Does "One Size" Fit All? Comparing Video-Feedback in Different Courses

Ole Jørgen S. Ranglund[1,2], Tone Vold[1] and Monica J. Lervik[1]
[1]Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Rena, Norway
[2]Østfold University College, Fredrikstad, Norway

Ole.ranglund@inn.no
Tone.vold@inn.no
Monica.lervik@inn.no

Abstract: Several surveys show that students appreciate feedback on their assignments in order to learn more, and to understand more about their academic progress. In order to personalize the feedback, this has been recorded on video and distributed to the students. In video-feedback, we as lecturers can stress certain messages in a different way than in written feedback. It is also possible to communicate a lot more in a 3-5-minute video.

In this paper, we compare the students' opinions about video-feedback. In one course, the students received both video-feedback and written feedback as a follow up on the same assignment, and in two other courses they only received video-feedback. Through interviews, we have investigated two different approaches. This has allowed us to look into two different approaches, and how students perceive this. In the course with the video-feedback and the written feedback, the students prefer the written feedback, and in the two courses with video-feedback only, the students are very positive and report on learning outcomes from the feedback in addition to them also wanting video-feedback in other courses as well. The results were surprising, as theory explains why video-feedback should be preferred.

Keywords: Video-Feedback, Personalized Feedback, Reflection, Supporting Learning Outcome

1. Introduction

Feedback on assignments is highly rated by students (Haave, Hole, & Vold, 2016). In fact, in investigations done at The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, it is one of the actions that provide the students with the highest experienced learning outcome (Haave, Hole, & Vold, 2016). According to Ramaprasad (1983), feedback is "information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter, which is used to alter the gap in some way" (Ramaprasad, 1983, p. 4). Hence, the function of the feedback is to provide the students with indications of how to improve, develop and reach their "zone of proximal development" (Vygotskij, 1978). According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), it is also supposed to enable the students to evaluate how they are doing, and how they can improve.

This can be viewed as a way of improving the quality of higher education. We have introduced the "flipped classroom" in many courses, in order to improve the quality of the education and support the student's learning outcome from the courses. The "flipped classroom" is about making lecture material available prior to meeting peers and lecturers, such as streaming video, allowing working with the theory during class instead of being lectured over it in the physical meeting (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Vold, 2014).

In order to continuously improve the learning opportunities for the students, we decided to test out video-feedback and compare how they perceive this to support their learning outcome, compared to the written feedback.

Assessing students' works is a powerful tool for influencing the way students behave and respond to courses (Gibbs, 1999, 2005). Feedback is important for the students' development of their written academic work (Wolsey, 2008).

Assessments can be made in different ways, from pass/fail to very detailed comments. However, There is not always enough time allocated to develop a very thorough formative assessment (Mathisen, 2012). Although formative assessment has proven beneficial towards student's learning (Cunningham, 2019b), it is difficult in a large class to offer individual feedback (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002). Still, the feedback given is necessary for the students' understanding of how to improve, as well as to develop and understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, to establish an effective learning situation, it is necessary to present to the students how to improve and provide directions for their development. The feedback may also aid in the process of establishing a relationship with the lecturers and the students (Mathisen, 2012). According to Wolsey (2008), this relationship has had a positive impact on learning.

There are different types of video-feedback. One way of providing video-feedback is to record a screencast where it is possible to point to the different areas in the students text (Lee and Chan, 2007; Mathisen, 2012; Turner and West, 2013; Ali, 2016; Cunningham, 2019b, 2019a). This may scaffold the learning as it provides both textual and visual feedback. The other way is to record a short video in the form of a video-podcast (Crook *et al.*, 2012; Turner and West, 2013; Henderson and Phillips, 2015).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) claim that the quality of the feedback is important, and is necessary to answer the questions of direction (where am I going?), the quality of work (how am I going) and pointing forward (where to next?). It is also important that the feedback is clear, informative, personal (Henderson and Phillips, 2015), and that it states how to improve, what the learning objectives are, and the focus for learning more (Crook *et al.*, 2012; Cunningham, 2019b). This will support the student's development, and is important to experience autonomy and self-discipline (Gamlem, 2022).

According to Borup, West and Thomas (2015), written feedback can be efficient and organized. However, even if a lecturer believes to have been clear about improvement points, it can be *interpreted* as ambiguous, and leave the learner uncertain about the improvement options (Daft & Lengel, 1986). In order to facilitate for less ambiguity or equivocality, the use of a rich media to present the information is preferred. Daft and Lengel (1986) define information richness as "the ability of information to change understanding within a time interval" (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 560). Consequently, a rich media enables complex messages to be communicated in an understandable way, while the media of a low richness holds fewer cues on how to interpret the messages. Nonetheless, if the message is, for example, a "pass" or "fail" for the media of low richness, such as a written comment, this may be sufficient.

The feedback provided to support adult learning processes should also pay attention to how adults learn. According to Cercone (2008), adults need scaffolding in order to be self-reliant. Furthermore, it is beneficial to their learning process to build on their previous experiences, as well as supporting their understanding of how the new knowledge and/or skills may be utilized in their organization.

Knowles (2015) presented the term "andragogy" about adult learning, which contains some assumptions about adult learners. For example, they are self-directed, that the learning builds on previous experience, that they have personal goals for their learning and need to know why they are to learn something, and why this is beneficial for them, and that they have an internal motivation for learning. Mezirow (2010) presented the theory of perspective transformation, which includes critical reflection. It is about being critically aware of how one's past, and how one perceives what is learned is colouring how one perceives, understands and feels about the surroundings.

Palloff and Pratt (2003) also claim that students need the ability to reflect in order to learn, and that they are different with different approaches to learning and with different learning styles. Hence, the need for a personal approach. Frey and Alman (2003) also recognize the individuality of the learner's background and learning styles, and suggest to address learning and feedback to the learners as "first person".

1.1 Research Question

We decided to investigate how students perceived video-feedback, and what they emphasized regarding learning outcome from them. Hence, our research question is:

How does video-feedback support the learning outcome of adult students?

To help answer this, we developed the following questions:

Question 1:

How personalized do they find the video-feedback?

This was asked to indicate if they felt that the video-feedback was individual/group-based, and therefore directed directly toward them and their assignments.

Question 2:

What was the learning outcome of the video-feedback they received?

Question 3:

How did the video-feedback affect how they could improve their assignments?

These questions would provide information about how they have reflected on their learning outcome, and the potential for development and change.

1.2 The Study

The study was undertaken in three different settings: one in Østfold University College, Norway, and two in the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway. One of the courses was offered to members of the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (NUMGE), and one was a part of a master's degree programme, see Table 1 below.

The students in the Bachelor study in economics were given both video-feedback, and the same feedback as written feedback, in order to investigate whether the students preferred written to oral, or vice versa. In the two other courses (HRM), the students were only provided with video-feedback, and were to compare this to other written feedback they previously received, or in other subjects/courses.

Table 1: Overview of respondents

Students at:	Type of course	Method of Inquiry	Number of respondents	Type of feedback
Østfold University College 2-year Bachelor study programme in work and welfare issues	HRM (15 ECTS)	Group interviews	35	Video-feedback
Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences: Students from: Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (NUMGE)	HRM and digital transformation (7.5 ECTS)	Group interviews	82	Video-feedback
Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences: Bachelor study in economics	Qualitative research methods (7.5 ECTS)	Group interviews – responses per interivewee/ respondent	7	Video-feedback and written feedback

The students are adult students, and from the NUMGE, the students are in a work-life.

2. Method of Inquiry

The data have been collected via interviews, both individual and in groups (Dalen, 2011). This qualitative research method allows for digging into the nuances and was chosen to enable searching for subtleties regarding learning outcome and perceptions (Denzin Lincoln, 2005; Dalen, 2011; Jacobsen, 2015). Also, this has been treated as case studies (Remenyi, 2012; Yin, 2014). However, the case studies are not to be generalized, but instead to compare and investigate the differences for improvement purposes.

We have used a strategic selection of our own full-time and part-time students at the bachelor and master level for the interviews in this project.

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3. Findings

Here, we will present the findings, and we have divided the findings into two separate categories: the responses from the ones with video-feedback only, and one with both forms present.

3.1 Video- and Written Feedback

Overall, the students who received the video- and written feedback (7 respondents) seems to find written feedback just as informative and supportive of their learning outcome. In fact, most of the respondents preferred the written feedback as it was felt to be more informative, and that they could read it over and over again. One of the respondents explained: "I catch it better and it helps me stay focused to catch the essence" (respondent 6).

Regarding learning outcome, the students refer to both the written and video-feedback and claim that they have learned from both. Mostly, they refer to the confirmation of how well they have done. An example of this is: "We get a confirmation about our understanding" (respondents 4 and 5).

They were asked about how they could use their learning: work, school and exam. Their responses were about how to utilize it for their exams. "The feedback on the assignment and about the most important issues helped me a lot, and I will use it when preparing for the exam" (respondent 5).

To spot any changes in their behaviour regarding preparing for the exam, all of the respondents claim it has not changed the way they will prepare. As respondent 6 said: "I got a confirmation about being on the right track, so I will not change how I prepare for the exam" (respondent 6).

Regarding being personal, the respondents are also unanimous about it being personal, as they are named in the video. "I felt it was personal because it was addressing my assignment, me as a person, and it was to the point" (respondent 7) "The fact that you mentioned my name made it personal" (respondent 1).

They were also asked if they would prefer receiving video-feedback in other courses. Here, most of the respondents reply that it would be a supplement, but they prefer the written feedback. "Yes, I would like that, but only as a supplement to the written feedback" (respondent 1). Similar statements are also from respondents 3, 5, 6 and 7.

3.2 Video-Feedback Only

Here, the students are unanimously positive toward the video-feedback. The students claim that it was engaging, as it made the feedback understandable, and it helped them to understand how to improve. In particular, they mention concrete examples given in the feedback. The tone of voice and mimicry support and enhance the feedback.

They also refer to the points of improvement given. Examples of such statements are: "It was both supportive and challenging, not only hearing about the good things in the assignment, but also lifting us higher by telling us how to improve", "It is great to receive concrete input on where to look in the curriculum", "We sense that you want us to improve. The feedback is detailed, and you spend the time explaining it, and then I feel that [the lecturer] wants me to succeed."

To approximately half of the students, the lecturer addressed the students by name, whilst in the other half, he did not. In the video files where the names were mentioned the respondents claim that this makes it feel personal. This is confirmed by statements like: "I like the fact that you mentioned my name", and "It felt personal as you mentioned my name and talked to me directly." Nevertheless, there are other parameters as well that support the feeling of being personal. Statements such as: "I felt you were talking to me, as you described what was in my assignment", and "You showed me how to improve directly, which was specifically for my assignment", show that naming examples from their particular assignments also make it personal to them.

Regarding changing behaviour, some of the students claim that it has made it easier to know what to focus on and get started. This is shown in statements such as: "You made it clear what I had to improve and motivated me to start there regarding preparing for the exams", and "The feedback motivated me to start working with my group on going through parts of the curriculum again."

Another issue that arose during the data collection was that the students started comparing feedback among themselves. "He did not mention this to me, but what does that mean?", and "This is similar to what we received, maybe we should team up and work on this?", are statements that seem to have encouraged a collaborative approach to further learning.

3.3 Summing Up

Both video/written feedback and video-feedback are considered to be personal when names are mentioned. This, and pointing to particular features in their assignments, are meant to personalize the learning, to meet what Palloff and Pratt (2003) claim are about all adults being individuals with somewhat different needs and motivation. As suggested by Knowles (2015) and Mezirow (2010), this is also promoting some type of reflection.

Moreover, they all claim to have learned from the feedback, and to a large extent are able to answer what they have learned, which corresponds with it supporting the learning outcome. By the reply, it seems that the lecturers have been able to meet what Hattie and Timperley (2007) refer to as the quality of the feedback, which is important for their learning. It seems to be answering the crucial questions of "Where am I going?", "How am I going?" and "Where to next?". It also seems that they are somewhat autonomous regarding engaging in preparations for their exams, which is also important for the outcome, according to Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Gamlem (2022).

The feedback have also supported the relationship between the students and the lecturer, as Mathisen (2012) Crook et al. (2012), Henderson and Phillips (2015) and Turner and West (2013)claim is important for the learning, as they claim they perceive the lecturer to be supportive of their learning and scaffold their learning process (Cercone, 2008). This relationship seems to have a positive impact on learning that Wolsey (2008) refers to, as they seem motivated to learn more and to re-enter the curriculum for preparations for their exams.

However, the findings point out that written feedback is also welcome. As Borup, West and Thomas (2015) claim, the written feedback can be organized to be unambiguous and clear, which seems to be the case with the respondents receiving both written and video-feedback. Indeed, they all *prefer* the written to the video-feedback, and only view the video-feedback as a *supplement*, which somewhat contradicts the idea of media richness being important for their learning outcome (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

4. Conclusion

The ones who only received video-feedback are unanimously positive towards this as a way of being motivated, and to engage with the curriculum in order to prepare for exams. They find that the lecturers' use of their names is experienced as personal, and personally directed to them as learners.

The ones who received both video-feedback and the same written feedback seem to prefer the written but view the videos as a supplement.

In general, the feedback seems to be of a quality that supports their learning process, and that it is also directed to the individual to meet the individual needs for scaffolding in their development process; hence, one size does not fit all – there has to be individual adaptions, but they may be in addition to more generic feedback.

4.1 Further Research

In order to investigate this further, we will investigate this with new students in some of the same courses. We will also seek to dig more deeply into the differences between the written feedback and the video-feedback, as well as the impact they have on the learning outcome, by extending the investigations with a mixed-methods approach.

Moreover, it may be interesting to support the coming students to the course in qualitative methods at the master's study programme with only video-feedback to investigate whether these students will respond in the same way. Is it only in the case of obtaining both video and written feedback that they prefer the written? When they only receive the video-feedback, will they promote this as they preferred way of receiving feedback?

The issue that arose regarding the somewhat unexpected result of one of the group interviews were the students starting to compare feedback: Is it also worth pursuing? If this may lead to collaborations among the students, this may be worth exploring. One way of testing this is to actively ask them in their feedback to compare their feedback with others.

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