A Preliminary Study of the Use of Self-Recordings of Student Presentations and Online Peer Feedback in Larger Classes

JooEan Tan
Division of Sociology, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore 637332

*Corresponding Author’s E-mail: jetan@ntu.edu.sg

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
The student presentation is an important way for students to learn how to summarize and communicate information. It complements the learning and mastery of ideas and information which is often the main focus of education. However, increasing class size makes it more difficult to incorporate student presentation in the curriculum (Sander et al., 2002). There is also concern that the information presented by students may be inaccurate (Farnsworth, 2008). These problems can be overcome with the innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT). The use of ICT, such as the video recording of student presentations, offers additional opportunities to provide feedback to the students (Barry, 2012). Cochrane (2009) created specialized software for students to use a webcam to record presentations and receive peer feedback. In this paper, I will describe the use of commercially available ICT to record student presentations of their project findings for peer feedback. The use of ICT and peer feedback removes the challenges student presentations present in the face of increasing class size.

Background
I taught a required course in the Sociology program at Nanyang Technological University on social organizations a number of times (once a year from 2006 to 2011). The main written assignment was a news archive project: students were required to write a report about an organization that had received news coverage in the past year and present their findings to the class. I had approximately 40 students the first time I taught the course and it was possible to organize presentations during the final two weeks of classes. However, student enrolments more than doubled in subsequent years and it was no longer feasible for students to do “live” presentations.

The availability of AcuStudio software, which is mainly used to record lectures, made audio-video recorded student presentations a viable alternative. In subsequent cohorts, students recorded their presentations at a computer that had a webcam and a microphone. The software had the option to sync the presentation recordings with PowerPoint slides. They were required to record a 5-minute presentation of their main findings, upload their presentation to a discussion forum in Blackboard, a learning
management system, and give peer feedback to an assigned student in the form of a comment in the discussion forum. Both the presentation recording and feedback were assessed as components of class participation. For their presentation, students were asked to identify their main findings and to explain them succinctly. Summarizing findings and communicating successfully is an important skill that students have few opportunities to practice in larger classes.

Implementation
Organizing the presentation recordings was logistically challenging for a number of reasons. First, I needed to ensure that the larger computer labs were available during the recording week to accommodate the students in a tutorial group, and that the AcuStudio software was installed on the computers. Second, the students needed to be familiarized with the AcuStudio. They were also informed of the schedule for recording, deadlines for uploading the link to Blackboard, and deadlines for giving feedback. The presentation recordings were organized by tutorial groups and so the peer feedback came from randomly assigned students from the same tutorial group. It was scheduled for the week after the project reports were due. The advice I received from NTU’s Center of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) on how to organize the recordings was invaluable.

Findings
Overall, the students were not resistant to recording their presentations. They were able to successfully record and upload their presentations, and provide online feedback. However, there were some difficulties that were inherent in the nature of the task. First, for many of the students, this was the first time they were asked to record a presentation and some of them had difficulty getting started. Some students were very self-conscious when they started recording—there was giggling and whispering but after a while most of them settled down to the task and were able to complete their recordings during the 50-minute tutorial. A few students, however, had to come back again to complete their recordings. The reasons ranged from acute stage fright to technical problems with the hardware and software. A handful of students found the task very challenging mainly because they were trying to produce a “perfect” recording. They persisted in rerecording their presentation a number of times, even though I reminded them that it was only part of class participation and was not graded.

Second, many students had trouble keeping to the 5-minute time limit. While most students exceeded it by one or two minutes, a few students ignored the time limit and recorded presentations that exceeded 10 minutes. The main problems were giving too much background information about their organization and not being able to select their most important findings. This underscored the importance of giving students the opportunity to practice summarizing findings.

Students were also asked to give peer feedback on presentation style and the clarity of the Powerpoint slides. Even though they were only required to view the presentation of the student they were supposed to give feedback to, many students viewed all the presentations in their tutorial group. Some students even left comments for students who were not assigned to them. The peer feedback was generally encouraging and any given criticism was gentle. Using a discussion board for the peer feedback allowed interaction between the presenter and the student giving feedback.

The students’ reactions to the tasks were generally neutral. While the majority of students completed the task without any complaints, a few students voiced their dissatisfaction—some thought that it was too
much work while others did not see any value in the task. One student, for example, complained about the presentation recording in the Student Feedback on Teaching exercise—the student stated that it would have been better to conduct live presentations.

**Conclusions**

The self-recording of student presentations made it possible to have students in a large class present their report findings to their classmates and receive peer feedback. They were able to reap the benefits from the normal presentations such as summarizing and communicating report findings, as well as receiving feedback. There were added benefits such as speaking to a camera as they would if they were teleconferencing and students were also able to review their own presentations. There was no concern that the students would be sharing inaccurate information since they are presenting information from their reports and the concepts they used were discussed in lectures and tutorials.

**References**


