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"How Did I Do?": Giving learners effective and affective feedback

Nicol R. Howard[1]

Abstract
Borup et al. (Educ Technol Res Dev 63: 161–184. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-015-9367-8, 2015) examined teacher candidate and instructor perceptions of feedback in blended learning environments. Their work juxtaposed two different modalities of learning and feedback; it serves as a critical anchor to support future efforts to ensure students and instructors are engaged in an efficient feedback experience that offers affective benefits in digital learning spaces. In this article, I offer applicable feedback delivery strategies for educators as an extension of Borup et al.'s work.

Keywords Feedback · Online learning · Teaching strategies

"How Did I Do?": Giving learners effective and affective feedback

The COVID-19 pandemic sent many institutions in a flurry grappling with how to keep the learning going amid redirecting learning from face-to-face settings to online learning spaces that leverage digital learning platforms. Challenges related to device access and WiFi connectivity persist for learners, yet there are more concerns that require attention (Fayez Ishtaiwa, Khaled, & Dukmak, 2015; Howard, Thomas, & Schaffer, 2018; Thomas, Howard, & Schaffer, 2019; Warschauer, 2004). Online learning requires instructors to rely heavily on technology to facilitate meaningful learning experiences (Anderson, 2009; Howard & Howard, 2017); adequate training and supports are needed as well (Fayez Ishtaiwa et al., 2015). Rapid shifts to digital learning spaces call for flexible innovative strategies to support both teachers and learners, especially when it comes to offering personalized feedback.

Feedback is a critical aspect of learning, and Borup et al. (2015) asserted that personalized feedback can be difficult when teachers and learners are separated by space and time such as in online learning settings. Although the focus should be on the quality of the feedback, the critical selection for delivery should not be ignored. Borup et al. (2015) examined teacher candidate and instructor perceptions of feedback quality and delivery in blended

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learning environments. Instruction was delivered predominantly online with occasional face-to-face class meetings. Borup et al. juxtaposed two different modalities feedback (text-based and video-based) to ensure students and instructors were engaged in an efficient feedback experience. It is important to note that the work of Borup et al., like other researchers (e.g., Ketchum, LaFave, Yeats, Phompheng, & Hardy, 2020; Istenič Starčič & Lebeničnik, 2020; Seckman, 2018; West & Turner, 2016) has given attention to student and instructor experiences and preferences. In response, I will offer guidance on applicable feedback strategies for educator-use based upon assignment type (e.g., literature review, performance tasks).

Feedback quality and delivery

Borup et al. indicated that students expect feedback to be respectful and supportive in nature. Additionally, they found that consistency, specificity, and usefulness of the feedback are essential to learners. Constructing quality feedback can present challenges for educators. Regardless, feedback is imperative and subsequently researchers have suggested that the use of a combination of both text-based and video-based delivery is known to be more effective in promoting substantive revision and improvement in students' work, especially on written assignments (Grigoryan, 2017a). Additionally, researchers have indicated that video-based feedback may have a larger impact on students' perceptions of their instructor's social presence (Ketchum et al., 2020; Thomas, West, & Borup, 2017; West & Turner, 2016).

When shifting to digital, educators should prioritize the delivery of effective and affective forms of feedback. Educators may consider conducting an informal survey that directly asks learners about their feedback preferences; however, Grigoryan (2017a) emphasized the value of multimodal feedback. Utilizing both forms of feedback allows educators to combine the specificity of text-based feedback (effective) with the relational aspect of video-based feedback (affective) in the same course. For example, text-based feedback can be offered on written assignments and video-based feedback on class projects or as discussion post responses either in an LMS or on a digital platform such as FlipGrid.

Text-based delivery is a commonly used format that offers educators an opportunity to give feedback in a concise manner. Since Borup et al. suggested that learners perceive feedback in written form as easy to access and view, educators should offer this feedback delivery especially when shifting to online learning environments. Text-based feedback is familiar to learners; it is accessible from a range of devices and can be read on the go without concerns about people hearing the feedback from an instructor, like in video-based feedback.

There are affective benefits to video-based feedback that can support learners. Although video-based feedback can require greater WiFi bandwidth, Borup et al. determined that learners appreciate how well and clear instructors can elaborate and support in video-based feedback. Like text-based feedback, educators can offer video-based feedback that is personalized and supportive while increasing the likelihood of building relationships with learners (Grigoryan, 2017b; Ketchum et al., 2020). This is especially important when shifting to digital, whereby learners and educators no longer have the benefit of face-to-face conversational exchanges.

Based on Borup et al. and subsequent research referenced above, I contend that effective text-based and video-based feedback strategies for educators should include the following:

Table 1 Examples of effective text-based or affective video-based feedback

Written Assignment (e.g., literature review)	Performance Task (e.g., presentation)
Specific and personalized:	Specific and personalized:
Your paper was well-written. You have clearly stated your claims and warrants. Remember to review comments throughout your paper to identify specific instances where you can draw connections to…	*Your project included all required components. Your presentation flowed logically and was well-sequenced. I was particularly impressed with how you included…*
Clear guidance:	Clear guidance:
To improve your final essay, remember to include in-text citations in APA format to further support your claims about…	*To improve, remember to re-read your slides to catch minor errors. Also consider how you might…to connect with your audience.*
Supportive and/or formative feedback:	Supportive and/or formative feedback:
You are making progress with your paper. To support with refining your argument, consider reading…	*You continually show improvement. Please review the sample presentations I have provided and consider how you to…*

(1) Specific, positive, and personalized feedback; (2) Clear guidance on items that need correction; and, (3) Supportive and/or formative feedback. Table 1 offers guidance on these feedback strategies for written and performance tasks. Each example could be offered to a learner as text-based feedback (effective) or in the form of video-based feedback (affective).

Future considerations

In addition to offering effective (through text-based methods) and affective (through video-based methods) feedback during shifts to digital, it is imperative that educators offer consistent, timely, and frequent feedback to learners. Additionally, learners should be offered opportunities to utilize both text-based and video-based methods for peer feedback (van Popta, Kral, Camp, Martens, & Simons, 2017). Optimizing feedback from educator to learner and learner to learner serves to benefit the relationship building in online learning environments; it also increases students' motivation and builds a stronger sense of community in the classroom (Li, Wong, Yang, & Bell, 2020).

Compliance with ethical standards

There are no potential conflicts of interest. This research does not involve human participants and/or animals, not does it require informed consent.

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