Screencasting for Enhanced and Manageable Large Group Feedback in Language Learning

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Class Size
100 students

Discipline
Spoken French,
Modern Languages

Feedback Approaches
Rubrics, Audiovisual feedback, Generic
whole-class feedback, Separating grade
and feedback

Technologies
Moodle, Camtasia, Powerpoint

Challenge & Aim

The context for the initiative was large group feedback for the spoken French component of the overall First Year language module. Traditionally, this skill was primarily (and sometimes solely) assessed via an end-of-year oral examination. Students received a grade and comments were recorded by examiners on a marking sheet. However, the latter were rarely consulted by students unless they had failed, and even then uptake was poor. Spoken French is an integral part of the French degree and it is vital that students learn from their assignments in order to improve general fluency and, moreover,

effectively prepare for the year abroad. Our challenge, therefore, was to create meaningful feedback that would reach all of our students in a timely and consistent fashion and which would provide students with pointers on how to improve their level of spoken French. A further aspect of the challenge was designing a new form of feedback that students would engage with and, more importantly, revisit several times as successful learning in a foreign language is processual and repetitive in nature as opposed to being obtained through standalone segments. Finally, we wanted to create a form of dialogic feedback that

would be more closely linked to the format of the assignment – a filmed conversation between two students.

The feedback initiative was linked to an end-of-module online assignment. Two forms of feedback were put in place: first, a marking rubric completed by the tutor/lecturer for each member of the multiple tutorial groups and which provides marks and comments on an individual basis; and, second, a generic screencast (combining visual and audio) directed towards the overall group and focusing on what worked well in the students' assignments as well as highlighting areas for improvement. In relation to the screencast feedback it was decided that we would present this initially to the students via Moodle and that it would be delivered separately from grades.

Evidence from the Literature

Research to date indicates that:

- Exemplars and rubrics can help students understand the standards associated both with a particular assessment, and with the subject discipline. They can also promote transparency, consistency, and efficiency in feedback provision (Carless 2015).

- Grades and feedback are typically simultaneously issued to students (Gibbs 2015). However grades can obscure, or act as a distraction from feedback, with students tending to focus on their grade at the expense of engaging with their feedback (Sutton and Gill 2010, Gibbs 2015). Separating grades and feedback, by providing feedback in advance of the grade, can encourage student engagement with feedback, and has been demonstrated to increase the perceived value of feedback by students (Irwin et al. 2013, Jackson and Marks 2015).

- Provision of generic, whole-class feedback on draft work can be an effective way to provide timely feedback, particularly in the context of large classes. This approach can be more effective than individualised feedback that comes too late for students to engage with or apply (O'Donovan, Rust and Price 2015).

- Screencast feedback has potential to generate number of practical and pedagogical benefits for students and teaching staff. These include: supporting feedback comprehension and student engagement with feedback; provision of richer feedback; improvements in relation to access and flexibility; and potential for time saving (Y1Feedback 2016).

Feedback Approach

In order to prepare the generic feedback screencast, there were four main steps, following the submission of the assignment on Moodle by the students.

Step One: Each tutor watched and listened to the videos for his/her own group and graded the students individually according to the rubric.

Feedback Approach

Step Two: Tutors sent a page of comments to the first-year (and module) co-ordinator (me), listing common and recurring grammar and pronunciation errors as well as highlighting the strengths of the student videos

Step Three: Gathering together all of the comment sheets, I prepared a Powerpoint presentation for the first years as a whole, setting out the feedback under a series of headings and sub-headings as follows:

(1) What worked well
(2) Areas for improvement
    (a) Vocabulary
    (b) Grammar
    (c) Pronunciation
    (d) Content
(3) General presentation

Step Four: Along with my colleague Brigitte McNeely, the other principal investigator in this project, we recorded an audio dialogue using Camtasia to accompany the Powerpoint presentation. Throughout the dialogue, we elaborated on the key points that appeared in the video presentation and gave further examples to illustrate meaning. We were also able to use intonation to indicate levels of importance regarding points and we established links between the assignment and particular feedback comments.Following this, the screencast was posted on Moodle and made available for students to access at their own convenience.I consulted with the Centre for Teaching and Learning Staff and we agreed some amendments to the slides.

A member of the Centre for Teaching and Learning briefed me on the Camtasia Technology and we recorded a feedback screencast.

The screencast was then uploaded onto my SO101 Moodle page and that of my colleague teaching SO104 in the second semester.

I attended my colleague's first lecture in the second semester and alerted students to the availability of the resource.

Outcomes

The main findings of this initiative were the following:

• Providing generic feedback is an effective of reaching a large group, providing detailed comments, but also ensuring that the lecturer/tutor's workload remains manageable. Students are more likely to engage with this form of feedback for a two main reasons. First, it is less intimidating than arranging a one-on-one with the lecturer/tutor and yet it remains dialogic and intimate. Second, it is easily accessible (as opposed to arranging with the executive assistant to view comments on scripts) and can be viewed and reviewed art one's own convenience. Indeed, reviewing will facilitate better learning than a one-off consultation might provide (where students may not be able to recall everything that was said).

- It allows students to consider their own progress/level on a larger scale and situate their learning within the group as a whole, as the comments do not relate solely to them but to all of the students involved in the assessment.

- The dialogic aspect of the screencast is not limited to the students but extends to the lecturers and tutors as well. By sharing comments with one another to be later compiled as a generic screencast, there is a sense of a community of practitioners where we can all learn from each other's observations. In addition to this, the feedback given to students ends up being more comprehensive as it includes a wider range of perspectives and not just those of the individual tutor/lecturer concerned.

What I would do differently:

- The main thing that I would do differently would be to provide some sort of interim feedback to the students midway through the module so that they can use this to feed forward and submit the best assignment possible. However, I am aware that this was our first attempt at using screencasting for large group feedback and, while in this instance the group concerned was restricted to end-of-module feedback, the screencast prepared this year can be recycled next year to provide a type of 'Do's and Don't's' mid-module forum.

Student Response

As this initiative has only recently been implemented, at the time of writing we have not yet had the opportunity to seek feedback from the students regarding our initiative. However, we have decided that we will use focus groups in the early weeks of the second semester to garner feedback on the screencast (and also the video assignment) and this will help us to enhance any future uses of technology for the purpose of engaging large groups in more effective learning.

Recommendations

- Keep the Powerpoint simple as you can use the recorded dialogue to elaborate and add examples.

- Ensure that the dialogue adds an extra element to the feedback and be wary of simply repeating or reading aloud what is on the Powerpoint.

- Aim for a screencast that does not exceed 10-15 minutes. Beyond this, student attention levels may begin to waver and the effectiveness of the feedback will be reduced. If you need to provide extensive feedback, it would be better to prepare a series of short screencasts rather than creating one that is overly dense and lengthy.

- Don't worry if you hesitate from time to time or use interjections. It's better if it sounds like a natural conversation. Furthermore, if you aim to record a word-perfect dialogue you will undoubtedly end up contravening one of the key aims of the initiative – that is, to render the workload involving a large group more manageable.

- You will need to have Camatasia installed on your computer if you do not already have it. You may also require a one-off training session on how to use it depending on your technological nous. Again, you may require assistance with editing. However, as mentioned in the previous point, it is better to sound natural than over-rehearsed so editing may not always be necessary.

- Expect teething problems if this is your first attempt at recording/preparing a screencast. You WILL become adept at screencasting and you will find that it is actually a time-saving initiative in the long-run, as well as being a form of feedback that is popular among students.

- Screencasting feedback is, in my opinion, more suited to large groups than small groups. The same effect can be achieved in the latter through in-class fora.

Useful Links/Further Information

facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-with-technology-articles/flipping-feedback-screencasting-feedback-on-student-essays/

ncte.org/cccc/owi-open-resource/screencast-feedback

jiscinfonetcasestudies.pbworks.com/w/page/89219369/Using%20screencasting%20for%20feedback

References

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Gibbs, G. 2015. 53 powerful ideas all teachers should know about. SEDA.

Irwin, B., Hepplestone, S., Holden, G., Parkin, H.J. and Thorpe, L. 2013. Engaging students with feedback through adaptive release. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 50(1), pp.51-61.

Jackson, M. and Marks, L. 2015. Improving the effectiveness of feedback by use of assessed reflections and withholding of grades. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, pp.1-16.

O'Donovan, B., Rust, C. and Price, M. 2015. A scholarly approach to solving the feedback dilemma in practice. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, ahead-of-print, pp.1-12.

Y1Feedback 2016. Technology-Enabled Feedback in the First Year: A Synthesis of the Literature. Available from: y1feedback.ie

Contact ✉

If interested in finding out more about this approach or technology, please contact Dr Julie Rodgers at Julie.rodgers@nuim.ie.

Cite as;

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