MSA-GREENWICH Conference 2017
Assessment Feedback closes the Constructive Alignment Loop

Dr. Heba Adel, Dr. Samia El-Sheikh, Dr. Zeinab Zaazou
Thursday, April 6, 2017

Introduction

Constructive Alignment
A common challenge in the teaching, learning and assessment process is to provide sufficient feedback to students during and after each learning activity, and after each assessment task to facilitate their understanding, show them respect and enhance their engagement and motivate them to develop their potential.

Introduction of the model by Re_translate (2013 and 2015) - adapted from Biggs and Tang, 2007

Facets of the Educational Coin

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Peer Assessment
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Intended learning outcomes

Teaching and learning activities

Assessment

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A common challenge in the teaching, learning and assessment process is to provide **sufficient feedback** to students **during and after each learning activity**, and **after each assessment task**, to facilitate their understanding, **show them respect enhance their engagement and motivate them to develop their potential**.

Alignment of ILOs together with TLAs and ATs
Source: Adapted from Biggs and Tang, 2007; Cited in Crawley, Malmqvist, Lucas and Brodeur, 2011
Constructive Alignment states that to maximize learning we should start any design process by outlining "WHAT IT IS THAT WE WANT THE STUDENTS TO LEARN", that is - the intended learning outcomes (ILO).

We should then align teaching and assessment to those outcomes.

This approach to design shifts the focus away from what teachers teach towards what students learn. Thus applying "Student centered Approach".
• The **main principle** is that there is a consistency between the three related components of curriculum design: *learning, teaching and assessment*.

• In Race’s model (Race, 2005) the learning outcomes are in the Centre of the learning process and assessment forms the evidence for achieving the learning outcomes.

• Feedback on assessment **enables both learner and the teacher to show how much the learner has accomplished of the learning outcomes**, thus *closing up the loop*.

https://classteaching.wordpress.com/2014/06/08/some-thoughts-on-feedback/
This case study concerns an undergraduate module that all students of the faculty of Management Sciences take in their first year of study at university:

- The students of the first year are diverse and vary greatly.
- With the cohort of students who took the module in semester Fall 2016, I devoted 30 minutes to explain the basics of referencing rules.

- However, when I corrected their assignment, I was faced with the fact that almost 40-50% of the students lost most of the grade of referencing.
• Moreover, few students came back to pick their corrected assignments as the majority are more interested in the overall course work grade than specific assignments.

• If feedback is ‘considered to be an endpoint instead of a beginning or a step forward’ learners improvement is sort of hindered (Norton, 2009).

• I added an in-class, formative assessment that includes 8 mini-cases of errors of referencing taken from actual student work and asked the new cohort of (Spring 2017) to correct these errors.

• Formative assessment enables students to see how well they are progressing and gives them feedback (Norton, 2009).
• **Timely feedback** is another major concern to all lecturers especially with the heavy work load that instructors face which makes timely feedback almost impossible.

• I put the **model answer on the data show and they did peer correction.** The first year students got excited to grade their peers. Thus, they became **highly engaged.**

• I also asked them to do **self-assessment of their summative assignment** in the same way that they corrected their peers.

• When I corrected their summative task, I was highly pleased that **most of the students did their referencing and citations correctly.**
If teaching and learning are considered as two faces for the same coin, then assessment and timely feedback are essential processes to keep this educational coin shiny.

I strongly believe in this metaphor especially when learning and teaching became my life style.
I agree with Wiliam (2011) in describing assessment as a crucial process towards effective education.

Assessment feedback provided to learners acts as a value-added tool that develops students' learning (Vohmann et al., 2015).
Assessment feedback is a two-way communication process, in which the teacher and students exchange shared understanding of valuable and timely information crucial to the improvement of the learning process (Vohmann et al., 2015).
We all need people who will give us feedback. That’s how we improve.

Bill Gates, Microsoft
Assessment for Learning and Feedback: Sharing my teaching practice

I usually use various formative assessment for learning activities in the form of group and pair tasks to ensure and promote my students’ learning/understanding.

For MKT201 and MGT320 students, I use a case study approach as in class activity about different Egyptian/global companies with questions (aligned with learning outcomes as suggested by Biggs (1996, 2003)) and ask learners to discuss it in groups then each group present their answers and share it with other groups to exchange different ideas/examples about strategies applied to our Egyptian context.

This encouraged my students to take the tutor’s position, enhance their communication/presentation skills, gain the required feedback from me and their peers (as suggested by Vohmann et al. (2015) assessment-feedback complete the learning loop), ensure their understanding, and sustain their focus, engagement and interaction.
Additionally, I ask **one question at the end of each session** and each student answer it in **one-minute card** then give them **feedback**.

As pointed out by Campbell and Norton (2007), I use **online formative/summative assessment and feedback** (e.g., online tests, feedback through moodle, online answers for exams/cases/problems uploaded to Moodle) to enhance the effectiveness/efficiency of the educational process.
• In our contemporary world, tutors became facilitators to the learning process, as such the role of assessment feedback is increasingly important as part of this facilitation to aid student learning (Ball et al., 2012).

• This made me reflect on my assessment process as a tutor and it hit me suddenly, that last semester I gave my students only one formative and one summative assessment for both courses (Bus 401 and Bus 412) which was minimal, plus I did not practice self nor peer assessments. I realized that my assessment load was not really appropriate for the two courses.

• This semester (Spring 2017), I thought deeply about developing my courses, my way of delivering lectures, my relation with my students, and last but not least my assessment feedback.
• All that entailed changing my whole assessment strategies for my courses.

• Students need information to help them understand the value of feedback and how to use it well (Entwistle, 2009).

• For example, the course I am teaching (Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management-Bus 412) is a course of a special nature, as it is depending a great deal on practical aspects, such as studying case studies, listening to guest speakers also visiting few small and medium size enterprises in Egypt, and writing a business plan of a business of their choice (existing business or a virtual one).

• Regarding the other course (Business and government relations-Bus 401) students are required conducting a field study to assess and investigate government’s relations with the private sector and non-profit sector and examining the different forms of public/private relations as well.
• As such, I decided to give students formative assignments for the two courses after each activity and ask them to write a brief report stating their opinions and point of views.

• As soon as I finished correcting their assignments, I assign one lecture for each course to conduct an assessment feedback by telling them where they went right or wrong and then listen to their comments.

• What really struck me was the remarkable development happened in their project assignments after the assessment feedback sessions.

• It reflected on their work immediately, even those who I considered average students, proved a progress.
There are a number of strategies that can be used to maximize student engagement with the assessment feedback, for example:

- Spiller (2009) believes that the feedback process is most effective when all partners are actively involved in the teaching, learning and assessment process.
- Breaking the assignment into stages and providing feedback for each stage, so that students can see the direct benefits of attending to feedback advice.
- Students can be asked to write down how they used feedback to develop their assignments (Spiller, 2009).

- A teacher can pend the grade until students give their opinions and reflect on feedback comments and indicate this in some way, which motivates them to read the feedback comments thoroughly and avoid a lot of deficiencies next time (Spiller, 2009).
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Arrangement of the coin with different facets of the educational coin with the focus on feedback.