

An aerial photograph of Singapore, showing the city skyline with the Marina Bay Sands hotel and the Singapore Flyer in the background. In the foreground, there is a large, modern university campus with a central green space and a bridge crossing a body of water.

Investigating teacher perceptions of feedback

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Importance of teacher feedback

- **Identify problematic areas clearly**
- **Allow students to work out solutions by themselves**

(Stern & Solomon, 2006)

Good feedback practice

- 1. Clarifies good performance (goals, criteria, expected standards)**
- 2. Facilitates student reflection**
- 3. Delivers high-quality information to students about their learning**
- 4. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning**
- 5. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem**
- 6. Closes the gap between current and desired performance**
- 7. Provides information to teachers to shape their teaching**

(Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 205)

Practice and beliefs

- Mismatch between practice and beliefs
- Practice often constrained by:
 - Classroom management issues
 - Curriculum requirements
 - Student expectations

(Borg, 2003; Phipps & Borg, 2009)

Practice and beliefs

- Limited studies on teacher perceptions of factors affecting their practice at the tertiary level
 - But see Hyland (2013a, 2013b)

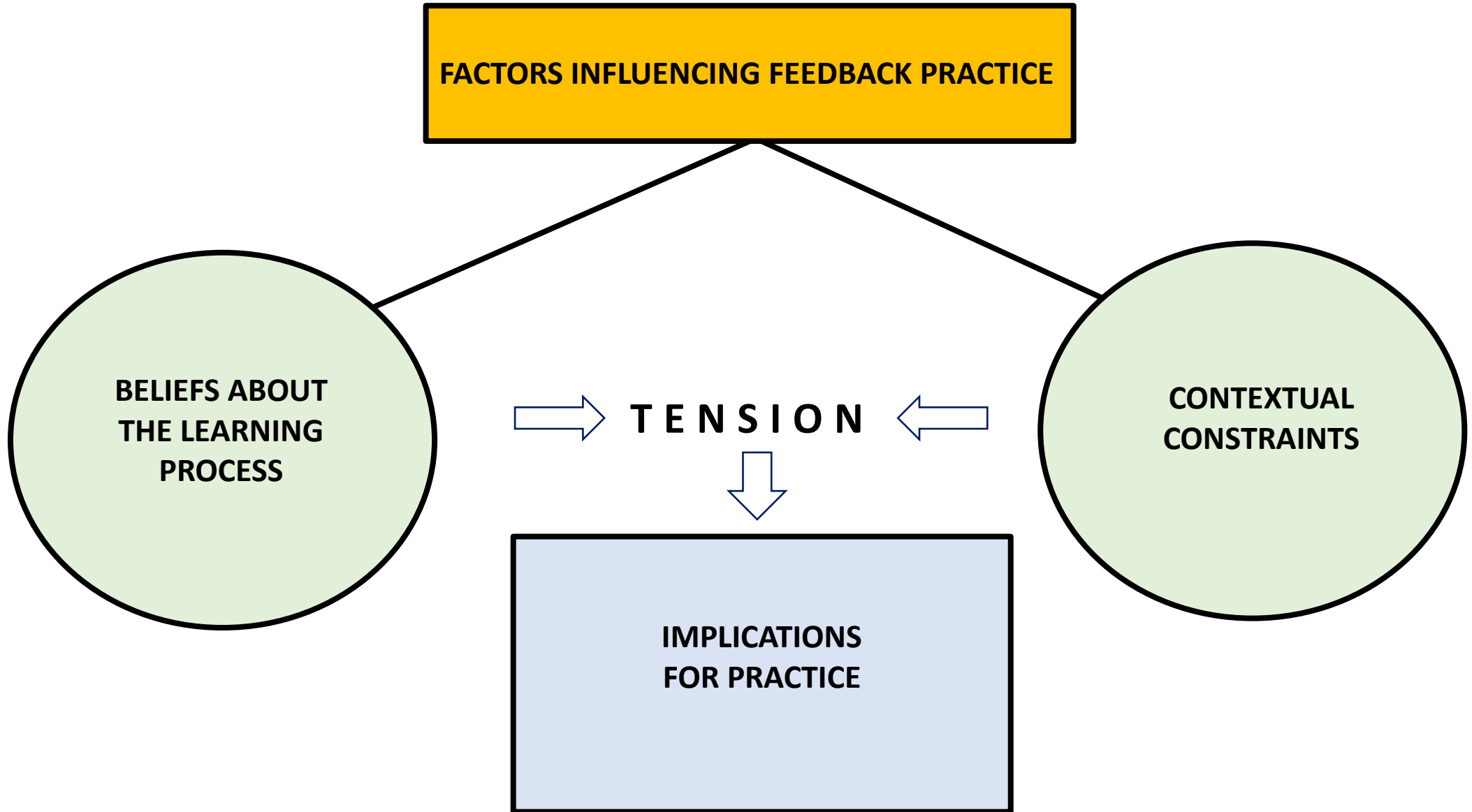
FACTORS INFLUENCING FEEDBACK PRACTICE

**BELIEFS ABOUT
THE LEARNING
PROCESS**

**CONTEXTUAL
CONSTRAINTS**

TENSION

**IMPLICATIONS
FOR PRACTICE**



Objectives of study

- **Factors influencing teacher feedback on academic writing at the tertiary level.**
 - *RQ1: Purpose of teacher feedback*
 - What are the beliefs of the respondents regarding the purpose of feedback?
 - *RQ2: Constraints on feedback practice*
 - What constraints, if any, do the respondents face in their feedback practices?

Methodology

- **Nine experienced teachers**
 - > 8 years of experience
 - Six females
 - Three males
- **Focus-group interviews**
 - Three to four respondents per group
 - Approximately 45 minutes per session
 - Semi-structured

Methodology — broad interview questions

- **For written assignments, what form(s) does/do your written feedback typically take?**
- **What do you typically focus on when providing feedback on a written assignment?**
- **What do you want/wish students to do with the written feedback you provide? Do you think your purpose is achieved? Why do you think so?**
- **What do you think students want most from your written feedback? Why do you think this?**

RQ1: Purpose of teacher feedback

Respondents' beliefs regarding the purpose of feedback

- Encourage learning by matching what students need with what they are capable of receiving

Okay, this is not informed by research. But based on my teaching experience, feedback is only useful if I make a comment at the level where you are at. If I made a comment that is over and above what you're capable of processing, it's lost. It's very demoralizing, it's not helpful.
(Hillary)

RQ1: Purpose of teacher feedback

Respondents' beliefs regarding the purpose of feedback

- Caution against “thinking aloud”

Sometimes, it's because we have so many scripts, we tend to forget that when we write the feedback, it's actually for the students. But in the end, the way we mark, or the way we put down our comments, it's like us thinking aloud.

(Elaine)

RQ1: Purpose of teacher feedback

Respondents' beliefs regarding the purpose of feedback

- Focus students' attention on the learning process, and independent/reflective learning

It's our belief that process is more important than outcome.
(Caroline)

I don't want to give them everything. So what I do is, sometimes, when major things are wrong, I will just say, you know, you should remember that lecture or that tutorial. I don't want to tell them everything. *(Dorothy)*

RQ2: Constraints

Constraints, if any, facing the respondents in their feedback practices

- Institutional constraints

- Class size
- Teaching load
- Grade distribution

I feel that my feedback these days is a mixed bag of motives — to help students improve, that's true. But it's also determined by course requirements, marking schedule, institutional requirements (including self-preservation motives), and doesn't always reflect my most deeply held, personal beliefs about teaching.
(John)

RQ2: Constraints

Constraints, if any, facing the respondents in their feedback practices

- **Emphasis on grades; hence, grade justification**

Now, since joining the university, I have changed the way I give feedback. Because, you know, they are so concerned about the grades. So I have learnt from my colleagues, and from my own experience, to write more and more comments to justify the grade. So I have become more explicit in that way. *(Dorothy)*

Implications for practice

- Tension between practice and beliefs
- Recommendations
 - Grade-less feedback
 - Regular feedback on ungraded assignments
 - Feedback-preference sheet (Bloxham & Campbell, 2010)

FACTORS INFLUENCING FEEDBACK PRACTICE

BELIEFS ABOUT THE LEARNING PROCESS

Feedback pegged at an appropriate level

Independent learning

Self assessment

CONTEXTUAL CONSTRAINTS

Institutional / administrative requirements

Student attitudes toward performance measurement

→ **TENSION** ←



Implications for practice

1. Feedback only, without grades
2. Regular feedback on ungraded assignments
3. Interactive cover sheet
4. Standardized feedback sheet

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