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The sensitive nature of feedback as a sequential phenomenon

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Abstract: Social actions such as advice and feedback are sensitive actions, often triggering emotional and defensive reactions. Moreover, just how to understand and describe such actions – for instance, as "constructive advice", "complaints", or even "insults" – is a potential point of contention and dispute for participants in interaction. Based on a corpus of video data from higher education, our research aims to develop a conceptual and empirically grounded understanding of the social organization of feedback. This study investigates how students and teachers orient towards the sensitive nature of feedback in critique sessions in architectural education. With a few examples from the data set, the study focuses on three issues: a) the sequential organization of feedback; b) the grounds for two (conflicting) orientations to the feedback; and c) the ongoing instructional work to make the students hear the feedback in the "right" way.

Introduction

Numerous studies and meta-studies show the massive presence, relevance, and diversity of feedback in higher education – from formative assessments of completed course work to responsive instructions produced during the performance of tasks (e.g., Evans, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback is used to point out mistakes or misconceptions, provide advice on how an assignment could be further improved or differently approached, and strengthen the students' ability to monitor their own performance. While the central role of feedback is agreed upon, not all feedback is equally effective in terms of learning. In a review of research on feedback, Hattie and Timperley (2007) maintain that praise is ineffective "because it contains such little learning related information" (p 86). They further argue that feedback seems to be "more effective when there are perceived low rather than high levels of threat to self-esteem, presumably because low-threat conditions allow attention to be paid to the feedback" (ibid.).

Although claims by Hattie and Timperley could be problematized on both empirical and conceptual grounds, they highlight a persistent challenge for university teachers: how to point out mistakes and deliver advice that is beneficial to student learning in ways that pose little 'threat' to students. Students and teachers tend to report different perspectives on what feedback is or should consist of (see Carless, 2006; Henderson et al., 2019). It is often possible to understand feedback, advice, or critical remarks in different ways. What the teachers perceive to be constructive feedback, the students might hear simply as complaints. This tension is not limited to higher education: feedback, advice, and similar social actions are delicate matters in mundane and institutional settings (Sutton et al., 2012).

When locating feedback as a critical activity within many educational settings, we see a need to enrich the view on what this notion might encompass. This study, therefore, takes an interest in the delicate, ambiguous, and potentially contentious nature of critical feedback and how this delicacy is constituted and handled in interaction. We have examined a larger corpus of recordings of critique sessions in architecture education with an analytical starting point in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970). To develop our line of argument, we will address a) the sensitive nature of feedback as a *sequential* phenomenon; b) the grounds for two potentially conflicting *orientations* to feedback; and c) the ongoing *instructional work* designed to make students hear and understand feedback in the "proper" way.

Background

Before turning to the empirical part of the study, we outline some prior research tied to the interactional phenomena and context of the study. The first section summarizes some findings on the social organization of feedback, advice, and critique, and more specifically, studies that investigate the sensitive and potentially problematic aspects of this type of interaction. The second section concerns the context of the study, and briefly discusses prior research on 'critique sessions' in architecture education. As the term critique session implies, and the existing literature demonstrates, such educational arrangements are useful settings for investigating *critical* feedback and how teachers and students orient to its sensitive nature.

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The interactional organization of feedback and advice

The problematic and ambiguous character of critical feedback is reflected in the English language (as well as other languages). As a verb, 'critique' could mean to "evaluate (a theory or practice) in a detailed and analytical way", but also to "indicate the faults of (someone or something) in a disapproving way" (Oxford Dictionary of English). Delivering 'constructive criticism' might have positive connotations, but 'being criticised' seldom does; and although 'complaining' is regularly understood to be essentially different from 'giving advice,' it is often hard to determine whether an utterance removed from its natural context is advising, critiquing, complaining, or something else. Whether an utterance is understood to be offering advice or making a complaint is tied to particular occasions, and its sense might be perceived differently by speakers and recipients (Heritage & Sefi, 1992).

Actions are also reflexively tied to activities and membership categories (Sacks, 1992). A remark on the speed of a driver that is uncontroversial during a driving lesson, has the potential of becoming provocative when it is said by a fellow passenger. During a driving lesson, the remarks, directives, and advice from the traffic instructor are relevantly understood in terms of teaching and learning. When fellow passengers comment on the speed or proximity to the roadside, this might be heard as a negative remark on the driving. As noted by Heinemann and Traverso (2008), speakers seldom characterize what they are doing as complaining, but instead use "less negatively valenced labels such as 'criticizing,' 'troubles-telling' or even 'factually reporting'" (p. 2381). Nevertheless, the insurance that the passenger is 'just telling' does not necessarily lead the driver to hear anything but a 'complaint' from a 'back-seat driver.' As Edwards (2005) surmises, "'complaining' [and we might add, 'critique' and 'feedback'] is a defeasible vernacular category with normative oriented-to properties and consequences" (p. 7)

In educational settings, where feedback and critical advice from teachers are expected features of educational exchanges, one might think that the sensitive aspect of feedback would be absent. As observed in previous research on feedback in higher education (Vevhiläinen, 2009), however, the educational context per se does not remove the sensitive nature of feedback. When a teacher suggests that something could be done in a different way – for instance, that the introduction of a manuscript could be differently organized – it could potentially be heard by the student as saying that the introduction is not good enough, or that the student has failed to live up to the relevant standards. It is therefore common that teachers orient towards feedback that potentially involves negative assessment as socially problematic (Skovholt, 2018). As testified by the literature on architectural critiques, moreover, students sometimes experience that feedback is more closely tied to power and authority than to learning and development.

Critique sessions in architecture education

All over the world, students of architecture traditionally spend much of their time working with models, sketches, and plans in different kind of design-projects – sometimes alone, at other times collaborating in small groups (Schön, 1983). At the end of a course, students and their projects are regularly assessed and evaluated. Reflecting the project-based structure of the education, as well as the complexity and multifaceted nature of the domain, assessments such as written tests are commonly put back in flavor of what is variously called *design reviews*, *juries, dialogues, critiques*, or *crits*. Design reviews typically begin with students presenting their projects to an audience of staff members, professional architects, and peers (e.g., Lymer, Ivarsson & Lindwall, 2009; Lymer, Lindwall & Ivarsson, 2011; Webster, 2005, 2007). After the presentation, staff members and invited professionals criticize, comment on, and discuss the students' work, elaborating on the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the presented projects.

When asked, students and staff members often highlight that design reviews provide students opportunities to display their work and to articulate their ideas, to receive formative feedback from teachers and peers, and to critically reflect central issues, and to improve and progress in their work (Smith 2021). Even if the strengths of design reviews are brought forward, however, students as well as staff frequently display mixed feelings about these events. As noted by Webster (2007), for instance, it is not uncommon for "students to describe the purpose of design juries as an occasion for both individual learning and the collective celebration of student achievements while at the same time recalling their own experiences of design juries as profoundly de-motivating and competitive." (p. 287). Other students express more reproving attitudes towards the design reviews, describing them "as an ordeal devised by tutors to leave them feeling as though they have been 'undressed in public'" (Doidge, Sara & Pamell, 2000, s. vii).

With titles such as "Design juries on trial" (Anthony, 1991), "Judging juries" (Anthony, 1989), "Reviewing the review" (Wilkin, 2000), and "Critiquing 'Critiques'" (Dannels & Norris Martin, 2008) several studies of design reviews critically assess and evaluate the educational format. Reporting on a one-year ethnographic study at a British school of education, for instance, Webster maintains that the design reviews mainly

are events where "staff uses their power to coerce students into reproducing staff-centered constructions of architectural habitus" (2005, p. 265). She further argues that the practice of critique itself is replete with structural features working against student learning. In light of this argument, "the continuing use of the architectural review is questioned" (ibid.). In a later study based on the same material, Webster (2007) draws on Foucault to discuss "the analytics of power" and the "startling schism between the official, or declared, intentions of the critics and their actions" (p. 24). From this analysis, Webster concludes that the design review should be "replaced by a new set of pedagogic events that are carefully constructed to support student learning" (p. 21). Other researchers, while acknowledging the problems with the design reviews, take a less radical approach and point to the need of "feedback literacy" among students and teachers (Smith, 2021).

Theory and methods

In this study, and in contrast to some of the research outlined in the previous section, we are less interested in evaluating or critiquing the educational format, as in explicating the local and situated organizations that occasions the sensitive or contentious features of feedback. Prior studies that have investigated these features have drawn on existing models and theories from sociology and social psychology, and conceptualizing the sensitive nature of feedback in terms of face-work (Goffman, 1955), politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and motivation (Swann, 1990). With an analytical starting point in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970), our interest is instead directed to the endogenous organization of social actions, and how members continually display their understanding of and orientation to prior actions as a constitutive part of this organization.

As repeatedly demonstrated in conversation analytic studies, social actions have a sequential organization; this means that each turn-at-talk displays an 'analysis' of the previous, which may then be either ratified or 'repaired' in subsequent contributions. This, in turn, provides us as researchers the material for our 'second-order' analysis – if the members sequentially display their understanding to each other, they do so for us as professional analysts as well (Lindwall, Lymer, & Greiffenhangen, 2015; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson; 1974). This sequentially based interactional conception of participant orientations provides a powerful analytic tool to ground claims that participants in a particular activity can be described as, for instance, orienting towards aspects of feedback as 'delicate' or 'sensitive'. Likewise, an analysis of resistance and/or dispute in relation to feedback interactions can be grounded in the sequential, turn-by-turn achievement of shared, contested or negotiated understandings.

In conversation analysis, the notion of "sequence organization" refers to the organization of meaningful courses of action enacted through turns-at-talk and embodied practices such as head nods, gestures, and shifts in posture (Schegloff, 2007). In order to follow and to be part of a meaningful interactional exchange, members need to monitor and analyze talk and embodied practices so as to understand what other members are doing and in order to respond in appropriate and coherent ways. The most basic sequential organization is the adjacency pair, which is a unit consisting of two actions produced by different speakers, and where one of the actions initiate the exchange, whereas the next action responds to the first. Typical examples of adjacency pairs include greetings ("Hello", "Hi") and question-answers ("what time is it?", "five a clock?"). In feedback interactions, more complex sequences emerge. Just as with adjacency pairs, however, analytic attention is devoted to examining actions and their responses, along with the ensuing sequences.

The study is part of a larger project where we investigate the sensitive nature of feedback across different settings, including text supervision in social science and 'debriefings' in martime and medical education. The examples presented in this study is drawn from a corpus of 70 hours of video material of critique sessions in architecture education. The recordings were made during a period of four months at a Swedish school of architecture. In total, 159 critique sessions have been video recorded, ranging in length from 10 minutes up to one hour. In the present paper, a highly selective approach is taken, presenting two extracts of interaction as illustrative examples of the issues under discussion. The episodes have been transcribed following the conventions developed in conversation analysis (e.g., Jefferson, 1984). In the transcripts, pauses are represented as numbers of seconds within brackets, with (.) indicating micro pauses. Co-occurring talk is horizontally aligned, with square brackets marking the onset of overlap. Extended vowel sounds are marked with colons, as in e:::h; >talk< indicates that it was delivered more rapidly than the surrounding talk, and <talk> that it was delivered more slowly. The original material is in Swedish, but given the limited space, only the English translations are offered here. For the same reason, actions such as gestures, head nods, and posture are excluded from the transcripts.

Results

Feedback and sequence organization

By examining the video recorded material, and returning to the notion of sequence organization, it is clear that feedback is not constituted by one specific type of initiating action with its corresponding next; feedback sequences do not constitute a particular form of adjacency pairs. The feedback provided by instructors and professional architects in the critique sessions take many forms and shapes; among the common variants, we find assessments ("this is a beautiful solution"), suggestions ("perhaps you could have used marble as the base"), questions ("what was the main concept with this floor plan?"), and directives ("do not read the presentation, but speak freely instead").

A first issue for students is whether they should explicitly respond to the feedback or not. This issue turns on the shifting and ambiguous addressivity of critic's talk – and its 'split audience design'. On the one hand, the critique is addressed to the group of students responsible for the design. Also present, however, are the students' peers from the same class. In an important sense then, the feedback is at the same time produced to be heard by a larger audience of students. During the course of a session, the relative emphasis put on addressing the particular group, or addressing the audience as a whole tends to vary. The critic might move from asking the responsible students a series of questions about the design, to elaborating on more general concerns. Even when doing the latter, however, the particular design proposal is often explicitly used as an example. This generates an interactionally difficult situation for students, in terms of the relevance of responding to feedback.

If a first issue for students is when to respond, a second issue is how responses should be designed. Since conversational exchanges are produced sequentially through a 'paired' structure, which includes expansions to the 'base-pair', the students need to produce a next action that fits the first for the interaction to be coherent. A request can both be met with acceptance and rejection, but if someone responds with a greeting it could potentially signal some trouble of hearing or understanding. In the design reviews, students typically respond to initiating actions with "type-conforming" (Raymond, 2003) nexts; i.e., questions are responded to by answers or accounts, suggestions with acceptance or rejection, and assessments with acknowledgement or perhaps second assessments.

Going back to the introduction, however, feedback in its various forms have the potential to be understood in different ways. Regardless of the form of the criticism – whether it is produced as questions, reminders, or assessments – it could be heard as doing 'complaining' rather than 'constructive advice'. Given that interaction is sequentially ordered, moreover, these understandings are displayed in and through the students' responses. When advice is is met by "I am sorry I made these mistakes", moreover, the response is not only doing an excuse, it also shows that the student heard a complaint in the previous utterance. In our data, such ascriptions are treated as problematic by instructors and invited professionals, and they typically engage in attempts to 'repair' the students displayed understanding of feedback as complaints.

'Counter complaints' is another next action produced by students which turns the interaction away from issues of learning and constructive advice towards issues of guilt and blame for having done something wrong. Excerpt 1 is a case in point. Before the episode, the students had presented a design proposal which include a hotel and a restaurant. One of the things that the instructor raises in relation to this proposal is the size of the ventilation shaft. When the episode in Excerpt 1 begins, the critic has already told the students that the ventilation shaft needs to be much larger, and he concludes by summarizing this point in the first three lines of the transcript.

Excerpt 1

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01 KENT: what one has to show when making hotel and restaurant in this way (.) you have to
02       think like something goes up and something also goes down (.) we recycle air (.) and
03       things like that=
04 Per:  =it had been good if you had told these things us when we asked you
05       [during the process]
06 KENT: [yea but you have  ] to arrive at that point in the drawings (.) we can't
07       tell you everything from day one you know cause then (.) you'll (.)
08       collapse in-=
09 Dan:  =but [we   ] have had            [just] that discussion with you actually
10 KENT:      [yeah ]                     [yeah]
11 Dan:  =if one should be strict (.) and we didn't get any measurements,
12 KENT: yeah
13 Dan:  it's very hard when you say (.) that yea it demands very much  [space]
14 KENT:                                                                [yeah ]
15       but [then I say that now         ]
16 Dan:      [yea and then it's like that ] aha then we asked like this y'know
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In the beginning of the episode, the critic turns from looking at the plans to the audience of peer students when saying that "one has to show" (line 01 and Figure 1). The gaze and the posture, together with the use of a generic one (sv. *man*), marks the utterance as addressed to all the students rather than just those responsible for the project. When shifting from "one" to "you" (sv. *ni*) in "so you have to think like" (403), the critic is still looking at the audience, and the utterance can therefore be relevantly heard as still addressing a generic recipient rather than pointing out those who had produced the design proposal. Understood in this way, the comment is not just about this specific project, but something that all aspiring architects have to think about. This kind of hearing would also constitute a case of 'formative' assessment, where the comments grounded in the current example occasions larger issues and contexts not yet encountered. It is something to be heeded by all participants, not just the group under scrutiny.

The discussion that ensues, however, makes evident that the presenting students hear the critic differently. The comment about missing air ducts is treated as a 'summative' assessment of the presented design and not just a relevant consideration for anyone designing a hotel or restaurant. The missing feature is thereby understood as a flaw in the design. While hearing the critics remark in this way, the students are unwilling to take the full blame. By topicalizing a prior discussion about ventilation when the critic was acting as teacher, Per and Dan jointly formulate a counter-complaint targeting the lack of prior advice. The organization of this interchange is more complex than the examples of adjacency pairs initially offered in this section. For the purposes here, however, the most relevant thing is that the students, through their response, treat the feedback as a complaint about the design and by implication their performance. Heard as such, the critic's comments are relevantly countered based on what happened during the process.

In his response to the students' counter complaint, the critic addresses both the grounds of the counter-complaint and dismissing the relevancy of it in the current situation: he talks about the conditions of giving feedback – that it is impossible to provide all the relevant information at once – and that he frames the feedback as advice that is offered "now" (line 15), thereby accentuating the forward-looking aspect of the design reviews. The comments are thereby framed as lessons to be learned from the design review rather than evaluations of previous performance.

Two orientations

Design reviews have both *summative* and *formative* functions. On the one hand, the activities provide evaluations and gradings on students and their projects. On the other hand, they are instructional activities, aimed at furnishing and scaffolding the learning and development of disciplinary skills – for the students responsible for the project, but also for the peers acting as an audience to the critique. In Excerpt 1, like in many other episodes in our material, there is a tension between how the students and the critics approach the design review. In this example, the students orient towards the summative rather than the formative aspects of the critics' comments – it is about *their* design and what *they* should have done. The manifest orientation of the critic is different: he uses the students' design proposal to make general and instructive comments to the audience of students in the room, not just the ones that presented their project. The core issue is what the design proposal in front of him can teach all students present in the room.

From the latter orientation, the students 'misunderstand' the remarks by responding to them as primarily having a summative and retrospective character. Although he initially addresses the issue of the 'missing advice', and the rationale for why he did not do what the students wanted him to do, he then turns to the ways in which the comments should be heard – that it is the lesson that is important, not when this lesson is learned. For students and critics alike, however, the situation is inherently unstable. The students are sometimes expected to provide accounts and explain their choices, whereas at other times, such explanations are treated as interferences. This means that from one situation to a next, the activity could turn from an assessment of a particular project to a 'lecture' where the work of the students is merely used as an example of some more general issue.

The two orientations can partly be understood with reference to the members' different relation to the design proposal. The students have spent several weeks, working hard to produce a strong design proposal that is now to be assessed and discussed by a professional architect. They are there to present and to some extent defend their proposal, and it might therefore be hard to switch to a hearing where the proposal is just being used as an example. For the critic, in contrast, the proposal is just one of several proposals that are being discussed that day, and the point is not just to give feedback to the students who produced the proposal but also to use the occasion to lecture about general issues central to architectural practice.

In other design reviews, the issue of 'fairness' is raised by students: 'how come that the critic raised a problem with our design proposal and not with the subsequent proposal which had the same manifest problem?' From the point of giving advice to the whole group of attending students, however, the very fact that they have already dealt with the issue is a reason for not dealing with it again. There are countless issues that could

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potentially be raised during the design review and time is limited so there might be plenty of reasons to not bring the same issue up again. Still, the design review is also an occasion for assessment, and as such, it is understandable that the students orient to quality – the strengths and weaknesses of design proposals – in relative terms.

Continuous interactional work

A central point in Mehan's (1979) classic study "learning lessons" is that pupils in the lower grades are not just learning the content of the lessons – they are learning 'lessons' in the sense of learning the endogenous organization of the lesson, how to appropriately take the turn, respond to a question, hear and understand what an appropriate question sounds like et cetera (see also Macbeth, 2003). In a parallel way, the students (and in a different way, the critics) taking part of the design review are learning how to hear and understand the critique. Although there are separate occasions where the format of the design reviews is discussed, including how one gives and receives critique, the instruction on how the critique should be heard is ongoing throughout the actual critique sessions. As already pointed out, the situation is in a sense inherently unstable where the students sometimes are expected to give accounts for their decisions and at other times they are just supposed to listen.

In Excerpt 1, this could be seen in how the critic attempts to end the issue of 'who's to blame', and the associated retrospective orientation, by pointing out that the main thing is what is said here and now. During this sequence, moreover, the critic breaks in with (10, 14, 16) minimal responses in overlap, thereby signaling a move towards a closing of the sequence. This orientation towards the ways in which the comments are heard and responded to is also displayed through bodily means. The critic might for instance give a thumbs up, showing a positive stance towards the effort that the students have put in their work, at the same time as he looks down (Figure 1, left) or turn towards their design proposal, thereby signaling a readiness to move on to the next thing; or use a gesture to the effect that an account is not necessary (Figure 1, right).



Figure 1. To the left, the critic gives a thumbs up while looking away and then turning to the poster. To the right, the critic makes a gesture to the effect that further explanations are not necessary.

On some occasions the purpose of the critique, and how the critique should be heard and understood are formulated explicitly. Excerpt 2 takes place approximately a minute after Excerpt 1, and during this time, the issue has centered on what was done in the design studio, and what teachers could or could not be expected to do – especially whether and to what extent the teachers should or could provide answers to the students' detailed questions about their projects. At this point, the critic breaks in by formulating the activity of critique, which is heard and treated as closing this particular issue, and a move to the next.

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Excerpt 2
01 KENT:  but take don't take it like the correct answer don't take critique in that way.
02        like we have taken apartments but but (.) bring with you the knowledge y'know
03        instead tha- better (.) uhm it's only that you can do this (.) you can think like
04        that when you redesign the house.
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In Excerpt 2, the critic is explicitly correcting the students' responses to the critique and previous comments and proposes how they should understand the critique instead. According to this proposal, it is not so much about the mistakes made – that the students "have taken apartments" – but that they should bring with them "a knowledge." This formulation of the activity provides a clarification of how critique should be understood: that they should listen to critique as suggestions on what they "can do" and "can think," rather than about the things that actually have or have not been done.

Discussion

A central aim of the project is to use the empirical results to discuss, problematize, and expand the theoretical literature on feedback. Schegloff (1996, p. 164) has argued that the disciplined study of particular actions is missing in much of the social scientific discourse. He adds that sometimes "they appear to be virtually epiphenomenal expressions of 'underlying' factors, processes, and variables – norms, rationality, conformity, power, system functions, and the like, but important largely as the public face, the accessible display and indicator, of those underlying forces." This characterization is also applicable to theories that set out to investigate the sensitive nature of feedback. Although theories of facework, politeness, and self-enhancement have some explanatory value, our video recorded material suggest that such matters are secondary to more manifest and pedagogically relevant concerns. The point of the infamous 'sandwhich model of feedback', where constructive or critical feedback are embedded in positive comments delivered before and after the critique, might not be to act or come across as nice or polite, as often is claimed; but to make the student hear, understand, and respond to the comments as educationally relevant feedback and not compliants. We therefore believe that a reconceptualization of feedback, grounded in the in vivo orientations of the participants and sequential organization of the interaction, would be a significant conceptual expansion of and a potential alternative to current theories and models.

A prominent strand in educational research on feedback is a 'remedial' agenda, embodied both in the efforts to develop optimal ways of delivering feedback, and in the fostering of student and teacher competencies to relevantly understand the significance of instructional feedback. Although there are many mertis to such appcoaches, it is also important to understand how the ambiguous nature of critique is not limited to educational situations and that the very *possibility* of hearing an advice in a negative way might be without remedy. At the same time, it is important to understand that that an emotional and defensive reaction to critique cannot be discarded simply as a 'misunderstanding'. The possibility of emotional and defensive responses are to no small degree provided by the interactional nature of feedback activities; "hearing it the wrong way" is one in a range of accountably rational ways in which any instantiation of feedback can be heard. There are of course strong reasons why we should aim for a better 'climate' in educational setting and there are clearly benefits of fostering different forms of 'feedback literacies'. Nevertheless there are also reasons to closely investigate the 'endogenous pedagogies' of settings where critical feedback is a constituve part, and to connect our understanding of feedback with our understanding of how critique is produced and received in other mundane and institutional settings.

It might be possible to read Hattie and Timperley's (2007) conclusions regarding "low levels of threat" through an interactional lens, as saying that feedback should ideally be produced and heard as e.g., 'constructive criticism', rather than 'complaints'. As Edwards (2005) notes, however, these lables are defeasible vernacular categories "with normative, oriented-to properties and consequences" (p. 7). The defeasibility of categorizations point to the fact that "the same stretch of talk might […] be glossed as criticism or accusation, troubles-telling, or merely story-telling or factual reportage, which are potentially relevant alternatives for speakers when characterizing their activities" (ibid). This means that what levels of perceived threat might be ascribed to a particular instance of feedback cannot be located solely in the production features of the feedback turns. As our analyses illustrate,moreover, orientations to 'threat' is a sequential phenomenon, developed incrementally through student responses as much as the design of the feedback itself. In some cases, something akin to 'perceived threat to self-esteem' is even explicitly addressed in critics' remarks regarding 'how to take critique'. Excerpt 2 can be read as an exhortation to pay attention to the feedback, instead of responding to its summative elements. The important thing is, again, that these are sequential phenomena with an inherent openness to them.

Although the problem of how critique is heard or understood is inherently interactional, it is also connected to whatever resources one has to make sense of the critique. In this respect we could observe that students became accustomed to feedback as something prospective and formative as they progressed through their education. This form of hearing is thus itself a lesson to be learned where one adjusts to the professional expectations at work. Nevertheless, there is still room for instructions in the communication. Whenever there are shifts between retrospective assessments and prospective lecturing these shifts can be more or less clearly communicated. The mitigation of what is perceived as threatening to students could reasonably be managed by critics overtly describing what they aim to accomplish with specific comments. We certainly see that this is happening in our materials (and it is partly present in the example as well). For the future however, this topic is worth further treatment.

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