Modeling higher degree by research student writing feedback based on Systemic Functional Linguistics: A collaboration of student, supervisor and academic language and learning adviser

George Ridgway

Learning Centre (Academic Enrichment), University of Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Email: george.ridgway@sydney.edu.au

Higher degree by research students contact academic language and learning (ALL) advisers, or are referred by their supervisors, with a wide range of problems associated with writing at all stages of the PhD thesis. Collaborating with an ALL adviser may enable the student to better develop their academic writing style during the writing process and for supervisors to focus on providing feedback on content knowledge. This study examined a systematic model of feedback negotiated with the student, the supervisor and the ALL adviser. The research design comprised of a case study of feedback on a student's draft thesis chapter. During feedback among the student, adviser, and supervisor, the student's chapter was analysed using an adapted version of a Systemic Functional Linguistics based framework. Feedback using the framework enabled the student to understand feedback organised at the level of whole text, paragraph, and sentence. The feedback allowed the student and ALL adviser to focus, systematically, on one aspect of the text per cycle of feedback, in order to build an understanding about writing based on a theory driven model of writing, using meta-language. The findings suggest that student feedback should be organised and contain sufficient explanation. To achieve this, collaborative relationships should be considered between the student, the supervisor, and the ALL adviser.

Key Words: writing collaboration, language adviser, supervisor, systematic feedback, higher degree by research writing, systemic functional linguistics.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

During the course of student candidature in higher degree by research (HDR) programs around Australia, and indeed worldwide, writing a PhD thesis requires an exceptional development in the capacity of reading to learn and learning to write. The student may be overwhelmed by the size and structure of the thesis, and the high level of detailed writing required in its content. The student's thesis supervisors may fall under increasing pressure to spend supervision time providing feedback on the clarity of the academic writing style of the student, with the result that less time might be available for the development of content knowledge. Not all supervisors have the meta-language skills to give feedback and support to struggling HDR students, and at least a part of the rationale for learning centres and academic language and learning (ALL) advisers is to develop student writing.

Generally, in an Australian Higher Education setting, the role of an academic language and learning adviser is to develop the language and learning skills of all students through delivery of a range of programs such as workshops, faculty-based teaching, eLearning resources and individual consultations. Many of these programs, particularly the last, involve the process of giving feedback on student writing (Jones, 2004). During individual consultations, HDR students can request writing feedback from academic language and learning advisers. These students form a diversified group, with English as a first or an additional language background, from first year to final year doctoral students, and from different faculties. Frequently, students' supervisors point out that their writing is very descriptive, lacks analysis (Chanock, 2000) and adequate argument, that it has little authorial voice used to 'tell a story', and that the text does not flow. Consequently, supervisors sometimes recommend students consult a literacy adviser to improve their writing.

One such supervisor provided extensive and detailed feedback to the student and copied it to the ALL adviser requesting writing support[1]:

> *The purpose of this email is to give some feedback on part of the introduction to your PhD thesis. I have copied [the ALL adviser] in to this email as discussed so that he can get a sense of some of the feedback I am giving and potential areas to give assistance to you in your writing… At the moment this section of your thesis seems to include a somewhat unconnected list of headings and associated text. I want you to develop a story and keep reminding the reader of why these are important aspects to cover. There are many different ways you can organise this section of your thesis but the flow needs to be obvious to the reader.*
>
> *In summary, I think the main areas to focus on are: 1) developing a workable structure for this part of the chapter, 2) linking the paragraphs into a story that sets the context for your research and relate to the overall heading for this section 3) developing analytical rather than descriptive writing about the relevant policies.*

Feedback is a crucial component of the development of a research student writer (Jolly & Boud, 2013). It typically involves collaboration between student and supervisor. Feedback is often perceived as the domain of the supervisor but 'supervisor only type feedback' is not always effective for the development of the student as a writer. However, if a literacy adviser is involved in the feedback practice then there is potential for multiple partnerships, resulting in a more effective, richer feedback cycle with benefits all round. There are opportunities for: the student for blending learning about the thesis content and learning about how language is used to construe content; the supervisor to understand deeper insights into the difficulties students face with their writing; and the ALL adviser to develop insight into how language is used in a disciplinary context. Such collaboration is likely to result in an effective and multi-faceted approach to feedback where the focus is on the development of the student's academic literacy.

1.2. Aim

The aim of this paper is to examine a model of feedback negotiated in consultation with the student, the supervisor and the ALL adviser. The paper will present findings from a case study of feedback on a student's draft thesis text using an adapted version of the Systemic Functional Linguistics-based (SFL) 3x3 framework (Humphrey, Martin, Dreyfus & Mahboob, 2010). The framework provides a theoretically informed and systematically constructed set of probe questions for use in teaching academic literacy skills to students. The benefit of this approach is that it enables the feedback to be both based on a metalanguage and to be logically sequenced.

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[1] **Source:** Personal communication extract taken from an email from a supervisor to an ALL adviser [reproduced with permission].

1.3. Outline

The paper will review language-based feedback, with particular focus on one linguistic framework, namely that informed by systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Next, the feedback cycle will be introduced, which is driven by the 3x3 framework. Selected results from the case study will be analysed to determine the effectiveness of the feedback cycle, the linguistic framework. Finally, implications for improving feedback practice will be discussed.

2. Context

Feedback is seen as 'one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement', but its impact 'can be either positive or negative' (Hattie & Timperley, 2007 p. 81). Gibbs and Simpson (2004) suggest that learning will best occur when supported by feedback; for them, feedback should be suitable for the writing task, as much as for the student learning needs, and be timely so that students can apply their understanding of the feedback. Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell & Litjens (2008) suggest poor feedback 'dwells on shortcomings' or 'lacks transparency' (p. 66). An example of unclear feedback is the tutor comment, 'Too much description; not enough analysis', which Chanock (2000 p. 95) found was confusing to nearly half of the students who responded to the comment in a different manner than intended.

2.1. Student and supervisor feedback

Students enjoy ongoing frequent face-to-face positive feedback, as dialogue which helps to clarify the expression of argumentation in their discipline and to show the relationships between ideas; they dislike short critical feedback (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Eyres, Hatch, Turner, & West 2001). While negative feedback can upset students, Caffarella & Barnett (2000) also note that continuing support through face-to-face feedback can improve their level of confidence when learning academic writing. Eyres et al. (2001) elaborated that feedback involving grammar, syntax and organisation is less valued by students, particularly for a first draft. They also noted that students like to receive feedback on several drafts of the same text. The perceived value of feedback is increased if the provider is seen as motivated to improve the student's academic skills. Students writing a thesis value practical feedback, which contains many ideas for revision and which also develops their understanding and future writing development (Kumar & Strake, 2007).

Supervisor feedback tends to be more directed towards the development of subject content rather than literacy needs. Bitchener, Basturkmen & East (2010) noted that, given the importance of feedback, not much is known about what supervisors focus on in giving feedback. In their questionnaire and interview study of three faculties (Humanities, Science and Commerce), they classified feedback into different types: content; part-genres (sections of the thesis); rhetorical structure/organisation; coherence and cohesion; linguistic accuracy; and appropriateness. Four of these categories are literacy oriented and, interestingly, feedback was distributed equally among all categories. While the results showed that supervisors did give extensive literacy-based feedback on the four categories, in the case of linguistic accuracy, however, many did not see this as their responsibility. This is commonly seen rather as the domain of the ALL adviser.

2.2. The ALL adviser

There has been little research within the context of academic language development on doctoral writing from the perspective of the ALL adviser. The adviser and student work together in 'complex …interactions with each other and the student's supervisors' (Woodward-Kron, 2007 p. 265) so that revisions are clear and negotiated. Individual consultations with students of any level are part of the core business of the ALL adviser and there is some research on feedback in this environment from an ALL adviser perspective. The majority of this has been directed towards undergraduate students, often Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students (Chanock, 2000, 2007a; Hyland & Hyland 2001). Chanock (2000) elaborates on the idea that students often do not understand the terms used in feedback in the same way that the tutor uses the term. Chanock's later research (2007b) highlights the importance of individual consultations for postgraduate students, particularly when related to literacy practices of disciplinary cultures.

With HDR students, ALL advisers are becoming more frequently consulted about writing the thesis. According to Woodward-Kron (2007), many postgraduate students from non-English speaking backgrounds consult ALL advisers for help with academic English, as well as to understand the advice given to them by their supervisors. Literacy advisers can use individual consultations as an important process to scaffold students' writing development at critical stages. In her study of an individual consultation with an at-risk HDR student, Woodward-Kron (2007) shows that the student's writing was developed from the at-risk of non-completion level to the successful completion of the thesis. In another study (Yeh, 2010), a case study approach was used to interview four postgraduate students, who spoke English as a second language, on their difficulties with research writing. Students were less motivated by research methods or academic writing courses, suggesting that more individualised feedback and guidance may be more effective. According to Woodward-Kron (2007, p. 264) initial writing consultations with ALL advisers need to move beyond 'surface level errors' and this type of feedback should not be the only form of feedback, since it can focus too much on the learners' shortcomings (Hounsell et al. 2008).

2.3. Applying a linguistic framework to feedback

Importantly, Woodward-Kron (2007) argues that content issues can also be the focus of feedback when supported by the application of a theoretical linguistic framework. The present paper concerns the application of a systematic approach to giving feedback on a student's text. The student (ST) and the ALL adviser need to share a common language about language, or metalanguage, to describe what is going on in the student's text. Such a metalanguage has been successfully provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) in tertiary educational settings e.g. writing the PhD proposal (Iddings, Lan, & de Olivera, 2014), explaining doctoral writing as a genre (Carter, 2011), and promoting variation of genre in the thesis for creativity (Chanock, 2007 b). In the HDR context, the challenge lies not in 'teaching' these students a linguistic theory, but in providing them with a sufficiently complex but appliable account of language (Halliday & Hasan, 2006). SFL offers a rich theoretical model of language and, as such, its richness can be exploited and reworked in different educational and disciplinary contexts.

In SFL theory, language is described as functioning from three perspectives, termed metafunctions. The ideational metafunction describes patterns of experience or fields of activity and the logical relationships of these activities. The interpersonal metafunction considers the nature of the social relationship between the interactants in a situation, e.g. the writer and the reader. The textual metafunction relates to the organisation of the message and examines what choices the writer has made to organise the text. These three metafunctions are used to view language across three strata: genre (whole text); discourse semantics (paragraph level); and the lexicogrammar (clause level) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Whole texts are seen as organised into stages of discourse or genres. Genre has been described as a 'staged goal-oriented social process' (Martin, 2009, p. 13). The concept of genre, however, is not only confined to SFL. For example, Genre Analysis is an approach that can be used to explain the expected parts or sections of a complex academic text and, where necessary, it can be varied in order to suit multiple goals (Swales 1990; 2004). From an SFL perspective, an academic text can grow by adding genres together, or by embedding one genre in another, as parts of a growing text or macrogenre (Martin & Rose, 2008). This concept is of particular importance, as the PhD thesis can be seen as a macrogenre and each component of this macrogenre is built from each stage or chapter. In academic discourse, two of the key resources are the language of evaluation and the language of abstraction.

The language of evaluation found in stages of the thesis occurs at the discourse semantic stratum. These resources are conceptualised as the appraisal network, developed by Martin and White (2005) and extended to research writing by Hood (2010). The appraisal network consists of the dimensions of attitude (affect, appreciation, judgement), graduation (degree of strength) and engagement (management of other voices). At the stratum of lexicogrammar in academic discourse the focus is on the language of abstraction, particularly on the resource of grammatical metaphor. Across the metafunctions, grammatical metaphor occurs when the grammatical class of a word is reconstrued as another (Halliday, 2004), often through nominalisation. For example, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are reconstrued as nouns – *observe/observation; relevant/relevance;*

likely/likelihood. This process of nominalisation allows the writer to package more information through pre- and post- modification of the noun, resulting in a complex nominal group. Grammatical metaphor creates abstraction through a different kind of complexity. Instead of complexity at the clause level in a sentence with two or more clauses, the complexity occurs at the nominal group level in which clause elements can be 'packed' into nominal groups in a single clause.

2.3.1. Applying the 3x3 framework

The concepts of how language functions have been used to create a systematic framework to scaffold the literacy skills of NESB students by aligning the three strata and the three metafunctions, in a 3x3 framework (Mahboob, Dreyfus, Humphrey and Martin, 2010). The framework was originally designed to help literacy tutors provide feedback to students as part of the Scaffolding Literacy in Adult and Tertiary Environments, the (SLATE) project, based on the 'Sydney School' genre pedagogy and register projects (Martin, 1999). In the 3x3 framework ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of language are cross-referenced to the three strata of language to form a nine square matrix. For ease of reference each of the nine cells is referred to with an alphanumeric reference. Each cell can be used to probe the text from different perspectives, which can be exemplified as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. A smaller version of the 3×3 framework showing examples of feedback areas for each metafunction and level of organisation of language (adapted from Mahboob et al., 2010).

Metafunction	Genre (whole text)	Discourse Semantics (paragraphs)	Lexicogrammar (clauses)
A Ideational	Purpose of whole text	Use of generalised logical relationships	Structure of nominal and verbal groups and circumstantial elements
B Interpersonal	Whether a critical position is presented	Construction of authoritative assessments	Interpersonal meanings construed through resources of Mood, interpersonal metaphors and use of citations.
C Textual	Effectiveness of text organisation	Use of abstract and concrete entities	Use of grammatical metaphor and voice to realise textual organisation

Mahboob and Devrim (2011) incorporated the 3×3 framework into feedback protocols for undergraduate language students in an on-line environment. Their project was based on clearly identifying good literacy practices and developing a metalanguage for tutors to use with learners in order to give feedback on the language features found in texts. Furthermore, feedback can result in additional multiple changes to the text from a single instance of feedback. Although the feedback protocols were designed in an on-line environment for students writing assignments, as the authors suggest, the protocols can be adapted for use in other contexts.

Based on Mahboob and Devrim (2011, p. 19), I developed a collaborative model of feedback as shown in Figure 1. In this model, an initial consultative meeting with the student (ST) and the student's supervisor (SU) is set up by the ALL adviser to select the text on which to give feedback in a three-way manner. After the meeting the ST sends the ALL adviser a draft of his/her text, which is read and analysed with reference to an adapted version of the 3x3 framework. Based on the analysis, the ALL adviser provides the ST with feedback (F1). The ST considers the feedback when the text is revised. After revision the text is sent to the SU, who gives the ST more feedback (F2). The ALL adviser and SU send each other copies of their feedback and comment on the suitability of the revised text (F3). After a complete cycle of revision, the ALL adviser initiates another cycle of feedback using a new area of feedback from the 3×3 framework.
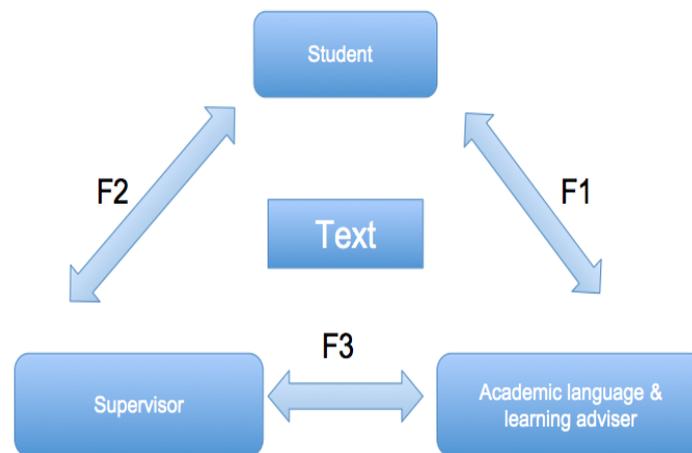
Figure 1. The three-way feedback model of feedback (F) between participants (adapted from Mahboob and Devrim, 2013).

In summary, the three participants first select the text for revision and establish a cycle of feedback. Next, the ST and SU identify where there are difficulties with the clarity of the student's writing, while the ALL adviser uses the 3x3 framework to decide on the focus of feedback for the student to revise the text.

3. Methods

A student thesis writer and his supervisor were recruited for this study. Both gave permission for their texts and comments to be reproduced. The supervisor had referred the student to the Learning Centre for help with thesis writing. The student was a PhD candidate in his first year of candidature with a non-English speaking background. The supervisor suggested that the introduction to the thesis should be used for the feedback process. The ST emailed the ALL adviser his text draft of Chapter 1, providing the background, scope, some references and the aims and research questions of the thesis. Cycles of feedback were carried out based on Figure 1.

The ALL adviser read the student text (T), and selected areas for analysis and feedback from the framework considered to be most relevant to develop the student's writing at the levels of Genre (whole text), Discourse Semantics (paragraph), and Lexicogrammar (clause). The version of the 3x3 framework containing all of the probing questions that guided the electronic and face-to-face feedback in this study is shown in Table 2. Although all of the questions in the table were used to give feedback in the case study, for reasons of brevity, the analysis reported below (shown in bold in Table 2) is restricted to three examples:

- Cell A1 (i): beginning to end structure (genre)
- Cell B2 (i): appraisal
- Cell C3 (ii) grammatical metaphor.

Table 2. Areas for the focus of feedback in the case study adapted from the 3×3 framework.

Metafunction	1 Genre: Whole text structure	2 Discourse Semantics: Paragraph/across clauses	3 Lexicogrammar: Within clause
A Ideational	i) Does beginning to end structure build knowledge relevant to discipline and purpose? ii) Does language construct technical specialised and formal knowledge of the field?	i) Is information extended across sections moving from general to specific? ii) What taxonomic relations are constructed?	i) Are the noun groups correctly formed (nominal group structure)?
B Interpersonal	i) Does the text present arguments in authoritative ways?	i) Is the subject matter evaluated with resources of appraisal? Attitude Engagement Graduation	i) Is source material incorporated into text through quoting paraphrasing and summarising?
C Textual	i) Is the content of the thesis previewed in the introduction?	i) Do topic sentences indicate the method of development of the paragraph?	i) Does choice of Theme aid text development? ii) Is grammatical metaphor used to rework processes, qualities and logical relations?

The student texts were coded and annotated according to the teaching point related to the areas of feedback. For Cell A1(i), text structure, B2 (i), appraisal and C3 (ii) grammatical metaphor Track Changes was used in different ways. For Cell C3 (ii), grammatical metaphor, the text was analysed and feedback provided in a coded word document using a coloured key code as follows:

[Yellow]	= Noun group participant 1/subject
(Red)	= Finite verb/process
{Green}	= Noun group participant 2
Bold	**= Different word function /Grammatical metaphor**
<u>Underlined</u>	= Head noun

4. Findings and Discussion

The examples selected for discussion in this section have been chosen to show different points on the feedback cycle. The first three relate to ALL adviser to ST feedback, and the fourth example is of SU to ST feedback. The ALL adviser to ST feedback concerned three levels of the text: the whole text, a paragraph and clause/sentence.

4.1. ALL adviser to ST: Cell A1(i)

Chapter 1 of the student thesis was examined using Track Changes with reference to cell A1(i) (Table 2), which asks '*Does beginning to end structure build knowledge relevant to discipline and purpose?'*(Humphrey, Martin, Dreyfus, & Mahboob, 2010). The feedback, as shown in Figure 2, was sent to the ST by the ALL adviser and later discussed at their face-to-face meeting as part of the feedback cycle. Feedback at this stratum (genre) meant that sections of the text were moved up or down by cutting and pasting, to show how the overall structure could be improved.

Figure 2. A screenshot of the Track Change feedback.

The section of text in Figure 2 originally appeared lower in the introduction but provided a suitable general introduction to the thesis topic. Conversely, what originally appeared at the start of the introduction was the text in Figure 3, which contained more specific information. The extract was moved and inserted later at a more appropriate point.

> Principle 3 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 clearly shows the connection among economic development, environmental conservation and human rights protection.

Figure 3. The student's introduction.

At the face-to-face meeting, the ALL adviser provided an explanation to the ST of how the text should develop according to the flow of content information from general to specific terms. This feedback resulted in better structuring of information so that it developed from less specific to more specific content as the text progressed. The ST further revised the text and submitted it to the SU for feedback, which will be discussed in Section 4.4 below.

4.2. ALL adviser to ST: Cell B2(i)

Since the student's writing lacked a critical perspective (Hood, 2010), a Track Changes process was used to demonstrate the resources of appraisal to build awareness of the language of evaluation. As shown in Figure 3, a sample of the introduction was probed with reference to cell B2 (i) *Is the subject matter evaluated with resources of appraisal*? (Humphrey, Martin, Dreyfus, & Mahboob, 2010). Figure 3 shows this sample, which introduces the focus of feedback and the need for the language of evaluation, i.e the appraisal system. The bold type in the comment boxes indicates what part of the appraisal system has been applied in suggested revisions i.e. **graduation [force], attitude [judgment], engagement**. The option 'stikethrough' was used to leave the original wording of the text in place rather than deleting it, to show how the text could be revised.

The student was encouraged to independently revise the text, after possible revisions were identified and explained, by asking him 'to consider' or mentioning that he 'might choose' a revision; alternatively, the potential revision was phrased as a question. In this way the student was invited not told to make a revision (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Extract from original student text showing feedback for resources of appraisal.

As can be seen from Figure 4, some of the comments could be expanded to provide the student with further explanation for the suggested revision. For example, Comment 6 as shown in Figure 5 is an example of the expanded content related to the passive voice and hidden agency and an opportunity for additional appraisal.

Figure 5. The details of comment 6.

Figure 6 shows the student's revisions, applying the resources of Appraisal. In the first, (a) the student used **Graduation [force]** in 'many frequent'. In the second, (b) he added the participants of the clause in response to in the expanded comment [6] in Figure 5. In the third, (c), he used evaluative language, **attitude [appreciation]** in which 'evidence' is positively appreciated as 'significant'.

The occurrence of **many frequent (a)** environmental calamities in the respective countries showed inadequate concern and poor implementation of the human rights instruments, both in the regional and international level. The often repeated trans-boundary haze pollution in Indonesia may provide the best example of how the right to a safe and healthy environment **have been violated by both state and non-state actors (b)**. Such practices to clear the land by burning the forest have shown the unsustainable manners of private enterprises in conducting their business, which have led to violation to the right to a safe and healthy environment. In June 2013, the irritating and harming smoke from uncontrolled burning of plantations in Pekanbaru Indonesia not only affected Indonesia, but also the neighboring countries of Malaysia and Singapore and parts of Thailand. Consequently, hundreds of residents had to be evacuated to safer places, while children and elderly were suffering from respiratory diseases. **This forced evacuation also provides significant evidence of violations of human rights associated with the economy (c)**, particularly the material losses suffered by the affected community, commercial businesses and educational sector.

Figure 6. Extract showing the student's use of Appraisal.

4.3. ALL adviser to ST: Cell C3 (ii)

This time feedback was given in a coded Word document to provide a detailed explanation for the concept of grammatical metaphor. The student's text was probed using cell C3 ii) *Is grammatical metaphor used to rework processes, qualities and logical relations?* (Humphrey, Martin, Dreyfus, & Mahboob, 2010). Figure 7 is an example of how the Word document was coded to analyse and provide a focus for feedback; the original used colour coding but the Key to code in this extract has been adapted (by the use of brackets) to conform to black and white formatting of the journal.

Sentences from two paragraphs of the student's introduction were coded to show the finite process, head noun and the noun group structure of the participants in two ranking clause complexes. The original sentence shown in Figure 7 was coded to reveal the grammatical choices selected, then revised and re-coded to illustrate an option in which the head nouns could be considered better formed enabling the student to use grammatical metaphor to reduce two clauses into one, by changing the logical relation (Schleppegrell, 2004). The reformed sentence was re-coded to clearly illustrate the noun groups formed by the participants in the new clause.

4.4. SU to ST feedback

In order to reveal the focus of the supervisor's written feedback, samples were collected on a draft of the student's text. The SU handwrote feedback, shown in Figure 8, on paragraphs of the text during face-to-face meetings with the student. Even in this small extract feedback is phrased as either statements, e.g. *legacy implies future* or questions, e.g. *Is this different from a safe and healthy environment*? This type of feedback engages the student in thinking about and responding to thesis content. Another comment focuses on the student's use of the passive voice and asks, '*who by*?' The circled comment on thesis structure refers to where the student has omitted an important stage of the introduction, which sets out the main position of the thesis to be argued. Feedback by the SU highlighted the incorrect use of the definite article, e.g. deleting 'the' in the phrase '*for the forthcoming generations*' and corrections in word choice, e.g. replacing '*mankind*' by '*humankind*'. The SU gave feedback on the ST's staging of the thesis introduction and the use of passive voice by asking a question 'who by?' whereas the ALL adviser had explained the idea and opened the text up to more development by the student with the use of appraisal.

Key to code

[Yellow]   = noun group participant 1/subject

(Red)   = Finite verb/process

{Green}   = noun group participant 2

Bold Grammatical metaphor   = **Different word function**

Underlined   = Head noun

Sentence 1

Original

However, since the Refugee Convention of 1951 sets stringent limitations in the terms of the definition of refugee, it may be very difficult for the people who are suffering from environmental disasters to seek refugee status under this convention.

Coded

However, since [the Refugee Convention of 1951] (sets) {stringent limitations in the terms of the definition of refugee}, [it] (may be) very **difficult** for {the people who are suffering from environmental disasters to seek refugee status under this convention}

Re-coded – reducing clauses, packing nominal groups, and grammatical metaphor

However, [stringent limitations in the definition of refugee in the Refugee Convention of 1951] (may cause) {great **difficulty** for the people suffering from environmental disasters to seek refugee status}.

Final

However, stringent limitations in the definition of refugee in the Refugee Convention of 1951 may cause great difficulty for the people suffering from environmental disasters to seek refugee status

Figure 7. Extract illustrating feedback to student.

4.5. Summary of results

This section has shown how a feedback cycle involving the ST, the SU, and the ALL adviser working as a team helped to improve the academic writing of the student's drafts. The systematic nature of the feedback cycle is important. The focus of ALL adviser feedback was selected systematically from the range of probing questions based on the 3×3 linguistic framework (Humphrey, Martin, Dreyfus, & Mahboob, 2010). As might be expected, SU feedback focused on content and was neither systematic nor detailed in terms of the language focus of his feedback. The ALL adviser feedback was richer, more explanatory and opened opportunities for the student to develop the content of the text by using a critical writing style, employing grammatical metaphor, and building complexity through noun groups.

Chapter 1 : Introduction and background

1.1. Background

The intertwining bond between mankind and his environment is very strong and close. The environment affects people's lives directly or indirectly[1], since it is the essential resource for maintaining life. Many environmental changes will affect people's enjoyment of their basic rights to a safe and healthy environment[2]. On the other hand, humans activity is a key factor in determining the current environmental conditions and the future legacy for the forthcoming generations[3]. Therefore, the bond requires the maintenance of a safe and healthy environment in order for people to have an adequate life[4]. A safe and healthy environment has come to be viewed as a basic need that is the right of all people and one which, if violated will lead to negative consequences. People cannot live properly in an environment that does not provide adequate conditions for health and safety. Poor environmental conditions caused by human developmental activities, such as air pollution, water pollution and noise can often interfere with the ability to exercise peoples' rights to a safe and healthy environment[5].

The quality of human life is affected by three critical factors: economic development, environmental protection and social justice as revealed in principle 3 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992. The principle shows the connection of the three factors by stating:

Figure 8. Supervisor feedback to student [reproduced with permission].

5. Conclusion

This research examined student, supervisor and language adviser perspectives on feedback on thesis writing and what this means for a cycle of feedback at this level. An adapted version of the Systemic Functional Linguistics-based 3x3 framework provided a theoretically informed and systematically constructed set of probing questions for use in teaching academic literacy skills to students. The paper draws together '[w]hat constitutes effective feedback' (East, Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2012) for postgraduate research students writing a thesis chapter and seeking feedback from both supervisor and language advisor. Giving feedback using a systematic approach of the 3x3 framework benefited all three participants. For the adviser, it offers guidance using a diagnostic and systematic analysis of the text and the opportunity to develop a sufficiently detailed metalanguage with the student; for the supervisor it allows more focus to be placed on thesis content development, but also the opportunity to learn more about writing focused development; for the student it offers feedback about writing that is systematic and contains a sufficient depth of explanation that they can learn how to write as experts. To strengthen the effectiveness of feedback, supervisors should consider collaborative supervisory practices with language advisers. Further research is needed to explore how this model of feedback raises the potential for closer, and perhaps more formal, academic relationships between students, supervisors, and ALL advisers, when giving feedback on writing the higher degree by research.

Acknowledgements

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