

Mobilising screencast technology and ipsative design to transform feedback practices

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Definition of terms

Dialogic feedback: Interactive exchanges between instructors and students which serve to share interpretations, clarify meaning, and scaffold learning.

Screencast feedback: A feedback modality that is captured via a digital recording of a computer screen (e.g. screen-capture) with audio narration and provided to students by instructors.

Introduction

From the classroom chalkboard to the personal computer, the ways in which learning conversations are facilitated are a significant part of the educational experience. ‘Digital’ is no longer a buzzword but resides at the heart of higher education. As such, habits of the past are being replaced to make way for our increasingly digital world and diverse student cohorts (Bearman, Dawson, Ajjawi, Tai, & Boud, 2020). Technology is reworking the ways in which institutions, academics, and students communicate and engage. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the 21st century was already bringing an increased emergence of digital tools which had begun to profoundly shape higher education (Bearman, Dawson, Ajjawi, Tai, & Boud, 2020). The necessity of fully online learning was catalysed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and many higher education institutions (HEIs) scrambled to adapt from embodied to digital and simply replicated what had been done (Bearman, Dawson, et al., 2020, p. v). Pedagogic gaps and deficiencies are highlighted in digital learning environments (Dron, Seidel, & Litten, 2004) This can be seen in the mixed methods study from Slade et al. (2021) where the prevailing strategy was to merely translate existing assessment practices into online modes. Students have said that a critical issue in the uptake of online higher education has been a lack of adequate support, interaction, and engagement with academic staff (Martin, 2020).

Feedback is a cog in the pedagogical wheel. It is the driver of student learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Students’ application of course content is positively associated with feedback from formative and summative assessment (Ice, Curtis, Phillips, & Wells, 2007). Yet, ‘higher education institutions are consistently criticised

more by students about the quality of feedback than for almost any other aspect of their course' (Boud & Molloy, 2013, p. 698). Many of the criticisms of electronically written, or text-based feedback relate not only to subpar quality—such as clarity, content, and usefulness for future work—but lack of personalisation and care (Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Ice et al., 2007; Martin, 2020; Winstone, Nash, Rowntree, & Parker, 2017). Jonsson (2013 as cited in Winstone et al., 2017, p. 2028) takes a broader view and describes several reasons why students may not use feedback: '(1) it may not be useful; (2) it may not be sufficiently individualised; (3) it may be too authoritative'. Moreover, 'within the multitude demands of academia, teachers may not prioritise feedback, appreciate or understand it fully, or they may perceive that dialogic feedback is impractical' (Winstone & Carless, 2020, p. 99).

Screencast feedback has been shown to solve many of the current criticisms of feedback (Cavaleri, Kawaguchi, Di Biase, & Power, 2019; Mathieson, 2012; University of Iowa, 2015). The addition of screencast feedback enables deepened learning due to utilising dual channels, visual and aural, for cognitive processing (Payne & Torn, 2021). Despite the benefits of incorporating multiple modes, written feedback remains the most used feedback method in online higher education (McCarthy, 2015; Ryan, Henderson, Ryan, & Kennedy, 2019). Whilst screencast is more detailed, clear, and personalised, it is not inherently dialogic; the modality coupled with deliberate, ipsative design will enable practitioners and students to reap the benefits of the technology to better facilitate sustained dialogue.

Given the already steady growth toward fully online higher education, particularly within non-traditional and historically excluded student groups (Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE), 2020) which has been catalysed by COVID-19 (Martin, 2020), it is even more vital to re-evaluate teaching practices that uphold the status quo. We must shift away from those that are not adequate in fostering community, productive communication and, ultimately, enhancing the digital learning environment. Screencast feedback provides instructors and students with the opportunity to engage in learning conversations that may develop and sustain trust, feedback-seeking behaviour, collegiality, openness, and that mimic two-way dialogue (Bearman, Boud, et al., 2020; Crommelinck & Anseel, 2013; Gould & Day, 2013; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Pitt & Winstone, 2020). Guided by the question, 'In what ways might screencast feedback and ipsative assessment design enhance relational and cognitive aspects of learning and teaching?', this conceptual chapter serves as a clarion call for intentionally designed and implemented feedback technology and processes that empower students and instructors. The aim is to inspire engagement as a community of practice by using technology and dialogue in a way that allows for teaching to transgress beyond the constraints of rote, disembodied digitised environments.

A discursal renaissance

Dialogue is crucial to the feedback process and to the learning experience (Pitt & Winstone, 2020, p. 79). Instructors must begin to take the role of a dialogue partner, rather than an authority in the online learning environment (Jonsson, 2012, p. 69). Feedback should be conceived as a communicative event; this requires a shift from

feedback as transmission toward feedback as talk (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018; Winstone et al., 2017). Fostering rich dialogue with students is a reciprocal rebellion that stands to empower both student and teacher (Payne, Bennett, & Stone, 2021).

In the recent shifts to fully online learning, many students reported insufficient feedback from, and engagement with, teaching staff (Martin, 2020). Students expected much more personalised interaction than had occurred (Martin, 2020). Students consistently express disappointment that electronically written feedback often lacks clarity and feed-forward actions; most written feedback focuses on remedial corrections and grade justification (Wang, Tlili, Lehman, Lu, & Huang, 2021; Winstone & Boud, 2020).

Dialogue may reduce power differentials between instructors and students. This reduction serves to enhance dialectic thinking, student engagement with and affect toward the course and instructor. Within HEIs, students are feedback seekers (recipients of feedback), whilst teachers/instructors are the targets of feedback-seeking. That is instructors are the source (e.g. sender) of feedback. Historically, this has implied a subordinate/dominate relationship between student and instructor. Feedback techniques in control-dominated relationships tend to be unilateral. With an aim to establish democratic authority (Mayo, 2013, p. 70), support-dominated relationships use discussion—‘a two-way give-and-take conversation’ (London, 1995, p. 166).

The affordances of screencast technology can mimic the kinds of training and performance conversations students may encounter in the workplace. As assessment has increasingly begun to focus on authenticity (Dawson, Carless, & Lee, 2021; Openo, 2020), teaching staff should aim to provide feedback in alignment with the personal and professional situations in which students may find themselves. After all, within the work environment, staff are provided an opportunity to respond to workplace performance feedback. Screencast feedback can and should be implemented more productively by encouraging and providing students the opportunity to respond (Winstone & Carless, 2020).

Dialogic, socratic and ipsative feedback

Feedback is not just a medium for information; it is also a medium of power. Its delivery and uptake are determined and reconciled by attributes of the feedback context, message and provider (Wood, 2021). Power, inclusion or exclusion can be illustrated through feedback. To minimise the power distance between teachers and students, and promoting inclusion, Socratic feedback uses questioning to initiate dialogue and invite student response (Winstone & Carless, 2020). Rather than as a mechanism to assert authority or ‘to corral the learner, albeit in desirable ways’ (Boud & Molloy, 2013, p. 703), instructors build receptivity to feedback, and students use it to facilitate their own learning.

Today’s feedback processes should represent a dialogic cycle (Winstone et al., 2017, p. 2027). In what is referred to as Feedback Mark 2 (Boud & Molloy, 2013), students are acknowledged as active co-constructors rather than passive recipients. Students have a repository of life experiences to draw upon (Mayo, 2013). Effective learning occurs by creating meaning from experience; what the learner knows is based

on their own experience (Merriam, 2018). Feedback dialogue should enable learners to self-reflect and draw on past experiences to arrive at new knowledge, new-found awareness, and new actions (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018; Mayo, 2013; Merriam, 2018).

Intellectual, introspective dialogue is the foundation of a Socratic approach to questioning. The early Greek philosopher/teacher, Socrates, believed that reflective questioning enabled the student to examine ideas rationally (Intel, 2007). Questioning encourages student agency, self-regulated learning and feedback-seeking (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018). Socratic questioning demonstrates how feedback may be adjusted so that it problematises issues, encourages, empathises, and engages (Table 1).

Table 1 Socratic questioning technique (Intel, 2007, pp. 2–3).

Socratic question type	Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you mean by...? • Could you put that another way? • What do you think is the main issue? • Could you give us an example? • Could you expand upon that point further?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about an initial question or issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is this question important? • Why do you think that? • What assumptions can we make based on this question? • Does this question lead to other important issues and questions?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumption questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why would someone make this assumption? • What is _____ assuming here? • What could we assume instead? • You seem to be assuming _____. • Do I understand you correctly?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason and evidence questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be an example? • Why do you think this is true? • What other information do we need? • Could you explain your reason to us? • By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion? • What led you to that belief?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origin or source questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this your idea or did you hear it from someplace else? • Have you always felt this way? • Has your opinion been influenced by something or someone? • Where did you get that idea? • What caused you to feel that way?

Table 1 Continued

Socratic question type	Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implication and consequence questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an alternative? • What are you implying by that? • If that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewpoint questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would other groups of people respond this question? Why? • What might someone who believed _____ think? • What is an alternative? • How are _____ and _____'s ideas alike? Different?

Suited to both formative and summative assessment, Socratic questioning can provide useful opportunities to validate students' knowledge and mitigate differences in power (Sybing, 2019). The Socratic technique is not used to intimidate, nor to patronise students but instead for the very reason, Socrates developed it: to scaffold critical-thinking skills in students and empower them to approach their learning with a self-referenced and academic lens (Payne & Torn, 2021). However, for this to be possible, there is a need for intentional design and the necessary shift away from teacher-telling (Winstone & Carless, 2020) toward storytelling (Payne & Torn, 2021) and dialectical thinking (Mayo, 2013).

Discussions of 'a new paradigm approach' (Winstone & Carless, 2020, p. 102) aim to utilise questioning to facilitate a more engaging and functional student experience. Further, such an approach to feedback is indeed possible with large class sizes (Winstone & Carless, 2020). This requires feedback to become 'more than an after-thought, to something that is meaningful in its own right' (Winstone & Boud, 2020, p. 2). It is the practitioner's role to provide scaffolded learning opportunities that enable learner autonomy (Ewing, 2013, p. 28). Most approaches end with the *hope* that questioning leads to reflection and application; a genuine feedback dialogue enables 'follow up of the effects of these questions through seeing whether there was initial uptake or not' (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018, p. 1116). As such, feedback is most effective where assessment design is ipsative (Zhou & Zhang, 2017); that is, the design allows for feedback to feed-forward and future work builds from past assessment so that students are provided the opportunity to reflect on, respond to, and apply feedback.

Screencast feedback

A significant amount of technology-mediated feedback literature in education has explored the affective implications, or feelings and attitudes, of the addition of audio and/or video feedback, particularly when compared with text-based feedback alone. Screencast feedback has more social and teacher presence which is 'particularly

important in overcoming feelings of isolation when studying remotely in online environments' (Carless, 2020, p. 5). This is significant as 'social presence helps students form a sense of belonging in online communities' (Payne & Torn, 2021). Social presence embodies the ability of academics to present oneself as authentic, credible, caring, and trustworthy within interpersonal interactions in online spaces (Payne, 2021a). As students may misconstrue written, text-based feedback (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018, screencast feedback 'can help avoid misunderstandings which can result from interpreting written feedback' (Cavaleri et al., 2019, p. 15). Screencast feedback allows instructors to be more nuanced and expressive.

Studies have shown that students rate the overall quality of feedback more highly when video-based feedback is provided in addition to written comments. The findings have demonstrated the addition of screencast feedback as preferred, more effective for the reception of assessment advice, more effective at building rapport and belonging in online environments, more valuable, and improving the overall usefulness and uptake of feedback (Cavaleri et al., 2019; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Kerr & McLaughlin, 2008; Mathieson, 2012). Screencasts enable feedback to be more specific, detailed and individualised. Additionally, the amount of feedback communicated to students is 'significantly greater than the amount communicated with written feedback, without being more time-consuming' (Jonsson, 2012, p. 70).

The productive use of screencast feedback 'depends on its pedagogical use by teachers' (Winstone & Carless, 2020, p. 2923). It is vital to ensure that our use of digital tools is enabling dialogue, socio-affective support and cognitive scaffolding. Technology is not impartial: it serves a variety of different and often competing agendas (Bearman, Boud, et al., 2020). Conversations about the present and future of online education have become more widespread. Recalibrating education to disrupt the status quo and meet the unique needs of students, allows us to reimagine higher education in this digital era (Bearman, Dawson, et al., 2020).

Source-recipient relationships

What is it about feedback that gives it such influence over students' decisions to utilise it? The power of constructive and destructive interactions and varied relational dimensions inspire wide-ranging responses to feedback uptake. The relationship that exists between the source (instructor) and the recipient (student) may influence the uptake of feedback. Trustworthiness and care of the source is of importance.

Students are entering the digital learning environment with a variety of pre-existing knowledge, aptitudes, opinions, and values which impact how they engage with and construe information (Payne, 2021b). Higher education is seeing increasing enrolment from non-traditional and historically excluded students—such as students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, students with reported disabilities, regional students, and Indigenous students (Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE), 2020). Diversity is the antithesis to educational authoritarianism and conformity.

Furthermore, language is shifting to incorporate students as ‘partners’, ‘co-constructors’ and ‘active participants’ (Barradell & Bell, 2021; Bell et al., 2020; Matthews et al., 2021). These terms are beginning to have a powerful rhetorical effect as the dynamic role of learners is acknowledged (Payne, 2021b). Thus, ‘feedback is no longer viewed as a “gift” transmitted from expert to novice’ (Wood, 2021, p. 3). Historically, teaching (and subsequently, feedback) has been underpinned by an emphasis on one-way information transmission, a culture of correction and an expectation of passive knowledge acquisition. Conceptions of the student-instructor relationship and of feedback are being required to shift from ‘the mechanistic to the responsive’ (Boud & Molloy, 2013, p. 703).

Contemporary education, particularly higher education, has begun to shift away from control-dominated relationships toward affiliation-dominated relationships (London, 1995; Mayo, 2013). Affiliative relationships move beyond the instructor as a dispenser of knowledge (Mayo, 2013). Xu and Carless’s (2017) case study highlights an approach taken by one instructor to ‘reduce the power distance between herself and the students’ (p. 1086), and subsequently, build an affiliation-dominated relationship with her students. This was achieved by enabling approachability and what Molloy and Bearman (2018) term *intellectual candour*.

Literature has begun to emphasise the importance of rapport-building and embracing the conflict between authority and openness (Molloy & Bearman, 2018; Pundt & Herrmann, 2015). Multimedia dialogue provides instructors with the opportunity to provide formative feedback and engage in interactions that may increase social ties, create greater assurances and deepen connections (Payne & Torn, 2021).

Feedback-seeking behaviour

Organisational and social psychology research suggests that students may not wait around passively for their instructors to initiate technology-mediated learning interactions; instead, they may (and are encouraged to) seek it proactively (Crommelinck & Anseel, 2013). Pre-emptive feedback-seeking can enable students to gain important performance information which can be used to adjust their work and behaviour, leading to deepened levels of learning, creativity, belonging and increased performance and satisfaction (Crommelinck & Anseel, 2013; Huang, 2012). Shifting feedback earlier and making use of formative, ipsative assessment may positively impact help-seeking behaviour and improve assessment and feedback alignment.

Students are intentional regarding from whom they seek feedback (Crommelinck & Anseel, 2013). Although students can seek feedback from many sources, including peers and other academic supports, I choose to focus on the online instructor as the feedback source. When striving for an affiliation-dominated student-instructor relationship, the teacher will likely end up more dominant (London, 1995). Instructors mark and monitor students’ performance; as such, there are parts of a teacher’s authority that cannot be overlooked (Jonsson, 2012). However, democratic teaching does not allow authority to deteriorate into authoritarianism (Mayo, 2013).

Authoritative feedback is generally not perceived by students as fruitful (Jonsson, 2012). It has the immense potential to be perceived as destructive and domineering. Control-dominated relationships within higher education may be a barrier to student affect toward the unit and instructor which subsequently may reduce feedback-seeking and feedback uptake, and hinder improvement. On the contrary, constructive, supportive climates create comfort zones in which students are willing to ask for assistance (Arghode, Wang, & Lathan, 2017).

Implications

Given the increased uptake to fully online learning by traditionally excluded students (Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE), 2020), we must re-evaluate teaching methods that may no longer be adequate. There are several key repercussions for screencast feedback. Remarkably, this technology allows the feedback provider to be more human, expressive, and nuanced. Electronically written and screencast feedback modes should work in harmony (Cavaleri et al., 2019; Ryan et al., 2019). Receiving feedback visually and aurally helps with the distribution of cognitive load, therefore enhancing the effectiveness of the message when compared to a single channel of presentation, such as text only (Payne & Torn, 2021; Ryan et al., 2019). Ideally, ‘educators will prioritise using video for feedback on aspects of academic improvement that would benefit from a visual demonstration or verbal explanation so that they could exploit the affordances of screen-capture technology’ (Cavaleri et al., 2019, p. 15). Screencast feedback dialogues are an approach to intentional engagement with students. Ipsative assessment design can enable feedback-seeking and a more strategic use of learning materials. This involving approach to both design and learning conversations enable students to take ownership over their learning process.

The experience offered by ipsative assessment and screencast feedback to shift the feedback model strives for learners to feel empowered and respected. Screencast feedback should be presented as a pathway for encouraging personalised learning conversations and self-regulation of students’ approaches to their current and future outputs. The addition of screencast feedback may also better enable HEIs in meeting the diversity of learners. This chapter asks HEIs to consider the conditions that enable practitioners to enhance and refine their digital skillset and improve their relationships with their students. Challenging and minimising power differentials in higher education may be achieved by communicating in more informal, warm, and conversational manners. Such communication may demonstrate care, signal trustworthiness, and facilitate the ongoing sharing of relevant information that enables help-seeking. The request to minimise the power differential is a request for HEIs to demonstrate that they are transforming, that they do not wish to exert authority, but rather they respect and care for students as human beings and allies. A two-way dialogue can reconfigure experiences and relationships between students and practitioners. Truly innovative teaching values the diversity of perspectives which is underpinned by effective dialogue.

Within online higher education, the student-instructor dyad becomes a proxy for social, pastoral, and cultural support (Payne et al., 2021). Educational reformer John Dewey (1997) advocated for empowering learners by honouring their experiences and abilities. The educational perceptions of the enforcing, domineering academic who expects conformity has come to an end (Payne, 2021b). Practitioners who rely on the Socratic method and dialectic thinking when providing feedback are more apt to problematise issues and use dialogue to enable students to explore content and concepts actively and deeply. Dialogue enables understanding of students as individuals (Dewey, 1997). In essence, Dewey is arguing for sustainable social-affective support and cognitive scaffolding, for educators to meet learners where they are, wherever that may be (Payne, 2021b).

Conclusion

Dialogue is a critical element of feedback, with the potential to improve uptake by the reduction of power differentials between students and teachers. Digital assessment technologies should serve not as tools that enable a measurement culture but should facilitate and enrich the student experience. Screencast technology is not intrinsically dialogic but has the potential to assist in rapport-building in a digital world and catalyse the shift of feedback processes from transmission to dialogic interaction. This shift will require HEIs and practitioners to reflect on their own values, behaviours, and relationships within an education system that has been complicit in facilitating top-down, unauthentic, and unsustainable feedback practices. The power of tradition is immense; ‘feedback practices in higher education have remained stubbornly similar and habitual for far too long, and things do not have to be this way’ (Winstone & Boud, 2020, p. 10).

Future discourse may seek to further interrogate the ways in which practitioners are sustainably integrating and engaging students using screencast feedback across their entire learning journey. This signals a shift to ‘a dialogic process that enables tracking the intermediary effects of feedback’ (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018, p. 1117). Further research on teacher feedback literacy is needed to uncover what those who effectively implement screencast as a feedback modality do well. What do they feel are their core responsibilities as feedback providers? How are HEIs and practitioners making this modality sustainable and accessible?

Times of great unrest and uncertainty call for greater adaptability, empathy and innovation. It is a hope that this conceptual chapter can set the stage for understanding how HEIs may effectively enable instructors to use screencast technology to humanise the online learning environment. This chapter calls for a renewed focus on holistic assessment practices—approaches that consider cognitive, socio-affective, and design dimensions. Disruptive events can give rise to long overdue reflection and transformation.

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Section B

**Pedagogy: Teaching
approaches, assessment, etc.**