English Supervisor Resources: exemplar essay, Transitions to Academic Writing

The student has identified an appropriate basis for analysis and the range of primary material is good. However, the essay would have benefited from closer and a more detailed discussion of fewer materials. Though the Beckett material is interesting, I wonder if it is necessary, as currently it sits a little oddly. There are even moments in which the focus of the essay appears to be Beckett, and one of the most concise questions the students raises (the suggestion that Beckett may be "challenging his audience to try and understand a new form of communication in his plays") is not sustained or even answered, and what relation this has to Shakespeare’s use of faces is not made clear. That said, the student’s readings of primary materials are sensitive and imaginative. Also, the use of The Spectator is good, opening very relevant questions of performativity that could be applied effectively to either Beckett or Shakespeare. However, I would suggest that when the student engages in the discussion of audience relations and performativity in theatre, he or she should make an effort to incorporate aspects of drama and performance theory into the analysis. This may be the principle problem - there is very little evidence of secondary reading or awareness of theoretical issues to support the good primary readings.