Student Perceptions of a Teacher’s Written Comments

Ruth Yontz
Department of Finance
“Without an adequate assessment, neither teachers nor students can comprehend the progress the learners are making. . . . A teacher can even quite inadvertently undermine all else that might be done to create the best learning environments. . . .”

Ken Bain, _What the Best College Teachers Do_, p. 150.
Agenda

• Context of the research
• Research Questions
• Research Task
• Results
Context: Opportunities for Oral & Written Feedback

Write 1st draft of assignment

Classmates

Discuss feedback in groups

Hand back written comments

Discuss 2-3 drafts in class

2nd Draft

Ruth

Comments Research
Two Major Research Questions

• How useful are my written comments?

• What do students look for and value in my comments?
Research Task

To find out how effective my comments are on your written work, I’d like your feedback. Please look at my written comments on your first draft of the letter.

With a red marker, mark those comments that are extremely helpful.

With a blue marker, mark those comments that are helpful.
After marking the comments in red or blue, please answer the following:

How did you decide which comments were extremely helpful?

How did you decide which comments were helpful?
Helpfulness Reflects Course Emphasis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Clarity</td>
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<td>Word choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Format</td>
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<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Spelling</td>
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# Dimensions of Helpfulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Important to revision (performance)</td>
<td>• Not crucial to letter’s objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crucial to letter’s objectives (effectiveness)</td>
<td>• Specific to this particular assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applicable to other writing (applicability)</td>
<td>• Problems student can correct on own</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Problems student cannot correct on own (teacher’s value)</td>
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</table>
Students Look for Comments to Improve Performance

• “I understand what I need to do and how I need to do.”

• “Your comments are most useful to me because I exactly know where makes readers confused and how to revise it.”

• “After getting some comments, I thought that I couldn’t realize how I am on the wrong track. And then I tried next time to make it better.”
Students Look for Comments to Improve Effectiveness

• “I thought of what would make a more important impact on the message I was trying to give, and the comments related to the message were the most important to me.”

• “The comments in red are to make the letter more effective and clear. In other words, the letter becomes more effective to achieve its objectives after I make necessary corrections according to these comments.”
Students Look for Comments Applicable to Other Writing

Extremely Helpful

• “General comments that will enhance my writing skills in the future and are appropriate to all kinds of documents.”

Helpful

• “Specific comments on this letter”
• “The ones that make this specific letter better, but probably will not appear in other letters.”
Students Look for “Teacher’s Added Value” Comments

• “I think I cannot correct some mistakes on my own without additional help, those comments are extremely helpful.”

• “Because some comments are very specific and the textbook does not provide such information. They are very beneficial to me. I cannot understand them if I study Business Communication by myself.”
Why Comments Research is Useful

• Validates importance of our feedback for students
• Tells us how students interpret and use our comments
• Prompts students to consider the usefulness of our comments—a good pedagogical tool