Video-Feedback on Assignments: A Case Study From Norway

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Abstract: The background for the study was a desire to strengthen the students' learning outcomes, and to support their development, preferably to become reflective practitioners. Knowing that the students prefer feedback on assignments and the opportunity to improve based on this feedback, summative feedback may not provide enough feedback in order to know what and how to improve. Also, some students, both younger students and students returning to school, are insecure and uncertain about studying in higher education and need psychological safety to be able to unlock their potential. The aim of the study is to investigate how they perceive personalized video feedback to contribute towards their development and their enhanced learning outcomes. By using video feedback, the students would be spoken to by name and get feedback on their assignment, including both what was adequately presented and why, and points for improvement and clues for improvement. The methods of inquiry have been survey, individual interviews and group interviews. We have treated this study as a case study. The results from the study have been very positive. The students claim that they perceive the feedback to be personal and they understand what and how to improve, in addition to how to prepare for the exam. Although some students still prefer written feedback, the majority of the respondents and informants are positive towards the video feedback, and some would even like to have this in other courses as well. They understand what and how to improve, and they perceive it as personalized and reassuring. The conclusion is that video feedback in general has had a positive impact on the students. The perception of personalization contributes to boosting confidence and supporting learning outcomes.

Keywords: Video feedback, Feedback, Assessment, Personalized feedback, Learning outcome, Reflection

1. Introduction

Supporting students' development and learning outcomes is of great importance. Not only does it help the students, but it may also support them finishing their education on time. One of the major contributors to students' enhanced learning is feedback (Haave et al., 2016, Hole, 2014).

There are two major types of assessment, summative and formative assessment, in which summative is in general a numerical score with limited or no additional or written feedback, while formative assessment provides students with feedback on their performance (Glazer, 2014). However, the score may provide the students with a sense of how they are doing, and they can also compare their score with others. Nonetheless, this score will not provide students with any clues on how to improve, what they have excelled in or where they have not met the expectations. Feedback can be offered in many different ways, for example, through conversations with either teacher or peers, or through written feedback from teachers or peers (Engh and Gran, 2021).

In this paper, we present a case study with students from The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Rena, Norway and Østfold University College, Fredrikstad, Norway. The video feedback follows a structure that includes starting with addressing the students by name (if it is a group, then all the group members' names will be mentioned), a short version of what the assignment was about, how well they have done, what they need to approve, advice on what to practice more on regarding their future exam, and lastly if they have passed their assignment. The study was done over a period of two years, and in this paper we are comparing the students' answers to see if they have changed from one year to the next. The video feedback lasted from four to seven minutes each.

We set out to investigate if the students' perception of video feedback had changed. The previous investigations showed that the students appreciate this type of feedback (Vold et al., 2023b, Vold et al., 2023a). They find it personal and useful, and they claimed to learn from the feedback. The students also claimed that they would also like to have video feedback in other courses. Would the second cohort of students have the same attitude towards video feedback? Would they be just as enthusiastic about it as their predecessors? Additionally, would the students who had video feedback in two courses following each other still be as positive toward the second round of video feedback?

We will first present the theory that has informed our study, and then explain our method of inquiry. Lastly, we will then present and discuss the results of our investigation before we conclude.

2. Theoretical Foundations

Hattie and Timperley (2007) define feedback as "information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). One type of feedback is feedback provided via video from a teacher to a student. Borup et al. (2015) claim that video feedback provides personal and personalized feedback. As the number of students has increased, there is a risk that feedback becomes less personalized, since the need to provide a lot of feedback leads to standardization. According to Borup et al. (2015), video feedback enables a maintained information richness.

Although feedback should be provided as quickly as possible after the assignment (Daft and Lengel, 1986) to have an impact, video feedback, although time consuming (Borup et al., 2015), makes it possible to provide positive and encouraging feedback via video. Enabling psychological safety when starting higher education (Edmondson et al., 2016, Edmondson, 2019) may provide the students with the affective support they need to gain confidence in the study situation (Palloff and Pratt, 2007).

According to Borup et al. (2015), students find that written feedback is easier to access, as they tend to use their mobile phones for study purposes. Moreover, the students in Borup et al.'s investigations (2015) claim that written feedback is more efficient, as they can skim the text, as opposed to a video in which they have to listen to- and watch the video. However, they find the video feedback more elaborate, supportive and understandable, as they can interpret more listening to the tone of the voice in the video. There is also a higher word count in the video, hence, more opportunities for praise, support and relationship building.

Blair et al. (2013) have done investigations as to what type of feedback students want. They base their study on the seven principles provided by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), in which good feedback:

1. Helps clarify what a good performance is
2. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning
3. Delivers high-quality information to students about their learning
4. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning
5. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
6. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching

Blair et al. (2013) also point towards a possible discrepancy between teachers' perception of importance of feedback, and the students' perceptions. The teachers may deliver feedback they think the students need in order to pass a test. According to Blair et al. (2013), some students do not have the ability to use the feedback provided.

They also claim that there may be more miscommunication in written feedback, as it may be written in a very academic style using academic language, which requires insight into this academic language from the students.

Due to the large number of students, there are also fewer opportunities for staff-student dialogues. These dialogues may have supported student engagement with feedback (Blair et al., 2013).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) conducted an overview of studies looking at the effects of formative feedback, and found that the most effective feedback provides information about the task in question and how to improve it. Praise, rewards and punishment did not contribute to any effectiveness. Their suggestion is that effective feedback should be asking: "Where am I going (goals)?", "How am I going (progress)" and "Where to next (improve progress)" (p. 86). In this way, it should be possible to "reduce the discrepancy between current and desired understanding" (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). They provide a model for feedback to enhance learning that ends up in four levels: Task level, Process level, Self-regulation level and Self level. The Task level is about how well tasks are understood and performed, whereas the Process level is about what process is needed to understand and perform regarding tasks (assignments). The Self-regulation level is about self-monitoring, directing and regulating actions, while the last level, the Self-level, is about personal evaluations and their effect on the learner. The Self-regulation level is about how to provide feedback that makes the students seek and accommodate information that will support the learning outcome. Hattie and Timperley (2007) have suggestions as to how the feedback on the task should be provided. For example, they claim that "feedback aimed to move students from task to processing, and then from processing to regulation to regulation, is most effective" (p. 91).

Drawing on both what Hattie and Timperley (2007) and the theorists above claim, the Self-level has less of an effect on the learning outcomes as praise, with Self-regulation being something that we want to achieve.

Balancing the task level and the process level is also important. Consequently, based on the theoretical foundation above, and how we have designed our video feedback, we propose the following model:

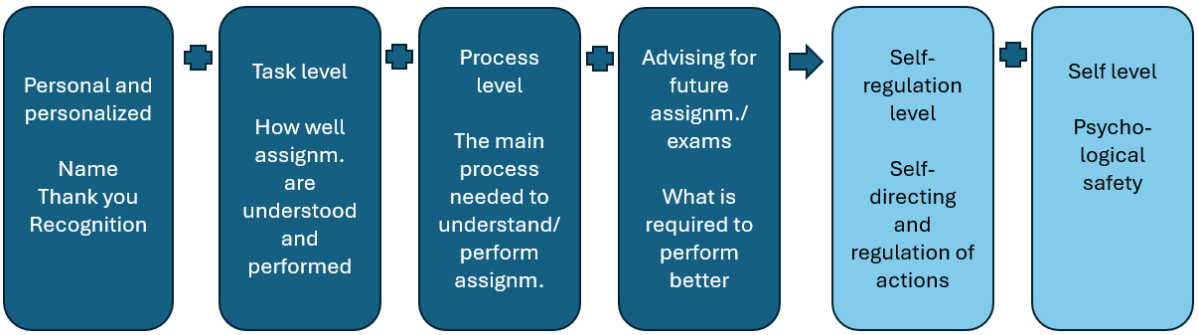

Figure 1: New figure on levels of video feedback

This figure (Figure 1) shows how the video feedback is provided based on the theoretical foundations of this paper. In the personal approach, we direct the feedback to the students by name, thank them for their assignment and recognize their assignment by addressing what they have written about. We then move to the Task level, in which we provide them with information on how well the assignment is understood, and how well they have performed. The next level is the Process level: how they need to understand and perform regarding improving their assignment. After that, there is the level of providing advice for how to solve an assignment, and work on their process towards their new assignment and/or exam. We hope this will lead to self-regulation regarding taking actions to improve their assignment, as well as support their "self" by providing any needed psychological safety.

Our aim for this research is to unveil whether this model still applies to the students who receive video feedback in the second semester, and whether this applies to the new students being exposed to video feedback.

3. Method of Inquiry

We have chosen a qualitative approach designed as a case study (Yin, 2003) to help improve our understanding of the students' perceptions, perspectives and reasoning for receiving written feedback and video feedback.

We have chosen to use a strategic selection of our full-time and part-time students on a bachelor and master level to investigate a wide array of specific experiences and perceptions of the experience of receiving written and video feedback on their assignments. We have chosen these students because they were typical, relevant and appropriate regarding our problem statement and the phenomenon to be studied (Clark et al., 2021).

Our study can be called a case study, as we have used several data sources in the investigations, and instead of generalizing, we will look at the differences and any potential for improvement. Case studies can be undertaken by utilizing several methods for collecting a detailed and rich data (Yin, 2018).

We used a combination of individual and group interviews, and distributed surveys to a selection of the students using the digital tool "Questback," which enables collecting and effective analyzing data. This methodological approach was chosen to provide us with a better understanding and nuances of the students' experiences and preferences, while at the same time allowing us to analyze the individual perceptions.

To help enhance our understanding of how students experienced receiving video feedback on their assignments, we have chosen to rely on Gadamer's understanding of conversation and language, who claims that to interpret underlies all perceptions of reality (Gadamer, 1975). It will be of vital importance to understand the students' perceptions, as well as our own. As lecturers, we have our own experiences and knowledge in the field of research. We are attentive to how our own experiences and background may influence the work on- and interpretations of the interviews, and an understanding of responses from the surveys. It may have its advantages, but at the same time our experiences and previous background may lead us towards interpretations that are subjective, since our own preconceptions may determine these interpretations.

The preconceptions we bring will determine what is possible to understand, and what is less possible to understand (Gadamer et al., 2012). According to Gadamer, understanding is never without its preconceptions (Gadamer et al., 2012), with these preconceptions guiding us in our interpretations and creation of meaning. Prejudice and preconceptions are our basis of experiences and preconditions that influence our interpretations.

According to Gadamer et al. (2012), the perceptions and attitudes within the sphere of understanding are explained by the expectations one brings into a situation. When the expectations do not suit the purpose, they need to be modified and corrected to become coherent with what we wish to obtain an understanding about. When one is clear about your preconceptions and previous knowledge, this will help enable an understanding of the opinion of others. Subjective convictions and opinions could hamper one's understanding if one is not aware of this. Gadamer (2012) pointed out the importance of being open towards other people's differences. Gadamer (2012) also claims that prejudices may be positive or negative, and that they do not necessarily hamper, but may be a precondition to help understand the future. Without a prior understanding, the understanding of a phenomenon will be difficult to understand. According to Grønmo (2004) and Gadamer et al. (2012), the pre-understanding will represent a possibility for a common acquired knowledge. By knowing the field of research, it will be possible to develop relevant knowledge and increase validity and reliability (Lindboe and Skrefsrud, 2016). At the same time, the researcher needs to be aware of not becoming too close to the research field, and thus hamper the analytical process.

Our study includes feedback to approximately 250 students. The students were located at two different universities, with two different courses at The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and Østfold University College. The students were encouraged to volunteer for the interviews, and we only conducted six individual interviews. The group interviews were conducted with four groups: two with 10 persons, one with 12 persons and two with approximately 40 students. The survey was sent to 167 students, with approximately 26 replies. Although the number of respondents compared to the number of students in total is low, we still get an indication of how they have perceived the video feedback.

4. Results and Discussion

As we have suggested in Figure 1, upon investigating how they perceived the video feedback, we found that most of the students claim that video feedback provides them with the feedback they need to understand how to improve on their assignments, and how to improve for their exams. Statements like: "In the video, the lecturer explained how well I had done on the assignment, but also provided me with input as to how I could improve the assignment" (informant X), and "the feedback provided in the video gave me concrete tips as to how I should have gone about solving the assignment" (informant Y), thereby supporting the two levels, the "Task level" and the "Process level" (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

Our approach of opening by addressing the students by name, thanking them for their assignment and recognizing their assignment was our way of recognizing without praising, which according to Hattie and Timperley (2007) does not contribute to learning outcomes. According to the informants, they found that this made the information "personal" and was "directly addressed to them". Some of the informants also claimed that "when the teacher opened the way she did, it gave me a boost of confidence and made me less 'afraid' of the rest of the feedback" (informant XX). This supports what we have aimed for in our model (Figure 1). It indicates that they have been provided with some psychological safety (Edmondson et al., 2016, Edmondson, 2019).

Most of the informants are also clear about how the initial address of seeing the face of the lecturer and hearing the tone of voice provides them not only with a sense of psychological safety, as we appear clear about wanting them to improve and providing them with support (Edmondson et al., 2016, Edmondson, 2019, Palloff and Pratt, 2013), but they also trust what we convey about their assignment. They also claim that they understand what is being said, something that is in coherence with what Borup et al. (2015) explain about media richness. They can both see us and hear us, which according to them not only reassure them about our good intentions, but also allow for a better understanding of what they could do to improve their assignments. The latter may also be due to that video feedback in general contains more words, hence providing a more extensive explanation of the task and process, as pointed out by Borup et al. (2015).

Only a few students claimed that written feedback was perceived as "better" than video feedback. One of these students stated that: "I can go back to the written feedback, and check out that I have remembered all for my new assignment" (informant Z). This coheres with what Borup et al. (2015) found. According to Borup

et al. (2015), the students could skim the written feedback and download it onto their mobile devices. Although none of our students claim that it is easier to access the written feedback on their phones, as opposed to the video feedback, they do claim that they like to skim the feedback, and to be able to do so several times.

With our fourth level about providing tips for task and process management towards exams, the students claim to both understand and appreciate this input from the lecturers. For this reason, Blair et al.'s (2013) findings on how the students may misconceive, or are unable to utilize the advice, may not be the case in our case study. In fact, after the introduction of the video feedback, the average grade went from C to B (which means an improvement). Although some of the students that we interviewed after their exam claim that they utilized the advice provided in the video feedback, AND the average grade went up, we still need to investigate further to establish more solid evidence of these coincidental happenings.

The students in the second semester also claim to enjoy video feedback for the same reasons. However, upon asking them which semester they would prioritize to receive video feedback, they unanimously claim that it is most important in the first semester. Statements like, "If I had to choose, it is more important to have video feedback in the first semester, as it is then that we need to build our confidence. Coming straight from a work situation, I was very unsure about how to become 'academic enough' to pass my exams" (informant Yy), and "I was so insecure and almost afraid to receive the first feedback, but the tone of voice, the reassuring comments and the way the advice on improvements were provided made me feel more relaxed, and inspired me to continue my work on my assignment although we were not to hand it in again. In this [second] semester, I feel more confident, so for this semester I could just as well have gotten written feedback" (informant Zz). Again, this implies that starting out with video feedback and being provided according to Figure 1, and based on the theory on good feedback (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, Borup et al., 2015, Hattie and Timperley, 2007), this supports Self-regulation and a Self level, including psychological safety (Edmondson et al., 2016, Edmondson, 2019, Palloff and Pratt, 2013).

Summing up, the video feedback seems to follow up on Nicole and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) explanation about good feedback, as it seems to "help clarify what good performance is", "facilitate reflection in learning", provide "high-quality information" on their learning, "encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem", and provides possibilities and support by "closing the gap between current and desired performance".

What we have had less of an emphasis on are number 4 about "encouraging teacher and peer dialogue around learning" and number 7, which is about "providing information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching".

5. Conclusion

Our conclusion is that video feedback based on the model displayed in Figure 1 has been successful, as according to our informants it has provided them with meaningful information about their task (assignment) and process. The first level about addressing them by name, thanking them for their assignment and recognizing what they have written their assignment about made the information personal, and helped put them at ease. Many of the informants also claim it provided them with a psychological safety that encouraged them in their further studies. The advice on the forthcoming assignment and/or exams, in addition to the information about their task (assignment) and process, provided some of the informants with Self-regulation, in which they claim to have gone through their assignments again to look at how they could improve, as well as preparing for the forthcoming assignment and/or exam. The average grade in one of the courses where video feedback was used for the entire course improved (from C to B), but this needs to be more extensively verified.

Although written feedback was emphasized as easy to skim and to return to when working on assignments and exams, it seems that video feedback is the preferred form of feedback by the students.

5.1 Further Research

In this paper, we have focused on the students' perspectives, as our investigations have been among the students. It would be interesting to also investigate the lecturers' perspectives. The theory we have used to inform this study also provides some information on the teacher perspectives, but it would be interesting to do a separate inquiry among the lecturers that have been a part of this investigation.

Also, to do a more in-depth investigation on any coherence between the increased average grade and video feedback would be of interest.

There is also a rapid development in tools that may aid regarding the time spent doing the video feedback. We do not yet know the full extent of what Artificial Intelligence (AI) can do for us, nor the digital tools available that can record and replay, and even text video messages. We will keep a close eye on the developments, and suggest testing different tools in the very near future.

In the following study year, we have decided to only provide video feedback in the first semester and written in the second semester, and repeat our qualitative investigations among the new students. The aim of this study will be first to establish if starting out with video feedback will provide the students with the necessary self-regulation and psychological safety needed to study in higher education.

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