WHEN GIVING IS NOT RECEIVING: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOW FEEDBACK IS GIVEN ON STUDENTS' WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

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Abstract

Research across all spectrums of multi-disciplinary learning, in higher education, has concluded that teacher written feedback after the completion of a written assignment, in a product approach writing course, is rarely read and implemented by students. The fundamental reason for this is that students perceive it to be of little relevance to future assignments (Crisp 2007; Tom et al. 2013). Therefore, for students to learn and grow as academic writers, intervention is required during the writing process (Hattie and Clarke 2019; Hattie and Timperley 2007). This intervention can be, for example, in the form of teacher-student feedback and peer feedback, in verbal and written communication. As a contribution to this process, this paper explores the possible use of key strategies from the work of Berne (1961, 1964, 1974, 2018, 2010) and his theory of Transactional Analysis (TA), (DGTA e.V.) in the context of teachers communicating both formative and summative feedback on student academic writing. Key tools from TA will be presented and shown to support in the delivery of feedback. Furthermore, the significance of understanding individual beliefs, whether it be your own or that of your students, will be addressed. A step-by-step guide is then presented with representative examples to exemplify how these strategies were implemented in two academic writing courses in higher education. Benefits of this strategy included reduced marking and grading time and gratifying learning outcomes, including an average grade score of 84% in the final term written assignment.

Keywords: *feedback, transactional analysis, beliefs, academic writing course, dialogue of feedback, process writing*

INTRODUCTION

The cognitive benefit of formative feedback as part of learning has been explored by numerous educational researchers, including prominent experts in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). These experts have largely determined that formative feedback has the potential to enhance both the giver's and the receiver's learning and development (Kumaravadivelu 2007; Mann and Walsh 2017; Richards and Lockhart 1994; Brookhart 2008; Kumaravadivelu 2012). However, not all feedback is good feedback (Bailey and Garner 2010). In a number of multi-disciplinary studies, research has unveiled feedback as often underutilised and, in the worst case, to be detrimental to learning (Bangert-Drowns et al. 1991; Butler and Winne 1995; Crisp 2007; Sutton 2012; Hattie and Timperley 2007; Kluger and DeNisi 1996). These shortcomings in feedback can be attributed to numerous issues, which have themselves been widely researched, leaving many conflicting findings and no consistent pattern of results (Hattie and Timperley 2007; Shute 2008).

One attribute which has not been extensively researched is the quality of transaction during the delivery of feedback between teacher and student and this is the area which will be explored in this paper (Wingate 2010). As early as 1984, Gebhard drew criticisms towards the traditional approach to delivering feedback, with teacher as expert and learner as novice. Gebhard (1984) suggests that this approach, where the teacher informs and evaluates students can be perceived as prescriptive and negative. An alternative to this traditional approach is a non-directive approach (Freeman 1982). This can be equated with supervision, where the teacher and learner have an equal relationship and work in collaboration to find possible solutions to problems (Richards and Rodgers 2010; Kato, and Mymard, 2016).

This paper aims to contribute towards the positive outcomes of using a non-directive approach of providing both formative and summative feedback. Firstly, the reader will be briefed of possible

shortcomings in the traditional delivery of feedback and how this might hijack potential positive learning outcomes. I will then provide a short background to the theories of Eric Berne and his theory of Transactional Analysis, the practice of which is certified by the association Deutsch Gesellschaft für Transaktionsanalysis (DGTA e.V.) (Berne 1961). I will then explain and exemplify key theories which I propose would support language teachers in the delivery of feedback (Stewart and Joines 2012). Thereafter, I will assess the potentials and pitfalls of implementing this approach of feedback to higher education students during two parallel academic writing courses taking in summer of 2021.

GIVING IS NOT RECEIVING. WHY DOES TEACHER'S FEEDBACK ON WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS OFTEN REMAIN UNDERUTILISED?

Traditionally, academic writing courses have been structured in such a way that the students only begin to write their assignment or paper at the end of the course and are therefore only given summative feedback on their final written assignment which is often left unread by students (Crisp 2007; Tom et al. 2013; Boud 2000). A major reason for this summative feedback being left underused is that it is often received after the assignment has been graded when students feel it no longer has relevance and where their final grade can no longer be improved (Crisp 2007). The use of a final written assignment is not only limited to language writing classes and certainly the requirement of an end of course written assignment has been extensively employed by many teaching staff in all fields of academia as a form of assessment due to the covid 19 pandemic where an in person end of term exam has not been possible (Şenek and Şenel 2021). Şenel and Şenel (2021) clarify that students who interact with teaching staff during their course are more satisfied with their final written assignment grades, which emphasises the importance of formative feedback. In support of these recent findings, as early as 1994, Bodoczky and Malderez (1994), supported a "feedback dialogue", giving teacher and student the opportunity of establishing a non-directive, collaborative atmosphere where student and teacher alike can participate in on going reflection (Mann and Walsh 2017) and development in their writing.

Although formative feedback has certainly become much more common place in academic writing courses (Wingate 2010) it is the quality of transaction which is examined in this paper. How formative feedback is communicated, directly impacts how the feedback is received and therefore is an important element to be addressed. The following three examples, taken from my own teaching environment, attempt to demonstrate why traditional strategies in teachers' feedback, using little or lack of "feedback dialogue" potentially renders it given but not received by students.

Strategy 1: The I know better than you approach in formative feedback:

"Your assignment uses I. This is not academic. Use the passive."

The criticisms of Gebhard (1984) outlined in the introduction, are substantiated by a number of mixed disciplinary studies in academia (Crisp 2007; Farr 2015; Kato, S., & Mymard, J. 2016; Kumaravadivelu 2006; Sutton 2012). Brookhart (2008) further substantiates this, concluding that teachers who position themselves as the boss (Guinote and Vescio 2010) impede learning in students because the students may become agitated by this dynamic and my simply follow orders rather than engage in autonomous strategic behaviour (Brookhart 2008). The general benefits of autonomous learning, where autonomous refers to learners taking responsibility for their learning, has been extensively examined and found beneficial to learning outcomes (Benson 2007; Nunan 2012). Indeed, in the context of higher education, it can be argued that the ability to think critically, debate and justify one's position are fundamental skills which Universities and thereupon teaching staff are responsible for nurturing (Franco et al. 2018).

Strategy 2: Not transparent in formative feedback:

"I like the introduction and I also think your signposting is excellent. I was very interested to read all the points you made and I thought your arguments were excellent, I could really empathise with your

writing…….maybe the paper is slightly too long, our word count is 2400 words and your paper is 3500 words. Keep up the good work."

The sandwich technique to feedback refers to the technique of giving praise, followed by corrective feedback, followed by more praise (Schwarz 2013). It is universally used by experts giving feedback to novices, across all academic disciplines and in the workplace by mangers to direct reports. The reason for its widespread use is that it is generally accepted that the giving of negative feedback "sandwiched" in praise will soften the anxiety of the corrective feedback for both giver and receiver. However, Schwarz (2013) reports that, when asked, the majority of receivers of feedback all said they would prefer to have transparent corrective feedback and furthermore questioned the genuineness of the praise delivered in sandwich feedback. Schwarz (2013) justifies the receivers' mistrust in sandwich feedback as he details that this approach is unilaterally controlling and designed to influence the performance of others without delivering transparency. These findings in the workplace are substantiated by (Von Bergen, et al. 2014) . Moreover, Glover & Brown (2006) consummate these findings, contending that multi-disciplinary students have difficultly interpreting written feedback by tutors, concluding it is often ineffective because it is "too much, too detailed and often misunderstood" (Glover and Brown 2006: 1).

Strategy 3: Summative feedback given on final assignment

Grade: 63%

Glover & Brown (2006) concluded that due to higher numbers of students, leading to an increased volume in marking, teachers have little time to mark during the semester. Therefore, many tutors only request the submission of an end of term paper and are therefore only able to give summative feedback. While teachers may give formation feedback, both spoken and written, on tasks and exercises performed during class, the students' preferences are to receive precise formative feedback on their own written assignment, specifically grammar errors and how to improve them (Tom et al. 2013).These findings have long been argued by Crisp (2007) and Hatti & Timperley (2007). The Model of feedback proposed by Hattie & Timperley (2007:10) asks the question "where to next?" and in the case of summative feedback on written assignment, the students perceive the feedback as having no further relevance to future assignments (Glover & Brown 2006). Indeed, Crisp (2007) conducted a study of undergraduate social work students and concluded that less than half, 39%, of students spent a scant 5 minutes reading the written feedback. Crisp further denotes this model of feedback to a "tell and listen" unilateral approach by teachers as opposed to "discover and do" involvement by students (Crisp 2007:578) as criticised in strategy 1. Indeed, in a study by Lee (2009) teachers of SLA themselves believed that their end of term assignment feedback would go unread and that process writing with feedback on more drafts would be far more beneficial to students.

How can Transactional analysis (TA) support the successful delivery of feedback?

The examples above have provided arguments for feedback which, although given by teachers, can remain significantly misspent by students. I will first give an overview of the founding principles of transactional analysis (TA) and thus venture to argue how theories from TA can provide a contribution to the non-directive dialogue between teacher and students and substantiate why this holistic approach to feedback is beneficial for both parties. I use the term holistic consciously. In short, from the perspective of TA, it is not possible to separate the communication of feedback as one specific speech act but must be seen within the context of the relationship between teacher and student as a whole. Furthermore, the application of TA theories does not happen in a vacuum, and I acknowledge that this process can be observed from a number of perspectives in the field of psychology (Ayesh Perera et al. 2007)

The fundamentals of TA and their relevance to teacher student communication

Berne (1962) who originally trained in psychoanalysis, wanted a theory which could be understood and accessible to everyone and began to develop what he named Transactional Analysis (TA). Berne's motivation for this was first, he believed that an individual did not need to be mental ill to profit from learning and understanding about oneself. Berne also believed in a person's self-responsibility for their own change and therefore wanted to provide a theory which an individual could work through independently from a therapist. Nowadays there are numerable self-help books on the market (Pierce 2021), however, In contrast to other self-help theories, Berne always, as the title of his theory clearly defines, saw TA in the context of social action rather than individual counselling and employed his work in Education and organisations (Stewart and Joines 2012; Barrow and Newton 2016). In the context of higher education, Berne believed that TA was an important tool to help the educator support autonomous learning by consciously avoiding the Parent (teacher) Child (student) dynamic. These principles of Berne complement both a student-centred learning approach (Kumaravadivelu 2012: 37-54) and a holistic approach conceptualised by the didactic triangle shown in figure 1 (Klafki 1985). TA recognises that individual learners have different learning needs and therefore require different levels of teaching support (Barrow and Newton 2016; Lapworth and Sills 2011). This can be equated with a student-centred learning approach proctored by scores of experts (Kumaravadivelu 2006; O'Neill, G., & McMahon, T. 2005; Richards and Lockhart 1994) Furthermore, the fundamental principle of self-responsibility and autonomy (Stewart and Joines 2012:6) parallels with the nurturing of an autonomous learning environment in higher education (Kumaravadivelu 2012:45).

Moreover, a possible misconception about teaching is that it is purely objective and that teachers are only responsible for the transmission of knowledge. However, as conceptualised by (Klafki 1985) in the didactic triangle (Figure 1), teaching and learning is a triangle where the relationship between teacher, student and content should be seen in equilibrium.

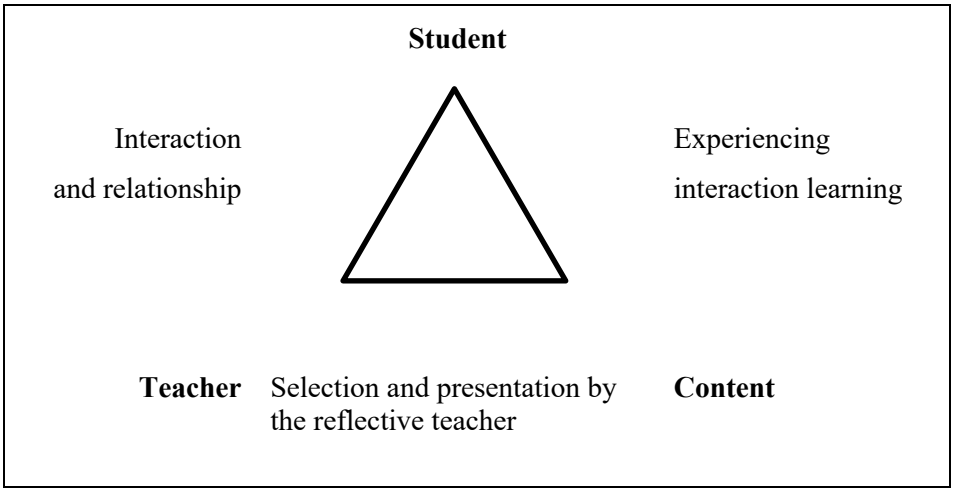


Figure 1: Didactic triangle (Klafki 1985)

The relationship between teacher and student is recognised as an important contributor to an effective learning environment (Lightbown and Spada 2013). This environment is one which supports the individual learner to reach their learning goals and potentials most efficiently. Furthermore, it is recognised that a learner can achieve this when they feel both accepted as part of a learning community and where the content of learning reflects their own personal needs (Falasca 2011; Kumaravadivelu 2012). This relationship and interaction between teacher and student in TA is addressed, as all other transactions between people are addressed. In TA a person is viewed as having three ego states (Figure 2). These ego states refer to the Adult, the Child and the Parent (Stewart & Joines 2012:11-22). Simply explained, you maybe thought you were one person but in TA theory you are three people. The Adult is the state where we respond to the here and now situation, using our grown-up resources. The Child state

is where we feel and behave as we did as children and The Parent state is where we adopt behaviours from our parents and other caretakers from our childhood. No matter who you are, you have these three people inside you.

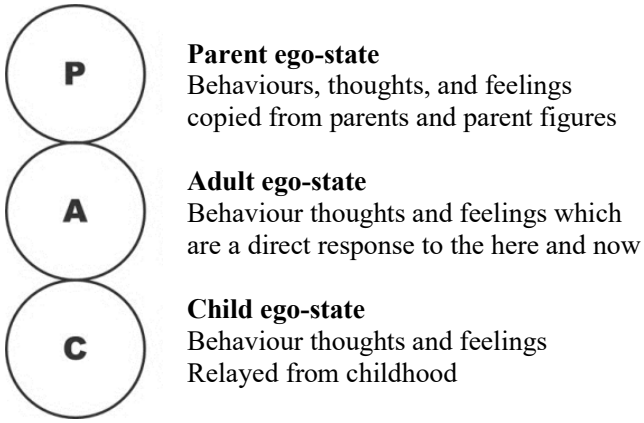


Figure 2: Descriptions of ego state in TA

These three behaviours take charge of us at different times. We can be in our Adult self, sitting on the train working on our lesson plan brushing and switch instantaneously into our Critical Parent self when our neighbour starts playing loud music. Maybe some of us switch into our Child self as we start tapping to the beat of the music. What is important to understand is that we all have these three people and we all, mostly unconsciously, swap in and out between these three people during our day. It is also important to understand that these three people are equally important. Imagine only living in Adult self and not having any feelings? Or imagine trying to cross a busy road without your Parent (caretaker) self? or celebrating your Birthday party without your Child self?

So which self is operating when we are giving and receiving feedback? It would be euphoric to believe that during the feedback process, specifically when feedback of criticism is being given and received that both parties are in their Adult self. Realistically, the giving and receiving of criticism triggers feelings (Haas 2014; LaCapra 1992; Nassaji and Kartchava 2017; Storch 2010; Stone and Heen 2014) and therefore both parties find themselves, all be it unconsciously, in Parent or Child self. It is not uncommon in the communication of critical feedback, for the giver to deliver in Parent self and for the receiver therefore to react from Child self. This is because transactions are complementary and parallel so if one person addresses us from their Parent self, we will naturally and unconsciously respond from our Child self. This is visualised in figures 3 and 4.

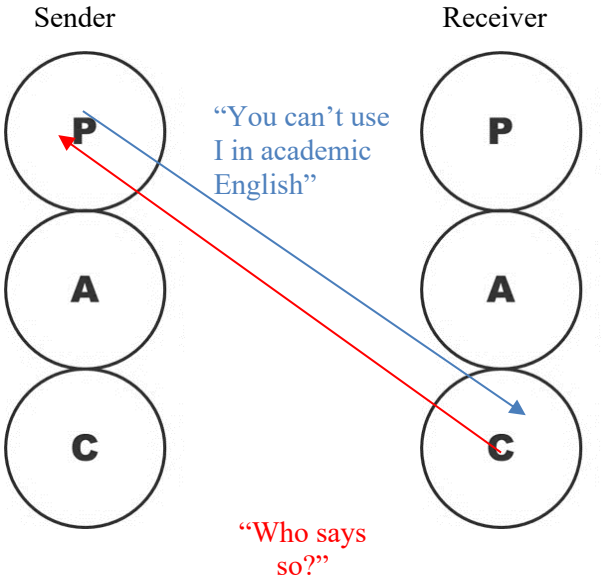


Figure 3: Visualisation of Parent to Child / Child to Parent transaction in TA

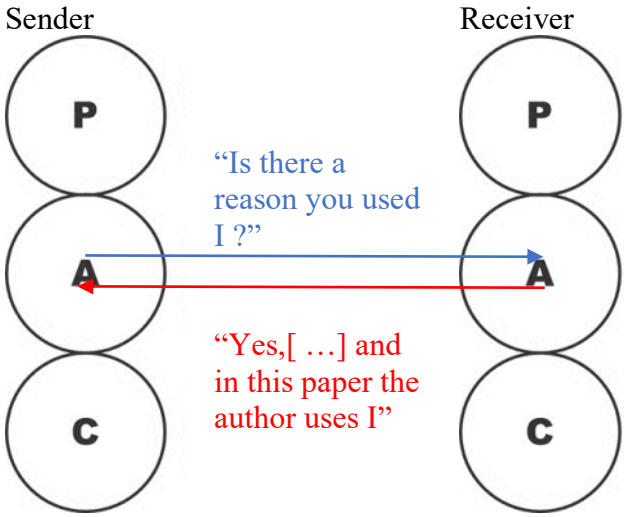


Figure 4: Visualisation of Adult-to-Adult transaction in TA

STROKES: DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

These transactions or exchanges are referred to in TA as the giving and receiving of Strokes (Stewart and Joines 2012:77 ; Steiner 1971). These Strokes will now be illustrated in greater detail.

Imagine you are a teacher, walking into your seminar room and as your students see you, they look up and give you a smile and a nod. Maybe even some approach your desk to ask you a question. We are so familiar with this kind of exchange that we simply take it for granted. However, imagine this scene again. Imagine walking into your seminar room and being ignored by your students who simply continue with whatever they are doing. Like most people you would probably be surprised at first and then the voice in your head would be asking "What have I done?" or "What's their problem?". This is due to our need for acknowledgement (Steiner 1971; Laurence 2003) which is referred to as strokes in TA .

A stroke is defined as any sort of act by someone else that lets you know they are there and that they acknowledge your presence. Eric Berne, referred to this as recognition hunger (Stewart & Joines 2012:77) and believed that the giving and receiving of strokes through contact with others is at the core

of our emotional development. Strokes are categorised into negative and positive, conditional, and unconditional. The very best stroke is an unconditional positive stroke, for example, when someone greets you with a smile and "How are you?" you did not need to achieve anything to obtain this. A conditional positive stroke, however, is earned, for example, on finishing a project and being congratulated by a colleague. An example of a negative unconditional stoke would be someone saying, "You're an idiot". Everyone has a different stroke economy depending on their own personal upbringing. As adults we continue to unconsciously live by our own stoke quotient, filtering out any strokes which would unbalance our equilibrium, referred to by Steiner as our stroke economy (Steiner 1971).

Steiner (1971) believed that the understanding of our own stroke economy was the first step to emotional competence. In short, it is not the case that all people feel most satisfied with only receiving unconditional positive strokes. Quite the contrary, in fact, Steiner suggested that we are all indoctrinated as children with five rules about stroking:

1. Don't give strokes when you have them to give.
2. Don't ask for strokes when you need them.
3. Don't accept strokes if you want them.
4. Don't reject strokes when you don't want them.
5. Don't give yourself strokes.

Steiner maintained that adults use these rules to control children into performing and doing as they are told. From children we grow into adults and remain obedient to these rules and therefore remain in a constant state of stroke deprivation. This belief governs our own personal stroke pattern, including how we give and receive strokes, coining the phrase "Different strokes for different folks".

The relevance of individual personal stroke patterns in the communication of feedback can be discerned in the feedback dialogue between teacher and student. These stroke patterns are influenced by the beliefs of teachers and students which are formed through an individual's own experience and perceptions. The construct of beliefs remains a grey area even though they govern one's own thoughts, words and actions and importantly operate independently from cognitive reasoning and therefore often defy knowledge and facts (Dewey and Findlay 1910; Nespor 1987; Simpson and Jackson 2021). As an example of this, one common belief which I have personally heard from students is "There's no use challenging my grade, the teaching staff never adjust it anyway" and from teaching staff, "Do not give students too much praise, it makes them lazy". Clearly, statements such as these are based on beliefs formed through emotional experiences of the individuals and defy cognitive reasoning (Kumaravadivelu 2012:60; Nespor 1987)

Application of TA strokes in an online academic writing course which fosters feedback dialogue

Course and Participants

During summer semester, 2021, a total of 18 participants registered for two parallel running academic writing courses as part of their Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering Degree, at the Language Centre (ZFS), University of Paderborn, Paderborn, Germany. Participation in these courses is voluntary, although once registered, attendance is mandatory over the 15- week semester. There are two teaching contact hours per week, a total of 30 contact hours, with an estimated 60-hours of autonomous learning in accordance with the designated workload requirement for 3ect points. Participants are graded on a written assignment from a field of their studies, a total of 2400 words, due two weeks after the last teaching session. The students' English language skills are level B2 or above, according to The Common European Framework of reference for Languages (CEFR). Moreover, students are predominantly native German, although some have a migration background. Due to the covid 19 regulations, the 2-hour weekly teaching sessions took place online.

TA Stroke application

The following flow chart in Table 1 visualises the steps (1-8) taken in the implementation of strokes during the online academic writing course. A key feature is the feedback dialogue in both spoken and written forms employed during the course. Moreover, written work was not graded until the final submission and therefore, students were encouraged to implement the feedback given into their writing. In an endeavour to maintain individual student stroke equilibrium, the amount of interaction between teacher and student was led by the student as they chose to participate in class (or not) and chose to sign up (or not) to private one to one tutorials.

Session 1 onwards	STEP 1
STROKE examples	• Give students non-conditional and conditional positive strokes. • "It's good to see you all" • "Thank you for pointing out that typo" • "Thank you for taking an active interest in academic writing" • "I've really enjoyed our lesson today. Your participation made it so much more engaging"
HOW?	• Set up non-graded tasks for students to work on together. • Ask students to proofread course notes and give the teacher feedback.
WHY?	• Create the foundations of a two-way feedback dialogue to be maintained through the course. • Give the students conscious and direct permission to correct their teacher. Create a safe learning environment with mutual respect between teacher and student. • Create an Adult -Adult learning environment.
Session 2 onwards	STEP 2
STROKE examples	• Students give each other strokes. • "This is an interesting topic you are writing about. Where did you get the idea?" • "Do you think you will be able to write 2,400-words on this topic?"
HOW?	• Set up tutorial groups in Moodle (university online learning platform) and invite students to sign up to tutorial groups. • Invite students to read and offer feedback on members' writing tasks.
WHY?	• Nurture and support learning autonomy through student-to-student relationships. • Support and monitor respectful learning environment between students.
Session 2 onwards	STEP 3
STROKE	• Better understanding of individual student stroke economy.
HOW?	• Implement a class learning strategy exercise (referred to in TA as a contract) and ask students how they wish to be corrected.
WHY?	• Important for both teacher and students to understand the individual learning goals of students and the expectations of each other in reaching these goals.
Session 4 onwards	STEP 4

STROKE examples	• Student-to-student individual positive and negative strokes. • Teacher introduction of general negative strokes. • "Which tense do we use for unfinished past?" • "Why is there no "s" on information?"
HOW?	• Co-operative writing task. • Set up students with ether pads (online co-writer tool) to write a short paragraph together in tutorial groups. • Give general feedback and error correction in tutorial groups and plenary.
WHY?	• Opportunity for students to give and receive individual strokes • Gives the teacher opportunity to introduce conditional negative strokes.
Session 6 onwards	STEP 5
STROKE examples	• Positive and negative conditional strokes from teacher-to-student. • "Very concise introduction. You have implemented all the key aspects we covered in our class" • "What do we need after furthermore?" • "How can I support you to improve your sentence structure?"
HOW?	• Ask students to complete a writing task and upload it in Moodle for error correction and teacher feedback.
WHY?	• Opportunity to give students individual and corrective feedback on their writing in a safe environment as students cannot see each other's uploaded work.
Session 7 onwards	STEP 6
STROKE examples	• Student-to-student positive and negative conditional and non-conditional strokes. • "KP wrote that comment about my work too. There is no s at the end of informations. It is uncountable." • "Your introduction is too long. It says in the guidelines it should be about 10% of your report."
HOW?	• Ask students to show and discuss their corrected written work in their tutorial group.
WHY?	• Ensures that students access the teacher feedback. • Check the meaning of the feedback with other students. • Realisation that they all make mistakes and many of these mistakes are the same. • Feedback on content from someone in the came field. • Create learning opportunities from each other which further supports learner autonomy.
Session 7 onwards	STEP 7
STROKE	• Positive and negative conditional strokes from teacher-to-students.
HOW?	• Create optional private tutorials for students with teacher before final assessment.
WHY?	• Provides students with opportunity to balance their personal stroke economy.
Post grading	STEP 8
STROKE	• Positive and (negative) (non-) conditional strokes between teacher and student.
HOW?	• Invite students to optional tutorial after final assessment.
WHY?	• Gives both parties the opportunity to reflect on their learning contract in step 3 and to question if learning goals were achieved and what if any changes need to be made.

Table 1: Implementation of strokes in an SLA academic online writing course

Key features which emerged from the TA stroke application in feedback dialogue

Looking at Table 1, the stroke process began with the use of positive strokes. Both (non)conditional in steps 1 and 2 are fundamental to a positive learning classroom environment. The feeling of positive recognition from teacher to student and student to student creates an atmosphere of trust and an acknowledgement of mutual respect for everyone, regardless of their language ability. These strokes are paramount to creating a safe learning environment and the foundations of feedback dialogue. Giving the students permission to correct any errors I as the teacher made also created an opportunity to practice Adult-Adult transactions (Figure 4) where I was clearly not in a power position. This relationship, for the majority of young adults in higher education, is unclear as understandably young adult students are in a period of adjustment, after years of Child-Parent relationship (Figure 3) with their teachers at school (Guinote and Vescio 2010; Stewart and Joines 2012). From a TA perspective, autonomous learning can only be achieved through self-responsibility and therefore an Adult-Adult relationship is converted. Furthermore, an Adult-Adult relationship lends itself to a collaborative feedback dialogue where the teacher and student both take responsibility for learning outcomes (Lapworth and Sills 2011:181).

Once this foundation had been created, as of step 3, I implemented conditional negative strokes. These I implemented through open communication with the students and forming a contract (Stewart and Joines 2012:8) as to how and when they wished to be corrected. Naturally, the implementation of peer feedback is volatile due to these above-mentioned factors of individual stroke economy and therefore to support the students I took measures to ensure best practice, including, giving an introductory tutorial about the purpose and the possible pitfalls of peer feedback. As a group, the students and I also developed a grading grid which we agreed to follow during feedback dialogue (Passmore 2022). All 18 members of these two writing groups participated in peer feedback in both combinations of spoken and written feedback as well as with a chosen feedback partner and randomly chosen feedback partner. I received no complaints from any students of bad practice during this process.

Differences in individual stroke economy of the participants materialized through the option of individual tutorials. From the 18 students, 8 signed up for one-time individual tutorials, whereby one signed up for a weekly tutorial. I found these individual tutorials very advantageous in gauging support needs of individual students, also importantly, those students who did not sign up for personal tutorials was also important feedback for me. Looking at the overall grade for the course of 84%, specifically that there was no extreme low grade or fail, I am satisfied that this approach worked well for not only best learning outcomes for students but also effective time management for both students and teacher. Implementing these steps and trusting students with their autonomy, I was able, as the teacher, to invest time effectively, catering to individual student needs and stroke economy rather than addressing all students with all issues in a top-down approach (Kumaravadivelu 2012:10).

Throughout steps 1 to 8 I, as the teacher, consciously sought to remain non-directive and in active Adult-Adult dialogue with students. As a TA coach, I am professionally trained to do this but I did catch myself falling into Parent and, yes, sometimes Child. Certainly, a possible criticism to any implementation of this process by a non-TA practitioner would be the concern of bad practice. However, as detailed above, TA theory was specifically developed by Berne for the non-therapist to use in everyday transactional situations. Therefore, I content that any member of teaching staff with an interest in self-development and classroom management could implement this process with success. This procedure is relatively simple, as is any coach to client relationship, following the principle that the coach should ask objective questions and allow the client to develop their own ideas and conclusions. The success of this question answer approach in coaching lies in the accepted knowledge that humans generally act on their own advice rather than that of someone else (Yalom 2008). None the less, the practice of listening rather than speaking is something which should be and can be trained, which is admittedly, not always easy for the directive nature of a teacher (Staub and Stern 2002; Morgan 2016).

Table 1 provides a scaffolding for which strokes can be implemented. There is no right way or wrong way of using strokes (Lapworth and Sills 2016: 201). As discussed previously, all individuals have their own stoke economy. However, it should be noted that there is no place for non-conditional negative strokes “You are all lazy” and to the best of my knowledge I at no time in my teaching have given students any of these said strokes. Also importantly, I only gave conditional negative strokes after having

invested in a foundation of positive (non-) conditional strokes therefore, lowering the risks of not being heard by the student as the student would more likely feel personally threatened and slighted "criticising my work, criticising me" also leaving the teacher feeling frustrated "rejecting my feedback, rejecting me" (Stone and Heen 2014:3). Although there are always exceptions to this rule, it can also be assumed that giving students positive (non-) conditional strokes in step 1 and 2 (see Table 1) cannot disrupt the receiving of negative strokes by a student, as any student who's stroke economy is devoid of positive stokes would simply filter them out.

I will now address how I implemented TA strokes to resolve the lack of feedback dialogue specifically criticised in the three strategies outlined in this paper above. I will precede with strategy 3 as it was criticised for being too late.

Strategy 3: Summative feedback given on final assignment

Grade: 63%

All participants from the 18 participants in both writing courses received some form of formative feedback on their written work. The amount of formative feedback was led by the students in the resolve of accommodating their personal stroke economy in a student-centred approach. Therefore, the giving of summative feedback in a void of formative feedback was completely avoided.

Strategy 1: The I know better than you approach:

"Your paper uses I. This is not academic. Use the passive."

In a TA approach, I turn any direct statements, into a question. In this case, I would have asked:

"Could you tell me why you decided to use personal pronouns in your paper?"

By asking questions, I am giving the responsibility to the student to justify their writing. The student's arguments, I believe should be listened to and understood. Maybe the student is right and can give the teacher examples. *"Do you have examples of academic writing in your field of study which use I?"* The student and teacher can communicate in a collaborative dialogue using questions and answers, leading to the student forming their decisive course of action. However, for this dialogue to be effective, both student and I as teacher need sometimes to be willing to challenge our previously held beliefs. An example from my own teaching experience with the *"*I know better than you*"* belief is that I have shifted this belief to "Language is dynamic, English is a global language, let's see what interesting new perspective I can learn through my dialogue with this student".

Strategy 2: Not transparent:

"I liked the introduction and I also though your signposting was excellent. I was very interested in all the points you made, and I thought your arguments were excellent, I could really empathise with your writing……maybe the paper is slightly too long, our word count is 2400 words and your paper is 4000 words. Keep up the good work."

A TA approach does not require the sandwich technique for any one situation as such because as a holistic approach, I have already consciously given the student positive strokes in step 1 and 2 (Table 1) before giving any corrective feedback. In this case where a students asked about the length of the assignment, I simply asked *"How many words are specified in the guidelines?"* As stated, and justified above, in a TA approach question are asked as opposed to advice given as questions nurture autonomy. Not one participant handed in a final assignment which was too short or too long.

CONCLUSION

"Dear Mrs Passmore, I just wanted to …. outstanding detailed feedback on our reports. I was very please how detailed it was …. This course was such an enjoyable experience and is not common…normally we get just a mark on our final paper" (Participant, English writing Skills for Engineering Students, August 2020)

This paper reports on a very small action research project (Burns 1999, 2010) which took place at the University of Paderborn in the Summer semester of 2021. It has exemplified how tools from TA can be implemented to support a dialogue of feedback in an academic writing course to generate positive learning outcomes. First, TA theory welcomes and supports the practice of formative feedback in a process writing course where TA tools can support how the feedback is given and received. This support is given in a student-centred teaching environment where the students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning needs and amount of teacher support, including the provision of supplementary individual tutorials. To support this environment of feedback dialogue, it is important for the teacher to create a respectful learning environment which can be accomplished through the giving of positive strokes during the initial course sessions.

According to the theory of TA Strokes, in concurrence with the didactic triangle (Klafki 1985) once a positive learning environment has been established, corrective feedback on work can then be delivered directly and objectively. This helps enable the students to hear the message without being lost in any unnecessary "feel good padding" delivered in sandwich feedback. Furthermore, feedback should be delivered in a non-directive dialogue where the teacher facilities and poses questions which enable and support the student to access their own knowledge. This non-directive method actively supports students to develop their autonomy which in turn creates sustainability in learning (Hattie and Clarke 2019; Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

The learning outcomes of this study are restricted to my own personal teaching environment as is the nature of any undertaking of action research (Burns 2010). There are clear limitations for the implementation of strokes into any other teaching practice, specifically the demographics of the participants, including two key parameters: culture and age. However, as an advocate of student centred learning and therefore a bottom up approach to teaching (Kumaravadivelu 2012) , I will continue to implement and develop a dialogue of feedback into my language courses. I very much hope that this paper will encourage and inspire colleagues to participate in their own action research in an endeavour to generate ongoing growth and development in our teaching practice.

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