

ADOPTING AUTOMATED ESSAY SCORING FEEDBACK IN MALAYSIA: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Sing Yii, NG, Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) 94300 Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia
ngsingyii@gmail.com, Tel: +60146908435

Chih How, BONG, Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) 94300 Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia
chbong@fit.unimas.my, Tel: +6082583796

Nung Kion, LEE, Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) 94300 Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia
nklee@fcs.unimas.my, Tel:+6082584152

Kian Sam, HONG, Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) 94300 Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia.
hksam1964@gmail.com, Tel: +6082583687

ABSTRACT

Assessing essays and providing feedback to learners is undoubtedly a daunting, time consuming task for language teachers especially for formative assessment. Formative assessment requires feedbacks that indicate learning gaps that inform ideas for further improvement. Although providing high quality feedback is important, teachers are often in dilemma to beat the deadline and hold accountable to huge class size despite the need for iterative and frequent practice. The laboriousness of essay marking often limits the occurrence of essay writing in classroom. A possible solution is to make use of an Automated Essay Scorer (AES) system that could score and generate feedback immediately. The purpose of this paper is to review on the importance of feedback and the feasibility of adopting an automated mechanism to help Malaysian English teachers to mark essays and provide feedbacks instantly. Features of good feedback, commercially available AES, reasons in favour of automated feedback based on the Malaysian context and some limitations of the system are examined. Our findings suggest that relevant and effective automated feedback mechanism can be possible through home-grown AES supplemented with properly phrased feedbacks. It can lead to self-regulated learning that empowers them for sustainable development. It is a laborious but attainable task with the cooperation and supports all parties. Hence, introducing Automated Essay Scoring Feedback (AESF), a home-grown AES is a feasible and highly anticipated tool for the Malaysian classroom.

Keywords: *formative assessment, automated essay marking, immediate essay feedback, self-regulated learning*

INTRODUCTION

Feedback is one of the important aspects especially for formative assessment which is fundamental for students to learn and improve their shortcomings that focuses on the gap between their performance and the intended outcomes (Chen, Cheng, Chen, & Cheng, 2008; Ellery, 2008; Wang, Shang, & Briody, 2012). Feedback as conceptualized by Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 81) is 'the information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer,

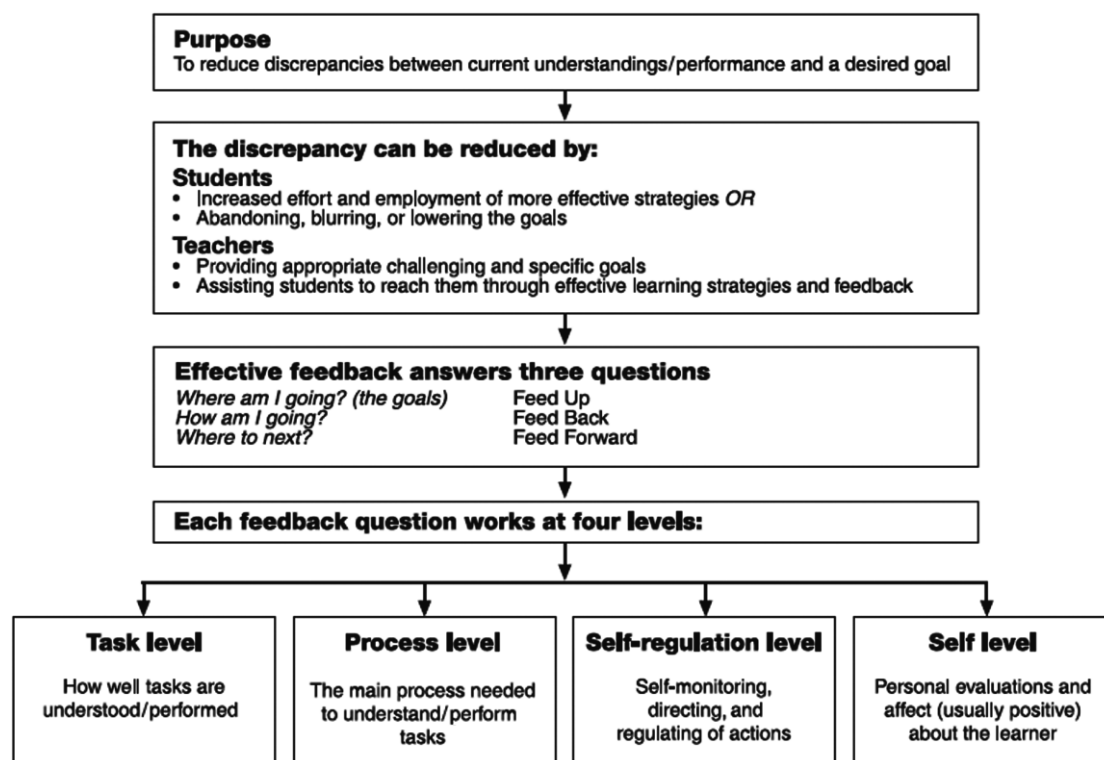
book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding'. Therefore, learners can expect a detailed listing of their strengths and weaknesses (Boud & Molloy, 2012) that allow the building of confidence in the confirmation of their strengths (Treglia, 2008) and guidelines for improvement in future tasks (Furneau, Paran, & Fairfax, 2007).

Providing feedback for learners regarding their essay productions requires thorough reading and understanding of the meaning communicated through error prone structures and mechanics especially for second language learners (Dikli, 2010). This is a time consuming process because teachers need to correct erroneous language without distorting meaning (Lewis, 2013; Wang et al., 2013), to make judgment on the quality of the writing and finally to phrase comment accordingly to impact learners positively (Lee, Cheung, Wong, & Lee, 2013).

Feedback serves as evidence that the teacher actually took the trouble to read and acknowledge students' progress and effort in completing the writing task (Weigle, 2012; Whitelock, Watt, Raw, & Moreale, 2003). It is the interaction between the teacher and student regarding the task in hand (Treglia, 2008). It should highlight achievement and identify gap between the actual performance and the intended learning outcomes (Chen et al., 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This can guide students for subsequent substantive revision (Boud & Molloy, 2012). This process can motivate learners to be responsive to the feedback to further improve their language production (Parker & Baughan, 2009; Warschauer & Grimes, 2008; Whitelock et al., 2003).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggested a model of feedback (See Figure. 1) aiming at reducing the discrepancy between the unknown to the known to enhance learning. In their study, it was highlighted that effective feedback answers to three questions; 'feed up', 'feed back' and 'feed forward', that depends on 4 levels namely task, process, self-regulation and self. The model was also used to address some common issue on timing, effect, optimal classroom use and also the role of assessment. Although their result claimed that feedback timeliness is not as important in some of the levels, but it is important for task feedback which is the core of knowledge acquisition. In addition, there is also little merit given to assessment feedback because there is often limited feedback given as 'teachers too often see assessment feedback as making statements about students, not about their teaching' (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 101), thus the effect of feedback is minimal.

Figure. 1: A model of feedback for enhance learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)



However, many scholars claimed that assessment diagnoses students' level of knowledge and at the same time identify their difficulties in conveying meanings (Boud & Molloy, 2012). Therefore, constructive feedback is the means of communicating the diagnosis that can be bad or good in an encouraging manner to assist reflection and learning (Quinton & Smallbone, 2010; Wang et al., 2013).

Many studies have listed various terms to characterise feedback as effective. These include constructive, appropriate, useful, accurate, individual/personal, delivered in context, detailed, facilitates feed forward, supportive,