Using the assessed ‘Feedback Viva’ to increase student engagement in academic writing

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PEAP Context

• Intensive EAP course for students holding conditional offers for UG, PG or PhD study at NTU
• Students study for between 6-30 weeks depending on proficiency
• High stakes – students must attain required grade on PEAP in order to progress to degree course

• Key aims of PEAP
  • to teach students the generic academic language and skills they will need on their various degree courses
  • to assess students’ linguistic readiness to begin English medium degree study
  • to introduce students to UK academic practice and the university environment
# Evolution of our Assessment Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Listening Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Reading Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Exam</td>
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<td>Writing Exam</td>
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</tbody>
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- Listening Exam: 2009, 15% 2011, 20% 2013
- Reading Exam: 2009, 15% 2011, 20% 2013
- Writing Exam: 2011, 20% 2013
A new approach to the coursework essay

**We wanted an approach which would**

- reflect our belief in assessment *for* learning as well as assessment *of* learning
- assess the writing process as well as the end product
- provide several opportunities for formative assessment
- motivate students through summative assessment at key points
- encourage student engagement at an early stage
- promote student reflection and build confidence
- mirror real academic practice
- lead to positive washback on teaching

28 May 2015
The coursework essay writing process

• Engaging with source material
• Drafting an essay plan
• Formative feedback on draft plan
• Final plan (assessed 15%)
• Writing first draft
• Peer review and formative teacher feedback on first draft
• First draft feedback viva (assessed 15%)
• Additional research to develop draft
• Second draft
• Formative use of TurnItIn
• Final draft submission (assessed 70%)
• Teacher feedback on final draft

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Precursors

**Carless (2002)**
- ‘mini-viva’ used to formatively assess group project on B.Ed. Course
- aimed to promote reflection by students and more focus on learning gains than end product

**Prowse et al (2007)**
- viva followed feedback on essay as part of Education module
- aimed to address problem of students not taking formative feedback seriously and used ‘grade fixation’ to motivate them

**Franks and Hanscomb (2012)**
- assessed ‘feedback viva’ (10% weighting) on Philosophy module
- dialogue between student and teacher on written feedback
- viva process contributes to other graduate attributes (e.g. accountability)
Students submit first draft – generates Turnitin report.

In-class peer feedback session

Tutor feedback – relates to assessment criteria for final draft.

Student reads and reflects on feedback and essay performance

In-class practice viva

Standardisation

Feedback Viva

Moderation

Reporting
Viva Procedure and Tools

Student brings:
- Annotated first draft
- Turnitin Report

Teacher asks / Student responds to scripted (and unscripted follow-up) questions

Teacher assesses responses against criteria

IN PRACTICE
Advantages of this assessment method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our perceptions</th>
<th>Student perceptions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourages quality feedback practices</td>
<td>Increased understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive washback</td>
<td>Improved draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earlier engagement</td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of viva as an assessment method</td>
<td>Opportunity to discuss their essay</td>
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Disadvantages

- Lack of ‘real’ dialogue.
- Role of the tutor / assessor
- More preparation time before viva and time after (to deal with errors)
Issues to address

- Does the coursework essay successfully teach / test the writing process?
- Should it be formatively or summatively assessed?
- How can we clarify the role of the tutor/assessor?
- Should we incorporating more ‘dialogue’?
- How could we address issues of memorisation and poor communication skills?
References

