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Students' responses towards the use of screen recording technology in the teacher's feedback for students' EMI writing assignments at a university in Vietnam

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Given the essential role of teachers' feedback in language learning, a great body of research has been conducted to find ways of boosting the quality of teachers' comments on students' performance. Nonetheless, little has been written about the use of screen video recording technology especially through Loom website in recording more detailed, vivid, and effective video feedback for learners' writing assignments, especially in EMI context. Hence, this action research study was conducted to shed light on the learners' perspectives towards the use of screen recording technology (Loom) in the teacher's feedback for their writing assignments. Two data collection instruments, namely surveys and semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect data from a class majoring in English language at a university in Vietnam. The results revealed that all of the students had positive responses towards the video feedback recorded via Loom as it could bring several benefits for both learners and teachers. Loom multimedia feedback was claimed to be not only more detailed, and vivid with the aid of both text and audio explanation, but also more time-saving and convenient than text feedback. However, some minor drawbacks were also pointed out with several suggestions to enhance the quality of feedback.

Keywords: computer-assisted feedback, screen recording technology, feedback for students' writing

Introduction

1.1. Rationale

First, one main rationale for conducting this study is the remarkable merits of computer-assisted feedback in general and video feedback in particular. There has been a consensus among researchers about several advantages that video feedback containing both audio and text content can have for teaching and learning practice (Mahoney et al., 2018).

The second reason is the pluses of utilizing multimodality and dual channels for processing information effectively. According to Multimedia Learning Theory, students learn and understand better if teachers use dual channels: visual/ nonverbal and verbal materials (Mayer, 2014). Hard concepts and complicated issues can be more easily expressed via multimedia than images or written text alone, especially when feedback is constrained by space or word limits.

Third, potential problems with current feedback for writing were another major rationale. Learners tend to have difficulties understanding teachers' comments if the feedback is in written form only and constrained by space or word limits (Mahoney et al., 2018). For teachers, it is very time-consuming and inconvenient to type long detailed text feedback for students or facilitate synchronous meetings.

1.2. Aims and objectives

To help provide more detailed and vivid feedback for students' writing assignments in EMI courses, the researcher conducted this study, aiming at shedding light on the students' responses towards the use of video feedback for their academic writing assignments.

More specifically, the main research question is:

What were the students' opinions about the use of screen recording technology (Loom) in the teacher's feedback for their EMI writing assignments?

1.3. Literature review

1.3.1. Feedback. According to Kerr (2017, p. 2), feedback is defined as any kind of information that students receive about their performance. This can be in the forms of either corrective feedback which focuses a learner's attention on errors, or non-corrective feedback, such as praise or encouragement. Besides, the feedback can also be about the performance of peers. Information provided via feedback may include "not only answer correctness, but other information such as precision, timeliness, learning guidance, motivational messages, lesson sequence advisement, critical comparisons, and learning focus" (Hoska, 1993).

There have been various definitions of video feedback, yet overall, most scholars refer to video feedback as the use of video recordings as a medium to provide comments for students to help them build up their language skills, correct their mistakes, and have better guidance to develop their assignments (Mahoney et al., 2018).

In this study, to leverage all the potential benefits of video feedback, the researcher focused on *screencast feedback* with teachers' physical image in a corner of the screen

as this is believed to be the kind of video feedback that engages students the most as it can make use of facial expressions and non-verbal language from teachers (Mahoney et al., 2018).

1.3.2. Multimedia learning principles. Mayer (2002)'s principles which guide the design of efficient multimodal learning in general and feedback in particular are directly related to the use of video feedback to facilitate deeper learning in this study.

In the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, Mayer (2002) claimed that if information was presented in the form of animation and narration (spoken words) rather than animation and written text, there would be more likelihood for deep learning to take root.

The animation-text mode may cause cognitive "overload" in the visual channel since the information from both animation and the on-screen text will enter our brain system via eyes and must be processed, "at least initially" in the same visual channel (Mayer, 2002, p.119). By contrast, with animation-narration mode, spoken information will enter learners' brain via ears, and pictures will enter through eyes. Hence, there will be more "cognitive resources available for processing the information in the visual working memory, thus reducing cognitive load" (Mayer, 2002).

The cognitive theory of multimedia learning by Mayer (2002) lays the foundation for the design of video feedback in this study. To avoid cognitive overload in the visual working memory, the researcher combined both narrations with short annotations and graphic elements instead of just including long text feedback for learners.

Method

This action research study follows mixed-method approach (Creswell, 2013), with an in-depth analysis of the use of Loom to record and deliver teachers' video feedback for the students' writing assignments.

2.1. Educational contexts and participants

The research was undertaken at a foreign language university in Vietnam. A specific class of 20 participants majoring in English Translation and Interpreting was chosen. They were learning an EMI course about Translation Theory during the research process. All participants were required to finish a writing assignment in the course. The intervention phase took place during this 15-week course. All students were asked for consent to participate in the study and were informed about the research purposes.

2.2. Data collection

The main data collection instruments were surveys, and semi-structured interviews. The combination of two data collection instruments, especially between quantitative (survey) and qualitative instruments (semi-structured interview) provided a more comprehensive picture of the situation. This action research study consisted of two cycles, namely "Feedback without a rubric", and "Feedback with a rubric".



2.3. Data analysis

Statistical analysis (in Excel) was applied for the surveys, whereas thematic analysis was used for the interviews.

Results

Data from the surveys and interviews revealed students’ perspectives about many advantages of Loom multimedia feedback, yet some shortcomings were also mentioned together with several suggestions for better video feedback practices.

3.1. Advantages

Most strikingly, almost all students mentioned a variety of merits of Loom feedback in both the survey and interview.

According to the survey, roughly 2/3 of the students rated Loom feedback as “good” and the remainder even rated it as “excellent” in boosting the lecturer’s feedback.

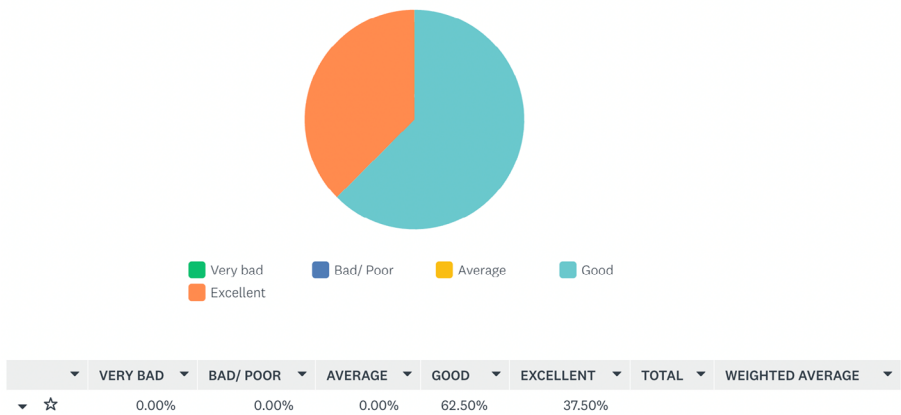


Figure 1. Students’ evaluation of the effectiveness of Loom multimedia feedback in improving teacher’s feedback quality

More notably, when being asked about the effectiveness of Loom multimedia feedback in helping to enhance the quality of their assignments, the students gave an average rating of 4.6/5, which is a very positive evaluation.



Figure 2. Students’ evaluation of the effectiveness of Loom multimedia feedback in enhancing students’ writing skills

Additionally, when being asked about whether they prefer Loom feedback or traditional text feedback, a significant majority of the students chose Loom feedback option as shown in Figure 3.

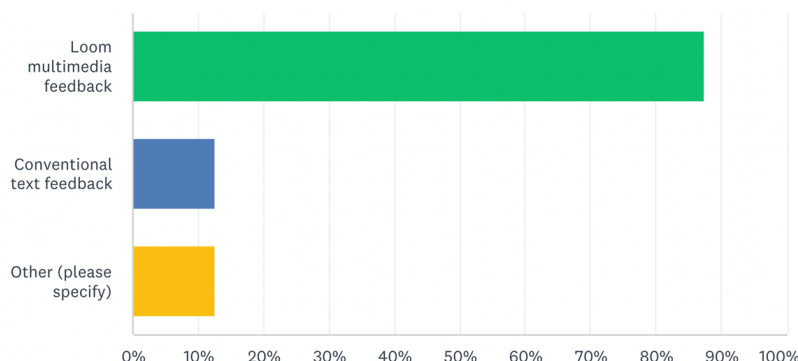
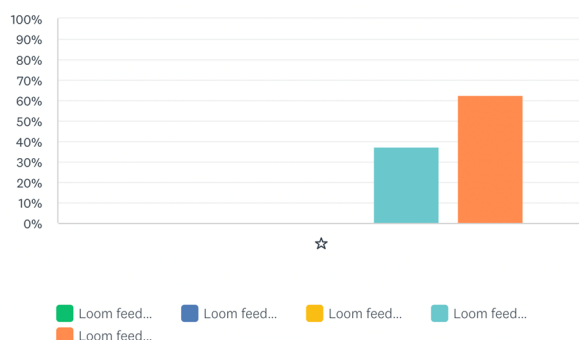


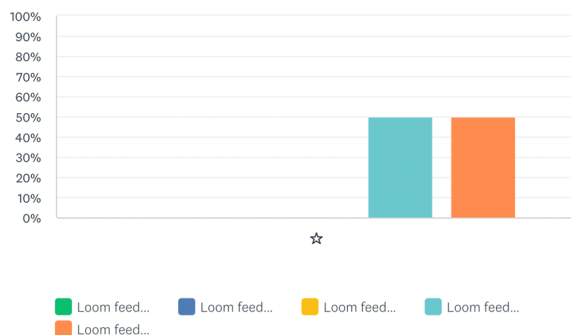
Figure 3. Students' preferred mode of feedback

Data from the survey also reveals major reasons for the students' preference for Loom feedback. The main reasons were that most of the students evaluated Loom feedback as either much better or a little bit better than traditional text feedback in terms of how detailed and how effective it is.



	LOOM FEEDBACK IS MUCH WORSE THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS A LITTLE BIT WORSE THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS AS GOOD AS TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS A LITTLE BIT BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS MUCH BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
☆	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	37.50%	62.50%		

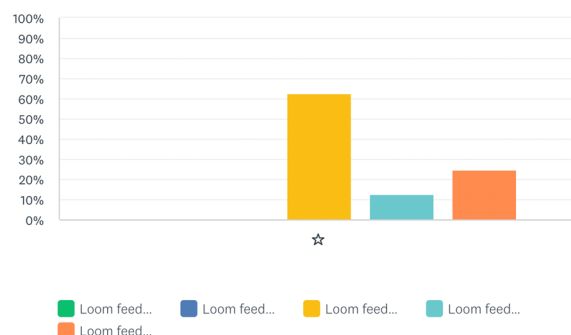
Figure 4. Students' comparison between Loom feedback and text feedback regarding how detailed it is



	LOOM FEEDBACK IS MUCH WORSE THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS A LITTLE BIT WORSE THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS AS GOOD AS TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS A LITTLE BIT BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS MUCH BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
☆	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%		

Figure 5. Students' comparison between Loom feedback and text feedback regarding efficiency in boosting writing skills

However, concerning user-friendliness, Loom feedback was evaluated as either as good as or a little bit better than traditional one.



	LOOM FEEDBACK IS MUCH WORSE THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS A LITTLE BIT WORSE THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS AS GOOD AS TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS A LITTLE BIT BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	LOOM FEEDBACK IS MUCH BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL TEXT FEEDBACK	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
☆	0.00%	0.00%	62.50%	12.50%	25.00%		

Figure 6. Students' comparison between Loom feedback and text feedback regarding how user-friendly it is

Data from the interviews is consistent with information from the survey. Additionally, the interviewees also gave more detailed explanations for their preference for Loom feedback and revealed some other interesting potential advantages that were not reflected in the survey.

For learners, first, video feedback was claimed to be more detailed. Interviewee 2 said that video feedback was not constrained by words, or margin, making it more

specific and fostering deeper understanding. Most interviewees also commented that it is easy to watch the videos and adjust the speed and volume, or watch again and take notes, so they would not miss any comments. Third, regarding time efficiency, interviewee 3 stated: “With Loom video feedback, I don’t need to go to meet teachers offline to ask for detailed explanations from teachers.” Besides, video feedback is more vivid with both text and contextualized audio feedback. More interestingly, “video feedback conveys more emotions via teachers’ intonation, voice, and stress” (interviewee 4).

For the lecturer, some interviewees claimed that video feedback was more effective as it is time-saving, efficient in expressing ideas, and convenient.

3.2. Potential drawbacks

First, interviewee 5 stated that more special preparation (strong internet and a quiet space to record/watch videos) was expected from both teachers and learners. Second, it is a little bit more difficult to locate a specific comment for a particular part in a video compared to text feedback (interviewee 6).

3.3. Suggestions

The majority of the learners believed that teachers should keep a motivating tone and balance between comments about strengths and weaknesses to keep students motivated when watching the feedback videos: “The speaker should apply attractive and friendly voice when giving comments.” (interviewee 2)

Discussion

The findings from this study aligned with results from previous studies about video feedback in different disciplines which pointed out its myriad potential benefits such as improved clarity, student engagement enhancement, more personalization, flexible access, high level of acceptability to learners, effective feedback time (Mahoney et al., 2018), and “shifts of focus from surface-level to substantive feedback” (Henderson and Phillip, 2015).

On the other hand, the finding about the potential drawbacks of video feedback for students’ EMI writing in this research is in line with other past studies by Henderson and Phillip (2015).

Conclusion

Compared to conventional text comments, multimedia feedback received overall positive responses from the students as it was believed to be not only more detailed, and vivid with the aid of both text and audio explanation which could boost students’ deeper comprehension of the subject matter content, but also more time-efficient and handy for lecturers. Loom feedback could also convey more emotions through teachers’ tone, and intonation expressed in the videos. Regarding further

suggestions, teachers were advised to balance comments about strengths and weaknesses to keep students motivated when watching Loom videos.



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