Revisions and Resubmissions with the Use of Written and Audio Feedback

April McGrath
Department of Psychology
Mount Royal University

November 9th, 2012
Outline

• Interest in the topic
• Feedback suggestions
• Research on feedback
• Overview of study
• Results to date
• Comments & Questions
My Interest in Writing and Feedback

• Experience as an undergraduate student
  ▫ Honours thesis, American Literature class

• Experience at a writing centre as a tutor

• “Good college grades should reflect more than nonverbal and non-written understanding. They should also reflect the ability to convey that understanding in writing.” – Peter Elbow
My Interest in Writing and Feedback

- How do we help students with their writing?
- How does feedback affect student writing?
- What is the best feedback?
- How do students work through revisions?
Feedback Recommendations  Willingham (1990)

• Encourage student to be editor
• Level of specificity is key
  ▫ “This doesn’t make sense” “awk”
  ▫ Rewriting text, appropriating the student’s text

• Tell student what you heard
• Personally insulting comments most memorable
• Need for positive comments
• Hierarchy of comments
Feedback Recommendations  
Lunsford (1997)

- Sent writing samples to 12 experts
- Key categories found across instructors

1) Development and Specificity
   - Longer conversational tone

2) Purposeful Commenting
   - Set of themes or main points

3) Issues of Control
   - Ask questions, give personal reflection, develop as own editor
Need for Revising and for SoTL

- Responding in context of revision
- Students must engage with feedback
- Detect space between intended and actual meaning
- Will miss out on opportunity – left with fixing errors
- “Writing is revising, and the writer’s craft is largely a matter of knowing how to discover what you have to say, develop, and clarify it, each requiring the craft of revision” (Murray, 1991)

- What does work? What evidence is there to support suggestions?
Understanding Comments (Higgins, Hartley, Skelton, 2001)

- 19 interviews and 94 questionnaires
- Comments too vague or general
- 33% understood assessment criteria

- Almost all reported reading comments
- 82% reported playing close attention to comments
- 39% reported spending 5 mins or less on reading feedback
Understanding Comments Chanock (2000)

- Questionnaire responses from 101 students
- Tutors often write “too much description (/narration/retelling) not enough analysis”

- Common comment, 56-68% had received it before
- 40% were puzzled by it and 54% felt that was helpful

- After reviewing their descriptions of what analysis means the author concluded at best (only) 51% of the students knew what it meant!
Students’ Perceptions of Written Responses (Weaver, 2006)

• Group discussion where students brought papers
• Asked to explain helpful/unhelpful comments

1) Too general or vague
   ▪ Two word notes, ticks, circles
   ▪ Analysis of feedback supported this claim

2) Focus on negative
   ▪ Commented on weaknesses, demoralizing, no balance
Audio-Recorded Commentary  Anson (1997)

- Miscommunication + desire for conversation
- Narrative quality with personal remarks
- Coaching, advising, readerly response
- Efficient
- Students preferred method, higher SEIs

- “these are things that came up” vs. “do the following”
- Student-teacher conference
Audio Feedback  Lunt & Curran (2009)

• 26 students surveyed on audio feedback

• Most students agreed that the audio feedback was helpful and easy to access

• 65% agreed audio feedback was more useful than written comments and desired it in the future

• Tutors: 1 min audio = 6 mins of writing
Focus of Current Study

• How do students experience revising process?
• What feedback is helpful?
• What do you understand and what is confusing?
• Differences in written vs. audio commentary?
Study Information

- First year seminar course (24 students), two terms
- Two writing assignments with multiple submissions
- Written and audio commentary
- 7 students (4 students completed 3-4 interviews)
- Semi-structured interview guide
- Reviewed and discussed feedback
- Provided clarification
- Average interview length 33 minutes
Types of Feedback

- Track changes and comments in Word
- Audio file
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Employed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>10-15 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moments of Confusion

- Do you know why he deleted that? *I, probably something to do with grammar.* Okay. But are you sure exactly why? *No.* - Betty

- Then he also deleted a semicolon? *Yep.* After however. Okay, do you know why he did that? *Not really, cause I was told to do it.* - Wanda

- And he’s replaced your semicolon with a period and then started a new sentence. Do you know why he did that? *Well a lot of professors really don’t like the use of semicolons. Like oh my students don’t know how to use it properly so just don’t use it.... I don’t know, I’ve been told that I use semicolons correctly, like I don’t know if I did it correctly this time.* - Betty

- Now did you have a, it says one-year follow-up. *I didn’t have the hyphen.* You didn’t have the hyphen. Do you know why you need it there? *Not really.* - Dorie

- *Yeah he put the hyphen, I don’t know if it’s that he actually put the hyphen there or if it’s because he highlighted the word maybe it just... I’m not sure.* - Jake
Moments of Confusion

- Some insertion/deletions seem problematic

- Did you find these kind of in text changes helpful or do you find them, like you said that you think it probably helps the flow of the essay. Does it help you understand why? It helps me understand why sometimes, especially when he puts the comments on the side right there, that definitely helps me understand. - Wanda

- Marginal comments provide more understanding than in text changes
Moments of Confusion - Assuming

- So he inserted a comma after “when I feel stressed.” Do you, when he’s inserting these commas does it make sense to you or are you wondering why they are not somewhere else?

- Well I get it now because like you said before it’s a complete sentence after that so it makes sense. - Wanda

- On this one it’s a little different because what precedes the comma isn’t a complete sentence.
Moments of Clarity

- You have overall I would say that I personally procrastinate for many different reasons. So he’s highlighted overall. “You’re overusing this word. You could find alternatives such as in sum, or taken together.” Okay so what did you think of that?

- *I know I’ve had this problem before, once you start it with one thing it’s like in your mind, and you just keep using it. So I, like I don’t think about it cause I always go over it and then like it makes sense to me cause I’m used to using the same word.* - Wanda
Moments of Clarity

• He says “okay this is a long list of rhetorical questions and it achieves its purpose but you need to really spell that out. What is the common feature here? Is it the issue of goals, or priorities? What is it that you are trying to get your reader to see?” So how do you respond to that comment?

• I totally kind of agree with it. It sounds like one of those, you’d hear someone saying on a podium just handing out some rhetorical questions. So when you go back and read it you can kinda see how the reader could get lost in you know, too many questions first of all and then at, I guess I think it’s kind of clear but can it simply be stated. - Jake
Moments of Clarity

• “Outlines the study conducted to see how well individuals adapt after...”
• He says “not exactly check the article for more precise expression of the purpose.”
• Okay so what did you think about that?
• At first I was like what the hell, this is what they’re assessing, but then I did reread it and I did add into it. - Dorie

• Not correcting or giving the answer
Moments of Clarity - Text Changes

• He has altered motivation to now read motivational factors. Do you know why he did that? *Oh cause motivation is a noun, and it’s supposed to be an adjective.* - Betty

• And then you wrote “now a teenager who goes to the gym.” And he has replaced that with “in contrast a teenager goes to the gym.”

• *Yeah that’s good. The other way was like really informal. Almost over the top informal, like I was trying to be informal. So saying in contrast that’s actually a lot better, cause it really gets the message across that I’m trying to compare one thing to another. Where in my other one is was just, now a teenager blah blah blah, and it didn’t really show that I was comparing.* - Jake

• Understanding of insertion/deletion comments
• Students with strong background, high achieving students
Struggling with Comment

• Well for him I would accept it, because that’s what he wants. But I don’t know if I would do it again, in another essay for another teacher. - Wanda

• It’s kinda, I understand what he’s saying but it’s rough for me to do that. So to me this is like oh what do you mean, everybody knows this and he’s acknowledging that he loves this quote and he knows the story so now he’s saying but you still have to explain it, it’s like well why? - Jake

• Involved in the feedback, need further clarification, a need to talk to instructor
Desire for Conversation

• I might talk to him about that and be like this is why I did this, and explaining it to him and then see how he feels about that. - Dorie

• So even though I did well, when I spoke to him about it he was like well you’re supposed to be writing a summary so you don’t have to really follow a structured essay format. So I was like well I didn’t know that. - Jake

• I don’t know if it sounds like a lot of work but I don’t know exactly what it is I’m supposed to do. So in that sense it’s a daunting task... like I could just go ask and he’ll tell me but at the same time, you know, I’m a little frustrated right now so I’m not exactly eager to run and do this. - Jake

• Self selection, small class, approachable
Want to Know Expectations

• Well, I didn’t like how it was so vague it was like just write about what you think procrastination is like it’s so broad like I don’t know what you want for me. - Betty

• He also has like a brief description of all the writings assignments in the course syllabus, which I find very helpful. - Jackie

• I felt a lot better that like I thought he was gonna like it a lot better than the first one because I knew more of what he was expecting of me. - Wanda

• And like you learn different grammar techniques from every teacher so you don’t know what everyone expects. - Wanda

• It’s really funny cause I, everything he commented on was how it was too informal and I was like you told us to write it informal. - Jake

• I guess it’s a learning curve for me too as to what they expect to be in a summary. - Jake

• I get frustrated depending on what the material is again and the style because sometimes professors aren’t really clear on what they want and then when you get it back it’s like oh well this isn’t what I wanted. Dorie

• You get to know what your professor expects of you and you get to know what they look for in the assignments, but I think it does become easier once you get to know the professor a little bit better. Dorie

• Expectations vary by instructor, important to know for success, involved in stress, seen as very important
Disconnect Between Grade and Feedback

• I don’t understand how I got such a good grade. He’s like tearing it apart. - Dorie

• All the other feedbacks were great idea, never heard that argument before, that’s a really great example, and it was just positive so I was really confused cause I was like why did I get a 4 out of 5, like 4 out of 5 is not bad, that’s an 80 percent. - Jake

• Don’t let me submit something that you know is gonna be an 80 and just say but that’s still good. It’s like I don’t want that. - Jake

• He gave me a few comments but the comments don’t dignify the amount of marks he took away. - Jake

• With all the red on the page I don’t see how I got an 8 out of 10. - Wanda
Preference: Written or Audio?

- I think it’s nice to have both. - Dorie
- He does both which is actually really nice. - Jake
- I’m spoiled with both right now. - Jake
- I see value in both. - Wanda
Inconvenience of Audio

• I definitely think it’s nice to have both cause when you’re looking at it, instead of having to repeatedly go through and listen and listen and listen, you have it written there. - Dorie

• You have to listen to him talk for ten 10 minutes no matter what. Whereas the other way you can just like read it really quick, and you can stop and focus on it if you wanted if you thought that was really important. - Jake

• I think I would prefer the written, because if he just gave the audio, I think I would get lost very quickly in what he is saying. Whereas this way I can see that what exactly he is talking about as he is saying it. It’s highlighted and it’s very obvious. - Wanda

• It’s just kind of, it’s kind of hard to follow a couple of points cause I didn’t really know, like if the written wasn’t there I don’t think I would have known a couple of, like it would have taken a while to find it, and then I would have had to go back on the audio file. I think this was just easier all around. - Wanda

• Discouraging? Different technology possibilities? Useful to have student listen and take own notes?
Reactions to Audio Commentary

- Oh my god. That’s so much more than all of his comments say. And it’s so much more than he put on the first draft. Like I don’t understand why he didn’t put all of this on the first draft so that I could only have to redo it once. - Dorie

- Audio feedback is a lot better, cause you really really hear what he’s saying and you, it’s easier for him to say what he’s thinking than to write what he’s thinking. Like when anybody writes anything you don’t know like the tone of voice they’re saying it in, or anything like that or the context they might mean it in, but here with the audio he’s actually explaining why he wrote this. If you were trying to write that in it would probably fill my entire margin. It’s just easier hearing it straight from him. - Dorie

- Hear the inflection in his voice and you get to hear that he’s not just a person that wants to take marks away, right so, and he emphasizes and repeats it so you know, when you read something, you know unless somebody italics it or bolds it you don’t know that that was super important. - Jake

- It was helpful to know what I need to do to make it better, whereas before it was just pointing out what I did wrong... And he is trying to help me, with the audio file, to make it a stronger essay. - Wanda

- Appreciate hearing his voice, provides more comments, focus on improvement
I think most effective is in person obviously. That audio thing it only happened to me once this semester and that was, it was too much of a shock at the time to actually feel evaluated cause it was so unorthodox, so I don’t know how much that helped me. - Jake

That was like that’s just weird. Why are you doing audio feedback? - Dorie
Reading and Listening to Feedback???

- I don’t think I’ve actually read through the comments. - Dorie

- I didn’t listen to it. - Dorie

- And if you didn’t come in for the interview today, do you know when you would have looked at this feedback?

  - Probably never, as bad as that sounds, yeah, I don’t know. - Wanda

- If you had received a worse grade? A lot more [motivation]. I probably would have redone it by now. - Wanda

- I’ve only listened to the very beginning. - Jackie
Quick Fix

• So how long did it take you to revise it and to resubmit it? Like, 20 minutes. - Betty

• When I’d seen that the L Y was deleted, like you could see that it was already deleted so I just... You just accepted the change? Yeah. - Wanda

• So do you know why he added it? Not really. When you did the revision did you just accept that change? Yeah. - Betty

• Was it a lot of work to go through the comments and fix it up? No. It took like 5 minutes. I was like, I can fix this easily, like I’ll just do what he asked me to do and hand it back in. – Dorie

• Like the one that said it should be in separate paragraphs all the time, took a lot longer than any of the other ones. - Wanda

• It’s probably gonna take me longer cause I’m gonna have to delete unimportant stuff so I can add in the stuff that he wanted.... They’re telling me what I need to do yes, without him just giving it away. Which is good because I would have to go into the article and actually search and figure out how to do it myself instead of him being like You should put blah blah blah blah blah - Dorie
Anxiety about Starting

- When you start a paper, that’s when mistakes start happening. - Betty

- What do you think is your main challenge when writing an assignment? One that sticks out in my mind is like, is just getting something on paper. Writing intros is like the hardest part of the paper for me. Not that I don’t know what to do but I kinda feel like everytime I do it I fail at it.... In his class I procrastinate because the anxiety of completing the task because I know his expectations are so high. - Jake

- Where I’m like so wound up about doing super well that you’re like, I get like super stressed about it that I can’t get the words out. - Jackie
Procrastination

• Like I’m not gonna lie, I usually leave things to the last minute cuz I guess, like in that case it also forces me to start. - Betty

• Like I kinda of procrastinated a little bit and then I ended up having to finish it like, the night of slash, the morning of. - Jackie

• No, I did it, I think, the morning before and then the day of. - Wanda

• Edited it Tuesday morning and then Tuesday night or even Wednesday morning I read it before printing it off. I think I reread it Wednesday morning so I did have a chance to reread it before I handed it in. - Jake

• In high school I used to, like it was really easy for me, so I just did it like the night before or two days before. But now it’s a lot more, it costs a lot more to fail so I do it like maybe a week before. - Gary

• Importance of revision – student needs to revisit “night before” work
Authority of Professor

• I just changed it because he’s right. - Betty

• When I was writing things, you’re thinking the whole time, is he gonna like that sentence, is he gonna like that sentence? - Jake

• Yeah, I just kinda followed that. That’s what he wanted. - Wanda

• I did exactly what he said. - Wanda

• Well yeah definitely in my second draft I changed it just because I know he’s gonna take away a mark for that, like I said I just do it for the mark at the end of the day. - Jake

• Well basically I kept it as it was, but wherever he put a comment, I did what he told me to do. Like whatever the comment said I fixed that. Dorie

• But there was no additional changes you had to make, besides what he said? No. - Dorie

• So I was really confused by that but I was like okay if that’s what _____ wants that’s what _____ gets, cause he’s the one marking it. - Jake
Willingness to Resubmit

- Umm I don’t think so just because I think it would be too complicated especially right now in the middle with like all of mid-terms, and especially with the power point presentation coming up I have a lot to do so I’m content with what I got on the second one and I know that it balances out somehow, but it’s still better than what I got on the first one. - Dorie

- Depends on my time because I have to do the annotated bibliography. - Dorie

- Well in the long run it depends on my schedule, cause like, I have already gotten a good mark on this, like, it’s all manageable changes so at the same time, if I have an hour of free time, it would be an easy way to boost my grade. - Wanda

- “I think on the whole as I said you’ve done a good job of the summary, one of the best I’ve read, but the lack of coherence in the one spot and the confusion around the results is what leads me to give you an A grade and I think you could earn an A+ if you revise.” That’s just gonna make me have to do it. I’m gonna have to re-do it. If it’s that incoherent obviously any future work I do, like will be reflected upon redoing this, and understanding why I’m redoing it. - Dorie

- I’m fighting for half a percent of my final mark, cause I don’t know if it’s worth the effort. – Jake

- Time, grades, work involved
Appreciation of Feedback and Resubmission

• I have never had a teacher that let us revise our assignments. That’s actually kinda cool. - Dorie

• Yeah also because you can learn from your mistake. You’re given an infinite amount of times to learn from your mistake. - Jake

• I like getting feedback cause it’s like, this is what I did wrong and you’re telling me so if I fix it I can do better. - Wanda

• Multiple submissions? I really liked that. I wish we had that in other classes. - Jackie

• Really appreciate that [multiple revisions], I wish more professors and teachers would do that. - Betty

• Returning an assignment electronically changes how you can provide feedback and I think feedback is underrated and _____ knows that and we have the resources at this school to do it so let’s freakin’ start doing it. - Jake
Conclusions

- Students appreciative of feedback
- Place for revision - valued and important
- Suggestion to make *developed* comments may be warranted(?)
- Suggestion to provide readerly response/questions may be warranted(?)
- Insertion/deletion comments a mixed bag
  - Simple changes, depends on student
- More info provided by audio feedback
- Power of instructor
- Desire/need for ongoing conversation
Uncertainty and Complexity

• “Early in my career in composition... I began to listen carefully to the ways students talked about their writing. Those who made the most progress seemed, during the various processes of drafting and revising, very uncertain. They weighed alternatives. They wrestled with rhetorical choices. They shaped, embellished, and rejected directions for their texts. Yet at the same time they seemed to embrace this uncertainty, to relish it.” (Anson, 1997)

• “The salient factors in the feedback process are related to issues of emotion, identity, power, authority, subjectivity, and discourse.” (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2001)
Comments and Questions

• Questions about interviews or other student comments?

• Feasibility of revision?

• Would you use/have you used audio commentary?

• Other topics to explore

• Moving to other data sources and study designs
References