

Book Review: *The Impact of Feedback in Higher Education: Improving Assessment Outcomes for Learners*

The editors of this book gathered the leading international researchers across diverse disciplines and proposed four questions to guide feedback research and practice, ‘Do learners know the purpose of feedback and their role(s) in it? Can learners make sense of the information? Can learners take action? What effects should we be looking for?’ (Henderson et al., 2019, p. 14). With the sociocultural perspective, we attempt not only to discuss, in the broad context of higher education, critical issues pertaining to feedback that makes a difference, expanding notions of feedback impact, pedagogies of feedback impact, visibility of feedback, and implications for research and practice, but to correlate the conclusions drawn from this book with the contexts and issues associated with feedback on L2 writing.

As part of its introduction, the book identifies the key issues it intends to address. Henderson, Ajjawi, Boud, and Molloy offer new perspectives on feedback in higher education in theoretical, methodological, and practical domains, and admit that the impact of feedback is difficult to define or measure. The reason for this is the learner’s agency, as well as the complexity of feedback meaning construction, demonstrating that causality is contingent and impact is diverse in educational research.

In Part Two, the authors extend current conceptualizations of the impact of feedback by suggesting that along with academic performance, factors affecting achievement, such as learning strategies, engagement, and affect, must also be considered. Tai, Dawson, Bearman, and Ajjawi argue from an interpersonal and interactional perspective that narrow and simplistic educational practices must be discarded to understand the impact of feedback. In research that lacks conceptual clarity, contradictory measures emerge, resulting in misaligned research designs and an emphasis on the easiest to measure. A social constructivist perspective is applied to Carless’ analysis of the short- and long-term impacts of feedback, and he uses a modified 3P model to explain how the learner experiences feedback, emphasizing that feedback literacy is an important factor spanning the interaction cycle between the learner and the teacher before, during, and after the feedback process. At the level of the broader socio-cultural context, Esterhazy offers a three-tiered model of feedback, highlighting the practical difficulties that can prevent effective feedback practices, and reinforcing the idea that feedback is a multi-layered process that involves students, teachers, and the social environment. Even subtle adjustments in any of these factors can have a profound

impact on how feedback is conducted. To articulate the emotional regulation dimension of feedback, Molloy, Noble, and Ajjawi reframe the role of emotion in feedback based on the Control-Value Theory. In their chapter, students examine their perceptions of control over themselves and their surroundings, as well as the values that underpin how they judge their situation. Aben, Dingyloudi, Timmermans, and Strijbos explain the simultaneous interplay between intrapersonal and interpersonal factors between feedback provision and processing, concentrating on the process of dealing with errors and the possibility of correcting one’s performance once the error has been identified.

Part Three illustrates strategies and principles for improving the impact of feedback. Pitt discusses how peer feedback can improve students’ evaluative judgment. Feedback dialogues and classroom cultures created by teachers help students improve their learning potential and understand, process, and apply feedback in subsequent assessments. As Panadero, Lipnevich, and Broadbent demonstrate, self-assessment can result in a more comprehensive self-feedback process. As well as providing teachers with information on how to modify their instruction, the ultimate objective is for students to generate and seek feedback so that the gap between their current performance and their desired performance can be reduced. In their chapter, Bearman, Eppich, and Nestel document debriefing methods and their impact on feedback practices, and analyze the reasonable evidence that debriefing contributes to positive performance outcomes. According to Lockyer, Armson, Könings, Zetkovic, and Sargeant, the R2C2 model consists of four phases, involving fostering relationships, exploring reactions, discussing content, and guiding learners to make changes, all of which promote a retrospective process focused on continuous improvement.

Part Four discusses the use of digital technologies to track impact or change over time, either at the individual learner level or at the system level. Ryan, Gašević, and Henderson demonstrate how existing learning analytics technologies can also be used to assist feedback practitioners. Educators can use learning analytics to design personalized, impactful feedback processes, and learners can use learning analytics to identify how feedback makes a positive difference over time. Winstone highlights the difficulties in monitoring the effects of feedback and suggests a digital solution called the Feedback Engagement and Tracking System (FEATS). The system aims to track students’ interactions with feedback by

analyzing their digital footprint. The primary focus is to understand student engagement with feedback and the impact of feedback on their learning behavior and outcomes.

As a culmination of the previous chapters, the last part draws on interdisciplinary literature to propose challenges, implications, and further actions for research and practice on effective feedback. With a learner engagement perspective, Ajjawi, Boud, Henderson, and Molloy explore the feedback process as a start to a dialogue about the impact of feedback. As a result of research in naturalistic settings on feedback, this chapter describes possible research categories related to feedback: direct learning over the short, medium, and long term; meta-learning processes, including developing evaluative judgment and self-regulation over time; and students' development as academics or professionals. Lastly, Henderson, Molloy, Ajjawi, and Boud provide some primary factors that teachers should consider when designing a feedback process, which can have varying effects on the impact of the feedback. The focus should be on designing the feedback as a whole, paying attention to and correcting possible deviations in the process to achieve the desired results, rather than just passively receiving feedback.

Considering the conceptualizations, pedagogies, and digital technologies discussed above, we would like to draw attention to a particular context of interest to researchers, educators, and students, in order to better understand the impact of feedback. The impact of feedback on L2 writing has primarily been studied in terms of text revisions and writing quality, with considerable attention being paid to the linguistic or textual aspects of student writing. Informed by the theoretical review, in Liu and Yu (2022), three major conceptualizations of L2 writing feedback were identified (i.e., feedback as information, feedback as internal processes, and feedback as sociocultural interactions) and their theoretical foundations were discussed, and it was proposed that feedback on L2 writing has multidimensional impacts on written products, writing process, and writers.

In line with the book reviewed, the sociocultural perspective has led to a growing number of recent studies examining the paradigm shift from the simple focus on written corrective feedback (WCF) to a wide range of different directions for addressing the impact of feedback on L2 writing. Zhang and Zhang (2022) examined how teacher feedback, peer feedback, and automated feedback affected metacognitive strategies used in L2 writing and found that these feedback effects differed statistically from one another when it came to the use of selective attention strategies, while other metacognitive strategies did not differ statistically. Additionally, automated feedback hindered monitoring strategies, whereas teacher feedback and peer feedback promoted all metacognitive strategies. Gan et al. (2023) explored how classroom feedback practices influence foreign language learning motivation among tertiary students and found that self-feedback was the most powerful predictor of motivation. Yang et al. (2023) found that process and self-regulatory oriented feedback can help students increase their interest in multiple-draft writing practice, develop self-reinforcement in motivational

regulation strategies, and become more proactive in feedback inquiry, but they did not engage in peer learning as much. Cheng and Zhang (2024) examined Chinese secondary school students' affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement with peer feedback in L2 writing, and found that participants viewed themselves as improving in all three dimensions over the semester.

Despite the fact that the study of feedback on L2 writing began in the early 1990s, Hyland and Hyland (2019) confessed that some questions remained unanswered or only partially answered after accumulating rich academic literature, 'What are the most effective feedback practices in different contexts? Does feedback improve student writing and language accuracy in the longer term? What is the impact of peer feedback on L2 writing? Does the use of social media enhance the feedback process? Does automated feedback encourage revision and learning? What factors affect student engagement with feedback?' (p.3). As a result of individual differences in L2 writers as well as different contexts in which to learn, these issues are complicated. Moreover, due to the rapid development of technology, any overview of its enormous impact on information delivery and feedback mediation may become outdated very quickly. Nevertheless, Hyland and Hyland (2019) identified four promising avenues for conceptualizing feedback and exploring its impact on L2 writing, some of which are highly corresponding with the essence of this book: situating feedback, within the wider sociocultural context; shaping feedback, its methods of delivery and impact; negotiating feedback, interpersonal interactions between participants; and engaging with feedback, how students participate in it.

It is therefore important to recognize that identifying the impact of feedback, whether it be in the context of L2 writing or in the broader context of higher education, is problematic, according to Henderson et al. (2019), and it is pivotal to 'revisit the contingent nature of educational research into cause and effect, and question the implications for feedback processes that are likely to be experienced by individuals in different ways with different effects over different timescales. It is here we then discuss some ways we convince the various forms of feedback effect including the intentional and unintentional, immediate and delayed, cognitive, affective, motivational, relational and social.' (p.7).

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