument
Please decrease the use of direct quotations.	Use of sources

The feedback in Table 1 sheds light on my commitment to the process of WCF provision. For instance, I think I leave broader comments when I am out of patience or energy to give explicit instructions (on how to improve), with some of these broad comments being too ambiguous (e.g., there were instances where I left just a question mark or an exclamation mark). Nonetheless, while broad feedback may not clearly describe an issue, it still hints that something was not right. Another concern I have regarding my feedback is its impact on learning, especially students' learning of the academic text genre. Since this module aims to prepare students to engage in academic writing and produce academic texts, I try my best, in my lectures and interactions with students, to demonstrate the different rhetorical strategies they could employ. Some feedback that I provided, which I think can have the potential to spur learning beyond my class, are shown in Table 2. These feedback were given in the second assignment, the Overview Essay. In this assignment, students need to partially offer crucial points that would serve as the foundation for their Final Essay. In examining my WCF, I noticed that there were those that could potentially support students' knowledge of the topic they had selected, or of the practice of producing an academic text. It is interesting to observe that in these instances, the recommen-

Rowland

I have always been sensitive to issues surrounding the implementation and provision of feedback in the HE context. I am particularly aware of the potential impact of teacher feedback – especially WCF – on students' attitudes towards their course content and syllabus, their motivations for learning, and their overall psyche. These issues are especially pertinent in FAS1101 *Writing Academically*. In this course, almost all of my students just entered the university and were only beginning to learn the ropes with regard to the consumption and production of academic texts. I conducted my classes in multiple groups comprising 15 to 18 students each. This classroom model made it logistically viable to adopt a whole class approach to teaching general academic writing and argumentation skills. The approach, however, also severely limited opportunities to discuss my students' written work in greater detail. In response to the constraints of whole class teaching, I provided students out-of-classroom corrective feedback on their assignments to facilitate more in-depth one-on-one conversations with them and communicate a more fine-grained and individualised evaluation of their work. Essentially, this individualised, out-of-classroom feedback practice functioned to supplement my whole class teaching efforts to align each of my students' needs

Table 2. Sample sociomaterial-oriented feedback given by Daron on his students' work	
WCF / Topic	**Potential for Learning**
Supernaturalism and Religion in Southeast Asia Is the boundary confined only to a particular country, or can it be defined by homogenous beliefs?	Prompts student to explore how cultural boundaries may be defined
Supernaturalism and Religion in Southeast Asia This is very interesting - how, then, do the Thais work with the cultural tendency for hierarchy in the structuring of the community…	Highlights a contradiction observable in a community
Literary works of Flannery O'Connor Do other analyses of deformity in other literary works hold a similar view?	Prompts student to consider a particular phenomenon of human life in other literary works
Law, Marriage and the Same-Sex Debate (in the context of Singapore) The only prevalence you reported is the new cases of HIV. Even then, you reported the number of one year - without comparing to the number of reported cases from other years.	Notes the potential limitation of student's use of data

(guidance and instructional support) and motivations (passing the course and/or getting good grades) with the intended learning outcomes of the course.

In the HE context, several scholars like Gravett (2020) are endeavouring to propose a less regimented approach to teacher feedback – specifically factoring in sociomaterial elements of student learning into teacher feedback – to promote student agency and reduce power imbalance in teacher-student interactions. In my view, the emerging movement to make teacher feedback practices more holistic and mindful of our students' social and material realities could not be more timely and appropriate. Teacher feedback, however, can vary largely between teachers and across departments, disciplines, and in- and out-of-classroom contexts. More critically and importantly, teachers have different symbolic and material resources at their disposal. Scholars who are researching on teacher feedback should then consider the social and material realities faced by the teachers themselves: their faculties, course offerings, and diverse array of limitations imposed by the predominant whole class teaching model.

While some teachers are increasingly championing for a less regimented feedback exchange structure, others may still find it more appropriate and efficient to introduce dialogic rules of engagement when providing feedback on student work. This is especially true when the provision of feedback takes place outside the classroom, since classroom instructional hours would always take precedence over consultation hours. In FAS1101, for example, the vast majority of our teaching team work only part-time, so they have limited time outside of instructional hours to facilitate highly individualised consultation sessions with their students. I worked as full-time instructor, and I always set aside time to provide guidance and instructional support for my students, but I set clear rules of engagement with my students on what kinds of questions my students could discuss with me during consultation hours, and limited the allotted time for individual (face-to-face) conferencing, in the interest of fairness to students who were under the tutelage of another instructor.

Another crucial point regarding the provision of feedback is the impact of rubrics and assessment on the type of feedback on student work. Although Gravett (2020) argues that feedback should reflect students' experiences in other learning spaces, in my case of teaching FAS1101, my students typically sought guidance and instruction based on how their FAS1101 written work would be assessed. As "peripheral participants" (cf. Vygotsky, 1994) of the academic community, by virtue of them being new to the university, my students' desire to receive such type of feedback suggested the need for a more dialogic approach, which makes it clearer for them on how to revise their work in line with the marking criteria (cf. Winstone, Pitt, & Nash, 2020).

My dialogic approach is evident in the types of corrective feedback I had given to my students for their research proposal due in the fourth instructional week. Table 3 illustrates sample written corrective feedback (WCF) I had given to two of my students: A, who was working on a paper on religious syncretism in Thai Buddhism; and B, who was looking to analyse several short texts written by Flannery O'Connor. Based on my WCF excerpts, it is evident that my feedback is intended to instruct students on how they should revise and structure their work., e.g., "Several areas need further clarification" or "Please submit your essay in MS Word format." My feedback also points their research to a particular direction, e.g., "Perhaps it might be more meaningful if you could come up with a more interesting angle on the topic…"

Table 3. **Sample feedback given by Rowland on his students' working theses**		
Student	**Student A**	**Student B**
Chosen topic	*Supernaturalism and Religion in Southeast Asia*	*Literary works of Flannery O'Connor*
Sample Research Proposal criterion: Is the thesis statement a declarative statement that can be affirmed or denied? Does it take a clear position on a debatable issue that is closely related to the topic?	Thesis: Syncretism is a catalyst to the change in Buddhism in Thailand as it provides Buddhism with new aspects that can induce the change. Tutor feedback: The thesis statement is quite vague. Several areas need further clarification: 1. The concept 'syncretism' needs to be clearly defined (because changes in Buddhism can also be explained using other concepts/theories, e.g., hybridization)…	Thesis: The fictional world of O'Connor illustrates a bleak, futile caricature of the goodness in humanity, despite the implied notion of spiritual redemption through worldly violence and shock. Tutor feedback: 1. Please submit your essay in MS Word format. 2. The thesis statement could show greater awareness and complexity of the topic… 3. Perhaps it might be more meaningful if you could come up with a more interesting angle on the topic (i.e., putting your own spin on it).
Sample Overview Essay criterion: Are the thesis and the supporting reasons or pieces of evidence sufficiently specific and clear?	Syncretism is the combining of religions, philosophies, or ideas; the elements are still functional when separated; In contrast, according to Kitiarsa, hybridism is the convergence of faiths and practices, that establishes 'new amalgamation and sets of meaning' which are more modernised. Hence, the hybridised system is non-functional when elements are separated. Syncretism and hybridism are simultaneous procedures that contribute actively to the change in Magical Buddhism in Thailand, as it provides Buddhism with new aspects that can induce the change. Tutor feedback: From where did you get your definition of syncretism?... The thesis statement is clear, but it seems to be a rehash of Kitiarsa's thesis in his 2012 paper. I think you should attempt to further evaluate -- and more importantly, critically evaluate – his claims (as opposed to merely reproducing and agreeing with them)…	The works of O'Connor are a harsh and unsympathetic critique of humanity, as seen from the grotesque, evil and violent caricature she illustrates. Tutor feedback: ...Overall, the supporting arguments are good -- they draw from an array of relevant perspectives to explain how O'Connor's works are a harsh and unsympathetic critique of humanity. But because there are quite a lot of perspectives involved here, I would like to see a more critical or evaluative approach to the essay. Perhaps weighing the significance of each argument (to the thesis) would be good.

In my view, dialogic feedback seemed to help students internalise their writing and argumentation skills; however, as students' academic literacies improved – they became more familiar with the conventions and rigour of academic writing – they sought more guidance and instruction on the use of symbolic and material artifacts beyond what my whole class teaching context provided. This is evident in the written feedback that I had given to my students for their second assignment, the Overview Essay: based on the relevant excerpts in Table 3, it can be seen that my feedback focused more on encouraging the students to think more critically and reconsider their organisation and framing of ideas, e.g.: "I think you should attempt to further evaluate – and more importantly, critically evaluate…"

As the semester progressed, the provision of feedback seemed to naturally shift to become more 'sociomaterial' as the students achieved higher levels of writing competence and understanding of their academic source texts. This became even more evident in the latter half of the semester during face-to-face consultations with students, wherein they exhibited higher levels of engagement and asked more complex and meta-discursive questions about their written work.

DISCUSSION

We expected that our WCF data would mainly point towards improving academic text production, e.g., appropriate use of language, rhetorical techniques, and formatting conventions, etc.; however, we also found instances of non-corrective feedback, i.e., feedback that does not necessarily evaluate the students' accuracy writing, but clearly reflects our attitudes or perceptions as course instructors. Here, we employed strategies which include, but are not limited to, the following: praising students for their strong points, ideas, or good command of the English language; interjecting our personal views on the content of their writing; or suggesting points that could potentially be useful for the students outside of the course. We surmise that such instances of non-corrective feedback could help build an affective rapport with the instructor, which in turn, may encourage students to become more confident and exercise greater agency over their work (Unlu & Wharton, 2015).

Our reflections illustrate several similarities and differences in the way we approached and administered WCF in our respective classes (see Table 4). Firstly, we both agree that feedback provision is valuable especially in terms of promoting teacher-student interaction. We also agree that feedback on written work is a primarily dialogic form of teaching and presents itself, at least in the initial stages of work supervision, in a top-down manner that provides guidance and clarity of purpose for the students. Within

our module, both of our dialogic approaches are supported by the curriculum, especially since the main objective of our course is to prepare first-year students for future university writing assignments. Despite the obvious differences in our teaching style and administration of feedback, the dialogicity of our respective feedback practices is clearly evident in our adherence to the evaluation criteria set by our assessment rubrics. In our view, providing clear guidance on errors, mistakes, strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement allows the students to better focus on the purpose of their work and optimise classroom time to meet the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the course. This, of course, is predicated on the assumption that the course's ILOs are sufficient for acquiring the basic academic writing knowledge and skills that are required at the tertiary level. While we acknowledge that the dialogic approach assumes a deficit model of learning, we argue that such as approach is suitable for introductory higher education courses like FAS1101, which requires the students not only to undergo a developmental uptake of new academic writing knowledge and skills, but also to be assessed based on the accuracy of their language use and content, and the logical strength and overall quality of their argumentation.

Secondly, we both agree that the provision of feedback should be personalised (as opposed to writing a general, mass feedback to all students). Also, feedback needs to be constructed in a manner that is accessible and discernible to each student. We, however, diverge in terms of how much we 'personalise' our written corrective feedback with regard to our students' language proficiency levels. Overall, Daron's feedback structure is less regimented, containing fewer imperative statements and suggestions, and employing interrogative statements more frequently to emphasise student accountability and encourage independent thinking and learning. This is akin to the study by Nyström et al. (2016), who reported that a feedback and debriefing session can be quite laissez-faire, if the intention is for students to develop individual narratives. Meanwhile, Rowland's feedback structure is more regimented, evidenced in the use of the descriptors in the rubrics (i.e., criteria) to guide the flow of the feedback. What is seen is the adherence to social protocols and disciplinary norms, perhaps with the intention to familiarise students with processes of writing, including building the capacity to understand and respond to feedback, and being aware of the expectations of the feedback provider, writing task, and the course (Duff, 2010).

While the above findings are illuminating, it is unsurprising to find that different pedagogical labours can produce different sets of beliefs and practices with regard to feedback. Perhaps the more important question, then, is whether it is necessary for instructors, especially those who are teaching the same course,

Table 4. Similarities and differences in feedback beliefs and practices	
Daron	**Rowland**
Feedback as a form of teaching	Feedback as a supplement to whole class teaching
Means of communication with students regarding the quality of their written work	Means of providing one-on-one conversations with students outside the classroom to discuss their written work
Feedback is personalised to address specific needs	Feedback is personalised to address specific needs
Feedback is based on evaluation criteria set by the assessment rubrics	Feedback is based on evaluation criteria set by the assessment rubrics
Feedback should be appropriate to the evaluation criteria	Feedback should be appropriate to the evaluation criteria
Less regimented feedback structure for students with high language proficiency	More regimented feedback structure, regardless of language proficiency.
Overall less detailed feedback structure to accord greater emphasis on student's accountability and independent learning	More regimented feedback structure, with clear rules of engagement with regard to receiving and addressing teacher feedback

to converge to a similar practice, e.g., the sociomaterial practice. In reviewing the nature of academic writing (as a course subject), as well as the composition of our student cohorts, we believe that a purely sociomaterial approach to teaching is problematic for several reasons. First, it is unclear at which point in the teaching practice it would be suitable to adopt a sociomaterial approach. In introductory courses like FAS1101, for instance, students do require explicit and top-down guidance and scaffolding to align them with the expectations and requirements of the module. This is because most of them are new to the university and need time to become familiar with the conventions of academic writing at the tertiary level.

The obverse case, however, is also problematic: adopting a purely dialogic approach, especially at the later stages of modular instruction, could potentially inhibit the students' ability to think and learn independently. We therefore argue that instructors need to think carefully about the construction and timing of their feedback. While it is necessary for instructors to first ease their students into the disciplinary conventions of academic writing (Kaufhold & McGrath, 2019), it becomes more crucial over time to let them transition into independent and critical writers. Feedback provision should encourage them to be more confident of themselves, to brave unfamiliar topics and draw ideas from various knowledge sources, and to formulate ideas on their own and put them into writing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The similarities and differences of our WCF practices highlighted several noteworthy pedagogical issues, for which we would like to offer several recommendations. First is the point at which it becomes appropriate for students to enact sociomaterial approaches to learning. In the course that we teach, students had just entered university. We do not expect them to be immediately cognisant of potential learning opportunities in this new environment. Indeed, our experiences with them suggest that they are receptive to teaching approaches that are designed to help them build a foundation that will serve them through their university education. In other words, students do wish to develop a clearer understanding of classroom conduct, conventions, and instructor and course expectations, so that they can better negotiate them or navigate their way around them. Thus, our recommendation would be to begin with WCF that is dialogic, and more importantly, framed against transparent evaluative criteria. In doing so, students will be able to build familiarity on academic processes by interacting with their instructors.

Second, we should be wary of the opportunities for learning. In our case, even though a sociomaterial approach may seem exciting, especially if students are able to bring in novel materials to support their content development, it would result in a heavier teaching load – we would need to read up on various new sources that students introduce in their writing. A purely sociomaterial approach may also not be as efficient, especially when students are being familiarised with conventional structures of academic essays, and are expected to understand how to work within the evaluative parameters of a module. Furthermore, given that there are institutional standards to be met, not all tasks or projects may lend itself as a sociomaterial site for learning. We recommend that instructors, whether academic literacy or subject specialists, will then need to carefully curate spaces where a sociomaterial approach may be implemented without being a burden to anyone.

This also raises the consideration that tasks are not heterogenous, and may require an eclectic approach in its planning, deployment, and management (see Gunnarsson, 2018). When these temporal and spatial contexts are identified, instructors can then efficiently cater to the personal needs of the students – be it academic literacy skills or their personal or academic investment in a topic or subject. Also, for students, learning from feedback is maximised through the timely application of either or both dialogic and sociomaterial approaches at various stages of the students' learning trajectory.

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