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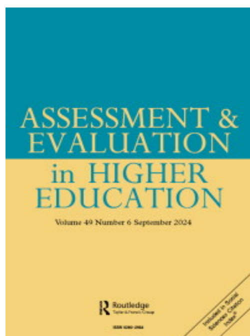

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Design review dialogues: a study of reviewer-student verbal interaction in a signature feedback method

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ABSTRACT

In place of unidirectional transmission of information, discourse on feedback advocates approaches that are more dialogic and promote student agency. The design review is a signature feedback method in architectural education. Although the review's format involves verbal interaction between students and reviewers regarding the students' design projects, there are differing views over the extent to which it aligns with a dialogic feedback ethos. This study analyses the talk between students and reviewers during design review sessions, using four established potentialities for student learning in dialogic feedback and applying interaction analysis to understand the conversational exchanges taking place. The findings reveal that contributions by reviewers dominated the sessions. However, they also posed questions, were willing to listen and employed talk strategies that build trust. Students responded to questions, but rarely took the initiative in their session. In considering implications for learning, several strategies to curate more student-centred dialogue are identified, especially around ways that elicit students' engagement and nurtures their active reflection, critical thinking and feedback seeking, to harness latent interactional opportunities. These could apply to the design review or similar feedback methods based on student presentations.

KEYWORDS

Feedback; dialogue; interaction analysis; design review

Introduction

In place of transmission-like unidirectional feedback methods, pedagogic discourse and research on feedback advocate approaches that engage students and teachers in dialogue and give students agency in the feedback process (for example, Nicol 2010; Boud and Molloy 2013; Ajjawi and Boud 2018; Pitt and Carless 2022). McConlogue (2020, 119) defines dialogic feedback as, 'individual, personalised, open to discussion and clarification, and supports students in planning their learning development'. However, notwithstanding such calls in research literature, Winstone, Pitt, and Nash (2021) found that the predominant view in teachers' attitudes toward feedback continues to reflect transmission-focused models.

The design review – also known as a crit or jury – is employed to provide both formative feedback during a design project and summative feedback at the end. Students present their drawings and models to a small panel of reviewers and an audience of their peers and describe the ideas underpinning them. The reviewers then ask questions and provide verbal commentary

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on the project, including suggestions for how it could be developed, which the student can respond to in the session.

In theory, the design review's format should align well with a dialogic feedback ethos. It provides opportunity for students and reviewers to discuss ideas and advice, clarify meanings and misunderstandings, pose questions, and for students to have an active role in the feedback process. For example, Carless et al. (2023) found that formative design reviews embodied general principles of dialogic feedback in a sustained interaction, including eliciting and processing feedback and co-construction of thinking.

However, the review has also faced significant critique. This includes surfacing student-teacher power asymmetry (Olweny 2020), privileging reviewers' contributions and supressing the student voice (Yorgancıoğlu, Tunalı, and Çetinel 2022), and an adversarial and intimidating environment (Smith 2011). Crucially, Flynn (2023) argues that, as opposed to reviewers' comments being a stimulus for discussion, the design review fosters a transmission of knowledge from reviewers to students in an instructivist model, with feedback an assessment of learning rather than for learning.

The design review is used as a feedback method in architectural education across the world (for example, Webster 2005; Salama 2015; Olweny 2020; Carless et al. 2023), as well as other art and design subjects (Orr and Shreeve 2018). Being a well-established and distinctive approach to feedback used broadly across the discipline and which aligns with disciplinary practices in a professional context, Carless et al. (2023) identify the design review as an example of signature feedback practice, which they describe as 'the characteristic ways feedback processes are enacted in specific disciplines' (1170). As such, the review plays a significant role in creative students' learning.

However, Carless et al. (2023) also caution that the efficacy of interactive feedback processes depends on a range of factors including the social practices of the discipline. Art and design programmes, including architecture, are based on socio-constructivist pedagogy (Orr and Shreeve 2018), in which learning occurs through discursive interaction, negotiation and collaboration (Palincsar 1998). Orr and Shreeve (2018, 82) identify dialogue as the 'glue' that holds the art and design learning environment together and enables students to practise the critical language of their discipline. If, however, design reviews reinforce the transmission of feedback through monologic delivery as opposed to actively engaging students in dialogue, as Flynn (2023) suggests, then there is a significant contradiction with socio-constructivist approaches to learning.

This study analyses talk between students and reviewers during design reviews. The objective is to evaluate whether that talk aligns with qualities of dialogic learning and socio-constructivist pedagogy, such as collaboration through active listening, contributing ideas and viewpoints, and building on such inputs in a mutually respectful manner (Teo 2019), and the extent to which design reviews promote dialogic feedback.

Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) developed a model of four different characteristics of dialogic feedback which they identify as being important to support students' learning in interactive contexts such as presentations with verbal feedback. They describe these as four potentialities for learning because they depict underlying capacities that can be utilised and developed in verbal interactions to promote learning and potential opportunities for students' development (Steen-Utheim and Wittek 2017). The review talk was categorised using these four potentialities for learning in dialogic feedback, then studied via interaction analysis. This aligns well with socio-constructivist pedagogic approaches, as interaction analysis is based on the premise that knowledge and understanding are situated in the interactions between members of a community of practice (Jordan and Henderson 1995).

The study contributes to the empirical literature by scrutinising these dialogic interactions, then reflecting on implications for student learning and ways to enhance practice in design reviews, especially around facilitating student engagement in the feedback process, active reflection, acting on feedback, and feedback seeking behaviours. These attributes are key components of student feedback literacy, described as 'the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed

to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies' (Carless and Boud 2018, 1316). This is a valuable capacity for students to develop, because through acquiring these skills and aptitudes in relation to feedback not only are they are better positioned to use it to judge their own work and enhance their learning, which is central to their success at university, but they also learn a core capability for lifelong learning beyond their university experience (Carless and Boud 2018; Winstone and Carless 2020).

Materials and methods

Context

The study was conducted in the undergraduate architecture programme at a post-92 UK university. The timing of the design reviews depends on the duration of each module, but they typically occur at three- or four-week intervals over a semester-long project. The cohort is divided into tutorial groups consisting of 10 to 15 students. Each tutorial group is reviewed by two critics, one an academic member of staff that teaches studio to the cohort and the other a guest reviewer from a local architectural practice. The students pin their drawings to a wall in the design studio and place physical models beside them. At the start of their review, each provides a short verbal description of their project and the ideas underpinning it. The reviewers then ask questions and make comments on the project and how it could be enhanced. The student stands beside their work with the reviewers facing them on the front row of an informal semi-circle of seats with the audience of student peers sitting behind.

Data collection

After the study was approved by the university's Research Ethics Committee (22/LSA/009), students in the second and third year were invited to participate. Seven volunteers were recruited (two second year and five third year), three of which had two of their reviews recorded. All participants, including academic staff and guest reviewers, completed a Consent Form and were given a Participant Information Sheet, advising them that involvement was voluntary, they could withdraw at any time, and that extracts from the sessions would be presented anonymously.

The ten formative review sessions were audio recorded. Video recording was considered but discounted as being more intrusive, whereas an objective was to keep the sessions as natural as possible. The average duration of the reviews was just over half an hour (mean 32 m 49s, shortest 24 m 8s, longest 58 m 48s), with the students' initial verbal introduction lasting between 4 m 25s and 8 m 55s (mean 6 m 53s). Each recording was transcribed full verbatim (McMullin 2023) in the format of a conversational analytic transcript, which emphasises the mutual relevance of participants' talk and highlights the sequential organisation of interaction such as new starts and interruptions (Jordan and Henderson 1995). This generated transcripts between 3,472 and 8,539 words (mean 5,140), and at this stage participants were anonymised. The students' initial verbal introduction wasn't included, this being a monologic element without conversation between the participants. The resulting data set was 51,397 words.

Data analysis

In a study of verbal feedback dialogue between a teacher and students on the students' presentations in an undergraduate international business communication programme, Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) present four distinct characteristics of dialogic feedback which they identify as being important to support students' learning in verbal interactions. Described as 'four potentialities for student learning in dialogic feedback' (27), these depict underlying capacities that can

be utilised and developed within such interactive contexts to promote learning and potential opportunities for students' development; they are: emotional and relational support, maintenance of the dialogue, students' opportunities to express themselves, and the others' contribution to individual growth (Steen-Utheim and Wittek 2017).

Whilst there are alternative frameworks for analysing feedback exchanges, such as Hughes, Smith, and Creese (2015) and Heron et al. (2023), Steen-Utheim and Wittek's (2017) was chosen for the coding framework used here as it was specifically developed through a study of verbal feedback on students' presentations, which therefore aligns very closely with the format of the design review, and it can identify ways to enhance student learning in such interactive contexts. In contrast, the Heron et al. (2023) study focuses on feedback talk in a classroom seminar format and Hughes, Smith and Creese's (2015) explores the content of feedback on written work.

The transcripts were coded deductively using the four potentialities. Each transcript was read in-depth to provide familiarity with the data. Next, coherent segments of interaction were identified, based on where the topic or focus of discussion changed or there were natural pauses or shifts in the review dialogue, which results in some segments being longer than others (Jordan and Henderson 1995). These were then marked with labels associating them with the relevant potentiality. Where segments embodied more than one potentiality or overlapped, they were assigned each applicable label. The coding process was verified through repeated re-reading of the data, until there was strong confidence it identified all pertinent segments within each transcript. Once coded, the data was collated in four new documents. These combined all the segments coded to each of the four potentialities for student learning from the ten transcripts whilst maintaining the identity of which session they originated from.

Once categorised, interaction analysis was used to understand the character and qualities of the dialogue within each interaction segment, a process that explores communication between people by examining the nature of those interactions and the ordering of talk (Jordan and Henderson 1995). Ajjawi and Boud (2017) identify the strength of interaction analysis for studying the dynamic nature of dialogue, and how it facilitates insight into qualities that promote and sustain verbal feedback. Each of the four combined data sets were searched inductively to identify routinising patterns and sequences, repeated instances of dialogic events, and distinctive occurrences (Jordan and Henderson 1995). During this process, notes were made summarising the dialogic exchanges taking place within each interaction segment, including where these cross-referenced with any of the other potentialities. This process continued through repeatedly analysing the data until there was strong confidence the dialogic qualities of each interaction segment were identified.

This two-stage analysis facilitates an understanding of how the reviews contribute to Steen-Utheim and Wittek's (2017) four potentialities for student learning, whilst the interaction analysis enables deeper comprehension of the dialogic exchanges themselves and where practice might be enhanced. The validity of findings was tested by reviewing them against both the data collated under the four potentialities and the original ten individual transcripts, to ensure that the process of collation hadn't fragmented the dialogue in a way that led to potential misinterpretation.

Limitations of the study

The study had a small sample size taken at one stage in the students' course of study, and as such it offers illustrative as opposed to generalisable outcomes (Pitt and Carless 2022). However, due to the in-depth nature of interaction analysis, it's usual for such research to be based on small sample sizes (Ajjawi and Boud 2017). Also, students that volunteer to participate may be more forthcoming, and therefore more likely to engage in review dialogue. Audio recording was chosen over video recording to keep the reviews as natural as possible. However, as some sessions occurred concurrently the researcher was unable to sit in on each of them and take consistent field notes, which would've enabled non-verbal interactions that supported the dialogic

exchanges to be recorded within the analysis. As the work of a single analyst, there was no means of cross-referencing the coding of the data with other coders. This may limit the robustness of the process and there remains potential for some bias or error within the categorisation and analysis. Efforts were made to mitigate this through repeated re-reading of the data until there was strong confidence all pertinent aspects were identified and by reviewing the findings against both the collated data and the original transcripts.

Results

The findings are presented under the headings of Steen-Utheim and Wittek's (2017) four potentialities for student learning in dialogic feedback. Transcript extracts illustrate salient interactions and provide representative examples of review talk from across the ten sessions. For clarity, these are presented as intelligent verbatim transcriptions of the dialogue; this is where the extracts have been edited to omit extraneous detail, such as repeated words, false starts and verbal fillers (like 'um' and 'err'), so they are more readable (McMullin 2023).

The others' contribution to individual growth

This describes the role of the reviewers within the dialogue, including the characteristics of their utterances and contributions toward the student's learning (Steen-Utheim and Wittek 2017), and was the principal element of talk in the sessions. Across the data set, contributions by reviewers accounted for almost three-quarters (71%) of the content by word count, significantly more than students expressing themselves (16%) and emotional and relational support (5%).

Three types of reviewers' contribution were identified. First was talking to the student, primarily making observations about their project and suggesting ideas, opportunities and alternative perspectives toward its development. In the following example, Reviewer 6 observes a lack of connection between the student's research and their concept and suggests they question how that might inform their project:

> Reviewer 6: So, the only things I'm picking up on as a story is that you have your research at the beginning but I didn't see how that feeds into what you're proposing in terms of your concept. Because at the moment you've taken the uses, the spa, the massage, the sauna and the ice bath, and they're the functions. I just wonder if there's some more questions you can ask about what you've picked up there that can feed in more to your proposal?

As this extract illustrates, reviewers would alternate observations on the student's work ('you have your research at the beginning' and 'they're the functions') with suggestions about how they might develop it. The former provides a rationale for the latter, meaning their suggestions don't appear ungrounded.

Similarly, in the following excerpt, Reviewer 1 suggests the student study the flow and movement between spaces, observing a particular feature of their current design ('it's just one long corridor'), then suggesting how that might be improved:

> Reviewer 1: It would be good to use specific studies of the flow of the different spaces and how you move through the spaces.
>
> Student 1: Yeah
>
> Reviewer 1: At the moment when you enter it's just one long corridor.
>
> Student 1: Yeah
>
> Reviewer 1: And I think it's trying to break that up a little bit, so you picture yourself literally arriving in the space.

The second type of contribution was asking students to elaborate on their project, often either as a precursor to highlighting an issue or to challenge the student's approach or rationale. In this extract, Reviewer 3 describes requirements for a shop then asks Student 2 how these operate within their design, and Student 2 elaborates on their thinking. Reviewer 3 then builds on that response with an observation ('you're building the service yard') and a suggestion:

> Reviewer 3: With the shop there comes things like servicing requirements, there's a staff room, bin store and all that kind of thing. How does that still operate with what you're proposing? Do you know where the shop things go?
>
> Student 2: I imagine it's behind here because this is all gated off.
>
> Reviewer 3: You're building the service yard?
>
> Student 2: Yes
>
> Reviewer 3: Well, if you're going to do that, you need to make sure that the facilities are still going to work.

The third type of others' contribution occurred when a student described an issue they had, and the reviewer(s) suggested a potential strategy to resolve it. In the following excerpt, Student 6 reflects on a challenge they encountered ('trying to balance adapting those spaces…'). After observing the possible cause of the issue (scaling), Reviewer 9 suggests a potential solution:

> Student 6: I feel like I was fighting amongst myself because I designed all these spaces and then I've got a ground and a first floor now, and it was trying to balance adapting those spaces and the vaults to now having another floor above it.
>
> Reviewer 9: I get that, and I think because you are scaling that to a size that it doesn't fit comfortably with is why it's standing out.
>
> Student 6: Yeah
>
> Reviewer 9: Maybe that needs to be designed slightly differently, so whether you have your colonnade, and these spaces were like walls because they work proportionally.

Maintenance of the dialogue

This details ways in which dialogue is sustained, directed and prolonged, such as who introduces themes, how turn-taking is managed within the dialogue, and the use of meta-questions (Steen-Utheim and Wittek 2017). Overall, communication was sustained throughout each review and dialogue never broke down. It was predominantly reviewers who initiated beginnings, introduced new themes, managed turn allocation, directed the path of discussion, and brought each session to a close. In the following example, Reviewer 1 introduces a new theme (accessibility) during their contribution:

> Reviewer 1: You sketch in a really lovely way but do that to a scale and then you'll know that it can work. I think accessibility is mentioned in the brief. So, it's making sure that it is accessible for somebody in a wheelchair. Thinking about that can help you determine your widths, and you will need a lift and where that would be best situated.

Reviewers posing questions, especially open ones, was one of the most effective means through which students became engaged in discussion. In the following example, Reviewer 7 asks Student 4 to describe a particular aspect of their work. Student 4 elaborates on their project and Reviewer 8 then poses a question and observation (about the auditorium's size), and makes

a further comment and suggestion ('it's something you need to think about'), and Student 4 replies:

Reviewer 7: You chose some very particular things. Do you want to say how you got to this point? I can see a diagram on the wall, just talk us through what you've got.

Student 4: The café, auditorium, reception spaces felt like the bottom floor could be this community area. You come in and it's a pit section-

Reviewer 8: How big do you see that auditorium being? Because I reckon that site could probably be taken by the entire auditorium in one go. I mean you get different sizes, don't get me wrong, but it's something you need to think about.

Student 4: The way I've made this it's abstract, but these spaces represent dividing it up into thirds. And one of these would be this pit that opens up near the bottom end.

In the extract above, Reviewer 8 cuts Student 4 off midsentence by interjecting, in this case with a question and observation (about the auditorium). Numerous instances of this occurred across the transcripts, a behaviour that frustrates students (Smith 2011) and one Jordan and Henderson (1995) describe as impairing productive interaction.

As Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) also found, students often made minimal utterances during reviewers' talk, such as 'mm-hm', 'yeah' and 'mm'. This conversational tool confirms a person is listening, understands, and encourages the speaker to continue (Linell 2001). Although minimal contributions in themselves, they are significant in sustaining dialogue:

Reviewer 4: I would say that the entrance circulation to your studio space, especially the one above Home Bargains,

Student 2: Mm-hm

Reviewer 4: is a little convoluted. Especially if you've got large format equipment and members of the public and invited members in the studio mixing.

Student 2: Uh-hu okay

Reviewer 4: One of the things that I think is missing in your presentation is mostly to do with not finding form exterior but finding space interior?

Student 2: Yeah

Reviewers also employed minimal utterances during students' talk, which had the effect of supporting their contributions to the dialogue. The duration of each session was managed by the reviewers. In some instances, they highlighted that the time allocated for the session was over, but often they asked the student a meta-question, such as whether they understood what had been discussed or were clear what they might do next, as the following extract illustrates:

Reviewer 5: I'm done. I'm just wondering if you feel done?

Student 6: I do.

Reviewer 5: And you know where you're going?

Student 6: Yeah

Reviewer 5: Right okay, excellent.

Emotional and relational support

This describes how the dialogue contributes to a supportive learning environment, such as showing empathy, valuing other's contributions and building trust between participants (Steen-Utheim and Wittek 2017). Both reviewers and students seemed willing to listen and showed

understanding. The reviewers' commentary was consistently developmental and not evidently confrontational, and all the reviews included some positive commentary. However, as noted above, this was a limited feature of the dialogue. In the following extract Reviewer 10 provides positive comments on the scope of Student 7's presentation and physical models:

> Reviewer 10: I think it's a really comprehensive presentation. And a really nice set of physical models that we've not seen much of over the course of the day. They're a really useful series of studies.

Two circumstances where reviewers often deployed supportive commentary were identified. The first was just before they made a more critical observation or suggestion. Illustrating this, in the following example Reviewer 3 praises Student 2 on their work and recognises the effort they had made, but then identifies a lack of technical knowledge and an issue with their design ('That space there isn't wide enough'):

> Reviewer 3: I think what you're trying to do with the sort of shadow gap is a really commendable thing. Because you've obviously looked at how buildings work and how you insert spaces between existing buildings, and you've figured out that shadow gaps work quite well.
>
> Student 2: Yeah
>
> Reviewer 3: But it's a lack of technical knowledge, and that's not much of a problem at this stage at all. But how are you going to physically build a wall there like that? That space isn't wide enough to get somebody down to build a brick wall.

As the above extract illustrates, positive comments made before a more critical contribution potentially softens the critique that follows. Murphy, Ivarsson, and Lymer (2012, 545) describe how reviewers utilise such 'contrastive sequences' to compare positive aspects of the work with problematic ones. Similarly, in the following example, Reviewer 1 provides a positive comment before making a more critical observation:

> Reviewer 1: I think you've got some lovely ideas coming along but it's just that scale and the flow is a little bit disconnected.

The second form of emotional and relational support was empathising with a student over a challenge they had encountered. In the following example, Student 6 describes an issue (the size of the site against the space needed) and Reviewer 9 empathises with their problem ('I see what's constraining you'), then suggests how they might resolve it:

> Student 6: I think it's the sizing of the site against the amount of space that I would need for a space like that to work.
>
> Reviewer 9: But maybe it's all about adjusting dimensions. I see what's constraining you, but could it be that you're sticking out in the water, and all this is sitting on the water on another colonnade? You could just have this creating a bit of space in front and suddenly you have the space you need.

The above extracts also illustrate how, like the dialogic feedback studied by Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017), reviewers made frequent use of personal pronouns (you, your, I) which personalises comments and engages students directly. And they demonstrate reviewers using both hedges ('maybe', 'sort of', 'a little') and personal-point-of-view disclaimers ('I think' and 'could it be') with their comments; these are linguistic tools and politeness strategies used to soften criticism and threats to face (Benwell and Stokoe 2002; Ajjawi and Boud 2017).

Students' opportunities to express themselves

This describes the different ways that the student's voice is heard within the dialogue, such as their contributions, reflections, and descriptions of their current understanding (Steen-Utheim

and Wittek 2017). The analysis identified three types of contribution students made to the review dialogue: primarily they described their coursework in more detail, and, to a lesser extent, reflected aloud or sought feedback.

In the following example, Reviewer 9 describes a potential issue (about scale), and in response Student 6 describes their project in more detail (regarding the site); Reviewer 9 then reiterates the observation and makes a suggestion:

> Reviewer 9: I'm struggling to know the scales to be honest because your colleague seemed like she fitted the whole project in a very small area.
>
> Student 6: To be fair though we've got a bigger site than this shows, and it does just wrap around that corner. So I think the proportion is about right. I've left that out because that's a car park for the apartments, so considering I'm designing for the community I thought I'd just leave that untouched.
>
> Reviewer 9: I think that's fine. But what we are raising is that it's difficult to know what scale we are looking at, and they are good as diagrams, but if you work on the right scale and adjust the dimensions and see what space you have, that would be good.

Illustrating the second type of students' contribution, reflecting aloud, in the following extract Reviewer 11 poses a series of questions. These prompt Student 7 to verbally reflect on their project ('I guess it is for the dance studios') and suggest potential opportunities for developing it:

> Reviewer 11: Are those intended as shared spaces for your dance studios as well? Changing rooms?
>
> Student 7: Yeah, dressing rooms. I guess it is for the dance studios.
>
> Reviewer 11: Or could you have some secondary changing rooms over there? It is quite a long way, isn't it?
>
> Student 7: Yeah, if I think about putting the restaurant on this side, I could maybe move this café here?
>
> Reviewer 11: Yep
>
> Student 7: A little bit more space here to put another studio.

Whilst reviewers' questions were the most common prompt for students to express themselves, some also reflected aloud on reviewers' suggestions. In the following excerpt, Student 3 reflects on the reviewer's earlier suggestion and verbalises ways they could apply it to their project ('maybe I should try and arrange spaces along the river'):

> Student 3: What about what you said, that the river could be the way you get from room to room? So maybe I should try and arrange spaces along the river rather than the river weaving to meet them? Like you could get in the river, go along, get out, get sauna, back in the river and go along to hot tubs or whatever?

There were also instances, although infrequent, of students seeking feedback from the reviewers. In this example, Student 5 describes a conundrum they faced and poses a question to the reviewers (whether they take a more linear orthogonal approach); Reviewer 8 acknowledges their issue and suggests a potential solution:

> Student 5: That's what I wanted to ask, because one of my favourite things from my previous projects, I like to create interesting shaped curvy- But I think I'm going to struggle to get across my design identity in this site. Do I just stray away completely from this curved idea and take a more linear orthogonal approach?
>
> Reviewer 8: I think you can blend the two. Because yes, the site is quite constrained and yes, it's in a grid. Why don't you inverse the idea and do the curves inside your building? That works both for you and your design ideas but also for the context.

Discussion and implications

Contributions by reviewers, especially talking to the students, dominated the sessions. There were multiple instances where the reviewers' commentary became a monologue, and the reviews

didn't promote dialogic feedback between the participants. Ajjawi and Boud (2017, 252) propose that 'a socio-constructivist perspective of feedback posits that feedback should be dialogic and help to develop students' ability to monitor, evaluate and regulate their learning'. Often, therefore, these reviews didn't align with a socio-constructivist approach through promoting feedback based around dialogue, nor utilise the interactional affordances of a face-to-face event. Reviewers adopting a monologic transmission of comments resulted in the instructivist approach described by Flynn (2023), above.

There are several opportunities to curate more student-centred dialogic feedback within the design review format, especially in ways that enhance both the immediate progression of students' projects and the broader development of their feedback literacy, such as active reflection, critical thinking, taking action, and feedback seeking.

In considering how creativity occurs through dialogue, Wegerif (2007, 97) discusses the concept of 'reflective dialogue', described as opening up a dialogic space between people in which creative thinking and reflection can emerge. Potential techniques to open that dialogic space and facilitate reflective dialogue include slowing down to enable room for others' contributions to arise, listening with respect and building on others' proposals and suggestions (Wegerif 2007).

Reviewers should adopt strategies that promote interaction, proactively open the dialogic space to students, and create opportunities for them to express themselves, to draw them into discussion and engage them beyond making minimal utterances. One such strategy is managing appropriate turn allocation and slowing the dialogue to create space for students to contribute. To proactively engage students in dialogue, rather than simply describe an observation or suggestion, reviewers could tactically draw students toward identifying where an issue or opportunity may lie for themselves, a process that would nurture their critical thinking and self-evaluation.

Having opportunity to ask questions is one of the principal benefits of the review format and can be a powerful strategy in sustaining dialogue. More than just open questions, Teo (2019, 174) advocates 'exploratory questions' that elicit students' views, ideas and suggestions, and encourage and sustain student talk, especially those which elicit their interpretive opinions rather than simple descriptive responses. For example, suggestive questions that queried the student over a reviewer's potential design idea proved a catalyst for students to reflect aloud and contribute their ideas. In reflecting out loud, students are actively engaging with feedback in the moment, musing on their interpretation of reviewers' comments, describing action they might take, or vocalising their critical thinking, thereby externalising key features of student feedback literacy (Carless and Boud 2018).

Winstone and Carless (2020) identify how students can encounter difficulty decoding and acting on feedback. Students vocalising how they might interpret reviewers' observations or apply their suggestions enables reviewers to clarify misunderstandings, avoid misinterpretation of their comments and reinforce key messages, but also to provide immediate feedback on those new ideas, which in turn could refine them yet further. Although students' capabilities and personalities might impact their tendency to adopt such behaviours, this active reflection through dialogue could be nurtured by reviewers posing questions that encourage students to think out loud. In response, reviewers must listen respectfully and then build on those ideas.

Boud and Molloy (2013) describe how students soliciting feedback cues providers on where to focus to best help them. There were few instances of students adopting such strategies during the reviews, as with introducing new themes and posing direct questions to reviewers. Where these practices did occur, however, they illustrate students adopting self-regulatory behaviour and having agency in the feedback process, core competencies in feedback literate students (Carless and Boud 2018). These opportunities are another significant strength of the format, yet seemingly underutilised by students. McConlogue (2020) cautions that students can find initiating feedback dialogue challenging, therefore scaffolding this activity through a supportive environment is necessary. To facilitate this, reviewers could ask students to identify specific aspects of their project they wish to discuss, or describe challenges they have

encountered, then refrain from filling the silence, thereby slowing the dialogue and encouraging students to reflect and put forward suggestions. An additional advantage to this approach is that discussion would focus on aspects of most significance to each student, which could enhance uptake and taking action – another feature of student feedback literacy (Carless and Boud 2018).

Only one review had a student peer participate as another contributing to the dialogue. Interestingly, this was conducted in a structured way, with a different peer invited to sit alongside the reviewers in each session. Spatial arrangement can affect participant interaction (Jordan and Henderson 1995), and reviewers sitting between the student presenting their work and the peer audience inhibits peers engaging in the dialogue. To overcome this, reviewers could challenge the conventional setup to deliberately include student peers beside them or relocate the reviews to a roundtable format (Flynn 2023).

Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) argue that for feedback to become dialogic there must be a shift in the power balance between student and teacher, without which feedback remains transmissive. The power relationship in design reviews is described by Price and Mahon (2023) as unlike any other in tertiary education, with guest reviewers often having higher perceived status than academic staff but both exerting significant authority over the students, resulting in an asymmetry geared against dialogue. Yet De Walsche (2023) suggests this issue relates more to the behaviour and competencies of the reviewers themselves rather than the format itself. Consequently, some form of training for reviewers on addressing the student-reviewer power asymmetry, facilitating more student-centred dialogue and refraining from verging into monologues would be of value. This is always a challenge for busy academics, but especially so for guest reviewers, who typically attend on a day away from their professional practice and therefore have limited time and opportunity to engage in such developmental activities.

Conclusions

This study finds that although the design review may superficially appear dialogic, the predominance of the reviewers' voice within the sessions and their propensity to talk at the student, especially in a transmissive monologue, meant that it often didn't align with a socio-constructivist approach to feedback as a dialogue between the participants.

If interactive feedback methods such as the design review are to promote dialogic feedback and become more student-centred, Wegerif's (2007) dialogic space needs to be opened up much more. Reviewers need to go beyond creating that space, or even inviting students into it – they need to proactively draw them into it through strategies such as asking them what they wish to discuss, using Teo's (2019) exploratory questions or suggestive questions, encouraging students to describe challenges they've encountered, and reflect aloud on ways they might apply reviewers' suggestions to their projects. At this point, reviewers must figuratively stand back and enable students to move to the centre of the dialogic space, listen with respect, and then build on each other's contributions and alternative suggestions.

Adopting such strategies could create more balance between the four different potentialities for student learning in dialogic feedback and harness latent interactional opportunities present in the design review format, thereby nurturing students' critical thinking skills and developing their feedback literacy. Further research could investigate the application of these strategies in design reviews, and the participants' views of their impact on learning, especially those of the students themselves.

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