What Can Students Gain From Multimodal Feedback?

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Extended Abstract

Providing feedback to language students is an integral part of instruction as it helps improve their academic performance (Ahmadi, Maftoon & Mehrdad, 2012; Parr & Timperley, 2010). Traditionally, feedback on students' writing is written/typed on drafts and/or conveyed via face-to-face conferences. However, some problems that educators using traditional methods face, with increased workload and class sizes, are the timeliness and quality of feedback, time constraints of conferencing sessions, and a lack of engagement by students with feedback (Crook et al., 2012). Recent research suggests that using technology to provide feedback can further enhance learners' performance by promoting deeper learning and higher order thinking (Nicols & Milligan, 2006) as well as increase students' self-regulated learning (Parr & Timperley, 2010). For instance, the use of video technology and other voice and screen recording software such as Educreations, Screen Capture and Jing (Pompus & Yee, 2012) consistently point to the remarkable benefits that such a technology brings to enhancing learners’ performance. Educators have reported that technology has not only increased students' engagement in learning, but also provided good quality and timely feedback.

This study aims to explore the impact of using an iPad screenscasting software to provide feedback to students. More specifically, it focuses on the learners' progress on writing an academic essay by providing multimodal feedback (i.e. audio and visual modes). The wider implementations of this exploratory study are that this software can be used to deepen students' understanding of other language areas and even fields in other disciplines. More specifically, the main research focus of this study is to investigate the extent to which the use of screencast software in providing verbal feedback has enhanced students’ capacity for higher-order thinking and self-regulated learning when it comes to writing academic essays.

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The results are collected from surveys, interviews, and students' writing. The findings will impact strongly on providing feedback based on the needs analyses specific for a group of students enrolled in an English academic writing course at the Centre for English Language Communication, and it can be widely adopted by departments and faculties at the National University of Singapore and even among the wider international education community. The data to support this research question are collected from:

a) analyses of students’ writing;
b) interviews of selected students;
c) questionnaires on how students feel about the verbal feedback provided through the software; and

d) the researcher’s own personal reflections throughout the study.

The purpose this presentation is to share the researcher's and students' experiences of three practices of feedback given to three different groups of learners in a 12-week academic writing course. Learners in the control group received feedback during individual face-to-face conferences, and learners in the experimental groups received either only online written feedback or online multimodal (written and audio) feedback. All three groups of students were given feedback on the content, organisation and language of their essay drafts based on Parr and Timperley's (2010) principles of good feedback practice. All the feedback informed learners of where they were at, key features of the desired academic performance they should achieve so they could notice any ‘gaps’ in their work, and what needed to be done to achieve the desired performance. More importantly, such feedback is able to prompt learners to think critically about the strengths and weaknesses in their work and enable them to take ownership of their learning beyond the classroom.

By the end of this session, participants will learn more about students' writing performance, the qualitative and quantitative measurements of students' experiences using different modalities of feedback, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of using online resources to provide feedback to students' writing. Moreover, the presentation will also address how educators can best provide quality feedback to language learners in higher education.
References


