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Feedback on writing in the supervision of postgraduate students: Insights from the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin

J. Morton, N. Storch and C. Thompson

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Email: jannem@unimelb.edu.au, neomys@unimelb.edu.au and celiat@unimelb.edu.au

One of the dominant models of postgraduate supervision is apprenticeship, with its focus on the role of the supervisor as an expert who provides guidance to the novice supervisee. This model has been critiqued by scholars including Knowles (1999), who suggests that it may encourage students to accept feedback uncritically because of the difficulty of challenging the perceived expertise and authority of supervisors. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development, an alternative conceptualisation proposed in this paper is that of a dynamic relationship that evolves over time, moving from expert/novice to a more cooperative relationship. In such a conceptualisation, feedback is seen as a form of scaffolding that encourages the student to ultimately take greater responsibility for their writing and their development as legitimate authors in their disciplines. Our analysis of the nature of feedback and authorial development is also informed by Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of dialogism. Bakhtin suggests that all individual contributions to textual creation come through the ways in which we accent the words and ideas of others in order to articulate an authoritative position of our own. Thus, if all speakers and writers are producers of texts that intersect and address each other (Bakhtin, 1981), then feedback also can be characterised as a point of intertextual engagement through which textual authority, ownership and authorship are negotiated between supervisor and student over time. In this paper we report on two case studies through which we explore the usefulness of these theoretical constructs to investigate issues surrounding the role of feedback in postgraduate supervision.

Key Words: Vygotsky, Bakhtin, feedback, scaffolding, dialogism, postgraduate writing.

1. Introduction

Supervisory feedback plays a central role in the process of postgraduate writing. A more traditional model of supervisor-student relations such as an apprenticeship model sees the supervisor as the 'expert' who provides guidance to the 'novice' supervisee. In this model, feedback provides an opportunity for the supervisor to guide the student into discipline-specific ways of thinking and writing and provides the student with concrete and situated assistance on the development of their writing and ideas. This model has, however, been challenged on a number of grounds including the notion that the supervisor is necessarily cognizant of and able to effectively communicate often tacit disciplinary norms and conventions (e.g. Casanave, 1995). A second challenge is the idea that such a model encourages students to accept feedback uncritically because of the difficulty of questioning the perceived expertise and authority of their supervisors (Knowles, 1999). Responding to these critiques, more collaborative models of

supervisory relations have been proposed by scholars, such as Bartlett and Mercer (2000). The negotiation of knowledge and of the supervisor-student relationship that is at the core of these more collaborative models informs the discussion of written feedback in the current paper.

Two theoretical frameworks are explored in our paper to inform the investigation into supervisory feedback. First, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development as described in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is drawn upon to conceptualise the relationship between supervisor and student as one that is dynamic, evolving over time from an expert/novice relationship to a more cooperative and collaborative one. Within this alternative characterisation of supervisor-student relations, feedback is seen as a form of scaffolding that encourages students to ultimately take more responsibility both for the written presentation of research and their own development as legitimate authors in their disciplinary fields of study. The second theoretical framework drawn upon to illuminate feedback practices is Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of dialogism. This theory views all texts as intersecting and addressing each other, and individual contributions to textual creation in terms of the ways that we accent the words and ideas of others (Bakhtin, 1981). From this perspective, feedback can be characterised as a point of intertextual engagement through which textual authority, ownership and authorship are negotiated between supervisor and student over time. Feedback is thus part of the broader issue of intertextuality in academic writing or in other words how students respond in their own writing to the ideas and words of others.

This article was motivated by our experiences of providing and responding to feedback in a range of academic contexts: in our own postgraduate studies, in teaching of postgraduate academic writing credit subjects, and in supervision of postgraduate applied linguistics students (at Masters and PhD level). In reflecting on our experiences in the process of writing this paper, we identified a number of issues surrounding feedback, which we thought needed further exploration. As supervisors: What aspects of our students' writing do we respond to? How do we respond, and with what level of directness? Does our feedback change over time and does it respond to our students' changing identities and developing disciplinary personas? Does our feedback allow our students to retain a sense of ownership over their work? And for students: How do they negotiate expert feedback provided on their writing? How does their writing change in response to feedback? In this article we attempt to address these questions by offering two perspectives on supervisory feedback: that of the supervisor and of the student. The approach to supervisory feedback here is as one voice in a range of disciplinary voices that students need to negotiate.

The next section of this article provides a necessarily brief summary of the theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin as they relate to the provision and uptake of feedback in academic writing. Our interest here is in how these theorists can help us conceptualise the feedback process (in what we consider to be complementary ways). Following this, we present two case studies, which provide very different perspectives on feedback. We chose a case study approach for this project because we wanted to gain an in depth understanding of the process (see Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, pp. 118-119; also Merriam, 1998, p. 19) of giving and responding to feedback.

The first case study is concerned with a supervisor's reflections on the feedback she provided one of her students. The second focuses on a student's responses to feedback from her supervisor. In the first case study, Storch uses Vygotsky's metaphor of scaffolding as a framework to analyse the feedback she provided to a postgraduate student on successive drafts of the student's minor thesis. In the second case study, Thompson draws on Bakhtin's (1981, 1984) theory of *dialogism* to explore how as a PhD student, her engagement with her supervisor's feedback and the ideas of other authors enabled her to establish a sense of authorship and ownership over her thesis as a whole.

2. Drawing on Vygotsky and Bakhtin to illuminate feedback practices

2.1. Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory (SCT) is a psychological theory that seeks to explain the development of all higher order cognitive abilities, including language learning, as a mediated

social process. From this theoretical perspective, human cognitive development occurs in highly contextualised activities and in collaboration with a more knowledgeable individual (the expert). For development to occur, the expert needs to provide the learner (the novice) with appropriate assistance, which is then internalised and used by the novice as their own individual resources. It should be noted that the 'expert' can be a peer (e.g. see Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001; Storch, 2002) or artefacts, such as printed and online materials. However, not all forms and sources of assistance are equally effective.

For assistance to be effective, it needs to be carefully attuned to the novice's needs. The metaphor that has been used in the literature to describe this kind of effective assistance is 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). A few key traits distinguish scaffolded assistance. First and foremost, assistance needs to be cognizant of the novice's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); that is, assistance needs to take into consideration the novice's current level of performance as well as their potential for development. To be useful, assistance must be aimed at the future, at what the novice cannot yet do unassisted. Assistance also needs to be dynamic, contingently responsive to and guided by the novice's needs. The third trait of scaffolding is the notion of 'handover' (van Lier, 2000). The ultimate aim of the assistance is to encourage the learner to take increasingly more control over their own learning and perform independently. Thus the level of scaffolding needs to gradually decrease, as the learner's expertise grows. This gradual dismantling of the scaffold is a sign of the novice's development. In the process of providing assistance, the relationship between the expert and novice evolves, eventually becoming a more cooperative relationship, where the novice is increasingly recognised as an emergent expert, capable of performing the task independently. Thus scaffolding is a metaphor that describes the fluid and dynamic nature of assistance that ultimately enables the novice to perform a task independently.

2.1.1. Applying the metaphor of scaffolding to feedback on writing

To date, a number of studies have applied the metaphor in second language (L2) contexts (see review in Lantolf, 2006), including analysis of interactions in one-on-one feedback sessions on writing. This feedback has focused on language use (grammar and expression) rather than on content. For example, Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) seminal study developed a scale of assistance ranging from the least to the most directive. The most explicit feedback was providing the learner with the correction; the least explicit was simply asking the learner to re-read their writing. The researchers reported that over time (two months), although the three case study learners' linguistic performance may not have changed, the type of help required to guide their performance changed. They gradually required less directive forms of assistance. This change was taken by the researchers as evidence of language learning. Nassaji and Swain's (2000) small scale study of two learners confirmed that assistance that is sensitive to the learners' ZPD has a greater impact on learning than randomly provided assistance.

The metaphor seems particularly suitable to investigate supervisor feedback practices. We assume that as the postgraduate student evolves and becomes an emergent researcher in their disciplinary area and a more proficient writer, the amount and nature of the feedback changes to reflect this evolution. That is, we expect not only that the amount of feedback declines over time, but that the feedback given becomes less explicit and directive. There is ultimately recognition that over time, the student assumes greater responsibility for their writing and becomes a more competent writer able to self-correct. However, it is important to acknowledge that in the case of English as an additional language (EAL) learners, successive drafts may not necessarily become more accurate because the student writer may introduce new errors in their revised draft.

Drawing on Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, we aim to address the following questions about feedback:

1. Does the amount of feedback provided decrease over time?
2. Does the feedback become less explicit/directive over time, in recognition of the learners' evolving legitimacy as an expert on the topic?

2.2. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism

For Bakhtin (1981), 'dialogism' represents a theory of communication and knowledge, in which the notion of *heteroglossia* is central. It is into this world of multi-voiced interaction that readers and writers enter as they engage in intertextual dialogue and negotiation about meaning making with each other. Dialogism is a socio-historically grounded theory of communication where the boundaries delineating individual ownership of words and ideas are blurred. For Bakhtin, all texts are "filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-ownness'…" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 89).

This tension, between our 'own' and 'otherness', Bakhtin (1981, p. 425) conceptualises in terms of "centripetal" (centralising, homogenising and hierarchicising) and "centrifugal" (decentralising, de-normatising and decrowning) forces that he believes are constantly at play in all communicative interactions. Each individual's contribution to textual creation is forged through the ways in which they interact with these opposing forces in order to articulate and (re)accent the words and ideas of myriad others:

> One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348)

The notion of addressivity is also a key feature of Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism. Thus according to Bakhtin (1981), we are all producers of texts that intersect and address each other. All texts are diachronic: they respond to preceding texts while simultaneously anticipating responses from future texts. It is precisely this multifunctional aspect of textual production across time that emergent academic authors can find so daunting when embarking upon their own thesis writing trajectories. Masters and PhD students have to somehow make their research respond to previous studies in their disciplines, while at the same time writing in anticipation of responses from future readers, especially those of their supervisors and ultimately also those of their thesis examiners.

Learning how to write freely through the voices of others in order to articulate an authoritative position is often a struggle; this has been recognised by many scholars of academic writing (e.g. Angélil-Carter, 2000; Cazden, 1993; Howard, 1992, 1999; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001).

Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogism, we examine the following questions about feedback:

3. What do students 'take-up' from their supervisors' feedback?
4. How do they (re)interpret the feedback?
5. How is the feedback informed/transformed by other texts?

3. Case study 1: Applying Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding to a supervisor's feedback

3.1. Context

The student in the case study is a Japanese female writing a minor thesis (10,000 words in length) for her MA in Applied Linguistics. The student, Maya (pseudonym), completed the thesis successfully in 2011. Her study investigated how learners process the feedback they receive on their L2 (ESL) writing. I (Neomy Storch) was Maya's thesis supervisor.

The data used here are three successive drafts of the literature review chapter and the feedback I provided on these drafts. Each draft was about 3000 words in length. Draft 1 was submitted in November, Draft 2 about a month later and Draft 3 four days after Draft 2. These drafts were submitted to me electronically via email attachments. I provided feedback on the drafts electronically a day before the scheduled supervision session to allow Maya to consider the feedback. The face-to-face supervision session was then used to discuss the feedback and clarify any concerns or questions that Maya had about the feedback provided.

The excerpts in Table 1 and 2 illustrate the kind of feedback that I provided to Maya on her drafts. Words in bold represent words added, underlined words denote errors in word choice or phrases that need to be rewritten for clarity, deletions are represented by strikethrough, and shaded text highlights areas needing attention. The excerpts come from the first draft of her chapter.

Table 1. Example of supervisor feedback provided on student draft.

	Comments
Written corrective feedback and revision process	
~~*Revision process*~~	No need for a sub-heading
~~Revison Concerning the revision process following feedback,~~ less research has examined learners' process of revision. Qi and Lapkin (2001) studied the revision process of L2 learners' writing to examine the role of noticing in revision. Two participants, who were both Chinese background ESL learners with different levels of L2 proficiency, wrote a composition based on a picture prompt and, four days later, the revision of the composition was conducted referring to the reformulated text. While composing and revising, they were asked to think-aloud and the researchers investigated their revision process. It was found that the process of revision from reformulated writing promotes noticing. Additionally, the researchers also examined the ~~varied~~ quality of noticing. They divided the noticing into two types; perfunctory and substantive noticing. The former indicates ~~that~~ noticing only ~~and~~ without giving reasons whereas the latter means noticing with a reason. They found that noticing contributes to improvements of writing especially when the learners noticed and gave a reason and the quality of noticing can vary depending on the learners' level of proficiency.	What's the link between these two statements?

How does the reformulated text fit into the research design? Please explain

Not clear – explain more clearly

Long sentence – divide into two to make the findings clearer |

3.2. Data analysis

All instances of feedback were counted. Instances of feedback included comments, deletions, reformulations, and underlining. Deletions, reformulations, and underlining seemed to pertain mainly to the use of language (grammatical accuracy and expression), and were either at a word level or on a larger unit (e.g. sentence). My main focus, however, was on the comments, since they seemed to deal with different aspects of writing.

Feedback comments were analysed for focus. Informed by the literature on feedback (e.g. Cadman & Cargill, 2007; Storch & Tapper, 2000) and an iterative reading of the data four main focus categories were identified:
1. Content: comments on development and clarity of ideas;
2. Structure: comments on cohesion and coherence, paragraphing;
3. Use of language: comments on academic expression, appropriate word choice, and on grammatical accuracy;
4. Other: comments, for example, on font size of sub-headings.

It should be noted that where comments dealt with more than one aspect of writing (e.g. grammar and content), or when it was not clear whether the feedback comment referred to content or to language (given the interplay between issues of language and content) such comments were counted twice, once for each category. However, such multiple-focus or ambiguous comments occurred infrequently in the data.

Hyland and Hyland (2006) note that the language used in feedback comments and the rhetorical form of the comments communicate important interpersonal messages. For example, hedges and questions can mitigate the potential criticism that feedback comments may convey. Thus the next level of analysis considered the rhetorical and orthographic form of the feedback, in order to code for level of directness or explicitness. In this study directness was perceived as a continuum, moving from the most to least direct feedback. Thus at one end of the continuum, the most explicit or direct forms of feedback included deletions, reformulations, and directives. Statements, questions and underlining were considered to be less direct forms of feedback. Unlike reformulations, underlining simply indicates a need for rephrasing but not how this should be done. Suggestions are generally perceived as less direct forms of feedback in the sense that they provide the writer with the option of choosing whether to respond to the feedback, and thus recognise the writer as a legitimate researcher and author. Although we acknowledge that this may not be how EAL students interpret suggestions (see also Hyland & Hyland, 2006), in this coding scheme we coded suggestions the least direct forms of feedback, lying at the other end of the directness continuum.

Table 2 illustrates how the data were coded for focus and for the form of the feedback, including the rhetorical function of the comments, which in turn reflects level of directness.

Table 2. Coding focus of feedback provided by the supervisor on student drafts.

Example of feedback form	Focus	Feedback form (directness)
~~Concerning the revision process following feedback,~~ less research…	Language/expression	Deletion
Think aloud ~~showed the~~ **had an** influence	Language/grammatical accuracy	Reformulation
Not clear – please explain	Content/Ideas	Directive
You have mentioned revision in the heading already	Language/expression	Statement
The revision of the composition was <u>conducted referring to</u> the reformulated text	Language/expression	Underlining
What's the link between these two statements?	Structure/cohesion	Question
Perhaps Schmidt's point about… could be discussed here	Content/ideas	Suggestion

3.3. Findings

Table 3 summarises the findings for the quantity of the feedback provided on the three drafts of the chapter, showing the total number of instances of feedback and the form they took.

Table 3. Instances and type of feedback given on three successive drafts.

	Draft 1(15 Nov)	**Draft 2 (11 Dec)**	**Draft 3 (15 Dec)**
Deletions	53	58	16
Reformulations	48	66	14
Underlining	20	21	5
Comments	60	20	12
Total instances of feedback	181	165	47

The table shows that the total number of instances of feedback was similar on the first and second draft, but decreased markedly on Draft 3. In terms of the type of feedback, there were more deletions and reformulations on Draft 2 but far fewer comments. On Draft 3, all forms of feedback decreased substantially.

Table 4 shows the focus of the comments on each draft and what percentage these comments formed out of the total number of comments given for the draft. As the table shows, the focus shifted slightly between drafts. Although a large proportion of the comments dealt with content-related issues on all three drafts, and particularly on Draft 1, the main focus shifted to structure on Draft 2 and language on Draft 3.

Table 4. Focus of feedback comments on each draft.

	Draft 1 (N=60)	**Draft 2 (N=20)**	**Draft 3 (N=12)**
Ideas/meaning	27 (45%)	7 (35%)	5 (42%)
Structure (coherence, logic)	17 (28%)	8 (40%)	1 (8%)
Total language	12 (20%)	4 (20%)	6 (50%)
Expression	7	3	2
Grammar	5	1	4
Other	4 (7%)	1 (5%)	0

Of more interest was the explicitness or directness of the feedback comments. As mentioned earlier, deletions and reformulations are among the most direct forms of feedback. As we can see from Table 3, these direct forms of feedback declined only on Draft 3. As to the comments, Table 5 shows the nature of the comments in terms of their directness, and what percentage they formed of the total comments given on that draft. As the table shows, although there was a decline in the directness of the comments over time, most of the comments tended to be statements and questions, with few if any suggestions.

Table 5. Form of comments and degree of directness.

	Draft 1 (N=60)	**Draft 2 (N=20)**	**Draft 3 (N=12)**
Direct (directives)	20 (33%)	6 (30%)	2 (17%)
Semi direct	38 (63%)	11 (55%)	9 (75%)
Statements	17	6	3
Questions	21	5	6
Indirect (suggestions)	2 (3%)	3 (15%)	1 (8%)

3.4. Discussion

The retrospective analysis of the feedback provided on three drafts of Maya's literature review chapter showed that a substantial amount of feedback was given on all three drafts, with a reduction noticeable only on Draft 3. The largest decrease was in the number of comments given, falling from a high of 60 comments on the first draft, to 20 and 12 on the second and third drafts respectively. Deletions and reformulations, which dealt with errors in language (expression and grammar) were frequent on the first two drafts. This perhaps explains why the majority of the comments on the first two drafts dealt with ideas and structure. On Draft 3, there were fewer deletions and reformulations, but a greater proportion of the comments related to language use.

The level of directness of the feedback is worth commenting upon. Deletions and reformulations, together with directive comments, are among the most direct form of feedback. These tended to form the largest proportion of instances of feedback on all three drafts. The comments, on the other hand, become less direct by Draft 3. Whereas on Draft 1 directives formed 33% of feedback comments, they formed only 17% of comments on Draft 3 and instead questions became the most common form of comments, forming half of all comments on this draft. There were very few suggestions in the comments made on any of the three drafts.

These findings suggest that there were some changes in the feedback, but only on the third draft. Only on Draft 3 did the number, focus and degree of directness of the feedback show signs of reduced scaffolding. This is a somewhat sobering finding, suggesting that as a supervisor, I need to reflect more closely on the nature of the feedback I provide to my students. Did the more explicit form of feedback given on the first two drafts reflect a lack of progress in Maya's writing? Was the feedback given so explicit for the sake of expediency? What is needed now is a closer examination of Maya's writing to see whether in fact the feedback provided represents missed opportunities for reduced scaffolding. I plan to implement such investigations in my future studies on feedback provided to postgraduate students on their writing.

4. Case study 2: Applying Bakhtin's notion of dialogism to a student's uptake of feedback

4.1. Context

In November 1998, I (Celia Thompson) submitted a PhD research proposal entitled *Plagiarism, cultural identity and pedagogy: A discourse approach.* The proposal was a direct response to a journal article published by Alastair Pennycook (1996) entitled *Borrowing others' words: Text, ownership, memory and plagiarism,* in which he called for a greater understanding of "our students' textual and language learning worlds" (Pennycook, 1996, p. 227). By March, 1999 I had enrolled as a part-time, off-campus doctoral student. I completed my Doctoral Assessment (probationary period) in March 2001 and submitted the thesis for examination in February, 2006. During this seven-year period, I struggled to free myself from the controlling influences of the discourses and voices of more authoritative others (see Bakhtin, 1981).

4.2. Liberating myself from the authority of others

In the next section I present extracts from the email texts that my supervisor and I sent to each other in June, 2001. In these messages we discussed my Doctoral Assessment Report, which was submitted after two years' part-time study. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) theory of addressivity and heteroglossia as outlined above, I will analyse how my responses to my supervisor's feedback[1] on my Doctoral Assessment Report were particularly instrumental in encouraging me to engage in new ways with the powerful and socio-historically imposed heteroglossia that for me adhered to the word 'plagiarism'.

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[1] Permission to include these feedback comments in this paper has been granted by the supervisor.

Table 6. Celia's struggle to develop her own 'voice'.

Supervisor feedback	Celia's response
The literature review needs strengthening in various directions: It tends to read in slightly linear fashion – i.e. it summarises various studies and issues but tends to do them in rather a one-by-one (or grouped) format, rather than in the form of an overview of central issues…I would prefer to see this organized more as a series of arguments drawing on different articles/studies where necessary...It needs broadening. So far, it really only covers plagiarism. The review covers this fairly well (though see above) but might also discuss in greater detail the issues of academic writing, EAP	I feel it will probably only be when I'm further down the track with the PhD that I will really be able to develop the arguments clearly so that I can then use the literature to support and develop these arguments rather than using the literature itself to drive the review…It would seem to be that it is only when a certain level of understanding of a topic/research area is reached that it is then that the foundations are in place for the writer/researcher to create/develop their own 'argument'/'voice'… I envisage getting into work on student voice, as well as theories on discourse acquisition, linguistic and cultural appropriation/cultural identity, the politics of writing and cultural capital, the novice versus the expert' dichotomy and related issues. Considerations about knowledge/power relations I would see as integral to all of this.

As my response (see Table 6 above) to the feedback indicates, I still felt largely controlled by the voices of more authoritative authors whose studies I was reading. I did not have a clear argument that I could call 'my own', as I still felt the need to be able to engage more deeply with the work of others in order to reach the point where I could "use the literature to support and develop these arguments rather than using the literature itself to drive the review". I felt I was "the novice" who lacked the power and the knowledge to add my 'own' voice to those of the texts I was reading.

Table 7. Re-conceptualising the term 'plagiarism'.

Supervisor feedback	Celia's response
It [the thesis] needs to find ways of confronting the problem of both problematizing the notion of plagiarism and using it as a term in the thesis … you talk of 'acceptable and unacceptable plagiarism' – what *is* acceptable plagiarism? Isn't it always, by definition unacceptable? ... [by] using terms such as 'textual borrowing' – … you can … talk more clearly about good and bad/acceptable, etc., whereas the whole notion of plagiarism seems to predefine the issue.	I feel this is something I need to tackle head-on and it will help me to develop and articulate my own perspective more clearly…I [think] 'textual borrowing'…is still quite problematic – 'borrowing' has the connotation of 'giving back' or 'returning' that which has been taken (away). I can see that when getting into questions about 'appropriation' and 'acquisition' this is more suggestive of 'keeping' or 're-creating' whatever has been 'taken' – these terms seem possibly to allow more for the idea of 're-working'/'re-fashioning' language/ideas/texts which can perhaps undergo some sort of transformation which allows for the 'appropriator' to stamp his/her own mark on an idea or text and 'keep it as theirs (i.e. 'own' or 'acquire' it in some way)…I think these deliberations will ultimately result in a change in title to the PhD that may include terms like 'appropriation', 'intertextuality', 'cultural identity', 'pedagogy' and 'critical' – how they might come together, I don't know yet!!!

It is clear from my response to the feedback in Table 7 above that I was reluctant to take up my supervisor's suggestion of substituting the term 'textual borrowing' for 'plagiarism'. This was a pivotal point in my development as a PhD student because I felt to be rejecting the opinion of a much more knowledgeable and authoritative scholar; yet, I wanted to find a term that encapsulated the idea that it was through the act of writing itself that ideas, language, and texts could be re-worked or re-fashioned, thus enabling the emergent author 'to stamp his/her own mark on an idea or text and 'keep' it as theirs'. My search for such a term led to my engagement with many other authoritative voices in the literature on plagiarism and textual ownership and with ideas that included: 'plagiphrasing' (Wilson, 1997); 'patchwriting' (Howard, 1992); 'local plagiarisms' (Borg, 2002) and 'intertextuality' (Kristeva, 1996).

The term that eventually played a key role in helping me to re-conceptualise the notion of 'plagiarism' in the thesis was 'intertextuality'. Although the latter was mentioned in my response to my supervisor's feedback (as outlined in Table 7 above), I was not quite ready to realise its full conceptual potential in 2001. Nevertheless, I did recognise that my 'deliberations' over its possible application to my study would be likely to result in a change to the title of my doctoral study.

These title changes can be viewed by dividing my PhD candidature into three distinct stages: Stage 1: 1998 to 2000 (proposal through to enrolment and probationary period of candidacy); Stage 2: 2001 to 2003 (Completion of Doctoral Assessment; further data gathering and analysis; first draft of thesis); Stage 3: 2004 to 2006 (final stage of analysis and conceptual development; final version of thesis submitted for examination). Table 8 below shows the evolution of the title of my doctoral study from proposal to completion.

Table 8. Evolution of thesis title from proposal and doctoral assessment through to completion.

Proposal (1998–2000)	Doctoral Assessment (2001–2003)	Completion (2004–2006)
'Plagiarism, cultural identity and pedagogy: A discourse approach'	'Plagiarism, cultural identity and pedagogy: A critical approach'	'Plagiarism or intertextuality? A study of the politics of knowledge, identity and textual ownership in undergraduate student writing'

As can be seen in Table 8, the words 'plagiarism' and 'identity' were the only two terms that remained constant; 'discourse' was replaced by 'critical', which in turn was superseded by 'politics'. Yet it took another three years of part-time study and engagement with yet other more authoritative voices before I had worked out how to engage more effectively with the feedback offered by my supervisor in 2001.

A critical stage in this process occurred around 2003 when I had the good fortune to work collaboratively with Alastair Pennycook and Rana Chandrasoma on a paper that also sought to analyse the use of sources in the research-based writing of emergent student authors. As we struggled to co-construct our own multivoiced text, I eventually began to understand how to respond to my supervisor's suggestion that I needed to "find ways of confronting the problem of both problematizing the notion of plagiarism and using it as a term in the thesis" (see Table 7; see also Chandrasoma, Thompson, & Pennycook, 2004).

As the third version of the title in Table 8 reveals, by the time I submitted the thesis for examination in 2006, I had de-constructed and problematised the term 'plagiarism' by explicitly drawing attention to its relationship to the notion of 'intertextuality' through the question: Plagiarism or intertextuality? This seemingly simple juxtaposition of terms proved to be the point at which I began to feel as though I was finally writing my 'own' thesis.

4.3. Discussion

Supervisory feedback is one of the many sources of guidance that students draw on as they develop their own authorial identities over the course of their RHD studies. As our account of Celia's responses show, her supervisor's feedback played a central role in her development as an emerging academic author. Celia interpreted her supervisor's feedback as posing questions that she needed to address at a conceptual level. Notably, the term 'intertextuality' eventually replaced the notion of 'plagiarism' and became pivotal in the evolution of the conceptual framework of the thesis as a whole. It was by engaging and re-engaging with key concepts from the myriad of textual influences that she had been working with that she eventually felt able to forge a 'voice' of her own.

Our exploration of Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogism has provided a valuable theoretical framework through which we have analysed Celia's responses to the questions she addressed in her supervisor's feedback. As Tables 6 to 8 demonstrate: "every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280). Celia's struggle to distinguish her own ideas and arguments from those of others is also effectively captured by Bakhtin in the following comment: "One's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, [although] the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible" (1981, p. 345). It is particularly Bakhtin's notions of addressivity and intertextuality that have enabled us to gain valuable insights into the complex processes of authorial development that occurred over Celia's candidacy as a doctoral student.

5. Conclusions

What we have attempted to do in this article is make visible academic literacy practices, which often operate on a tacit level (see Lillis, 2003). The practices focused upon here include how supervisors provide feedback on writing and how students respond to this feedback in their writing while simultaneously developing and articulating their own identities/voices (cf. Coffin & Donahue, 2012). Two case studies involving reflections on feedback have been presented: a supervisor's reflections on the nature of the written feedback she provided and a student's reflections on her uptake of feedback from her supervisor. To illuminate these feedback practices we explored ways of approaching written feedback through the work of two key theorists – Vygotsky and Bakhtin and their concepts of scaffolding (Vygotsky) and dialogism (Bakhtin). Although the students we have discussed in this article were at very different stages of study and the feedback provided had a very different focus (grammar and expression in the first case, concept development in the second), we have found the concepts of scaffolding and dialogism to be useful in examining the different ways in which supervisory feedback was delivered and subsequently incorporated into students' writing. In both case studies, the supervisor provided a form of scaffolding to the student and in each case the nature of the supervisory feedback and the student uptake can be characterised as dialogic.

This article represents a first stage in our analysis and theorising of the role of feedback on writing in the supervision of postgraduate students. In future research, we intend to apply the methodologies described here involving a combined focus on the perspectives of participants (both supervisors and students) and analyses of the texts that they collaboratively produce. We think the ideas of Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981, 1986) will be useful in further exploring a number of interesting issues around feedback in postgraduate writing. These issues include students' perceptions as to the type of feedback that best encourages them to take increasing responsibility for their research and writing as well as the potentially unintended consequences of supervisor feedback (cf. Stracke & Kumar, 2010). They also include a focus on the nature of the supervisor-student dialogue, including for example, how the supervisor frames the process of giving feedback as well as how the student 'talks back' (see Lillis, 2003) to the supervisor. A further area of interest is to track the cycle of addressivity beyond the supervisory relationship into the broader disciplinary community, including the markers of the thesis and possible future publications in students' fields of study (cf. Tuck, 2010; Thein & Beach, 2010).

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