Academic Language Feedback toolkit: Making progress with post-entry language development

Dr Anna Podorova

Critical Intersections: the 12th Biennial Conference of the Association for Academic Language and Learning, University of Wollongong, 25-27th November 2015
Today

Setting the scene: institutional dynamics and ALF toolkit framework

Academic Language Feedback (ALF) toolkit: components and application

Evaluation: teaching staff perceptions and attitudes
Academic Language and Literacy Development (ALLD): Faculty of Education, Monash University

- 2 faculty ALLD staff
- ALLD on 4 campuses, flexi and distance modes, off shore
- Student population - BEd (Hnrs), MEd, Master of Teaching, HDR (n=6,000)
- Monash library subject team (librarians and learning skills advisors), academic literacies only
- no English language development centre at Monash
- Pilot projects 2014 (PELA) and 2015 (ALF Toolkit)
## Cohort characteristics – example of hidden diversity in an UG unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit (Code)</th>
<th>Unit Mode</th>
<th>Fund Source</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Basis for English Entry Test</th>
<th>Student Language Indicator - English</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>Melbourne City, Australia</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>Os Singapore</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>Peninsula</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Domestic</td>
<td>25 IN UNITS 3 &amp; 4 VCE ENGLISH OR EQUIVALENT</td>
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<th>On Campus</th>
<th>183</th>
<th>230</th>
<th>166</th>
<th>579</th>
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<tr>
<td>EDF1304</td>
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<td>579</td>
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</table>
Physiological needs consist of basic principles such as food, air to sustain humans’ live. For example, students are not being able to learn effectively when they are hungry, cold, or sick. Once this need is satisfy, they can able to move up to the second level, and it emerge by level. In other words, Maslow in educational perspectives urges the educators to put emphasis on students needs. This theory informed about students should be nurtured and comes to the effective learning outcomes. In addition, Rogers has also extend Maslow theory by explaining, human tend to use most of their efforts to fulfill in their self-actualization (Julesborras, 2013). Julesborras (2013) added, human that become self-actualization need to develop a self-concept that usually reflection from others that are important in our life, more often is teacher or parents. Rogers (1961) cited in Julesborras (2013) trust in human can feel themselves capable when received positive feedback from their closest one. This positive regards are from the Maslow’s hierarchy level 3, love and warmth.
‘Language-rich’ feedback (feedforward)

**English language proficiency/literacy description**
- grammaratical elements
  - verb forms
  - tenses in regards to time markers
  - parts of speech, articles
  - plural/singular word forms
- sentence structure
  - word order
  - sentence length
  - fragmented phrases
  - parallel structures
- Other less common issue(s) (please record)

**Mechanics of referencing**
- Consistency of in-text referencing
  - Accuracy of the list of references

**Style and voice**
- Appropriate formal style and non-biased tone
- Using literature as evidence
- Distinction between writer’s voice and others’ ideas

**Organization and development of ideas in response to the task**
- Introduction establishes main themes and structure
- Clear transitions between ideas and sections
- Quality paragraphs and topic sentences
- Conclusion provides a sense of unity and logical ending to the assignment

**Academic language feedback guide**
- content

**Academic writing proficiency description**
ALF toolkit framework

1. Understanding ‘academic language’ ability

- students’ capacity to use English language and academic literacy skills to engage with the course content and satisfy assignment criteria
- focus on “functional communication, especially in the areas of advanced education, professional practice and employment” (Read, 2015, p.111)
- based on the description of language ability as “a capacity that enables language users to create and interpret discourse” (Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 33)

2. Discourses (Gee, 2015)

- Acquisition and learning processes
3. Embedded models of ALLD

- Provision of a “variety of [language development] strategies and opportunities within the curriculum” (Briguglio & Watson, 2014, p. 71)

- “assessed coursework will typically take precedence” (Murray, 2012, p.60) over other commitments

- multi-layered model of language development provision (MMLDP)
4. Third space

- ALLD staff and teaching staff
  - Working in the Third Space (WITTS) model (Briguglio, 2013; Briguglio & Watson, 2014)
  - Effective collaboration is subject to “open communication, flexibility and trust” (Frohman, 2012, p.57)
  - “common ground”, or shared Discourse creation - not only academics and ALL staff but students as active academic language users
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun/verb Agreement (he were [was], they is [are]?!)</th>
<th>Tenses (walk, walked, have walked, have been walking)</th>
<th>Modals (can, could, may might)</th>
<th>Word form (plural, noun or verb form, -ing form)</th>
<th>Word choice (idioms, slang, does not suit the sentence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure (incomplete, run on, word order)</td>
<td>Sentence Complexity (simple, rambling)</td>
<td>Conjunctions (and, but, yet, so, because, although)</td>
<td>Prepositions (in, at, on, by, from)</td>
<td>Articles (a, an, the)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**English Language Proficiency Description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on the topic</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Development of topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Strong focus on the topic</td>
<td>□ Appropriate and relevant</td>
<td>□ Clear and complex sentences used appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Satisfactory focus on the topic</td>
<td>□ Mostly relevant but could be further developed</td>
<td>□ Logical and sustained connections throughout essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Poor focus on the topic</td>
<td>□ Irrelevant material included</td>
<td>□ Sentences lack complexity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the feedback, the following actions are recommended:

| 1 | No English language support required | You have applied and demonstrated your knowledge of writing skills consistently, cohesively and effectively. |
| 2 | May require English language support | Speak with your Faculty Learning Advisor to find out what English language support is available this semester. |
| 3 | English language support strongly recommended | Early help can make your time at University much easier. Speak to your Faculty Learning Advisor to find out what English language support is available and how you can work together to increase your skills. |
EDF1303 (Peninsula) WRITING TASK FEEDBACK SHEET

English academic writing proficiency description. Your performance is marked as High (+), Medium (M), Low (L) or Not Demonstrated (ND) for each descriptor. Overall __________

Responsiveness to task
1. Addresses all aspects of the task with appropriate emphasis.
2. Demonstrates logical arguments.
3. Offers evidence for points.
4. Analysis, reflection and critical thinking are evident.
5. ________________

Accuracy and range of structures, vocabulary and mechanics
1. Writing draws on a range of simple and complex sentence structures accurately and comprehensively.
2. Uses tenses, other grammatical elements and word forms accurately and intelligibly.
3. Vocabulary is rich and used appropriately.
4. Spelling and mechanics allow ease of reading.
5. ________________

Discourse organisation and development
1. Introduction directs reader to the main points and emphaeses.
2. Essay progresses with clear signposting.
3. Conclusion is appropriate.
4. Key words and terms used to establish cohesion.
5. ________________

Voice
1. Tone is appropriate for the task and text type advocated.
2. Writer's own voice is clearly evident.
3. Clear distinction between writer's voice and the ideas and words of others.
4. Some recognised form of in-text referencing is used.
5. ________________

Based on the feedback above, the following actions are recommended:

1. No English language support required at this stage. Continue to develop your academic literacy skills.
   You have applied and demonstrated your current knowledge adequately. Please analyze your feedback to identify areas for improvement. To further develop your academic writing skills, use the EDF1303 Moodle site and library resources.

2. May require additional English language and academic writing skills development.
   Please analyze your feedback to identify areas for improvement. Click on the links in the "Academic Language Support" block and the "Library resources" block on the EDF1303 Moodle to find out what support is available this semester. Make use of on-line tutorials and face-to-face workshops in the faculty and in the library during the semester.

3. English language and academic writing support strongly recommended.
   Early help can make your time at a university much easier. You will need to complete additional language-related tasks to make progress in your course. Please contact an Academic Language and Literacy Development Advisor Dr Anna Podorova (anna.podorova@monash.edu) as soon as possible to find out how you can build on your skills.

4. Unable to mark
   - Limited sample
   - Unable to read writing
   Please contact an Academic Language and Literacy Development Advisor Dr Anna Podorova (anna.podorova@monash.edu) as soon as possible to discuss your options for attempting this task.
Academic language feedback guide

- English language proficiency description
- Academic writing proficiency description
- Content

2015 pilot feedback structure – interconnectedness of the language, academic literacies and content
English language proficiency/literacy description

Academic language feedback guide

Other less common issue(s) (please record)

Vocabulary
Punctuation
Spelling
Apostrophe

Grammatical elements

Verb forms
Tenses in regards to time markers
Parts of speech, articles
Plural/singular word forms

Sentence structure

Word order
Sentence length
Fragmented phrases
Parallel structures
Academic language feedback guide

English language proficiency/literacy description

Academic writing proficiency description

Content

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Academic Language Feedback toolkit for students

- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Apostrophe

English language proficiency/literacy description
- Grammatical elements
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Academic writing proficiency description

MONASH University
Dr Anna Podorova, Faculty of Education, March 2015
Academic Language Feedback toolkit for students

Revision of each element: ppts and interactive on-line tutorials

Learning more: links, F2F workshops (hands-on English language program – GET HELP, Conversational English programs, including conversational circles and writing peer-support – CEP, and appointments
Each academic literacy element is representative of a variety of academic skills such as finding and evaluating information, effective reading, etc. More info here http://www.adelaide.edu.au/rsd/framework/interactive/
ALF toolkit for staff

- Language-rich (language-focussed) feedback information sessions
- Resources and templates:
  - ALF guide
  - Referral flowchart
  - Comments bank
  - Plan of action – overview of available options to use in offering ‘feed-forward’ to students
Overview of the referral process with the use of the ALF guide elements (for staff use only, Sem 2 2015)

English language proficiency

Medium and low proficiency students - English Language Proficiency section in the 'Academic Language Resources' folder on Moodle and:

- Speakers of English as an additional language (EAL)
- Native speakers of English

Medium proficiency

GET HELP and CEP sessions

Individual referral to GET HELP coordinator/language advisor

Academic writing proficiency

All students - academic writing proficiency section in the 'Academic Language Resources' folder on Moodle and:

- Medium to high proficiency
- Medium proficiency
- Low proficiency

Library drop-ins on each campus

Library and faculty academic literacy workshops

Individual referral to a library learning skills advisor on each campus (via email)
## Comment bank template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English language proficiency/literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you feel the student is at risk of failing due to the English language proficiency issues, please refer them to the GET HELP coordinator,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/e-mail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comment template (1-2 elements):  
Usage of **{ALF element in bold}** at times interferes with your intended message. You need to check your writing after you have looked at the resource on **{ALF element in bold}** in the Academic Language Resources folder on Moodle (bottom section). Pay particular attention to.... (tutor identifies specific errors if possible).

### Comment template (3 and more elements):  
Usage of **{ALF elements in bold}** at times interferes with your intended message. You need to develop your English language skills further and look at the resource on **{ALF elements in bold}** in the Academic Language Resources folder on Moodle (bottom section) and the GET HELP session schedule and bookings in the same folder. Pay particular attention to.... (tutor identifies specific errors if possible).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic writing proficiency</th>
<th>Comment template:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students need to develop their academic literacy skills as part of their unit as well as by engaging with additional resources. If you feel the student would benefit from an individual appointment, please refer them to the learning skills advisor in the library on your campus: Campus/name/email.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment template:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please pay attention to <strong>ALF element in bold</strong> and look at the resource on <strong>ALF element in bold</strong> in the Academic Language Resources folder on Moodle (bottom section). Use the drop-in sessions and other classes offered in the library before you submit your next assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation surveys (n=20) and interviews

Staff perceptions and attitudes

- clear structure of the ALF guide
- helpful resources
- the ALF guide was used in several ways:
  - 14 respondents referred to the ALF guide in their workshops and tutorials when explaining assignment requirements and academic language expectations,
  - 12 consulted the ALF guide when marking assignments
  - 14 used the ALF guide when providing feedback to students
  - 18 respondents were prompted to reflect on their knowledge of academic language elements and available support options
What’s next?

ALF toolkit

- Increased interactivity - clickable solutions
- Quality resources
- Improved structure of each module to ensure consistency
- Closing the feed-forward loop
- Adoption in other disciplines (subject to institutional constraints)


Rayner, G., Papakonstantinou, R., Gleadow, R., & Abbot, K. (2014). Iterative writing programs may generate higher student confidence about their ability to write, but not necessarily improved writing ability. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 8*(2), 60-71.

