Disruptions and Dialogues

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Disruptions and Dialogues: Supporting Collaborative Connoisseurship in Digital Environments

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Introduction

Over the last decade, higher education has grappled with the integration of digital environments into assessment and feedback processes. Tools such as blogs and wikis open up new ways for individuals to work with content and with each other. This technological development has coincided with a turn towards learner-centredness, with an increasing emphasis on the co-constructed nature of meaning-making and the value of peer feedback (Hounsell et al. 2008), peer review practices (Nicol, this volume), a greater emphasis on self-regulation (Gibbs and Simpson 2004) and an emerging appetite for student involvement in assessment design (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Carless 2007). As a result, educators have been prompted to reflect on the nature, purpose and appropriateness of educational practices and to consider shifting the balance from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for* learning, as advocated by Hounsell, Xu, and Tai (2007a, 2007b).

Multimodal assessments can be particularly disruptive to past assumptions about the nature of assessment, since to construct or advance an argument they require meaning to be created between multiple modes of communication (such as image, text and animation) and between creator and audience (Sorapure et al. 2005). The student must guide the reader to piece together different components in such a way that each not only complements,

but is dependent on, the others – a skill that lies outside traditional academic literacy (Archer 2010; Goodfellow and Lea 2007).

Tutors and students generally have a somewhat vague grasp of what represents academic quality within emerging multimodal practices or how to produce a multimodal product that conforms to assessment criteria and other requirements (for example, word count) as they are traditionally understood (Goodfellow and Lea 2005; Bayne and Ross 2013). This lack of clarity results in many students opting for more traditional assessment forms, rather than embracing new media as a novel way of forming and articulating arguments. When used, multimodalities are often treated in less risky ways – for instance, as platforms for the presentation of linear, essay-like work (Hemmi, Bayne, and Land 2009; Swan, Shen, and Hiltz 2006).

In the *Manifesto for Teaching Online*, Ross et al. (2011) claim that 'assessment is a creative crisis as much as it is a statement of knowledge'. It is a crisis not only for students, but also for educators, as multimodal work must be engaged with in a more interpretive and non-traditional way. This is not meant as a negative statement, but rather as an embracing of risk as a potential catalyst for opportunities and rewards (see McArthur, this volume). Indeed, it is a crisis that can lead to greater pedagogical creativity. While uncertainty and inexperience may provide a challenge, multimodal content creation can, and should, be used to question power relations, support risky ventures and redefine the boundaries of academic discourse. In this chapter, we argue that Dai Hounsell's elucidation of feedforward, cumulative assessment and developing connoisseurship provides a conceptual frame with which to move idealised principles of collaborative, dialogic and multimodal learning into practice. The following case study is an exploration of a course that uses a class-wide, wiki-based assignment to scaffold and support group learning and assessment. This chapter is dedicated to Dai, who not only had a key role in the conceptual framework, but also in the design and teaching of the course, as part of the University of Edinburgh's MSc in Digital Education.

A Balanced Approach

An oft-held tenet in the assessment literature is that students must come to share 'a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher' (Sadler 1989, 121). However, notions of quality are highly contextualised

and can be expressed in a myriad of forms (Bloxham and Boyd 2007; Sadler 2010). In multimodal assessment, creating shared understandings becomes particularly demanding and the perceived risks of failing may stifle creative forms of academic expression. A safe and supportive environment is required in which students can develop their skills and understandings of multimodal authorship. There is a need for students to help tutors to interpret their work in a way that fulfils the criteria and for tutors to clarify their understanding of quality in this new context. Transparent, open and dialogic experience with a wide range of works, including the application of assessment criteria, can lead to a more fundamental understanding of quality than simply reading an assignment brief or set of marking criteria (Hounsell, Xu, and Tai 2007b; Hounsell 2008).

Collaborative assessments, in which students co-generate and co-author work, offer particularly rich opportunities for developing shared understandings (Hounsell 2008). For one thing, the multidimensional nature of assessment as both process and product is made more explicit. The affordances for interaction made possible by the combination of interfaces, environments and actors in digital environments (Bloomfield, Latham, and Vurdubakis 2010) can be exploited to develop an understanding of the complex processes of collaboration and co-authoring. Social tools, such as wikis, facilitate documentation and dialogue around the workings that lead to the final, synthesised product (Williams, Brown, and Benson 2013). For example, each edit or revision can be traced and revisited by all members of the group. Visual conventions, such as writing in different colours, can be adopted to clarify who has done what so that other group members know whom to approach for further information or explanation. Comment functions allow a separation of process-related reflections from the written work. Access to product and process can be made available to peers and tutors to provide opportunities for peer feedback (McCune and Hounsell 2005; Sadler 2010) and vicarious learning (Mayes et al. 2002).

It is not just the feedback that a student receives from his/her peers that is valuable here, but rather, as Nicol argues earlier in this book, the creating of feedback for others. This affords the opportunity to practise appraisal and communication skills through providing commentary and feeds directly into the development of students' ability to judge the quality of their own product

and thus work towards improving that level of quality (Carless 2007). It is the development of this evaluative acumen that leads to what Hounsell et al. (2007) call 'connoisseurship'. While not unproblematic, digital tools can aid this process by providing access to, and the ability to comment on, other students' work, encouraging ongoing conversations and an iterative refinement of ideas.

Importantly, these experiences are most effective when there is the opportunity for development from one learning experience or assessment to the next so that feedback and guidance from tutors and peers can be directly applied to subsequent work. 'Feedforward' increases the value of feedback by creating that iterative development (or 'feedback loop') where feedback from one task feeds directly into the next task (Hounsell, Xu, and Tai 2007b). For us, with an emphasis on a learning-oriented approach (Carless 2007), feedforward provides an excellent way of achieving a balance between formative and summative assessment. It embraces dialogue, reflection and transparency, supporting the student's development and confidence within both their particular subject area and the assessment process. Equally, it encourages educators to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment processes are constructively aligned (Biggs 2003). By embracing a multimodal approach to feedforward (for example, by including audio, video or imagery), tutors can also model aspects of multimodal academic literacy to their students.

'Online Assessment' and the Class-Wide Wiki Assignment

We present here a detailed analysis of 'Online Assessment' – a course that is part of the MSc in Digital Education at the University that covers the subject fields of learning, assessment and digital environments. The design of this course draws from the educational theory outlined above, using the affordances of online environments to inform assessment practices that foster multimodal academic literacy and assist students to meet the challenges of multimodal collaborative work. We are extremely fortunate to have Dai Hounsell as one of the tutors on this course, and his influence can be seen in the approaches we have taken towards developing connoisseurship.

The course is delivered entirely online over the duration of twelve weeks and contains two formal assessment activities: a class wiki assignment and an individual critical review (weighted at 25 per cent and 75 per cent of the

overall grade respectively). Here we focus on the class wiki assignment, which was developed to create an opportunity for students to experience and reflect on the problematic nature of online collaborative assessment. As Hemmi, Bayne, and Land note:

> Wiki textuality has the potential to be radically different from more orthodox, non-digital modes of writing within formal higher education, in that the wiki space is one which is fundamentally unstable and collectively produced, with a tendency to problematize conventional notions of authorship and ownership. (2009, 27)

By introducing challenges of 'unorthodox' collaboration, the wiki assignment was designed to help students think through some practicalities of applying the principles concerning assessment and feedback put forward in the literature on digital environments. The assignment, completed over weeks' four to nine, was supported by earlier activities that were also situated in the wiki environment. These activities were designed to support students' development of technological skills and promote reflection on social and group writing practices. For instance, during an orientation week, students edited text and added images and links to the wiki. In week one, they used the comment facility, while in weeks two to three they made their first attempt at collaboratively co-authoring a summary and a critique of an academic paper. These early activities not only provided scaffolds for the technological and social practices around the wiki, but also allowed tutors an opportunity to diagnose the particular support needs of the cohort.

For the assignment itself, students were asked to collaboratively author a response to one of five challenging topic statements, known as 'The Big 5'. Short and seemingly simple, these statements asked students to draw on course themes in overlapping, complex and nuanced ways. For example, a successful response to the statement 'collaboration is just bringing together multiple individual efforts' required a balanced and critical examination of a range of literature, as well as of the statement itself. The nineteen students allocated themselves into groups of up to four members based on the topic statement that most interested them. They also signed up to act as a 'critical friend' (a nominated peer reviewer) for one or two other groups and were encouraged to read and think across all five topics. Help was available

throughout the course from tutors, via email, a discussion forum and Skype.

Halfway through the assignment, each group was asked to nominate three elements of their work that they would like feedforward on. Tutors provided this feedforward in the form of a seven to ten minute audio discussion for each group, along with generalised written commentary on the wiki as a whole. These were shared on the class forum and accessible to all students. As well as modelling the critical friend role, this process was intended to provide supportive and critical guidance in preparation for final submission.

As Forte and Bruckman (2007) argue, there is an underlying tension between individual assessment and collaborative work. By giving each student a class-wide grade, rather than a group or individual grade, we hoped that they would not only experience a collaborative assessment, but would also engage with work beyond their group's topic. Further, by engaging in a critical fashion with the work of their peers, we hoped that students would develop a sense of connoisseurship around what counts as quality work (Hounsell, Xu, and Tai 2007b) and that this would, in turn, encourage students to feel more confident in creating and engaging with other multimodal assignments in the future.

Methodology

We have taken a constructionist stance for this research, as we strongly believe that meaning is constructed in, and through, our interactions with participants within a social context (Cousins 2009). We gathered and analysed a range of qualitative data on the thoughts and experiences of the nineteen students in the class, all of whom participated in the study. The main form of data generation was email interviews at the middle and end of the wiki assessment activity. The asynchronous nature of the interview enabled ongoing reflective discussions between researchers and individual participants exploring complex issues (Berger and Paul 2011). Our interviews aimed 'to provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that might occur to all interview participants' (Holstein and Gubrium 2004, 152). Alongside email interviews, data generation included the discussion forum, where in-depth, class-wide discussion of theoretical and practical issues took place, and the wiki, where the argument itself was formulated.

While acknowledging the subjectivity involved in evaluating our own course, our position as tutor–researchers enabled more open and free-flowing discussions with participants throughout the data generation and analysis stages. Thus, although we started our thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998) by generating conceptualisations of the students' experience from the literature and our own experiences of coordinating the course over several years, the coding and memo-ing process developed through our ongoing interactions with the participants. The concepts that emerged from that process of testing and re-testing formed the basis for understanding the nature of engagement with the assignment and the factors behind this engagement.

Discussion

Dialogues and Disruptions

In our exploration of the themes that arose from our research, we found two interweaving and overarching concepts – 'dialogues' and 'disruptions'. Disruptions reflect the various types of destabilisation that occurred due to the combination of digital environments and tools, physical distance, requirements for collaborative and multimodal authorship and other aspects of the assessment structure. While often related to confusions and uncertainties, disruptions are not negative aspects of the teaching and learning process. Rather, they are indicative of students' engagement with troublesome and transformative threshold concepts (Meyer and Land 2003) as they negotiate new and previously inaccessible ways of understanding. Disruptions are as essential to course design as their counterpart, dialogues.

Dialogues refer to the rebalancing, if not stabilising, activities aimed at bridging the gap between confusions and uncertainties, on the one hand, and a sense of clarity and shared purpose, on the other. They are ways of working on the threshold, the processes through which students and tutors help to establish and shift shared understandings. Dialogues, then, are attempts to negotiate disruptions. These two broad themes have a push/pull quality to them, each bringing about the other, both culminating in a new moment of disruption or a new opportunity for dialogue. The interplay between dialogues and disruptions brings students through a network of threshold

concepts related to ways of thinking, practising and developing their evaluative acumen (connoisseurship).

Supporting Success

For us, as tutors, there were three main components to ensuring a successful outcome for the group-authored class wiki assignment as both an assessment *for* and *of* learning. These were: the development of individual connoisseurship; the development of group and class-wide connoisseurship (with an emphasis on successful peer engagement through the role of the 'critical friend'); and, finally, a product of appropriate quality that demonstrated critical engagement with the topic. As expected, the most problematic component for students was the collaborative work that underlies communal connoisseurship. As noted by other researchers, this type of work can be very challenging for students, as it is at odds with their prior assessment experiences (McCune and Rhind, this volume; Swan, Shen, and Hiltz 2006). Students were aware, however, that this discomfort was part of the intention behind the assignment, which aimed to provide first-hand experience and insight into the tensions of online assessment.

Supporting students through this challenging, complex and, admittedly, idealistic design demanded more than post-submission feedback. It required multi-level, iterative and targeted scaffolding, not just at the formal feedforward point, but also throughout the whole course as informal, just-in-time tutor support (for example, through forum posts, wiki comments, emails and Skype chats). In our experience, the needs of each cohort are different and cannot be fully predicted, and guidance is best tailored to groups and individuals as we get to know them during the course. We took an unfolding, dialogic approach to clarifying the task and guiding students toward our expectations in respect to the assessment criteria. For some students, this approach worked well: 'The design of the course has clearly been very well thought out, with each week leading nicely into the next'. However, getting the balance right for each individual student will always be a challenge. One student, in particular, 'would have liked clearer parameters regarding approximate goal length of wiki project early on' and felt that 'as a wider class we had to initially "beg" this information over the forums'.

A Cumulative Approach

Importantly, supporting the three components of success described above involved designing earlier learning activities that laid the groundwork for the skills and practices that would be needed. For instance, an initial task using the wiki to reflect on prior experiences of assessment was intended to help students reconcile their preconceptions with the demands of an unfamiliar format. A later task involved critiquing various assessment frameworks and principles through a low-risk practice attempt at small group co-authoring. This was intended to make the upcoming disruptions more manageable and, thus, lower the perceived risk. Students were also encouraged to take their first step towards critical friendship at this juncture, as a way of gaining insight into their own work.

For some, this initial low-risk group work effectively enabled positive group experiences later, although as one student noted: 'Group cohesion – this was great from day one, stayed great and ended great. Why? Possibly because the formative group work activity around frameworks eased us into it . . . Possibly though, we're a natural gelling group'. For others, it highlighted difficulties they might face later on with higher-risk group work. One student, in particular, questioned the relationship between individual work, such as writing content, and contributions to group processes:

> Overall, I would rate myself as a fail on this task. Although I did make some suggestions and offered some ideas about how to develop the writing, my contribution in terms of content was negligible. However, I did, I think, raise some useful meta discussion about the group process . . .

It is worth noting that the other group members disagreed vociferously with this student's self-evaluation, arguing against being overly critical and instead unpicking the processes needed to ensure successful group work in future. As Vassell, Amin, and Winch (2008) have found, wiki contributions, such as edits, number of words and comments, may not be the best indicators of engagement across the group, as members may have different roles, foci and forms of engagement with the task. Within-group discussions, such as the one described here, prepared the way for the assignment phase, opening up reflections on the collaborative process and future ways of working. Students

began to brainstorm solutions in relation to role allocation, choice of technologies, preferred working styles and so on.

Negotiating Risk

One issue with online distance learning is that certain practical issues, such as technical problems and conflicting schedules and priorities, can undermine the fast and efficient flow of dialogue (Felder and Brent 2001). In this case, students noted that a reliance on asynchronous discussion could make achieving consensus a slow and painstaking process. Time pressures were exacerbated by a tendency to overestimate the scope of the task. Although the assignment was generally considered to be low-risk (being worth only 25 per cent of the overall grade for the course), a disproportionate amount of energy was spent on it relative to other course tasks. This may be an inherent issue with group work, where achieving consensus can be time-consuming (Karasavvidis 2010). While acknowledging these difficulties, students generally considered group processes to be worthwhile. As one student argued:

> On this particular occasion . . . I think the class-wide mark is a brilliant idea. It promotes the exact skills it is meant to foster without the disadvantages of group-marks . . . I would definitely prefer individual marks if the assessment was more 'high-stakes'.

As has been found in previous research into online group work (for example, see Rovai 2001; Kreijns, Kirschner, and Jochems 2003; Vratulis and Dobson 2008), before effective co-authoring could take place, appropriate group management strategies and social conventions had to be developed. In the case of one group, a particular technological affordance (Skype voice conferencing) helped them to negotiate strategies for group cohesion:

> At first I thought that a group assessment would be a little daunting as the experience in the activity groupwork was not collaborative or cooperative, however the Group Assessment went very well especially after we all met using VOIP (Skype), this helped to break the ice somewhat and is vital for good group gelling. We all had a turn as group leader for a week and felt that we could talk to each other regarding anything. [Virtual] Group hugs were also a good part of this and boosting each other when things got on top of us.

The challenges of 'project management' seemed more clearly felt in groups where individuals did not have that sense of shared purpose essential to academic alignment (Davies 2009). Some students perceived a loss of autonomy, which demotivated and obstructed their engagement in the very practices that would have led to connoisseurship: 'I have to say however, that I have lost a lot of my zest for this Big 5 assignment, knowing that only the cohort's overall efforts will be rewarded and not the group or each individual'. This demotivation had serious implications, as this particular group struggled to motivate the student and thus tackle the assignment. There is a balancing act, then, between assessment as a driver and motivator (as noted by Boud 1995; Knight 2002) and ensuring that an assessment is perceived neither as too high, nor, indeed, as too low, a risk.

In the same way, another student felt that the needs of the group sometimes subsumed those of the individual. She eloquently described her feelings regarding this 'disheartening' tension between the individual versus the group needs:

> . . . when you feel that you cannot be 'you' but have to become 'us' –accept things that you don't agree with, adopt a writing style and structure that says nothing about who you are and how you feel and think. If the rapport between members of a group is good, then perhaps one would not feel all this.

Vratulis and Dobson (2008) note that group members do not always have equal rights. They describe a case where the struggle to express individual positions within wiki co-authorship highlighted an unrealised group hierarchy. The student expressing the inherent tensions above seemed to have come to a similar conclusion – that individual voices can be suppressed within the negotiation of consensus.

Interestingly, when another group negotiated a successful collaborative work process, the choice of process created its own form of disruption. The group moved from the communal space of the wiki to the space of Google Docs (an online collaborative writing tool). Their rationale was that comments could be added without disrupting the document's flow, there was a synchronous chat feature and it felt 'more intuitive', as it involved a single document (whereas wikis are dynamically structured by linking multiple

pages together). Although this group was able to develop conventions of its own, the decision to use an alternative environment led to most of the working process not being accessed by tutors or the other groups. This reduced the amount of feedback they received during the development of their work and also made it more difficult to apply successful aspects of other groups' working processes to their own. Indeed, 'outsiders' to the group could only leave anonymous comments, which undermined the opportunity for extended dialogue with critical friends. The affordances of Google Docs changed the possibilities for the kinds of writing, group work and even learning that could take place (Norman 1988).

Collaborative Connoisseurship

In keeping with the findings of Stacey (2007) and Naismith, Lee, and Pilkington (2011), the most prominent disruption of the learning process was unlearning certain ways of working individually. Individual authorship and ownership were destabilised by the requirement for negotiating direction, co-synthesis of knowledge and the expression of that knowledge. Stepping back from an individual perspective on the work required a challenging shift in appraisal. One student described the struggle to move from a position where 'I'm seeing the class-wide feedback and thinking (in a paranoid fashion) "which bits apply to me and which bits don't"' to one that positions group synthesis as the priority. Another student spoke of a past strategy, reminiscent of the diligent isolate of Pieterse and Thompson (2010), where an individual works independently of the group dynamic:

> Normally when I 'was forced' to work in a group/pairs (those rare times), I used to do all the work, cause *I'm very shy/not proud to say*, I thought that the other/s wouldn't produce work which is up to 'my' standards.

The students, however, recognised that individual approaches could lead to a less integrated and less coherent outcome. As one student noted: 'The danger of group writing could be that we end up with an ugly duckling instead of a swan due to different types of writing styles, and being intimidated by editing others' work'.

Wheeler, Yeomans, and Wheeler (2008) recommend that students be prepared to accept that once an idea has been published on the wiki, it no

longer belongs to the originator, but to the group. The tutor's role, then, is to encourage the editing, amending and challenging of group ideas, while ensuring that this engagement is 'not a breach of trust but an act of responsibility and mutuality' (Hemmi, Bayne, and Land 2009, 28). In order to do this, students had to move away from individual notions of self-regulation and toward interdependence (as found in previous research, such as Karasavvidis 2010). One student was 'flummoxed' by:

> . . . not making sure I had a clear idea of what was expected of me as an individual and as a group member. This resulted in me waiting too long and not prioritising the activities I should have done in tandem with other members, and therefore left me way behind, consequently being unable to contribute much of interest.

A form of 'group connoisseurship' was required. In other words, individual understandings of quality needed to align with a co-constructed group understanding of what constituted 'good' work in relation to their shared task (Naismith, Lee, and Pilkington 2011; HEA 2012). This group connoisseurship was eventually achieved for each group and the class as a whole through the often challenging and destabilising dialogic/disruptive dynamics that were necessary processes in criticising and editing the work of others.

Interestingly, while the process of editing the work of others is an important aspect of asynchronous collaboration (Wheeler, Yeomans, and Wheeler 2008), there is still limited understanding within the assessment literature regarding how this is approached by groups and how remote collaborators develop a group tone. Directly editing the work of others was the most difficult process for the students and was generally done only when external pressures built up to the extent that immediate action was necessary:

> We were 'editing' initially by Skyping and discussing/debating what we'd found. This was great – very scholarly and collegiate, but what we weren't doing was touching each others' writing directly . . . By the end we were really doing this in anger and I think we got a common toned and joined up feeling, but this came from literally the last 5 days or so.

In line with the findings of Hemmi, Bayne, and Land (2009), the forms of criticism that did take place between group members were often tentative,

with a cautious tone, soft language and social niceties utilised to defuse discomfort and risk. Technology-based conventions also needed to be negotiated and the affordances of the tools employed in this course offered ways of performing this gentle approach, as demonstrated here – 'I have used all of the sections highlighted in yellow but didn't want to delete them just in case you weren't happy with my changes ;)'.

Collaborative Critiques

One way of moving a group forward was by giving a constructive critique of another group's work. This raised the level at which students were critically aware of their own group's work and offered new ways of articulating and dealing with critiques within their own group. The critical friends, then, were tasked with working towards multi-level alignment, both within their own group and between groups. However, until the formal tutor feedforward, students were tentative in performing the critical friend role – for example, 'I'm just calling by to say hi as one of your critical friends. Happy to help any way you want feedback/discussion but also don't want to be distracting you too soon in your work flow'. Prior to this, most groups were still negotiating roles, social cohesion and the direction of their argument, so while some critical friend input (for example, suggestions, resources, challenging questions) was useful, it was difficult for students outside the group to know when to step in. Indeed, there was a tension between critical friend behaviour as a performance indicator and as a scaffolding device: '[I] want to help with relevant comments but want to avoid making "show off" comments only to "prove" I'm a "committed" Critical Friend'. It may have been that until the guiding influence of modelled feedback demonstrated ways of constructively critiquing, students engaged more in a ritual fashion, completing critical friend duties in order to avoid negative consequences (Zyngier and May 2004).

Notably, most groups made significant progress after the formal tutor feedforward was given midway through the assignment. Tutors provided feedforward in audio format, where the imprecision and tonal variance of verbal speech conveyed the contextual, provisional nature of knowledge (Gould and Day 2013). We adopted a conversational approach, including moments of disagreement and consensus-building that highlighted the subjectivity of assessment in a way that linear text could not. This style of feed-

forward was an integral part of scaffolding the task and the response to this was consistently positive: 'The feedforward experience has been extremely constructive to my learning process. I guess it was the first time that the feed(back) I received, came before actually handing in the final piece. As I said, all very formative!' The feedforward was able to bridge uncertainties or discomfort in relation to the ways the multimodal product could meet the assessment criteria. For example, tutor feedforward across all the groups emphasised the development of academic discourse and argumentation in combination with critical use of the literature. Post tutor feedforward, critical friends were able to play a more useful role in that final developmental stage, as demonstrated by feedback given like this:

> this is a very well researched piece of work. it covers a lot of points and give breadth and depth to the topic. however, what i didn't see explicitly coming through very much was your argument. what is your group's take on this matter? . . . what i think you have here is a literature review, but i wonder if this is what the task is about?

Tutor feedforward had an impact not just on the direction of work, but on the confidence with which groups worked on different aspects of their argument. Some students found that tutor feedforward affirmed their own sentiments and empowered them to negotiate the direction their argument was taking within their group: 'p.s. Thanks for the Group 2 wiki feedback. Bang on. Difficult for me as I've been making similar noises. The art of negotiation is the key'. Others were looking for affirmation and struggled to find it within feedback that was tailored to the group, rather than the individual:

> I think it was the idea of not being able to compare with others . . . to do with defining personal success against the rest of the class – where does one's mark lie in comparison to others. I have to say that during the process of writing I didn't really think about that aspect . . . but I find myself now, faced with the generic class mark and feedback, searching for my little bit of personal feedback. And really, I think it probably comes down to looking for reassurance . . . that I'm up to the necessary standard for the next 'individual' assignment.

Despite our attempts at encouraging less hierarchical forms of dialogue, the uncertainty and unfamiliarity of the task may have reinforced a perception

of tutor feedback as qualitatively different from peer feedback, particularly in terms of the authority that students attributed to it, either seeing tutors as sources of knowledge or as assessors.

Engaging with tutor feedforward across the entire class opened students up further to a range of exemplars of current work in progress. Students were also able to see what finished products looked like by engaging with previous cohorts' collaborative assignments. However, this previous work did not feature integrated multimodal authorship that took advantage of the digital environment, and this might have impeded progress towards greater multimodality. A lack of clarity around what constituted good quality multimodal academic discourse may have restricted opportunities for groups to develop shared multimodal expression. In our next iteration of the course, we intend to scaffold that engagement with multimodality earlier and more iteratively. Overall, however, we were pleasantly surprised by how much students came, by the end of the assignment, to engage with each others' work as critical friends. Indeed, we think that this, alongside their engagement with the tutor feedforward, may explain the quality of work we saw in the individual critical review assignments completed after the group wiki task.

Conclusion

The collaborative element of the wiki assignment was disruptive in a number of ways. As previously mentioned, disruption is not inherently negative, but rather it can create opportunities for deep learning and a more nuanced understanding. The structure of this assignment, including the class-wide grade, created a level of dissonance between individual priorities and goals, those of the group and those of the class as a whole. Further dissonance emerged between traditional criteria of appraisal of the quality of individual work, the appraisal of individual contributions to collaborative work and the quality of a group-authored product. The complexity made it necessary for students to closely examine the processes behind the co-construction of meaning and expression, as well as the affordances of the digital environments that framed their interactions.

The nature of the digital environment also created opportunities for multimodal expression within the students' perceived parameters of the assessment of academic discourse. Departing from traditional, text-based

modes of academic writing challenged notions of authorship, authority and shared understandings of quality. When situated within a high stakes assessment context, this disruption may have increased the perception of risk.

Our approach to supporting students through these disruptions was to design a cumulative learning and assessment structure that iteratively added layers of complexity to their understanding of quality. This strategy placed a strong emphasis on dialogue between members of the learning community, making particular use of peer feedback and tutor feedforward – a dialogue that took place across multiple technologies and genres.

The ultimate goal was to develop learners' connoisseurship at individual, group and class level. The extent to which this was successful could be thought of as how well students – with our support – managed to resolve and rebalance the disruptions created by the assessment. To this end, our results were mixed. Although there was very limited multimodal discourse, the class as a whole managed to produce a high quality academic submission, as did each of the groups. Yet at an individual level, there were cases where a student's contribution to group content, quality and/or cohesion fell short of our design intentions. We have learned that balancing the tension between individual and collaborative connoisseurship requires more than just an eye for the right design choices. It also needs skilled facilitation, taking advantage of teachable moments and taking account of very specific cohort needs. Challenging as this is, with a flexible, dialogic approach, a highly engaging and transformative course can emerge. One student said of our course: '[I]t's a challenge but useful indeed. The meta-cognitive thinking throughout OA is impressive. I love it. Now, all is getting even more interesting and engaging as I started to look at the other topics as a critical friend'.

With Dai's scholarship and expert involvement in the Online Assessment course, we have had a wonderful opportunity to develop our own connoisseurship. This chapter, we hope, takes the critical friendship he has kindly extended to us and shares it with others.

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