NJ: DRAMA AUSTRALIA JOURNAL
2019, VOL. 43, NO. 1, 4–19
https://doi.org/10.1080/14452294.2018.1509368

nj Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

ARTICLE

Check for updates

Social filters shaping student responses to teacher feedback in the secondary drama classroom

Sharon Leanne Hogan

School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

ABSTRACT

Little is known about how secondary drama students identify or utilise teacher feedback. This article presents findings from a study exploring how drama students describe their experiences of teacher feedback and how, or if, they apply this feedback to enhance their learning. Data collection and analysis focused on students' experiences of teacher feedback occurring in three secondary drama classrooms in Queensland, Australia. Emergent findings suggest that drama students employ contextual, social and individual learning filters to assess the usefulness of teacher feedback. In the highly interactive and relational drama classroom, social filters can induce or hinder the existence of dialogic feedback. This can subsequently influence the drama students' perspectives of the usefulness of teacher feedback. This article draws on the student voice to describe these social filters and suggests how drama teachers may culture opportunities for drama students to engage with dialogic and useful teacher feedback.

KEYWORDS

Teacher feedback; classroom ambience; drama education; drama assessment

Introduction

During recent decades, the positive effects of teacher feedback on student achievement in compulsory school settings have garnered increased interest. This interest has been driven by claims that when applied effectively, feedback can enhance student learning (Black and Wiliam 2010, 2009; Hattie 2009; Shute 2008). Despite this attention, there is scant research investigating how secondary students experience and utilise teacher feedback (Gamlem and Smith 2013; Gan and Hattie 2014; Kerr 2017). Arguably, understanding how students interpret and apply teacher feedback to modify their thinking may assist in greater learning benefits for students. However, obtaining this deeper understanding has proven not to be so straightforward. Butler and Winne (1995), for instance, found that feedback is a complex process that involves the learners' psychological states and dispositions. Research also indicates that teacher feedback only leads to learning benefits when it includes process steps on how to improve, when students have opportunities to utilise the feedback, understand how to use it and are willing to devote effort (Hattie and Timperley 2007; Kluger and DeNisi 1996).

This article describes emergent findings from a study exploring secondary drama students' perspectives of the usefulness of teacher feedback. A review of the existing

CONTACT Sharon Leanne Hogan sharon@sentioeducation.com.au Griffith University, Australia

© 2018 Drama Australia

literature revealed a number of small-scale studies focusing on students' perspectives of teacher feedback in secondary school contexts (Carnell 2000; Gamlem and Smith 2013; Kerr 2017; Plank, Dixon, and Ward 2014). However, these extant studies are often set in secondary disciplines such as mathematics (Dixon and Haigh 2009; Harks, Rakocsky et al. 2014), science (Cowie 2005) or languages (Gamlem and Smith 2013; Havnes et al. 2012). Other studies focus on teachers' feedback experiences (Dargusch 2014) or feedback practices in higher education (Evans 2013). Little research could be located exploring secondary students' experiences of teacher feedback in Arts disciplines such a visual arts, dance, music, media and drama. To make some contribution to addressing this gap, and due to the researcher's background as a drama educator, drama was selected as the subject discipline to explore students' perspectives of the usefulness of teacher feedback. Conducted in three large urban secondary schools in Queensland, Australia, this study utilised a multiple-case design (Stake 2006), to explore the perspectives of secondary drama students aged 15–17 years. During focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, drama students commented on the types of teacher feedback they identified, experienced and how, or if, they utilised teacher feedback to enhance their learning or achievement.

Background literature

In this study and article, the term 'feedback' refers to 'information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning' (Shute 2008, 154). While the power of feedback to enhance student learning (Hattie 2009; Wiliam 2011) is frequently acknowledged within the field of education, the impact of feedback on the learner can be negative or positive (Hattie and Timperley 2007). The type of feedback and the way it is given can alter its effectiveness (Kluger and DeNisi 1996; Kulik and Kulik 1988). The primary purpose of teacher feedback is to offer information that assists students to 'reduce the gap' (Hattie and Timperley 2007, 86) between what is known, demonstrated and the desired performance goal. This is an important distinction between the terms 'information' and 'feedback'. Wiliam (2011) points out that feedback only exists when the 'information fed back to the learner is used by the learner to improve performance' (120).

Contemporary conceptualisations of feedback have evolved from earlier transmissive or behavioural views to include socially constructed and dialogic processes. Askew and Hodge (2000, 13) describe this ideal dialogic feedback process as

> Not a gift or batted back and forth in linear or hierarchical relationships, but constructed between loops of dialogue and information. As nothing is ever influenced in one direction, responsibility is shared for learning. Feedback and reflection become entwined, enabling the learner to review their learning in its context and related to previous experiences and understandings – a meta-view which can lead to meta-learning.

The various cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective aims of dialogic feedback can be identified in the quote above and are also described in the writing of other researchers. Feedback supports learning when students are engaged in processes that support meta-cognitive strategies, are able to understand the relationship between their previous performance, have an understanding of explicitly defined success criteria and become

the agent of both improving and initiating their own learning (Hattie 2009; Harks et al. 2014; Kerr 2017; Nicol and Debra 2006). Useful feedback is now commonly considered to be that which 'is constructed jointly by teachers and students and framed as a dialogue' (Plank, Dixon, and Ward 2014, 99).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) also recognise the importance of the teachers' and students' role in the joint construction of feedback and its primary aim in reducing the gap between a student's current understanding and a learning goal (see also Sadler 1989). Hattie and Timperley's (2007) often-cited model for effective feedback defines teacher feedback messages as occurring on four levels including task, process, self-regulated and self. They draw on a meta-analysis of feedback research to conclude that teacher feedback is least effective when targeting the self-level, which includes personal praise, and should instead focus on assisting students through goal setting questions such as 'Where am I going?' 'How am I going?' and 'Where to next?' Students and teachers need a shared and clear understanding of the goal or the criteria for success, where students are currently achieving in relation to that goal and the steps or scaffolding required to reach that goal. Importantly, research indicates that responses to teacher feedback are learner sensitive (Evans and Waring 2011; Gamlem and Smith 2013; Shute 2008) and that experiences of feedback may, therefore, vary from student to student. This review of the literature assisted in the selection of a research methodology capable of capturing the qualitative and highly individual ways that drama students may experience teacher feedback.

Methodology

Multiple-case study methodology (Stake 2006) was selected to explore the drama students' experiences of teacher feedback at three different research sites: one Catholic, one independent and one state school. Schools were given a coloured name in order to de-identify them within the study – Red College (RC), Green College (GC) and Blue College (BC), respectively. Case study was selected to preserve the 'multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening' (Stake 1995, 12) in each of the drama classrooms. Common features provided boundaries to the cases: All of the schools were in South East Queensland, urban locations, within the Brisbane area; schools were co-educational; teachers were experienced drama teachers; and all of the cases were situated in a secondary drama classroom. Other commonalities between cases included the nature of the drama curriculum. The drama curriculum, at each school, was shaped by the Queensland Senior Drama Syllabus (Queensland Studies Authority 2013). At all three research locations, year 10 was regarded as a preparatory year for the final 2 years of study, and therefore, all students were regarded as part of the senior school.

An experienced secondary drama teacher at each school generously granted access to their classroom and assisted in facilitating contact with students from one selected drama class. The drama teachers, each with over 10 years of teaching experience, met with the researcher to provide details about the curriculum and the school context. Data collection focused on foregrounding the students' voices, specifically their perspectives of teacher feedback and as such targeted the 'crucially important affective and interactional aspects of learner's responses to feedback' (Hargreaves 2013, 3). The students

were enrolled in the subject of drama at different grade levels: two classes at year 10 and one class at year 11. Overall, 57 students (24 males and 33 females) obtained parental or carer consent to participate in classroom observation. Of this larger number, 37 students (13 males and 24 females) consented to join in focus group discussions and 24 students (12 males and 12 females) agreed to follow up individual interviews. The average age of students across all three sites was 15 years. To allow the researcher to build a deeper understanding of the context, develop rapport with the students and enrich interview and focus group questions, interactions between teachers and students were observed during drama classes over a 3-month period. Most lessons and rehearsals were videoed for later review. A series of fieldwork notes and analytical memos were maintained throughout this period. Key informants emerged at each case study site. Comments from these informants and the voices of students in the broader data-set have been included in the proceeding section of this article. Pseudonyms have been used to de-identify the school, teacher and student names. Initials have been used beside student pseudonyms to identify which school they attended, for example, James (GC) is from GC. All stages of the research were conducted in compliance with the human ethics requirements of Griffith University. As students were the key participants in the study, additional considerations for ethical practice were integrated into the research design. Data collection began with focus groups in familiar spaces (usually the drama classroom) and interviews were scheduled towards the end of the unit of study, on the school campus. Individual Interviews, therefore, occurred when students were familiar with the researcher, after several months of fieldwork.

Emergent findings

Several common student experiences of teacher feedback emerged from the three different case study sites. The overall formal school context and curriculum strongly shaped the drama students' perspectives of teacher feedback. All of the students were enrolled in drama as a subject within the school curriculum; subsequently, students often identified experiences of teacher feedback linked to assessment tasks, syllabus dimensions and cycles of learning and assessment, within a unit of study. Similarly, the drama teachers aimed to provide feedback to assist students related to assessment tasks, and the achievement of the standard descriptors required skills and knowledge objectives defined in the Queensland Senior Drama Syllabus (Queensland Studies Authority 2013). Within this syllabus, assessment tasks and standards are organised into three dimensions: forming (the making of dramatic work often assesses through scriptwriting or directing), presenting (the performance of scripted or student devised work in a range of dramatic styles) and responding (the analysis of dramatic works in written or oral tasks; Queensland Studies Authority 2013).

Most instances of teacher feedback described by the drama students were associated with assessment. Students frequently referred to their experiences of teacher feedback as they worked towards the completion of assessment tasks aligned with the forming, presenting or responding dimensions of the syllabus. Students identified sources or types of teacher feedback using terms such as verbal or written, 'prac' or theory, direct or indirect, positive or negative, public or private, during or outside of class time and individual or group feedback. Alexis (BC), for example, made the distinction between the usefulness of written and verbal feedback on a written responding assessment task in an essay form:

Alexis (BC): When we did our essays. We didn't get written feedback, really, we just got verbal feedback on our drafts. That didn't work for me at all. Because she just went through it and highlighted things that I needed to do and she told me things that I needed to change … I can't remember that by the time I get home after doing four other subjects that day … On essays, I prefer written feedback but on practical work I prefer verbal feedback.

Similar distinctions between teacher feedback related to 'written' or 'prac' assessment tasks appeared in a range of student responses across all three case study sites. Many students, like Alexis, preferred teacher feedback to match the modality of the task, with verbal and frequent teacher feedback for practical tasks and written corrective feedback for scriptwriting or essay tasks. Many students identified higher volumes of individual, corrective and written teacher feedback generated through the assignment drafting process. More instances of whole class or group verbal teacher feedback occurred during games, acting exercises and the rehearsal phase for 'prac' presenting tasks, usually with a performance outcome. Alexis, and several other students, indicated that having time to apply teacher feedback was also key to its value and crucial to 'usefulness'. Some students identified continual indirect sources of teacher feedback, whereas others did not notice feedback cues.

Some students demonstrated greater awareness of the cycles of teacher feedback, offered in different methods during the sequencing of assessment and learning phases within a unit of study. These methods could include task sheets, criteria or achievement standard rubrics, exemplar tasks (video or written), informal whole group comments or demonstrations offered during learning experiences in class or opportunities for scaffolded reflection provided by the teacher. For example, Oliver (GC) explained how he reflected on the task sheet and criteria provided by the teacher. He used these to identify goals and ways to meet these prior to assessment: 'I think about criteria a lot and how to meet them because I know that that is important'. He relied on the teacher to provide feed-forward, establish the learning goals and deconstruct the criteria and then to offer feedback: 'she tells us what we can do to improve to fit the criteria'. Taking this knowledge of the criteria, Oliver liked to 'fix' things on his own believing that 'you just can't have the teacher there the whole time'. Oliver valued how the learning and reflection from one assessment task fed into his developing skills and knowledge for the next task. He mentioned a previous assessment task requiring the students to produce an essay analysing their own presenting work, a videoed student performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Teacher feedback, in the form of results and summative comments on the acting task, was withheld until the class completed the analysis of their own work. Oliver found this useful and stated that 'this was well planned because of us sort of having to annotate our own performance really made us realise what we could work on and how we can work on it'. Oliver was readily able to identify and utilise direct and indirect teacher feedback. He incorporated general indirect teacher feedback, offered to the whole class during lessons, and applied this to the preparation of the current and next assessment tasks. Similarly, Victoria (RC) identified greater awareness of teacher feedback cues. She described how indirect teacher feedback occurred frequently within the learning experiences, specifically the games and exercises during drama lessons:

Victoria (RC): It's [feedback] like all over the place. Like in maths you get feedback after you get your exam back. But in drama it is like all the time. So, when we are just playing a game or something we get feedback after that if she thinks that there is something we can improve on.

Other students did not pick up on these different forms or cycles of feedback and required more direct, personalised, teacher feedback. For example, Ashlee (GC) wanted greater detail and personal assistance with identifying further steps for improvement from her drama teacher:

Ashlee (GC): She never really personally told me … If I asked it would be, like, just 're-read what is on the sheet'. I was like, 'Well! That is not really going into depth' … Oh I just wanted her to talk through what she has written more. Explain it more.

Despite personal preferences for different modes of teacher feedback, levels of detail, timing and degrees of awareness of forms of feedback, not all teacher feedback was described as useful by students. Ashlee's perspective was similar to that of other students, indicating that other relational and motivational factors shaped her experiences of teacher feedback. While she wanted greater detail and elaborated teacher feedback, she was reluctant to directly ask for or enter into a dialogic feedback process with her drama teacher. Some of her latter comments suggested her frustration and uncertainty as to the next process steps needed to reduce the gap between her goals and current performance:

Ashlee (GC): Well I have tried things but even when I did I only got a C+. I improved by a plus. I tried to slow down my talk and try and make everything I said louder and clearer and like made actions on stage more like flowish and like it is meant to kind of be. And I still got a C. So, I don't know. I think I am just bad at it … even when I did try to improve. I got the same mark so it is kind like 'what else do you want me to do?'

Ashlee requested more elaborated and detailed teacher feedback. However, there are suggestions of gaps in drama knowledge, misconceptions, difficulty in accessing or processing the feedback, personal levels of confidence and motivation possibly shaping Ashlee's experience of teacher feedback. These collectively acted as filters to teacher feedback and influenced her decisions to apply the feedback or pursue further dialogue. Further analysis of a range of student perspectives revealed that a number of factors appeared to mediate drama students' experiences of teacher feedback. Drama students' perspectives on the usefulness of teacher feedback generated during class time, rehearsals and in the production and evaluation of practical or written assessment tasks, varied. Through further meta-analysis of the data, patterns within these varying filters emerged. These were then grouped as different categories of feedback filters.

Emergent findings suggest that students apply contextual, social and individual learning filters to assess the usefulness or value of teacher feedback. In the fields of science or engineering, a filter is a device or apparatus that is porous in nature through which liquid, sound, light or gas may be passed through to separate out solid matter or remove impurities. A filter can be constructed of layers of other individual filters. Each

filter has a different purpose and is, therefore, constructed of different components creating a different density or porousness. The concept and structure of a filter can be applied to illustrate the emergent findings of this study. Students' feedback filters also appear to be arranged in layers, have different purposes and consist of various components. In this instance, teacher feedback in a written, oral or non-verbal form is the substance trying to pass through each layer without being caught in the various components making up each porous filter. Students applied a filtration process to assess the quality and usefulness of teacher feedback. Only some teacher feedback appeared to flow through to the inner learning domain where it was again cognitively and emotionally filtered by the student before they chose to act upon the feedback or decided to proceed to the next step and participate in a dialogic feedback process with the teacher or their peers. The next section of this article discusses components of one of these feedback filters, the social filter. In the highly relational drama classroom, the social filter emerged as a particularly complex and crucial filter for teacher feedback to flow through before reaching the status of 'useful' from the student's perspective.

The social filter

The social filter applied by drama students to teacher feedback consists of two components. One component relates to the development of an overall supportive class ambience, reinforced each lesson through the students' interactions with peers and teachers. The second social filter component, shaping experiences of teacher feedback, relates to the drama students' perspectives of power and shared artistry occurring within the drama classroom. The next section of this article draws on the students' comments collected in focus groups and interviews to illustrate the two components of the social filter. The requirement for a supportive classroom ambience will be outlined before moving onto the necessity of an open and creative learning environment with shared artistry and power.

A supportive ambience

Drama students at all three research case study sites described the importance of a strong sense of community, climate of trust, risk taking, playfulness and positive relationships with teacher and peers as vital to effective engagement with teacher feedback. Annie's (GC) description of the ideal drama class was typical of other students from all three case study sites, 'I love that it is like a no judgment zone … you can be a bit more out there and can speak out loud without getting in trouble'. Mathew (GC) confirmed the significance of the 'chilled out' ambience to his learning in drama:

Mathew (GC): The group of people in my drama class are more accepting compared to my core class. I don't know if it is kind of the way that the drama classroom works it is pretty much like freedom of speech and everyone is so chilled out and everything.

Matthew's and Annie's comments suggest how the 'no judgement zone' and 'chilled out' ambience of the drama classroom is formed through the implicit curriculum,

established norms of behaviour, embodied attitudes of teachers and students, motivation levels of class members and the dynamics of social interactions. These social interactions are shaped by norms of behaviour and ways of relating that are repeated and reinforced throughout the weeks of the school year. These norms included 'freedom of speech', 'acceptance' and 'speaking out loud without getting into trouble'. In contrast, Dominic (BC) identified a negative ambience in his year 11 drama class. He attributed this to missing interactive classroom norms: 'Why can't we play an actual drama game?' In an earlier focus group discussion, he described the atmosphere of his year 11 drama class: 'You know drama is about expressing yourself and your imagination and stuff and when we come into this room, we're just overwhelmed with mopiness'. Dominic believed that his perspective of the classroom milieu affected his relationship with the drama teacher, his willingness to seek, listen to or respond to teacher feedback. Joshua (BC) shared a similar perspective on the importance of rapport with his teacher and how this shaped his experiences of and receptiveness to teacher feedback:

Joshua (BC): If I had gotten more feedback, I don't know. I feel like I might have tried to work on it but I have this thing. Like, when teachers give me like attitude or something as if they don't like me it makes me not want to try in their class. I know that is a really bad thing because I need to pass school and stuff but I just … it is their presence, it is like I get a negative energy and I just don't like being around them anymore so it makes me all … I don't want to do your work kind of feeling.

Joshua's beliefs shaped both his relationship with his teacher and the amount or contact of teacher feedback offered or accepted. The relationship with the drama teacher and the dynamics within the class emerged as a significant social filter component shaping other students' receptiveness to teacher feedback. Ethan (BC) reflected on how he believed relationships with the drama teacher shaped other students' experiences of feedback:

Ethan (BC): Just in general a lot of them would probably see it [teacher feedback] negatively because a lot of them clash with the teacher in particular because they just don't get along with her. I think you have certain students … who are getting feedback but it is too light to be taken seriously and it gets to this stage where she is talking at you and not to you. It is not like she is saying stuff to you.

The nature of the feedback delivery, the content and his perspective of the relationships of his peers with the teacher shaped Ethan's experience of teacher feedback. Teacher feedback, from his perspective, can be 'too light', not challenging enough or not personal enough to be taken seriously. He also suggests that there is little dialogic feedback occurring due to the students' perceived rapport with their drama teacher. In contrast, Oliver (GC) described his year 10 drama class as very 'social' and that a 'bond' existed within the group which he described as a 'family'. Oliver's trust and respect for his drama teacher was evident, and he believed that 'she is good at' creating an 'uplifting' and positive classroom atmosphere. He expressed a similar positive view of his drama teacher in an earlier focus group discussion: 'she loves to see us get better at what we do … she loves teaching us I think'. In this open learning environment, he described how the students in the class found the teacher approachable and 'just go up and ask for feedback'.

Students participating in this study typically identified norms such as warm-up games and welcoming rituals at the beginning of lessons as important to creating a positive ambience. Many drama students believed that these interactive moments built a culture of trust and a sense of belonging in the classroom that shaped their experiences of teacher feedback. However, they also noted that teachers and students built relationships weekly, over a series of lessons, through risk taking and the skilled management of levels of vulnerability balanced with ongoing support. Opportunities for artistic collaboration and shared power in the drama classroom appeared to enrich students' responses to teacher feedback.

Shared artistry, agency and power

During the data collection phase, students often compared drama teachers to teachers in other subjects. They frequently noted that drama as a subject, and therefore, drama teachers offered a greater sense of freedom and opportunities for self-expression. They also noted that the drama teacher often joined in and demonstrated with students, sometimes, from within the fictional context. This was a unique point of contrast to other subjects; in drama, the teacher pretends *with* you. Several students identified the teacher's participation in dramatic action or performance as a way of democratising the classroom and an indicator that the drama teacher shared a more equal relationship with students through artistic collaboration. This positioning of the drama teacher acted as a catalyst to teacher feedback.

Several students participating in the study identified that during the rehearsal phase, the drama teacher often offered feedback from inside the dramatic action, taking on roles and acting with students. This appeared to add value to the feedback provided by the drama teacher. For example, James (GC) described how he was more likely to 'take feedback to heart' based on his relationship with his teacher and the willingness of the teacher to be vulnerable and take risks. He believed that when the teacher assumed roles and acted alongside him, his engagement with teacher feedback was enhanced. Matthew (GC) described how he valued feedback from the drama teacher that 'gets in and just pretty much acts it out like a student and how a student would do it'. This dramatic participation level of the teacher appeared to act as a catalyst, effectively enabling teacher feedback to pass through social filters at a faster rate to reach the point where it registered with, was taken seriously and was responded to by the student. The willingness of the teacher to be vulnerable and to 'do' alongside students generated trust, respect and deepened the student engagement with and responses to teacher feedback. Joshua (BC) shared a similar perspective on the importance of teacher modelling and vulnerability:

> Joshua (BC): When we are doing these acting tasks, we have to get out of our comfort zone … it would help a lot of kids out if the teacher said, 'look it is no big deal look I am prepared to get out of my comfort zone' … if the teacher was prepared to do something a little bit weird then more students would take a chance.

Students also described how opportunities of dialogic feedback were supported by a shared sense of power and artistry in the drama classroom. For example, Clare (GC)

identified 'prac' lessons in drama as valuable creative opportunities to create dramatic action and characters. She valued the feedback generated from multiple sources during the rehearsal and devising phases. She viewed teacher and peer feedback in this context as equal, useful and offering divergent ideas or opinions:

> Clare (GC): It is not just Miss Rowland's opinion that you are taking on, It's everyone's. So, Miss Rowland will say something like 'why don't you do this' and then Zoe will be like, 'I got a good idea why don't you say this and then you can do that', and I am like 'sure'. And someone is like, 'wait why don't you do this'. And I am like three ideas! Which one, which one?

Clare deemed teacher and peer feedback as opinions and felt no obligation to adopt these or correct her work. Instead, she preferred to move through a process of refining and editing this elaborated feedback, incorporating the teacher or student feedback she found most useful.

Teacher feedback was regarded by several students as more useful when it fostered greater student choice, self-expression or agency. In these instances, students described how valuable teacher feedback sparked more dialogue and questions, as students clarified or discovered the next process steps as they moved towards the completion of assessment tasks and achievement goals. Sarah (GC) noted that the active and expressive nature of drama was a point of comparison to other classes: 'I think drama is like so different compared to every other subject … we get to stand up and express ourselves more'. A similar focus on shared power, opportunity for agency and a preference for an open classroom ambience was evident in Jonathan's (GC) comment: 'In drama it is more like you are controlling your learning'. Despite the formal schooling structures, curriculum guidelines and assessment requirements, drama students expected a classroom ambience that supported choice and self-expression including the option rather than the requirement to adopt teacher feedback. Drama students expressed a desire for greater opportunities to engage with useful teacher feedback that promoted deeper creative thinking, dialogue or innovation.

Implications for drama educators

In summary, students rejected teacher feedback at the social filter layer if students believed that the interpersonal interactions with the drama teacher or other students could result in feelings of judgement, if there was a lack of trust of the teacher or peers or if there was little opportunity for co-artistry. The need for social protection predicated students' engagement with teacher feedback. If these social needs were met, the relational nature of drama, particularly when working towards the development of practical assessment tasks in the presenting or forming dimension, afforded rich dialogic feedback opportunities for the drama teacher and students. Drama teachers had the unique opportunity to interact with students and offer feedback through the elements of drama, including playing, working in role, experimenting with characterisation and exploring vocal expression, language or movement ideas. Findings from this study suggest that drama teachers culture the positive ambience of the drama classroom, and unique ways of learning in the drama, in order to optimise opportunities of dialogic feedback.

Caution in the guidance of interactions of the drama classroom has received attention in the extant drama education literature. For example, Dunn and Anderson (2013) note that as drama is both a form of pedagogy and body of discipline knowledge, the drama teacher needs to employ 'aesthetic and skilful management of the elements, structures and affordances of dramatic form' (299). Numerous authors, including Neelands (1984) and Fleming (2003), note the importance of establishing positive classroom relationships as key to student engagement with learning in drama. Others, such as Burgess and Gaudry (1985), concur that when students engage in dramatic learning experiences, they can feel greater vulnerability 'as the self is both the medium and the object of expression, there is really no refuge from the eyes and the ears of others' (73).

To optimise opportunities for dialogic feedback within the cycles and phases of assessment, drama teachers need to initially establish and maintain positive classroom dynamics. The importance of positive social dynamics is supported by influential drama educators who suggest that preparatory activities are essential to build a safe learning environment, create a respectful learning community or affectively re-sensitize participants prior to engagement in drama (Boal and Jackson 2002; Neelands and Nelson 2013; Wagner 1976). Dorothy Heathcote carefully considered the 'condition', including the real context and dynamics of each group, before inviting the participants to enter into a negotiated dramatic context and commence role-playing (Wagner 1976, 42). In the drama for social empowerment work developed by Augusto Boal (Boal and Jackson 2002), facilitators, actors and participants begin with a series of games to sensitize the group and build a democratic arena with agreed ways of collaborating. More recently, Neelands and Nelson (2013) adopted the Royal Shakespeare Company rehearsal room approach in their drama in education-based research conducted in Chelsea, Massachusetts, U.S.A. A total of four rehearsal room behaviours were required including co-operation, altruism, trust and empathy. These proved to be key to fostering a learning environment to support the artistic and intellectual achievement of the participants during a 9-week play-making project. Neelands and Nelson (2013) suggest that these behaviours, developed through an initial 3 weeks (15 classes) of 'community building work' (19) utilising drama games and improvisation, were needed in order to create the necessary preconditions for creativity, academic development and intellectual risk taking. In his earlier writing, Neelands (2009) explores the social demands of working as an ensemble in drama, noting

> The making of relationships in drama and in the professional ensemble often requires the taking of extraordinary risks for all involved … Young people must make themselves vulnerable and visible in order to participate. They must know that there is protection and mutual respect for difference from within the group, matching the personal and social challenges required for taking a part in the action. (16)

Interestingly, the students in this recent study also indicated that the teacher is an important part of the ensemble and how they too must show vulnerability to enhance the opportunities of dialogic feedback in the drama classroom. A safe and respectful group environment is frequently noted in drama education as key to effective learning in drama through 'the creation of community, where risk taking and playfulness are valued' (Dunn and Anderson 2013, 297). Aitken, Fraser and Price (2007) discovered the necessity for similar supportive social conditions in their research based in primary

classrooms, noting that 'concerns with embodiment, use of space, passion, emotion, empathy, and modelling that are core to relational pedagogy, have also long been central to teaching in drama' (2).

In the broader field of Arts education, Elliot Eisner identifies several dimensions necessary to the delivery of effective sociocultural pedagogy in Arts education. In *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Eisner (2002) identifies how the development of somatic knowledge and qualitative cognition for the Arts student is shaped by the overall school and classroom climate formed through the interaction of the explicit, implicit and null curriculum. Eisner (2002) uses the term 'ambience' to describe the overall social milieu of the classroom. According to Eisner, Arts educators should understand and utilise the affordances and constraints of a specific medium or style as a vehicle for social inquiry, play and exploration in the classroom. Eisner (2002) argues that the Arts educators should be aware of how they are forming and reforming relationships with each student daily through classroom norms, the language of instruction, questioning, teacher prompts and the nature of the physical environment (155–160).

Findings from this study confirm that the social aspects of learning in the Arts, specifically the ambience of the drama classroom, significantly shape learning experiences and students' perspectives of teacher feedback and its usefulness. Addressing the components of the social feedback filter could be further explained as a series of questions for drama students. If students can answer affirmatively or give positive responses to most of the questions outlined below, then teacher feedback is more likely to be experienced as useful by the drama student and promote further opportunities for dialogic feedback processes. These questions are outlined below.

A supportive ambience generated through the nature and quality of interactions/relationships

- Do I have a positive relationship with the teacher and my peers? How approachable is the teacher? How judgemental or accepting are my peers? Do I trust the teacher? Do I trust my peers?
- How private and comfortable is the drama classroom? Do I feel that I can take creative risks in this room?
- Are the majority of students in my class motivated and contributing?
- Can I take a risk and be vulnerable with this teacher and my peers? Does the teacher make himself or herself vulnerable? Does the teacher model active participation and 'get in' regularly?
- Do the norms of interaction contribute to build my sense of trust and safety? How playful are the dynamics in the room? Do we create dramatic action regularly? Do we laugh?

A creative learning environment generated through shared power, co-artistry and control

- How much control do I have in this class dynamic? How much opportunity for choice and self-expression do I have? Do I have a sense of creative freedom and agency?

- Do teachers and students generate or provide elaborated feedback together?
- Does the drama teacher move regularly around the room from group to group? Do they sit on the same level as the students? Do they give similar time and interaction to most students in the drama class?
- Does the teacher offer feedback through the dramatic form or action? Is there a sense of artistic collaboration?
- Can I challenge the teacher feedback I receive, seek more information and offer feedback back to my drama teacher?
- Do I have opportunity for dialogue with my teacher and peers about my creative work?

For students to take teacher 'feedback to heart' (James GC), they need to regard the teacher as a facilitator of safe classroom interaction and equally value their curiosity and 'function as an artist within the experience' (O'Neill 1995, 64). This finding links to previous advice for drama educators suggesting that a stance of openness and inquiry through questioning fosters stronger student engagement and subsequently learning in drama (Wagner 1976). In this recent study, the drama teacher appears to play a key role in the development of a classroom ambience and drama pedagogies conducive to learning and the promotion of dialogic feedback processes. Neelands (2009) agrees with the importance of what the drama teacher *does with* drama:

> Drama of course, by itself does nothing. It is only what teachers do with drama that makes the difference … In my experience 'difference' in drama is more usually at the level of what is in the hearts and minds of teachers using drama, rather than in technical differences of content and traditions. (12)

To create a classroom ambience, rich with dialogic feedback opportunities, students participating in this study shared their perspectives on the necessary 'hearts' and 'minds' of their drama teacher. They described a number of components they used to filter teacher feedback at the social level which often sped up the flow of teacher feedback to the point of possibly modifying student thinking, further dialogue or action. The flow of teacher feedback through the students' social filter is aided by the presence of habitual classroom welcoming rituals, games that foster interaction, risk taking and learning experiences that foster supportive and respectful interactions between all members of the class. The individual student's social feedback filter was further attuned to the distribution of power, communicated through the teacher's interactions in the learning space and the degree of artistic collaboration between teacher and students. Students were more open to teacher feedback if the nature of the feedback offered opportunity for freedom and self-expression, shared power and control and if teachers provided feedback from within and outside the dramatic action.

Conclusion

This article reports on emergent findings from a study exploring students' perspectives of teacher feedback in the secondary drama classroom. The intersection between the dialogic process of feedback with the highly social and relational pedagogies that are

central to the drama subject was explored. The emergent findings, presented in this article, indicate that timing or modes of teacher feedback are not the only factors mediating how students may rate the usefulness of teacher feedback. Instead, data analysis suggests that students' experiences of teacher feedback are shaped by a unique combination of filters. One of these filters consists of a number of components related to the social nature of the drama classroom and learning in drama. The social feedback filter is regularly applied in the drama classroom due to the higher levels of student vulnerability and the need for safety, trust and shared power. For students to engage with, value and act upon teacher feedback, they prefer a positive, safe, respectful, democratic and supportive classroom ambience. Findings from this study confirm previous writing and thinking in drama education, noting the importance of considering the relational and collaborative nature of drama pedagogies in order to enhance student learning and engagement. In this study, new connections are made with students' experiences of useful teacher feedback, suggesting that drama educators establish positive social, relational and artistic interactions in the secondary drama classroom with renewed attention.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Sharon Hogan is currently the Head of the Arts at James Nash State High School, in Gympie Queensland. She is currently a PhD candidate at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.

ORCID

Sharon Leanne Hogan http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0839-4457

References

Aitken, Viv, Deborah Fraser, and Graham Price. 2007. "Negotiating the Spaces: Relational Pedagogy and Power in Drama Teaching." *International Journal of Education & the Arts* 8 (14): 1.

Askew, Susan, and Caroline Lodge. 2000. "Gifts,Ping-Pong and Loops-Linking Feedback and Learning." In *Feedback for Learning*, edited by Susan Askew, 1–18. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Black, Paul, and Dylan Wiliam. 2009. "Developing the Theory of Formative Assessment." *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability (Formerly: Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education)* 21 (1): 5–31. doi:10.1007/s11092-008-9068-5.

Black, Paul, and Dylan Wiliam. 2010. "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment." *Phi Delta Kappan* 92 (1): 81–90. doi:10.1177/003172171009200119.

Boal, Augusto, and Adrian Jackson. 2002. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. New York: Routledge.

Burgess, Roma, and Pam Gaudry. 1985. *Time for Drama: A Handbook for Secondary Teachers*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Butler, Deborah, and Philip Winne. 1995. "Feedback and Self-Regulated Learning: A Theoretical Synthesis." *Review of Educational Research* 65 (3): 245–281. doi:10.3102/00346543065003245.

Carnell, Eileen. 2000. "Dialogue, Discussion and Feedback: Views of Secondary School Students on How Others Help Their Learning." In *Feedback for Learning*, edited by Susan Askew, 46–61. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Cowie, Bronwen. 2005. "Student Commentary on Classroom Assessment in Science: A Sociocultural Interpretation." *International Journal of Science Education* 27 (2): 199–214. doi:10.1080/0950069042000276721.

Dargusch, Joanne. 2014. "The Nature of Feedback in English: Teacher Practices." *English in Australia* 49 (3): 21–31.

Dixon, Helen, and Mavis Haigh. 2009. "Changing Mathematics Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment and Feedback." *Teacher Development* 13 (2): 173–186. doi:10.1080/13664530903044002.

Dunn, Julie, and Michael Anderson. 2013. "Drama and the Future: Activating New Possibilities." In *How Drama Activates Learning.*, edited by Michael Anderson and Julie Dunn, 293–306. London: Bloomsbury.

Eisner, Elliot W. 2002. *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. New York: Yale University Press.

Evans, Carol. 2013. "Making Sense of Assessment Feedback in Higher Education." *Review of Educational Research* 83 (1): 70–120. doi:10.3102/0034654312474350.

Evans, Carol, and Michael Waring. 2011. "Exploring Students' Perceptions of Feedback in Relation to Cognitive Styles and Culture." *Research Papers in Education* 26 (2): 171–190. doi:10.1080/02671522.2011.561976.

Fleming, Michael. 2003. *Starting Drama Teaching*. London: David Fulton.

Gamlem, Siv M., and Kari Smith. 2013. "Student Perceptions of Classroom Feedback." *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice* 20 (2): 150–169. doi:10.1080/0969594X.2012.749212.

Gan, Mark J. S., and John Hattie. 2014. "Prompting Secondary Students' Use of Criteria, Feedback Specificity and Feedback Levels during an Investigative Task." *Instructional Science* 42 (6): 861–878. doi:10.1007/s11251-014-9319-4.

Hargreaves, Eleanore. 2013. "Inquiring into Children's Experiences of Teacher Feedback: Reconceptualising Assessment for Learning." *Oxford Review of Education* 39 (2): 229–246. doi:10.1080/03054985.2013.787922.

Harks, Birgit, Katrin Rakoczy, John Hattie, Michael Besser, and Eckhard Klieme. 2014. "The Effects of Feedback on Achievement, Interest and Self-Evaluation: The Role of Feedback's Perceived Usefulness." *Educational Psychology* 34 (3): 269. doi:10.1080/01443410.2013.785384.

Hattie, John. 2009. *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. New York: Routledge.

Hattie, John, and Helen Timperley. 2007. "The Power of Feedback." *Review of Educational Research* 77 (1): 81–112. doi:10.3102/003465430298487.

Havnes, Anton, Kari Smith, Olga Dysthe, and Kristine Ludvigsen. 2012. "Formative Assessment and Feedback: Making Learning Visible." *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 38 (1): 21–27. doi:10.1016/j.stueduc.2012.04.001.

Kerr, Katie. 2017. "Exploring Student Perceptions of Verbal Feedback." *Research Papers in Education* 32 (4): 444–462. doi:10.1080/02671522.2017.1319589.

Kluger, Avraham N, and Angelo DeNisi. 1996. "The Effects of Feedback Interventions on Performance: A Historical Review, A Meta-Analysis, and A Preliminary Feedback Intervention Theory." *Psychological Bulletin* 119 (2): 254–284. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.119.2.254.

Kulik, James A., and Chen-Lin C Kulik. 1988. "Timing of Feedback and Verbal Learning." *Review of Educational Research* 58 (1): 79–97. doi:10.3102/00346543058001079.

Neelands, Jonathan. 1984. *Making Sense of Drama: A Guide to Classroom Practice*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Neelands, Jonothan. 2009. "Acting Together: Ensemble as a Democratic Process in Art and Life." *Research in Drama Education: the Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 14 (2): 173–189. doi:10.1080/13569780902868713.

Neelands, Jonothan, and Bethany Nelson. 2013. "Drama, Community and Achievement: Together I'm Someone." In *How Drama Activates Learning: Contemporary Research and Practice*, edited by Michael Anderson and Julie Dunn, 15–29. London: Bloomsbury.

Nicol, David J., and McFarlane-Dick Debra. 2006. "Fornative Assessment and Self-Regulated Learning: A Model of Seven Principles of Good Feedback Practice." *Studies in Higher Education* 31 (2): 199–218. doi:10.1080/03075070600572090.

O'Neill, Cecily. 1995. *Drama Worlds: A Framework for Process Drama*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Plank, Christine, Helen Dixon, and Gillian Ward. 2014. "Student Voices about the Role Feedback Plays in the Enhancement of Their Learning." *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)* 39 (9): 98–110.

Queensland Studies Authority. 2013. *Senior Drama Syllabus*. Brisbane, QLD.: The State of Queensland. https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior/snr_drama_2013_syll.pdf

Sadler, Royce. 1989. "Formative Assessment and the Design of Instructional Systems." *Instructional Science* 18: 144–199. doi:10.1007/BF00117714.

Shute, Valerie J. 2008. "Focus on Formative Feedback." *Review of Educational Research* 78 (1): 153–189. doi:10.3102/0034654307313795.

Stake, Robert E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Stake, Robert E. 2006. *Multiple Case Study Analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.

Wagner, Betty Jane. 1976. *Dorothy Heathcote: Drama as a Learning Medium*. Washington: National Education Association.

Wiliam, Dylan. 2011. *Embedded Formative Assessment*. London: Solution Tree Press.