

Learning and Teaching Conference 2015

**Personalising feedback:**

**Can we bridge the formative-  
summative gap?**

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# Personalising feedback: Can we bridge the formative-summative gap?



# Summative V. Formative Assessment

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Brainstorm concepts related to each type of  
assessment

(2 minutes)

# Formative assessment

*"All those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged."*

*(Black and Wiliam, 1998, p. 10)*

# By the end of the presentation we will have ...

- outlined our experiences using particular tools (e.g. audio/screencasts/google docs) for formative feedback;
- persuaded you of the potential our approaches have for improved feed forward and student engagement;
- highlighted some institutional barriers to bridging the formative-summative gap

# Context 1 :Degree programme in French

- Degree programme in French ; taught in the target language; no distinction between “language classes” and “cultural modules”
- Acquisition of knowledge goes hand in hand with acquisition of language
- Norms of an academic culture apply and need to be integrated
- Scaffolded approach and planned progression at programme level are key

# Challenges to be addressed

- Declining level of academic skills
- Inappropriate students' beliefs regarding language learning
- Development of self-regulated learners
- Dissatisfaction with feedback procedures
- Lack of students' engagement with feedback
- Difficulties in conveying some messages (e.g. argumentation)

# Rehearsal for summative assessment

French Language and Society II – Group Friday 11:15

**Serait-il souhaitable de rendre le vote obligatoire?**

Après la chute **du absolutisme** en France, on peut dire que, concernant la politique, **il y avait un désordre. Encore** beaucoup de corruption et de luttes pour le pouvoir ont **forgé** le pays.

**Donc** depuis quelques siècles, l'homme a combattu pour le droit de voter, **soit la seule droit** pour l'homme mais aussi pour les femmes. Beaucoup des manifestations et surtout **la** triomphe après la prise de la bastille ont causé la déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen en 1789. **Introduction? Problématique? Structure?**

Aujourd'hui on peut dire que l'acte de voter est un privilège **et** presque toutes les républiques démocratiques suivent cet exemple. Malheureusement le taux d'abstention dans certains pays démocratiques est trop haut. Par exemple, cette année pendant les élections **présidentielle** 2012 en France, en moyenne 20% de la population ont décidés

Page: 1 of 2 | Words: 495 | French (France) | 124% | 08:17 22/11/2012

02:14



# Students' perspective

- More explanatory at various levels
- Shows how to improve
- Easier to process
- More memorable
- Grade is justified
- More personal
- Students have to be more active
- One way discussion

# Tutor's perspective

- More enjoyable
- Demonstrates the complexity of the reading process
- Raises students' awareness of time and effort
- Allows to talk about a number of aspects at the same time
- Helps to focus your mind
- Makes you aware of the complexity of the process
- Introduces an emotional dimension

# 7 principles of good feedback

- Clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards)
- Facilitate the development of reflection and self-assessment in learning
- Deliver high quality feedback to students : that enables them to self-correct
- Encourage dialogue around learning (peer and tutor-student)
- Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
- Provide opportunities to act on feedback
- Provide information that teachers can use to help shape their teaching

(Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006)

# 7 principles of good feedback

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# Context 2: Taught Master's in Language Education

- Mainly **MATESOL-pre-service teachers**-content modules but also expectation for 'language' feedback
- **International students**, mainly South East Asian education cultures
- **Transition** from the 250 word IELTS composition to longer **texts-criticality –synthesis of material from multiple sources**
- Term 1- **formalised formative task- 1000 word mini-assignment** (4500 documented essay style summative assignments)

# Written feedback- a post-mortem rather than a medical

- Too descriptive
- Be more analytical
- Your writing is not very coherent
- More critical analysis

- Work on definite and indefinite articles
- check past tenses
- Look at word choice

Too often written feedback can be a post-mortem rather than a 'medical'

It may be ..

- accurate but not helpful
- indicative in identifying problems...
- lacking in developmental feed forward help

# Evolving approach

**Screencasts** have advantages of podcast feedback plus visual element to locate specific points

My own **classroom based research** (2012) showed some residual preference for written fb- so 'one-size-does not fit all'

**A combined approach** -15 mins to read and annotate in Word- record 5-6 mins of unprepared commentary

# Screencast example

Construct validity and authenticity

1

Construct validity and authenticity:

Drawing 'real and ripe' ability from test-takers

The concept of communicative competence brought changes in language teaching and learning and inevitably how to assess language ability (McNamara, 1996). The major shift from grammar translation method to communicative language teaching (CLT) is one of the examples (Richards & Rodgers, 2002). In CLT, language teaching focuses on improving learners' ability to communicate in target language. In order to assess what learners learned through communicative approach, performance assessment has arisen as the most suitable type of testing (McNamara, 1996). Even though they appear to be testing those skills directly, as for any other tests, they are not without questions of construct validity. Construct validity concerns with theoretical constructs that specific tests claim to assess (Brown, 2000). That is, what has come out as an outcome should reflect test-taker's ability that the tests assessed. Construct validity, therefore, deals with

**Comment [BS1]:** Strange formatting?

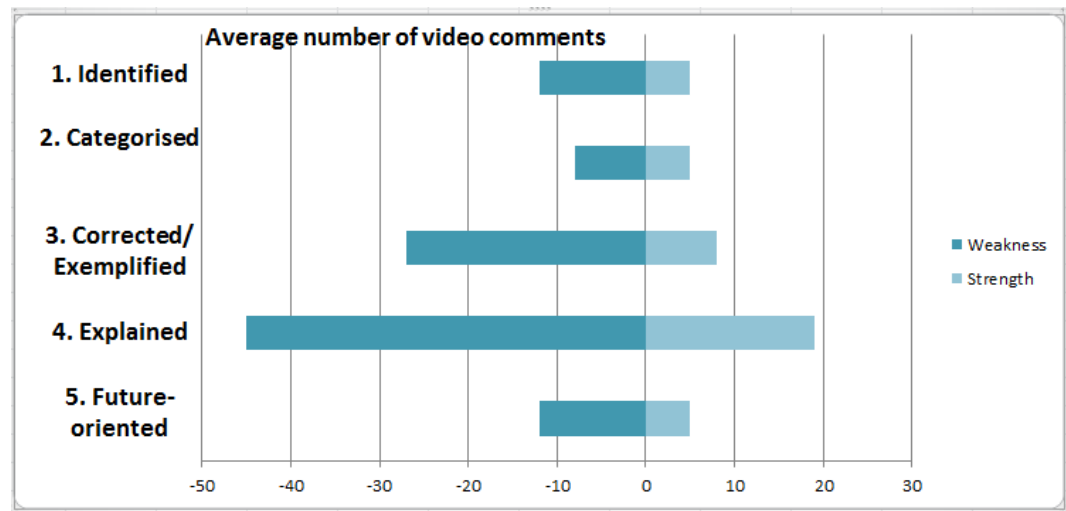
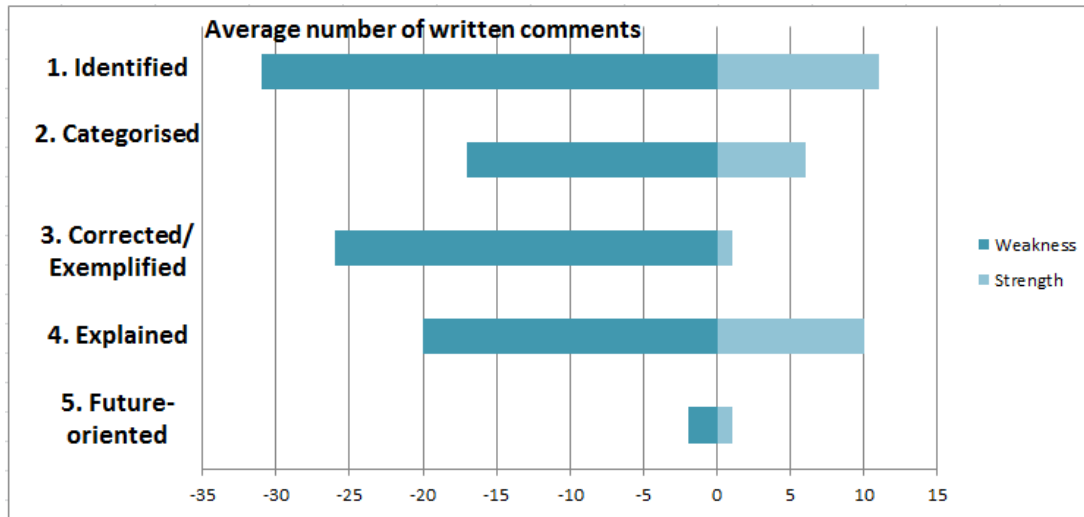
**Comment [BS2]:** What does 'they' refer to?

**Comment [BS3]:** Do you mean that the test set out or intended to test?



# Feedback analysis

9/32 students in two modules- Focus group+ think aloud review of commentary



Feedback Analysis  
Chart for Teachers  
(FACT) (Toro-  
Fernandez, 2012)

# Evidence for the value of combined approach

## Written comments still valued:

I like the word information ...it's very visible and I can get the point more concisely...I will see the word summary more frequently because it's more convenient. (Katy)

# Depth of feedback

“..even for my summative essay I didn't get so detailed feedback ...very in-depth with voice and screen, ...really nice, really good experience.”  
(Anna)

## **Multiplying feedback by a factor of 4?**

No, audio/ video commentary picks up a smaller number of points and elaborates upon them in depth= less is more principle

# Reader response style- potential for building relationships

- Shows teacher engagement and attention to work
- Emotions, actually underpin social interactions -not simple by-products of them

“The tone of delivery is really very friendly, written feedback is stale.” (*Jim*)

Do verbal commentaries complement *wfb* and compensate for lack of face-to-face contact?

# Forced engagement versus comprehension challenge?

“Watch and stop watch and stop. You sometimes have to repeat, sometimes the speed is a little quick”. (Paul)

“I have to take some time to make some notes, so I have to pause it... ”. (Bella)

“You have to take some time to process the information even if you know what he is saying. Sometimes we have to read it again to see how to change it”. (Jim)

# 7 principles of good feedback

- Clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards)
- Facilitate the development of **reflection and self-assessment in learning?**
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- **Encourage dialogue around learning (peer and tutor-student) ?**
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# Formative and summative assessment-bridging the gap

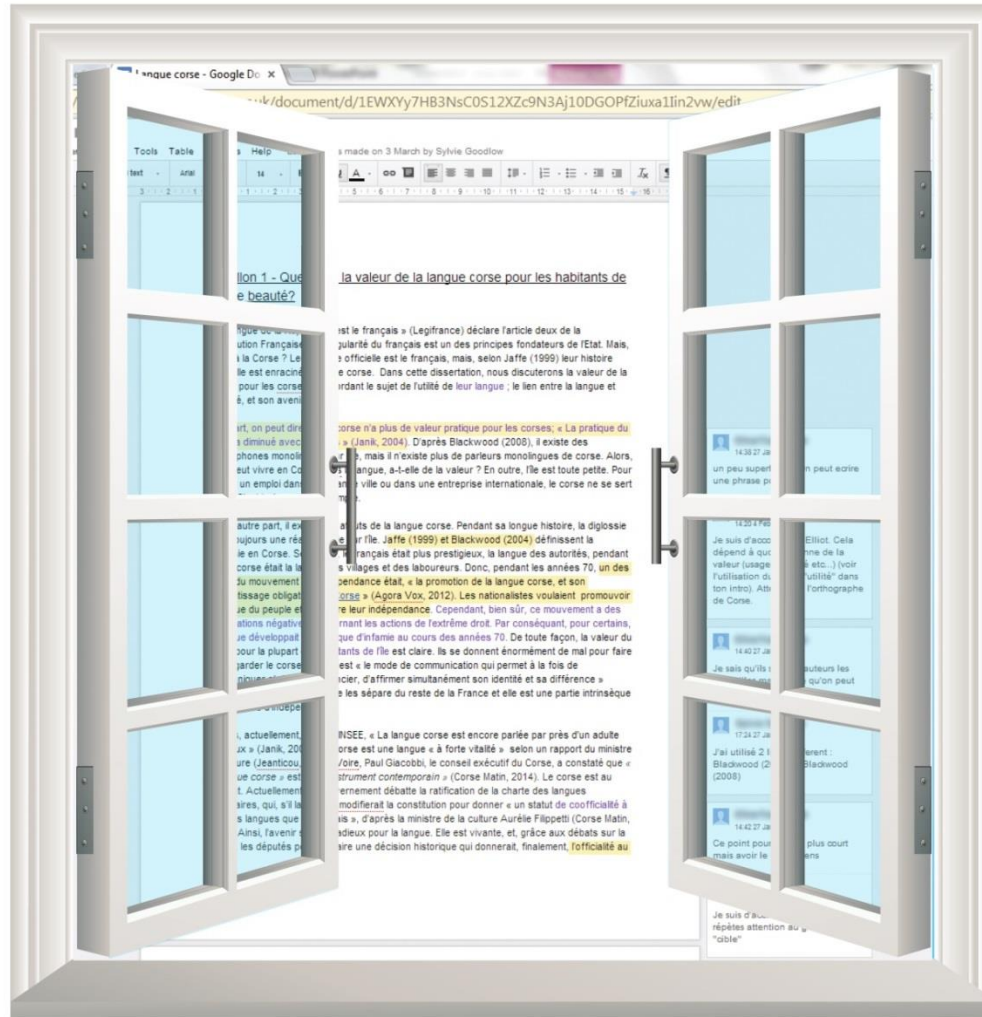
- How to explain the gap between (or the alignment of) their performance and the expected standards?
- How to help students internalise standards?
- How to ensure they take action to close the gap whatever their level of skills and understanding at that point?
- How to provide a coherent framework which encourages students to adopt appropriate learning tasks and strategies?

# How to bridge the gap?

- Digital Language Portfolio (Strategic Learning and Teaching Project Fund)
- Use of Google docs
- Feedback as feed forward
- Iterative process
- Programme level design
- Piloted formatively- now part of summative assessment
- Led to a complete revision of the Y1 programme in which it is now well embedded



# A window onto students' perceptions



# How to bridge the gap?

View feedback holistically, within teaching and learning context:

- Use of pre-emptive feedback with **peer discussion** around a number of **exemplars**
- **Other guidance** (e.g. article errors, paragraphing)?
- Use of **blogs**
- **Reflection on feedback**-in class discussion

But opportunities to act on feedback?

# Reflection –feedback modes?

**No silver bullet, one-size does not fit all in feedback: What is most appropriate mode?**

- Video engaged students, but was it the novelty factor?  
“The reason we are so impressed is because we weren’t familiar. If students became familiar would they treat it like written feedback once they are used to it?” (Linda)
- Need for a reflective student response?
- Tutors’ uptake of new tools and approaches?

# Our assessment

- Degree of effectiveness?
- Increased workload?
- Constraints imposed by the institutional frameworks?
- Consistency of message across the programme?

# Some thoughts on institutional constraints

- Modular system multiplies the number of SA assessment tasks
- Module specs
- Module level design rather than programme level design
- Issues of fairness and quality assurance (e.g. anonymous marking)
- Accreditation by external bodies
- Increasing student/staff ratios
- Increasing workload and “accountability”
- Conflicts with underlying beliefs of learning and teaching
- Innovation around assessment only focuses on Y1 undergraduate students
- Long term engagement
- Staffing and division of labour