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# Using an evidence-informed reflection tool to develop understandings of feedback talk

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## ABSTRACT

Research-based and practical reflection tools can enable systematic analysis of practice and contribute to deeper understandings of classroom processes. An empirically based, evidence-informed reflection tool was developed to support teachers to recognise feedback talk and how it is built into classroom interactions. The tool, titled the feedback talk framework, enabled teachers to reflect on their feedback talk and effect changes in practice and feedback literacy. The feedback talk framework was refined through a survey and semi-structured interviews with teachers for use as a reflection tool and resulted in three overarching feedback talk themes: informing, confirming and validating, and questioning. Results illuminated how teachers used the tool to identify and reflect on feedback talk, strengthening our argument that using an empirically derived feedback talk framework can support evidence-based approaches to teacher reflection. Suggestions and implications for the utility of the reflection tool in a range of contexts are then provided.

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Feedback talk; evidence-based reflection; reflection tool; feedback literacy; teacher professional development

## Introduction

Reflecting on classroom teaching practice is notoriously complex and can be challenging, particularly for early career teachers (Baker et al. 2018). One suggestion to guide teachers in their reflections on practice is the use of reflection tools, or frameworks (Windsor et al. 2022). Scholars argue that the use of artefacts such as tools can contribute to evidence-based learning and provide a starting point for talking about teaching (Engin 2015). They have also been found to act as catalysts for change in the classroom through supporting metacognition and the reframing of what might be considered to be typical classroom experiences (Baumfield et al. 2009). Significantly, however, these reflection tools also need to be research-based and practical to use (Mercer, Warwick, and Ahmed 2017). As Walsh (2003, 127) states, in describing a reflection tool for teachers to

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analyse their classroom talk, ‘as a tool for teacher education, the framework has to enable teachers to describe [interaction] relatively easily and unambiguously’.

In this paper we focus on the concept of feedback talk – which is part of ‘the contingent, episodic and dialogic interaction between students and teachers in the classroom’ (Heron et al. 2023, 1). This is distinguishable from student evaluations of teaching, and the verbal feedback that typically describes spoken feedback related to summative written assessment (Agricola, Prins, and Sluijsmans 2020). We describe a process in which an empirically-based framework of feedback talk was refined to be practical and meaningful to higher education teachers from a range of disciplines, and to support teachers’ understanding of feedback talk and their ability to articulate their reflections. We argue that an empirically-derived reflection tool on feedback talk can provide support for teachers to further their understanding of teacher-generated feedback processes in the naturally occurring classroom discourse / interaction, and enhance student teachers understanding of the role of students and student-teacher interaction within the feedback process (Ketonen et al. 2024).

## **Background**

### **Feedback**

Feedback is widely considered to be one of the most influential factors in supporting student learning (Hattie and Timperley 2007; Wisniewski, Zierer, and Hattie 2020). Yet it is the aspect of their learning experience that higher education students are least satisfied with internationally (Medland 2016). Further, when feedback is tethered to high stakes assessment, the potential for psychological threat (i.e. ‘threat to self-concept or self-worth’ (Jones et al. 2021, 441)), and mental distress, is heightened (Patel et al. 2015). This preoccupation in the literature with summative assessment-related written feedback has served to fixate attention on a tiny proportion of the feedback to which students are exposed, ignoring the most abundant form of feedback – that which takes place within naturally occurring classroom dialogic interactions.

In an attempt to guide the burgeoning feedback-related literature away from the notion that post-assessment written comments constitute the primary source of feedback, Carless (2015) called for a shift from the old to new paradigm of feedback. In the old paradigm, feedback is primarily monologic, post-assessment, written, and focused on the transmission of information to the student. In the new paradigm, feedback acts as a key site of interaction between teacher and student in which student engagement is fundamental. Whilst not necessarily a new idea (Buckley 2022), this paradigmatic shift paved the way for the introduction of the concept of feedback literacy, which is the capacity for making use of feedback to take action (Carless and Boud 2018).

Feedback literacy has recently evolved to include feedback impact (Henderson et al. 2019); the enablement of internal dialogue (Nicol and McCallum 2022; Nicol 2021); the socialisation of learners into academic culture (Carless and Winstone 2023); and signature feedback practices (Pitt and Carless 2022). In addition, attention has turned to the relationship between the feedback literacy of students and teachers (Carless and Winstone 2023). Researchers have also considered ‘negotiations and recreations of meaning’ within the feedback process (Ajjawi and Regehr 2019, 653), encompassing both interpersonal and intrapersonal considerations, the importance of creating

psychologically safe spaces for feedback conversations to take place, and the role of dialogic interaction (Ajjawi et al. 2022).

Research focusing on feedback literacy has undoubtedly brought our understanding of the process of feedback interactions forward, but there is still a tendency to focus on assessment-related written feedback in theory and practice, and, therefore, on what is done with feedback once it is received. What this fails to acknowledge is the fundamental skill of first being able to recognise feedback, which is surely a critical precedent to feedback literacy (Heron et al. 2023). We contend that developing feedback literacy (for both teachers and students in what Baumfield et al. 2009 refer to as the mirror effect) and feedback practices could be supported through use of tools and resources that identify features of feedback talk.

To address the lack of research into the ubiquity of feedback talk across Higher Education (HE) classroom interactions, Heron et al. (2023) carried out an analysis of six seminar sessions and identified linguistic and rhetorical features of feedback talk. The analysis resulted in a feedback talk framework (FTF) which includes ten feedback talk codes (see Table 1 below for an outline of these ten codes) and which was presented as a heuristic for understanding feedback talk in the wider context of classroom interaction.

Whilst this was a positive move in the direction of valuing feedback in every-day classroom discourse, the framework has not been empirically evaluated in terms of its practical utility as a reflection tool. In this paper, we report on the process of refining the framework in the light of teacher feedback and discuss the implications of such a tool for teacher professional development purposes. Drawing on the concept of data-led reflection (Walsh and Mann 2015), we argue that a robust and reliable reflection tool can enable teachers to understand and harness the feedback talk occurring every day to stimulate their professional learning (Baumfield et al. 2009) via the enhancement of feedback practices and enhanced support of student learning.

Our argument is that teacher reflection requires structured guidance and appropriate tools (Mann and Walsh 2013). The current study evaluates the utility of the feedback talk framework as a scheme for teachers (and students) to use to reflect on and better understand how feedback talk is built into the fabric of the longer conversations in classroom talk. We report on the refinement of the framework into a practical tool.

**Table 1.** Feedback Talk Framework.

		<b>Confirming and validating</b>
1	Validating	Acknowledging student input, e.g. <i>thank you</i>
2	Praising	Praising a response, e.g. <i>That's great</i>
3	Affirming	Showing agreement with a response, e.g. <i>yes, exactly</i>
		<b>Informing</b>
4	Consolidating	Repeating / playing back a student's response, e.g. <i>S: Number eight is strong</i> <i>T: Number eight is very strong</i>
5	Elaborating	Building on a student's response, could include giving an example, e.g. <i>So what we are saying here is ...</i>
6	Correcting	Providing a correct answer, e.g. <i>Well at this stage they haven't actually done the courses.</i>
7	Negating	Rejecting an answer, e.g. <i>No</i>
		<b>Questioning</b>
8	Requesting clarification	Checking understanding of the student's comment, e.g. <i>Sorry?</i>
9	Probing	Seeking further details e.g. <i>why do you think that?</i>
10	Initiating	Inviting others to speak, e.g. <i>Would anyone like to comment?</i>

### **Evidence-based reflection tools**

For teachers to develop their feedback literacy, they need to be able to recognise when feedback is taking place within taught sessions, and how such feedback interactions can create opportunities for mutual development (Carless and Winstone 2023). Appropriate tools and resources, particularly those which are empirically informed and evidence-based, are crucial to supporting the understanding of classroom talk and interaction (Hennessy et al. 2021; Walsh and Mann 2015). Windsor et al. (2022) argue that using reflection tools supports a non-judgemental approach to reflection and informs professional conversations. In arguing the case for evidence-informed teacher reflection, Walsh (2006) suggests that a tool or framework can provide a number of advantages including the facilitation of description, a common or shared metalanguage (language to talk about teaching, in this case, feedback) and the enabling of new levels of understanding. Further, he also emphasises the importance of the utility of reflection tools: ‘By making available appropriate research tools – tools designed by teachers for teachers – the intention is that reflection on practice can develop’ (139).

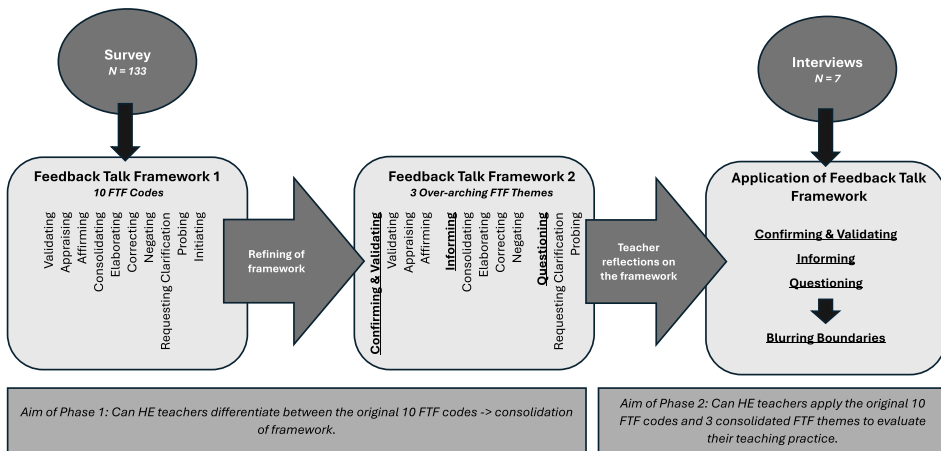
Structured guidance in the form of talk frameworks have been used in teacher education programmes and initiatives in the school and higher education sector, such as the Teacher Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis (T-SEDA 2018) (Calcagni et al. 2023), Academically Productive Talk (Michaels, O’Connor, and Resnick 2008), Oracy Skills Framework (Mercer, Warwick, and Ahmed 2017 – see its application to higher education in Heron 2019) and Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk (Walsh 2003). In a disciplinary HE context, Hardman (2016) developed a coding framework to analyse classroom talk and interaction in HE accounting lectures. The coding framework was used for teacher development purposes, demonstrating the utility of a specified set of linguistic indicators of learning and teaching for teacher reflection. To the best of our knowledge, no talk framework has focused specifically on feedback talk.

What these tools and frameworks have in common is their application to authentic data in the form of classroom transcripts, which are used to stimulate reflection. The unique contribution that our framework offers is a focus upon the feedback talk taking place within taught sessions.

The aim of the current study was to describe the process of achieving/developing an empirically based but practical set of codes that form part of a tool for reflection on feedback talk. We argue for its utility across a range of teaching disciplines and contexts, including teacher education (Ketonen et al. 2024), through surfacing the learning which emerged in its use with teachers.

### **Methodology**

Refining the feedback talk framework for use as a reflection tool involved a number of different aspects. An exploratory, mixed-methods, sequential methodology (Creswell and Creswell 2023) was adopted, which began with a quantitative online survey. The results of the survey then informed the development of a qualitative semi-structured interview with higher education practitioners. Both data collection methods drew upon authentic data emerging from small group taught sessions within a research-intensive higher education institution. A conceptual scheme of the research design is provided



**Figure 1.** Conceptual scheme of study phases.

in Figure 1, and further details of the data collection methods, participants, data analysis techniques adopted, and ethical considerations are provided below.

## Methods

### Survey

A survey comprising closed and open-ended questions was developed by the authors using the design, relational and pragmatic dimensions of the framework for teacher feedback literacy (Carless and Winstone 2023). The survey included the following:

- Demographic questions (disciplinary background, number of years teaching, sex);
- Perceptions relating to feedback literacy (derived from Carless and Winstone 2023);
- Differences between written and verbal feedback;
- Responses to the ten feedback talk codes in the feedback talk framework (Heron et al. 2023);
- Three excerpts (see Appendix A), segmented into 14 feedback talk teacher statements ranging in length from one word to 28 words (see Tables 3 and 4), from classroom transcripts that participants coded against the feedback talk framework, and;
- Several further open questions about the relationship between feedback and teaching.

**Semi-structured interviews.** A group of teachers were interviewed adopting a semi-structured protocol carried out by Authors 2 and 4. In the interview, Author 4 asked the participants to reflect on the feedback exchanges with reference to the ten feedback talk codes. The interview questions related to understandings of what constitutes feedback, reflection upon and evaluation of excerpts of their own session transcripts against the original ten feedback talk codes, and some more general questions including the interrogation of the relationship between feedback and teaching. The interviews were carried out and recorded online using Zoom technology. The automated transcripts were subsequently checked for accuracy against the recording. The seven teachers had

earlier given Author 4 permission to access recorded teaching sessions of around one hour. The automated transcripts of these sessions (using Panopto) were checked for accuracy and feedback exchanges were identified.

## Participants

The online survey was completed by 133 HE teachers, and seven teachers took part in the semi-structured interviews. Authors' pre-existing networks were utilised to disseminate the online survey and request participants for the interviews. Social media was also used to distribute a link to the survey to a broader audience. As part of the interviews, seven teachers from the research site provided an audio-recording (through Panopto) of one of their seminars. The participants came from a range of disciplines – a summary can be seen in Table 2 below.

## Analysis

In order to understand whether the feedback talk framework could be used in its current form as a reflection tool (i.e. using all ten codes), it was necessary to ascertain whether participants could differentiate between each code. Consistency between participants ( $N = 133$ ) in how they applied the ten codes of the feedback talk framework to the excerpts in the survey was assessed using inter-rater reliability tests. For each of the individual statements/segments, agreement was established by calculating the percentage of participants within the sample who assigned each code to each segment. Across the entire corpus of 14 segments, a Krippendorff's alpha analysis (Hayes and Krippendorff 2007) was performed to determine overall agreement in the application of codes from the framework to the excerpts.

The interviews ( $N = 7$ ) were analysed iteratively using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006). The approach was deductive, using the initial feedback talk framework as a heuristic and therefore followed the codebook approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2019). This approach allowed for the inclusion of themes derived from both the feedback talk framework as well as those generated during the data analysis process. It therefore sits between coding reliability thematic analysis, and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2019) because it draws upon the structure of the feedback talk framework (i.e. coding reliability) whilst adhering to a largely

**Table 2.** Disciplines of participants.

Method	Faculty / Discipline	<i>n</i>
Survey ( $N = 133$ )	Social Sciences	48
	STEM	36
	Arts & Humanities	29
	Other	20
Interviews ( $N = 7$ )	Civil Engineering	1
	Economics	1
	Hospitality, Tourism & Events	1
	Biosciences	1
	Literature & Languages	1
	Liberal Arts	1
	Health Psychology	1

qualitative underlying philosophy (i.e. reflexive) (Braun and Clarke 2022). To achieve this, Authors 1 and 2 first analysed one transcript, looking for data that either supported the feedback talk code or refuted it. The two authors then met to discuss their coding and findings and agreed on exemplifications of the codes. Finally, both authors analysed the remaining six transcripts, inputting data into NVivo, and manually analysing the transcripts to generate any further themes.

### ***Ethical considerations***

The research was reviewed by the Ethics Committee of the research site and received a favourable ethical opinion (CENT20-21002EGA). All participants granted informed consent to participate in the survey and interviews. In addition, the interview participants were assured of the confidentiality of their data, including the classroom recordings, and interview recordings and transcripts. The interview transcripts were checked for anonymity and any identifying words or phrases were redacted. All interview participants were assigned a code to ensure further anonymity. All participants were free to withdraw up to the time of interview data analysis.

### **Results**

Within this section, the results from the survey will first be presented that indicate how participants applied the ten feedback talk codes to the teacher statements/segments from the three seminar extracts. This will be followed by an outline and rationale for how and why the ten original feedback talk codes were collapsed into three overarching master themes. The section will conclude with the qualitative interview results that illustrate teachers' experiences and reflections upon the utility of such a coding scheme.

### ***Refining the framework***

The 133 survey respondents coded the 14 teacher statements/segments from the three seminar extracts against the ten feedback talk codes of the coding scheme (i.e. the feedback talk framework). Table 3 displays each of the codes assigned to each statement by participants, along with the percentages of participants who selected that code (i.e. their percentage agreement for each segment).

As Table 3 shows, for many of the statements there appeared to be little agreement on which of the ten codes was the best fit, with some statements being assigned almost evenly across multiple codes. A follow-up Krippendorff's alpha analysis was performed across the 14 coded segments from the extracts to assess the reliability of these participant judgements (Hayes and Krippendorff 2007). A coefficient of .34 (95% CI on  $\alpha$  [.31, .36]) was obtained (whereby a coefficient of 1 represents perfect agreement), which falls far short of the .667 value deemed to be the minimum acceptable value to demonstrate reliability (Krippendorff 2004a). This means there was a poor level of agreement about how to apply the feedback talk framework coding scheme to the feedback talk teacher statements, suggesting that the utility of the framework in its current form required some development to serve as a reflection tool.



**Table 3.** Percentage agreement for codes assigned to each teacher statement/segment.

Teacher Statement/Segment	Segment Length (Words)	Code Assigned	% Agreement	<i>n</i>		
T: Excellent.	1	Praising	74.4	99		
		Affirming	12.0	16		
		Validating	11.3	15		
		Consolidating	1.5	2		
T: Any other view?	3	Probing	0.8	1		
		Probing	49.6	66		
		Initiating	35.3	47		
		Requesting clarification	7.5	10		
		Elaborating	3.8	5		
T: Exactly	1	Praising	2.3	3		
		Consolidating	1.5	2		
		Affirming	77.4	103		
T: So it goes to support, as she said, that it goes beyond just putting together loyalty programmes. Recognition is a very important aspect of trying to build loyalty	28	Validating	18.0	24		
		Consolidating	3.0	4		
		Probing	1.5	2		
		Elaborating	50.4	65		
		Consolidating	34.1	44		
		Validating	6.2	8		
		Affirming	5.4	7		
		Initiating	2.3	3		
T: So staying committed to the service that person has rendered to you.	12	Probing	0.8	1		
		Correcting	0.8	1		
		Consolidating	46.1	59		
		Requesting clarification	17.2	22		
		Validating	11.7	15		
		Elaborating	11.7	15		
		Probing	4.7	6		
		Affirming	3.9	5		
		Initiating	2.3	3		
		Correcting	2.3	3		
T: Thank you very much	4	Praising	2.3	3		
		Praising	35.9	46		
		Validating	35.2	45		
		Affirming	25.8	33		
		Consolidating	1.6	2		
		Probing	0.8	1		
		Elaborating	0.8	1		
T: Yes?	1	Probing	0.8	1		
		Probing	32.6	42		
		Initiating	29.5	38		
		Requesting clarification	27.1	35		
		Affirming	5.4	7		
		Consolidating	1.6	2		
		Correcting	1.6	2		
		Validating	0.8	1		
		Elaborating	0.8	1		
		Praising	0.8	1		
		T: Okay	1	Affirming	0.8	1
				Affirming	62.0	80
Validating	25.6			33		
Probing	4.7			6		
Consolidating	2.3			3		
Correcting	2.3			3		
Negating	1.6			2		
Requesting clarification	0.8			1		
Elaborating	0.8			1		
T: It's a bi-directional trust from consumer and trust from seller, trust in each other.	14			Elaborating	0.8	1
		Elaborating	53.5	69		
		Consolidating	27.9	36		
		Correcting	12.4	16		

*(Continued)*

**Table 3.** Continued.

Teacher Statement/Segment	Segment Length (Words)	Code Assigned	% Agreement	<i>n</i>		
T: Good.	1	Validating	2.3	3		
		Probing	1.6	2		
		Affirming	1.6	2		
		Requesting clarification	0.8	1		
		Praising	56.7	72		
T: We've literally zoomed into customer loyalty. Yes, share your views on that, loyalty?	13	Affirming	30.7	39		
		Validating	10.2	13		
		Consolidating	0.8	1		
		Initiating	0.8	1		
		Correcting	0.8	1		
		Initiating	45.8	60		
		Probing	41.2	54		
		Requesting clarification	5.3	7		
		Elaborating	3.8	5		
		Consolidating	2.3	3		
T: Yes. Definitely.	2	Correcting	0.8	1		
		Negating	0.8	1		
		Affirming	82.3	107		
		Validating	12.3	16		
		Praising	3.1	4		
T: Do you think it could cause any problems as well, having a sort of group of people?	17	Consolidating	1.5	2		
		Elaborating	0.8	1		
		Probing	71.8	94		
		Initiating	19.8	26		
		Requesting clarification	4.6	6		
		Elaborating	2.3	3		
		Validating	0.8	1		
		Negating	0.8	1		
		Elaborating	48.1	63		
		Probing	23.7	31		
T: Yes and if there's solely one person talking, you're not getting much out of the other participants, it's a bit difficult to tell someone, can you speak more?	28	Requesting clarification	9.9	13		
		Initiating	7.6	10		
		Consolidating	6.1	8		
		Validating	2.3	3		
		Affirming	1.5	2		
		Correcting	0.8	1		
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>126</b>			

Note: Some statements/segments have missing responses.

It has been suggested that '[a]fter data have been generated, reliability may be improved by discarding unreliable distinctions, recoding or lumping categories' (Krippendorff 2004b, 431). Therefore, drawing on the three over-arching purposes of feedback talk (i.e. the master themes in Table 1) that are thought to encompass these ten codes (i.e. i. providing information and validation, ii. information giving, and iii. questioning, as identified in Heron et al. (2023)), participants' selections were recoded as follows: Validating, Praising, and Affirming codes were combined into the theme of *Confirming and Validating*; Consolidating, Elaborating, Correcting, and Negating codes were combined into the theme of *Informing*; and Requesting clarification, Probing, and Initiating codes were combined into the theme of *Questioning*. Table 4 displays the percentage agreements for each segment for the three master themes after collapsing across the ten codes originally assigned to the statements by participants.

**Table 4.** Percentage agreement for master themes after collapsing the ten codes assigned to each teacher statement/segment.

Teacher Statement/Segment	Segment Length (Words)	Theme Assigned	% Agreement	<i>n</i>
T: Excellent.	1	Confirming and validating	97.7	130
		Informing	1.5	2
		Questioning	0.8	1
T: Any other view?	3	Questioning	92.5	123
		Informing	5.3	7
		Confirming and validating	2.3	3
T: Exactly	1	Confirming and validating	95.5	127
		Informing	3.0	4
		Questioning	1.5	2
T: So it goes to support, as she said, that it goes beyond just putting together loyalty programmes. Recognition is a very important aspect of trying to build loyalty	28	Informing	85.3	110
		Confirming and validating	11.6	15
		Questioning	3.1	4
T: So staying committed to the service that person has rendered to you.	12	Informing	60.2	77
		Questioning	24.2	31
		Confirming and validating	15.6	20
T: Thank you very much	4	Confirming and validating	96.9	124
		Informing	2.3	3
		Questioning	0.8	1
T: Yes?	1	Questioning	89.1	115
		Confirming and validating	7.0	9
		Informing	3.9	5
T: Okay	1	Confirming and validating	87.6	113
		Informing	7.0	9
		Questioning	5.4	7
T: It's a bi-directional trust from consumer and trust from seller, trust in each other.	14	Informing	93.8	121
		Confirming and validating	3.9	5
		Questioning	2.3	3
T: Good.	1	Confirming and validating	97.6	124
		Informing	1.6	2
		Questioning	0.8	1
T: We've literally zoomed into customer loyalty. Yes, share your views on that, loyalty?	13	Questioning	92.4	121
		Informing	7.6	10
T: Yes. Definitely.	2	Confirming and validating	97.7	127
		Informing	2.3	3
		Questioning	96.2	126
T: Do you think it could cause any problems as well, having a sort of group of people?	17	Informing	3.1	4
		Confirming and validating	0.8	1
		Informing	55.0	72
T: Yes and if there's solely one person talking, you're not getting much out of the other participants, it's a bit difficult to tell someone, can you speak more?	28	Questioning	41.2	54
		Confirming and validating	3.8	5
<b>Total:</b>				<b>126</b>

Note: Some statements/segments have missing responses.

After combining the responses, percentage agreements increased substantially for most of the statements (see Table 4). A further Krippendorff's alpha analysis across the 14 coded segments revealed a coefficient of .72 (95% CI on  $\alpha$  [.64, .79]), which is

an acceptable level of reliability. Therefore, it appears that although participants may have had difficulty differentiating between some of the ten individual codes, they were able to make a distinction between different aspects of feedback talk at the overarching level of feedback theme.

### **Teacher reflections on the framework**

The interviews highlight several affordances of a reflection tool, including the importance of a shared metalanguage to talk about feedback, and demonstrate how teachers can appropriate this language to talk confidently and explicitly about their own feedback talk.

The interview data were analysed using a codebook approach to thematic analysis, which included the three themes derived from the feedback talk framework as well as those generated during the data analysis process (Braun and Clarke 2022). Findings provided evidence to support the synthesis of these ten codes into the three overarching feedback talk themes, as supported by the survey results. The interview results are therefore divided according to the three overarching feedback talk themes (i.e. i. Confirming and Validating; ii. Informing; iii. Questioning) that illuminate participant perceptions of the interconnections between the ten codes that form each of the three themes. During the data analysis process, a further theme relating to participant perceptions of what implications feedback talk might have for the relationship between teaching and feedback was also generated.

#### **Confirming and Validating**

The Confirming and Validating feedback talk theme consolidated three codes from the feedback talk framework (i.e. Validating, Praising, and Affirming) and therefore focused on feedback that acknowledged, agreed with and praised student responses. Participant responses served to illuminate the difficulty in distinguishing between the three codes that were encompassed by the overarching Confirming and Validating feedback talk theme, for example (the bold font has been added by the authors to identify the feedback talk framework codes):

*So I would probably code that as **affirming** ... and ... It could also be **praise**. Kind of acknowledging [i.e. **validating**] that what they've said is a good thing to have said ... It is a **praise**, isn't it. (Participant 6)*

Here we see how the participant struggles to distinguish between the three original feedback talk codes that characterise the Confirming and Validating feedback talk theme. The quote below serves to illuminate the perceived interconnection between validating and praising: '**Validating**, you know, a lot of my **validating**, I think would link in with **praising**' (Participant 7). These quotes serve to provide insight into the difficulty that participants encountered when attempting to apply the original ten feedback talk codes due to their perceived interconnectedness.

#### **Informing**

The Informing feedback talk theme consolidated four codes from the feedback talk framework (i.e. Consolidating, Elaborating, Correcting, and Negating) and therefore focused on feedback that repeated and built on a student's response, and accepted or

rejected those comments. Once again, participant responses served to illuminate the difficulty participants faced in drawing distinctions at the level of the ten original feedback talk codes. Instead, responses demonstrated the interconnections between codes. For example:

*... probably just echoing them [i.e. **Consolidating**] ... and then I'm expanding on what class means to me, what I'm trying to elucidate to them [i.e. **Elaborating**] (Participant 1)*

Here we see how the two feedback talk codes are combined to create an iterative sequence in which the participant uses feedback to build upon the student's original response. Furthermore, the quote below highlights the reluctance of the participant to reject a student's response, preferring to adopt the more positively skewed approach of correcting an error, thus highlighting an awareness of the potentially deleterious impact of negative affect on student learning. Indeed, across the data underpinning this research, Negating was the least commonly used feedback talk code:

*... generally we're trying to avoid **negating** ... [but if] it was very, very obviously wrong ... I suppose I would go more into the **correcting** ... the two of those probably would be related (Participant 4)*

### Questioning

The overarching Questioning feedback talk theme consolidated three codes from the feedback talk framework (i.e. Requesting clarification, Probing, and Initiating) and therefore focused on checking understanding, seeking further details, and inviting other students into the interaction. Similar to the above, participants struggled to differentiate between some of the feedback talk codes, for example: '*it's either **initiation** or **probing** ... it's kind of a bit of both, I would say*' (Participant 2). The below quote demonstrates the uncertainty with which the participant assigns a feedback talk code to an interaction with their students, but indicates the close relationship between the three feedback talk codes that have been collapsed to create the over-arching feedback talk theme titled Questioning:

*So I was just **clarifying** with them and trying to get more out of them, you know. They hadn't given very long answers, trying to get more out of them from them [i.e. **initiating**]. You know from what they'd found in their research. Yeah. OK, **probing**, I suppose. (Participant 5)*

### Blurring boundaries

When asked about what impact, if any, making use of the feedback talk framework tool might have on participants, this prompted reflection upon the relationship between feedback and teaching. These reflections highlighted the interconnected nature of feedback and teaching. For example, participant 7 concluded that:

*... I can see that if you define that conversation, not in the narrow terms of feedback, but in a broader term, then all of that teaching approach could be seen as, you know, it is feedback ... And I think, I think, of huge value.*

Here we see evidence of the participant's conceptions of feedback evolving from the more 'narrow' old paradigm of feedback, to the much 'broader' new paradigm of feedback, in which the boundaries between feedback and teaching begin to blur. All participants

described the fundamental relationship between feedback and teaching, describing this relationship as ‘integral’ and ‘inseparable’ (participant 4), ‘inherent’ and ‘crucial’ (participant 3), and as ‘integrated completely’ and ‘impossible to educate someone without providing feedback’ (participant 1).

It appeared that participants felt the tool could support reflection upon the interconnections between feedback and teaching, although a distinction was still drawn between the two so that feedback and teaching were seen as distinct entities. For example, participant 2 compared the relationship between feedback and teaching to the relationship between ‘God to religion’, in which feedback is described as the principal object (i.e. God), and teaching as a means of enacting it (i.e. religion). This is a sentiment that is also reflected in Participant 4’s comment, who noted how feedback served to set the ‘classroom into action’. Therefore, feedback was perceived as the encompassing process within which teaching resides. Participant 4 further clarified this distinction by highlighting some of the tasks that are specific to teaching, such as the selection and preparation of materials.

## Discussion

This paper has described the process of refining a tool for teacher reflection on feedback talk. Our central argument is that an empirically based framework *for* teachers, which has been refined through trialling and piloting *with* teachers, can be a powerful support in guiding reflection, providing a shared metalanguage to talk about feedback and a stimulus for deeper thinking and understanding (Walsh 2003; 2006). Further, the provision of such catalytic tools that are practical and accessible can support change in the classroom (Baumfield et al. 2009), as seen within participants shifting conceptualisations of feedback towards new paradigm thinking (Carless 2015). Participants struggled to differentiate between some of the ten feedback talk codes identified within Heron et al. (2023), but collapsing of the original ten codes into three over-arching feedback talk themes (i.e. i. Confirming and Validating; ii. Informing; iii. Questioning) resulted in a practical and usable reflection tool (Mercer, Warwick, and Ahmed 2017) that scaffolded the reframing of typical classroom experiences (Baumfield et al., 2009). Our aim in refining the framework to develop a tool was to ‘combine research-based validity with a practical ease of use for teachers’ (Mercer, Warwick, and Ahmed 2017, 59).

Whilst it might seem reductive to isolate feedback talk to a set of codes and themes, potentially losing the moment-by-moment nuances of meaning in talk, we argue that this tool for reflection provides a first step in both recognising feedback and reflecting on feedback talk. We argue in this paper that systematic and rigorous reflection needs to be evidence-based and data-led (Mann and Walsh 2013; Walsh and Mann 2015). Using the reflection tool to focus on feedback talk as part of the naturally occurring classroom discourse is advantageous in a number of ways. Firstly, a unique feature of feedback talk is its disentanglement from assessment (Winstone and Boud 2022), which serves to reduce the potential for psychological threat that high stakes assessment can represent (Jones et al. 2021). Secondly, feedback talk can be viewed as grounded within authentic data (i.e. data-led reflection – Walsh and Mann 2015) emerging from the naturalistic setting of the taught classroom (i.e. classroom transcripts), rather than the bolt-on end of assessment written feedback that is typically focused upon within the literature.

Thirdly, the reflection tool has the potential to inform the evolution of the concept of feedback literacy in a number of ways, including the facilitation of a shared metalanguage (Walsh 2006) to stimulate professional learning through a reframing of typical classroom experiences (Baumfield et al. 2009). This is achieved through acknowledging and providing a heuristic for the recognition of hidden feedback that is currently described as part of the dialogue of teaching and learning (Medland 2019) and is, therefore, an important precedent to the development of feedback literacy.

As the visible element of learning (Hattie 2009), the ability to be able to recognise, identify and evaluate the different functions that feedback fulfils can support an evidence-based approach to teacher reflection and thus contribute to the development of teacher feedback literacy. Walsh and Mann (2015) argue that an approach to teacher education which values teacher autonomy must provide teachers with the appropriate tools and guidance to support reflection. The tool has been empirically derived and tested, so we contend that it can act as a catalyst for reflection on practice (Baumfield et al. 2009). The framework could be used by teachers independently, or as part of taught teacher professional development programmes, such as the well-established PGCE and PGCert programmes offered by many higher education institutions.

As proposed by Carless and Winstone (2023), teacher feedback literacy involves three dimensions (i.e. design, relational, and pragmatic) that create safe learning spaces for feedback uptake and provide opportunities to both model and coach students in how to respond to the feedback process. Therefore, in recognising and harnessing the abundance of feedback talk taking place within the naturalistic setting of the taught classroom (in person or online), teachers will be able to not only develop their own feedback literacy, but also that of their students through engagement with the authentic discourses that characterise their discipline (Pitt and Quinlan 2021).

Further, through using the reflection tool to disentangle feedback from assessment (Winstone and Boud 2022), the psychological threat is reduced (Jones et al. 2021) and the creation of a safer dialogic space (Ajjawi et al. 2022) in which to engage in the feedback process can be created. Through this dialogic safe space, teaching and learning processes can be interrogated and opportunities for collaboration and co-creation can be created, providing an opportunity for teachers and students to collaborate and co-create strategies for addressing any challenges or gaps in learning that may have been identified through the feedback process. The tool could, therefore, be used to create intentional and structured spaces to engage in the feedback process in a continuous and natural way, rather than as a bolt on to a taught session as they are typically delivered.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to discuss the process of refining a framework to create a reliable and rigorous reflection tool for teachers (and students), and to argue the case for teacher reflection on their feedback talk. The tool recognises three distinct, overarching feedback talk themes (i.e. Confirming and Validating; ii. Informing; and iii. Questioning), providing a heuristic for recognising the most abundant form of feedback that students are exposed to (i.e. feedback talk). Participants involved in this study discussed the potential for using the tool to scaffold more rigorous and systematic reflection upon, and evaluation of, the feedback talk taking place within their taught classes. Some further

suggestions for how the feedback talk framework might be applied to enhance teaching practice are outlined below.

### ***Implications for use***

In a teacher professional development context as well as more generally as part of the continuing professional development of teacher practitioners, the feedback talk reflection tool could be used in a number of ways. We outline these below:

- **Self-reflection:** As part of a teacher professional development programme (e.g. PGCert, PGCE), student teachers can record a section of their lesson using software such as Microsoft Teams. The software generates a transcript which teachers can use in conjunction with the feedback talk tool to analyse their feedback talk. They can analyse the interactions with students according to the framework which may provide a stimulus for discussion and reflection upon the feedback processes being enacted within their taught sessions, as well as surrounding who has agency of the feedback and how it could be co-produced (Ketonen et al. 2024).
- **Peer-supported reflection:** As a means of scaffolding the teaching observation process that is commonly undertaken across the HE sector internationally, observers could draw upon the feedback talk tool to frame the reflective post-observation discussion as a means of identifying strengths and areas for development of feedback processes (Heron, Donaghue, and Balloo 2023). This could also be used within a mentoring relationship as the basis for mutual reflection.
- **Student-supported reflection:** As a means of informing the evaluation of teaching, students could apply the feedback talk tool to scaffold their articulation of the feedback that they provide to teachers to inform the development of teaching practice. This experience could also serve to support the mutual development of teacher and student feedback literacy through the recognition, reflection and action upon feedback interactions in taught classes.
- **Rapid reflection:** With the rapid evolution of generative artificial intelligence it might be possible to develop an openly accessible online application that allows teachers to upload classroom transcripts/video recordings of their taught sessions and receive an evaluation of the feedback talk that is present within their taught sessions within seconds.
- **Trends:** If the development of the generative AI application mentioned above were possible, this could allow for the analysis of data that could be evaluated for trends, e.g. do different disciplines/levels of teaching experience/types of taught sessions etc., exhibit different patterns of feedback talk?

### ***Limitations and future research***

Whilst the interview findings represented a range of disciplines, they all emerged from the same institution, which could be influenced by a variety of contextual variables (i.e. research versus teaching intensive institution). Future research could, therefore, aim to collect data from a range of different institutions and organisations (i.e. businesses,



counselling, emergency services etc.) to establish what influence the context might have on feedback talk patterns. The interviews also focused on evaluating small group, discursive-based approaches to teaching, and comparison of different approaches of teaching (i.e. lectures, laboratories, tutorials, supervisions etc.) might usefully be investigated to illuminate the ‘epistemic nuances’ (Nieminen and Carless 2022, 16) of feedback talk within different disciplines to capture patterns in its use and illuminate how it inhabits communities and their interactions (Carless and Winstone 2023). To date our research has focused exclusively on how teachers could make use of the tool in their practice. Future research could, therefore, focus on how the tool could support staff and students to co-reflect upon feedback talk to gain insight into how it is co-performed (Esterhazy et al. 2021), and how the tool can support the development of feedback literacy in both teachers and students. The tool might also be usefully applied to the teaching observation process to scaffold the evaluative and reflective dialogues that focus on pedagogic enhancement. Furthermore, no training was provided in relation to the application of the feedback talk framework in evaluating taught sessions within the interviews or teaching extracts used in the interviews, which could be influential in how participants engaged with the tool. Future research might usefully focus on using the tool to defuse the psychological threat often associated with assessment-related feedback through creating psychologically safe spaces in which to engage in assessment-free, low-stakes feedback.

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