A Word In Your Ear 2009: Audio feedback

Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK, 18 December 2009

Keynote

Bob Rotheram, National Teaching Fellow at Leeds Metropolitan University, led the innovative and highly successful JISC-funded project "Sounds Good: Quicker, better assessment using audio feedback". Sounds Good showed that students like receiving audio feedback on their work and staff also appreciate its advantages.

Bob will use his keynote address to reflect on the project and highlight the main findings, practice tips and limitations. He will also point out the some of the challenges if audio feedback is to be more widely adopted for assessment in higher education.

Bob Rotheram

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Challenge Circles

Prior to lunch, Challenge Circle discussion groups will be run to address some of the questions that delegates have come with today about the use of audio feedback.

In your pack you will find a Challenge Card. Please complete the challenge question and post this during the morning coffee session to the Challenge Board.

The Challenge Circles will address one theme each. These will be:

- ☐ Pedagogy (or Academic design)
- ☐ Student Use of Feedback
- ☐ Use of Technology

The Chairs for each Challenge Circle group will use the challenges you have identified to lead the discussion.

Tip Cards

Your conference pack includes a tip card. During the day please complete this and post it in one of the Tip Card boxes that will be available during the day. What would you advise colleagues about using audio feedback?

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Wireless and Power

WiFi login details are on your name badge.

Power sockets are available for delegates to recharge laptops etc in the presentation rooms. Please don't hog these!

Conference Twitter Tag

#awaord09 - be kind!

Short papers

Presenters are invited to submit extended papers following the conference. Delegates should check the conference website for updates to these: http://research.shu.ac.uk/lti/awordinyourear2009/

Abstracts

The following short papers, posters and workshops have been selected for presentation at *A Word In Your Ear 2009: Audio Feedback*, a one day conference

SHORT PAPERS

Theme: Does Audio Feedback Work?

Sounding out audio feedback: Does a more personalised approach tune students in or switch them off?

Dr Patricia Fell *(patricia.fell@ bcu.ac.uk)*, Birmingham City University

This paper will report on the findings of an exploratory case study undertaken in order to inform and help shape the design of a proposed larger scale pilot on audio feedback within the Faculty of Health at Birmingham City University. The purpose of this case study was to explore students' attitudes and opinions to the use of digital audio files as a means of feedback on their assessed work. The 'students' chosen for this study were academic staff from within the faculty who had experienced audio feedback on the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme. This sample was chosen as they offered a unique insight to feedback issues as both students and also as educationalists. A small scale (n=6) exploratory qualitative study was conducted using semi structured interviews as the data collection method.

The findings of this study support the emerging view from literature to date that audio feedback offers a more personalised form of feedback to students. Students do appear to appreciate the qualities such as tone of voice and nuances afforded by audio feedback. However, whether this improves the quality of student feedback, enriches the student learning experience or translates into increased student engagement with the feedback is not so certain.

The results from this study indicated that the personal nature of the feedback was not always sufficient to enhance student learning and could in some cases negatively impact on student engagement. This paper will explore key factors that affected the extent of student engagement in this case and present essential components of effective audio feedback, as identified by the students in this case study. Furthermore, the need for further research into the relationship between emotional intelligence and engagement with audio feedback will also be discussed.

Questioning audio feedback

Sue Rodway-Dyer *(s.j.rodway-dyer@exeter.ac.uk)* **Elisabeth Dunne** *(e.j.dunne@exeter .ac.uk)*,
University of Exeter

The interest in audio feedback in higher education has led to a number of small-scale practitioner studies. These suggest, for example, that digital feedback suits today's student; that audio feedback tends to be more extensive, easier to access and understand, and with more depth than written. However this is still an area wherein rhetoric abounds and assumptions are made about the benefits of working in this way. This session will consider some of the difficulties of offering worthwhile audio feedback that undergraduate students will use to improve their learning. Data will be presented from a case study in Geography, where a lecturer has given audio feedback on written assignments from a class of 73 first-year students. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, have been gained from students to gain their views on audio feedback, as well as from the lecturer through stimulated recall discussions. Findings outline that students did not always respond well to the content of their feedback, despite the lecturer expending considerable time and effort in giving them feedback that would be seen as supportive, useful, and that would enable them to engage with their learning. A category analysis of the content of the feedback suggests reasons for their lack of enthusiasm, and student comments suggest that the way in which feedback is offered, the students' expectations, and the purpose of the feedback in a particular context, may have both cognitive and affective implications for learning. Findings also highlight that there are many factors that need to be considered when offering feedback, such as the optimum time length for audio feedback, the style, the tone of voice, and the register of language, alongside the actual content and the way in which the content is organised.

Group assessment feedback: the good, the bad and the ugly

R. Emery, A. Atkinson *(roger.emery@solent.ac.uk)*, Southampton Solent University

Introduction

Southampton Solent University's project: The use of audio to deliver effective feedback on student assessment; involved using audio feedback to improve student's perception of feedback given by their tutor and to provide the tutor with a potentially quicker or more efficient way of delivering feedback, in anticipation of online submission and, potentially, online marking.

The project raised a number of issues; of particular interest was feedback delivered to students working in groups which in one case was very successful and in another not at all workable.

This paper outlines general overview of Solent's wider project, the specific issues encountered with providing feedback to groups; the positive responses from the successful case study and the responses from the unworkable case study as well as an overview of the technology used to ensure effective secure delivery to groups.

The Good: Where it works - The successful case study involved a cohort of five groups of level 1 law students whose assessment involved giving a group presentation which was assessed by the first marker and recorded on DVD for second marking. The feedback was given in the form a recorded conversation between the first and second marker at the moderation stage. The feedback was delivered securely to each group via the University's VLE (moodle) and generally received a positive response from the students.

The bad: Where it doesn't - The unsuccessful case study will be used to highlight the difficulties within different assessment strategies. The audio feedback was created during the formative stage of client appraisal interviews. Students were working on a one to one basis as fitness instructors interviewing clients during a weekly gym class session, while the tutor circulated the room observing the interviews and recording her observations. The study revealed two inherent problems: The students found the tutors background comments distracting while they worked. The tutor struggled to edit and control the increasing number of audio files, as a full file could not be created in one go as she moved backwards and forwards around the interviews.

The Ugly: Technology / Secure Delivery - A key issue within providing audio feedback to groups was the need to provide a secure system of delivery. A method of secure delivery of feedback to students was devised using a combination of the moodle 'Advanced Uploading of Assignments' activity in concert with the moodle 'groups' tool. The paper will highlight recommendations for further development of this these tools in order to further improve and facilitate usability.

Theme: Learner and Academic Experience

Podcasting assignment feedback to students; an evaluation of staff and student experiences

Derek France *(d.france@chester.ac.uk)* **Kenny Lynch** *(klynch@glos.ac.uk)*,
University of Chester, University of Gloucestershire

A recent revision of the UK e-learning strategy document by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (2009, p.6) stated that, "focus should be on student learning rather than on developments in technology per se, enabling students to learn through and be supported by technology." Prensky (2009) has developed his theory to advocate 'Digital Wisdom' and 'Digital Enhancement', using digital technologies to enhance learning. In the last 20 years there has been a proliferation of assessment strategies requiring students to produce video, poster, presentation, online and other media. This has broadened the student learning experience. However, the breadth of methods of providing feedback to students on their assignments remains primarily in a written form. This raises the questions of what the best way is of broadening the means of providing feedback to students.

This paper will evaluate research with staff and students from two universities using podcasting technology to deliver audio feedback to students. The paper will briefly explore the process developed to facilitate the production and access of audio content. The researchers used the Nie (2007) model to construct a process that was transferable between staff and across disciplines. The paper will also report on quantitative surveys with students at different stages in their degree programmes before and after receiving the feedback. The surveys include evaluation of summative, formative and generic forms of feedback, in a range of class sizes. To

complement this and explore developing themes, the research also reports on qualitative data collected from focus groups with staff and students and reflections of their experiences which were overwhelmingly positive from both perspectives. The data demonstrates that students value the opportunity of hearing their tutor's voice providing the feedback where and when is suits them. This method of delivering feedback is particularly appreciated by distance learners. The tutors appreciate the ease of communicating verbally directly to the students concerned. The paper will conclude with some discussion of lessons learned and some directions for future investigation.

Talking about writing: exploring teacher and learner use of audio feedback on EAP writing assignments

Clare McCullagh *(c.e.mccullagh@reading.ac.uk),* University of Reading

This paper reports on the findings of an action research project exploring how teachers and international learners in an EAP writing context within the University of Reading exploit and perceive digital audio as a feedback medium. The study was inspired by research within the EFL arena and across the HE sector, in which audio feedback has proved to be effective, friendly and engaging for learners, and efficient for teachers to deliver. The study set out to explore whether audio might be a more accessible feedback mode for those learners at ease with speaking and listening activities who respond well to informal teaching styles. For all learners, we envisaged that audio might enable teachers to provide a richer layer of detail that would motivate learners to engage more deeply with the essay re-drafting process.

Both generic and individual audio feedback were introduced in a staged approach alongside a reduced amount of written commentary on essays. Teacher and learner responses were captured through surveys, focus groups and discussion. Analysis of responses as well as audio feedback transcripts not only sought to establish whether participants liked audio feedback, but also to identify particular features of audio feedback that develop our understanding of why teachers and learners may or may not have a preference for this approach. In all respects, apart from the demands it placed upon tutor time and energy, audio feedback met our expectations and proved to be entirely appropriate for a process writing context. Although this study involved a group of international learners, its findings are of relevance beyond an EAP context to the wider HE sector, where the flexibility of digital audio offers great potential for both face-to-face and distance applications.

Theme: Audio and Written Feedback: differences and preferences

Vorsprung durch Technik: advancement through technology, audio feedback improves student satisfaction

Dr Heidi Probst *(h.probst@shu.ac.uk)* Rob Appleyard *(r.m.appleyard@shu.ac.uk)* and Chris Glover *(c.j.glover@shu.ac.uk)*, Sheffield Hallam University

Formal feedback from tutors on summative assessments plays a crucial part in the learning and assessment process and can be provided by tutors via oral face to face transactions, written text, electronic media (e-mail or through synchronous or asynchronous discussion), audio or video methods. The use of audio recordings for student feedback is not new, yet formal research into the effectiveness of this mode of feedback has been difficult to locate.

Students are primarily grade or mark orientated, yet they can report dissatisfaction if graded work is returned without accompanying comments. But what evidence exists to suggest mode of feedback improves overall student satisfaction and the opportunity for future learning?

This paper reports on a project that looked at feedback methods used in one Institution across the MSc in Radiotherapy and Oncology course. The project aimed to identify levels of student satisfaction and differences in resource commitment for tutors across different modes of feedback.

This small research study found that the use of audio feedback across a range of different modules significantly enhanced student satisfaction compared to written methods and indicated a possible recall improvement with audio that requires further study. The study was unable to identify whether audio feedback had any significant improvement on future assignment scores and this will be the focus of future research.

Applying research on audio feedback to "thought mapping"

Phil Ice *(PIce@APUS.EDU),* American Public University

Foundational work in the use of audio feedback in online courses found the following benefits associated with use of the technique: 1. Ability to understand nuance, 2. Increased involvement in the course, 3. Improved content retention and 4. Increased perceptions of instructor caring. Subsequent research across multiple institutions confirmed these findings and detected significant gains in various aspects of teaching, social and cognitive presence. Later work demonstrated a generalized preference on the part of students for feedback that included both audio and written components. This presentation will review new research that examines students' perceptions of the value of audio versus text-based feedback at various levels. The discussion will be extended to include new techniques for multimedia "thought mapping" that builds on the strengths of the various components of the feedback cycle.

An exploratory study of speech styles in audio feedback to M-level students

Dr. Diane Davies, Dr Pamela Rogerson-Revell and Gabi Witthaus *(gabi.witthaus@leicester.ac.uk)*, University of Leicester

The benefits to students of receiving audio feedback on assignments have recently been discussed in various contexts in the education literature. Students have reported that they experience audio feedback as being 'more personal', 'more detailed', more 'complete' and 'clearer' than written feedback. In preliminary findings from the DUCKLING (Delivering University Curricula: Knowledge, Learning and Innovation Gains) project at the University of Leicester, students have said they feel 'more connected' and 'closer' to their tutor when listening to the podcasts. For these reasons, many students indicate a higher level of motivation to listen to the audio feedback than to read written feedback.

This paper reports on an exploratory study currently under way at the University of Leicester, with the aim of identifying the linguistic features of audio feedback that differentiate it from written feedback, and that might be associated with these impressions ('personalisation', 'connectedness', etc.) that students have reported.

In the study, samples of audio and written feedback given to distance students on their assignments are analysed and compared in relation to the following hypotheses:

- That linguistic strategies used to personalise feedback and establish 'connection' with the student are more prevalent in the audio mode
- That power relations between tutor and student are differently constituted in the language of audio and written feedback
- That intonation plays a key role in establishing (or failing to establish) a supportive tone in audio feedback and that written feedback may, by comparison, have a less supportive tone.

In our presentation we will discuss our research methodology and some of the early results of our study.

Using an old technology in a new way or using a new technology in an old way? - exploring the use of audio feedback post-teaching observation

Carole Davis *(c.l.Davis@mdx.ac.uk)* **Agi Ryder** *(a.i.ryder@mdx.ac.uk)*, Middlesex University

As part of the assessment strategy, new academic staff undertaking the PGCERT HE at Middlesex University are required to undertake teaching observations.

Over the past two years the programme team have been exploring the potential of providing students with audio feedback in order to provide them with detailed and timely feedback. The research explores the different aspects of teaching observations; the principles of effective feedback and the advantages and disadvantages of audio vs written feedback. (Race, 2006, Rotheram, 2008) It also explores audio feedback as a mechanism to enhance the reflective process in a way that the written word does not. (Brockbank and Mcgill, 2007) Preliminary findings indicate huge benefits for the recipients. The personal and more detailed feedback has strengthened the relationship between the programme team and the participants. It enables participants to become more critical of their practice and become more aware of the positive aspects of their own practice. We would like to share with the conference delegates the findings of our research and engage them in a discussion of how practitioners can use audio feedback effectively in teaching observations and/ or in their own practice.

Audio feedback at the University of Liverpool: a review of experiences

Stuart McGugan *(s.mcgugan@liverpool.ac.uk)* **Nick Bunyan, Dave King and Michaela Higginson**,
University of Liverpool

This paper reports on 2 pilot studies of using audio feedback at the University of Liverpool.

The first pilot evaluates the use of audio feedback podcasts created by 4 academics in the School of Sociology and Social Policy. A particular focus of this study was to examine (both quantitatively and qualitatively) how the characteristics of the feedback changed by replacing traditional text based comments with audio comments on student coursework across 3 years of an undergraduate programme. We will illustrate the different characteristics of the feedback constructed and discuss what implications (if any) that this may have for student learning.

The second pilot evaluates the use of audio comments to complement text based feedback provided to 2nd Year Occupational Therapy students. The approach adopted took the form of inserting audio comments directly into MS word documents submitted by students. The value of such an approach will be considered by drawing on the experiences of the assessment moderators, the module tutor providing the feedback and the students themselves.

Both pilots highlighted both the positive and negative aspects of using digital audio recordings to deliver student feedback in Higher Education, and based on the lessons we have learned at Liverpool we will share some of our thinking for effective practice in the future.

Theme: Students in Charge of Learning

Give and take - using peer group audio feedback to develop successful collaboration within blended and online courses

Angela Smith *(angela.smith@edgehill.ac.uk)*, Edge Hill University

This paper evaluates the use of peer audio assessment/ feedback for developing collaborative working for post graduate online CPD learners. The audio activity took place within two courses (one blended, the second wholly online) which ran for twelve weeks and was the follow up activity to a task requiring a group presentation. Although the product itself was not assessed, the participation was a required element and groups were then required to work collaboratively to agree on and present, as well as receive, audio feedback both for and from other groups on the same course.

The use of peer group audio feedback aimed to:

- Further develop group cohesion
- Allow for experience of different roles within an online group
- Encourage peer group constructive criticism and supportive feedback
- Allow for collaborative interactive assessment and feedback
- Develop an alternative way of feeding back by using audio
- Allow participants the experience of giving as well as receiving audio feedback
- Facilitate giving/ receiving feedback as a group activity
- Develop a deeper understanding of the potential for audio feedback within a range of teaching/ training contexts
- Encourage links between underpinning socio-constructivist theories and collaborative activities
- Allow for discussion of the experience and future implications

Initial concerns about having to work in groups, mainly online, were overcome through individual persistence, tutor support, peer pressure and specific pre ordained roles being established and adhered to.

The activity resulted in participants acknowledging a deeper sense of group cohesion, a broadening of theoretical understanding aligned to current practice and a clear indication of a growing recognition of the potential value of using audio feedback across all sectors of education and beyond.

The final conclusions discussed offer samples of meaningful reflective practice by participants as to the real benefits experienced as a result of both offering and receiving audio feedback.

iGather: learners as responsible audio collectors of tutor, peer and self-reflection

Andrew Middleton *(a.j.middleton@shu.ac.uk)* **Anne Nortcliffe** and **Rosie Owens**
Sheffield Hallam University

Feedback is frequently described as something that is done for the learner: feedback is 'given'. This paper describes how audio feedback can be designed as a device that facilitates personal and autonomous knowledge construction. The Student Audio Notes Project at Sheffield Hallam University encouraged students to use MP3 recorders to gather the comments, explanations and ideas of tutors and peers, and to also use audio as a channel for personal reflection. Students became responsible and active 'owners' of their audio data, and so were more likely to use it to feed forward, or affect, their learning. This paper draws upon student testimony from a year long project and reports on how the 52 student participants used their MP3 recorders to gather useful formal, informal and semi-formal voices. What did they decide would be useful? How did they work with the recordings? And could they have been guided further in iteratively reviewing their recordings? Those attending this short paper will be asked to help identify ideas for, and the implications of, encouraging the wider use of student collated audio feedback.

Theme: Alternatives to a Dictaphone Approach

Is there potential to use embedded digitally recorded comments as a form of feed forward, enabling greater flexibility and enhancement to the assessment and feedback progress within Higher Education?

Sue Murrin-Bailey *(susan.murrin-bailey@edgehill.ac.uk)* **Shirley Hunter-Barnett**, Edge Hill University

The effectiveness of feedback within traditional educational environments has prompted much debate. With the arrival of social software and Web 2.0 technologies for learning, digital audio is now being considered as a way to improve the quality of feedback and enhance the students learning experience. Supported by the body of work written by educationalists, a multi-faceted environmental scan that consisted of assessment, the use of embedded digital audio as a feed forward foci and associated technology, was conducted to ascertain if there is a potential to embed recorded auditory feed forward comments within students electronically submitted course work. A multiple research methodology that incorporated techniques from qualitative and quantitative methods was used for the empirical data collection and to facilitate triangulation, thus reducing bias in the analysis. Participants were students and tutors from Edge Hill University in Ormskirk, West Lancashire. This paper focuses on student and tutor responsiveness. It describes how there is potential to use embedded digital sound files in HE, and that its use seems to enable greater flexibility in the feed forward process, whilst being a technology that tutors are prepared to use and students find easy to understand. Any problems encountered are discussed and suggestions for improvement in the feed forward process included.

Using audio email feedback in formative assessment

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Liverpool John Moores University

The importance of formative assessment in promoting student learning is well recognised within pedagogical communities of practice [1] and continues to be noted by researchers (e.g. [2, 3]). Formative assessment is specifically intended to produce feedback on student performance thereby improving and accelerating learning [1]. 'Surface' approaches to learning which often characterises other assessment approaches is discouraged and increased learning can be achieved [4]. Despite the importance ascribed to formative assessment, very few formative assessment opportunities are generally made available to students in HE [5]. A commonly cited reason for this is the limited time lecturers have within semester-based systems to produce and deliver the feedback necessary to affect changes in student learning behaviour, often within increasingly large student cohorts [3]. For 'formative learning' to occur and the benefits of formative assessment to be achieved, feedback needs to timely, relevant and delivered to students prior to summative assessment.

Ameliorating the above stated problems in HE formative assessment therefore provides the motivation behind our work. A number of researchers have reported positively on the use of a variety of emerging technologies within HE formative assessment and feedback strategies [6, 7, 8]. In this paper we report on the use of audio email feedback as a means of delivering detailed formative feedback to students. In particular, we focus in the deployment of Wimba Voice [9] to deliver formative feedback as voice emails to level one undergraduate

students studying within the domains of business and web technologies. Preliminary results of a formal evaluation of audio email feedback on student learning will also be summarised.

POSTERS

Neanderthal to Neil Armstrong

Ian Bassam *(ian.bassam@sunderland.ac.uk)*, Sunderland University

A poster giving a personal account of how audio has been adopted by an academic member of staff, with one eye firmly fixed on retirement, to enhance the tutorial process.

Chalk and talk worked perfectly well. Now I've discovered that there is a 'digital age' and I'm finding that possible applications of these 'discoveries' is mouth-wateringly large. My personal preference is talk rather than chalk. So, I thought that audio would be ideal for tutorials with a small group of overseas students who needed opportunities for listening and speaking in English. Tutorials present those opportunities to get to the heart of issues, address specific concerns and offer tangential opportunities which aren't possible in written feedback. But, the tutorial can be ethereal. (A paper copy of the tutorial would leave a permanent but these students don't take notes in tutorials, forget, and the moment is lost). The audio record allows for the flow and spontaneity to be maintained, preserved and then accessed again, and again. This isn't any imposition upon the people or the process; just carry on as usual but with a recording device (and a mindset change!).

I changed, the students appreciated and the process carries on apace. I'm looking forward to retirement rather than career development, so the notion would have to be that if I can embrace this concept why can't anyone else?

Which audio feedback is best? : Optimising audio feedback to maximise student and staff experience

Dr I-Chant A. Chiang *(iac@aber.ac.uk)*, Aberystwyth University

Lecturers are using a variety of audio feedback methods but is one audio feedback method better than the others? Would high-performing students and underperforming students prefer different methods? Does the optimal method depend on the assessment type? We investigate three forms of audio feedback currently being used by lecturers around the UK to determine the optimal method for a variety of learners: audio-only (mp3 files), asynchronous audio-visual (embedded audio files within Word documents), and synchronous audio-visual (video and audio screen capture with Jing). The poster will discuss our evaluation of these three methods. Quality and quantity of feedback will help determine which method will provide effective feedback for students without overburdening assessors. We hope to discuss with users of other methods how they chose that method and whether they found it successful.

Feedback by text and audio annotation

Steve Dixon *(s.dixon@newman.ac.uk)*, Newman University College, Birmingham

With increased VLE use and blended approaches to delivery, opportunities are now available to re-appraise different ways of recording and giving feedback. Under the auspices of JISC's Sounds Good 2, staff at Newman University college trialled audio feedback in order to test the hypothesis that it can benefit staff and students by both saving assessors' time and providing richer feedback to students. During a compulsory first year module in Education Studies, 83 students were asked to submit a 1500 word essay as a text file via Moodle. This online submission allowed for both traditional written annotation of the original script as well as the embedding of an audio mp3 file for student feedback. Initial findings show that an overwhelming majority of respondents were very enthusiastic about the use of audio feedback with indications that the medium facilitates a shift in the nature of the feedback and the staff-student dynamic.

Lend me your ear and I'll improve your grade

Dr. Mark Glynn *(mark.glynn@ioti.ie)*, ITT Dublin

Continuous assessment has become an integral part of higher education. Anecdotal evidence says that an increasing number of courses are now completely assessed through continuous assessment, removing the element of the final exam. In order to optimise any assessment, continuous or otherwise, in terms of a learning experience for the student, feedback is crucial. However, providing feedback on a regular basis to students can dramatically increase the workload of the lecturer. This paper outlines how the use of technology has been used to minimise the workload for the lecturer while providing individual feedback to students on a regular basis.

This research was conducted on a first year chemistry module. This common module was delivered to students from BSc in Chemistry, BSc in Sport Science and BSc in DNA and Forensic science. This study was limited to first year full time students, but the methods mentioned in this paper are used to a lesser extent in other courses within the department of science.

Assessment within this module consists of 50% continuous assessment and 50% available in the final exam. The continuous assessment aspect of the module is further sub divided into 35% allocated to ten laboratory reports and 8% available through a group presentation on a given topic and finally 7% on an in-class exam.

In addition to written feedback, given on the various assignments, students received audio personalised feedback on their laboratory reports distributed via the Learning Management System (Moodle). The software used to compile the audio feedback was Audacity, which is available for free through the internet. In addition students were required to use MS PowerPoint to compile a poster style presentation with voiceovers. Allowing students to prepare this presentation on their own time allowed them to "perfect" their presentation and removed the logistical problem of listening to numerous presentations during class time. Every assessment was completely managed through the colleges learning management system. The only cost involved was the purchase of a headset and microphone for the lecturer. The research is evaluated by use of student questionnaires.

Technology, Feedback, Action! : The impact of learning technology upon students' engagement with their feedback

Stuart Hepplestone *(s.j.hepplestone@shu.ac.uk)* and Helen Parkin, Sheffield Hallam University

This poster shares the findings of an externally-funded research project undertaken at Sheffield Hallam University to explore the potential of technology-enabled feedback to improve student learning. Learn how the use of a range of technical interventions, including online publication of grades and feedback through the Blackboard Grade Centre, the adaptive release of student marks through a bespoke Assignment Handler and linking feedback to assessment criteria via an electronic Feedback Wizard might encourage student engagement with feedback and formulate actions to enhance their on-going learner development.

Peer feedback modelling: sharing techniques used to record the group tasks

Linda Mason *(l.mason@yorksj.ac.uk)* **Mike Hickman** *(m.hickman@yorksj.ac.uk)*, York St. John University

This workshop will focus on student use of digital audio within an Initial Teacher Education maths module. Given the need for trainees to develop an understanding of the importance of 'talk' in the primary classroom and within mathematical problem solving, podcasting was considered the most appropriate vehicle.

Students will record their own discussions within an upcoming problem solving session, being actively engaged from the outset. This audio material will then be made available to all, providing opportunity for structured peer feedback. The ambition is for students to not only engage with vital pedagogy for the classroom but also extend their thinking through more considered investigation of peer responses to given problems (more than would be possible within the time constraints of a normal session). This feedback can truly be considered formative in that it should inform expectations within the trainees' upcoming school experience placement. What kinds of discussions should the teacher be initiating with children? What counts as a high quality response to such a task? The digital audio recordings will enable trainees to interrogate their own responses (and, indeed, their approach to problem solving) before comparing them to recordings of children engaged in similar tasks within the classroom.

The over-riding pedagogical rationale behind the use of digital audio for this purpose is to overcome the limitations within the teaching and learning model (namely, one single one and a half hour input on problem solving within the module). Problem solving strategies need to be modelled for trainees before they can make effective use of them in the classroom – through podcasting, it is hoped that, along with modelling for each other, children will also provide models for them that will impact positively on their performance when teaching maths.

The workshop would involve the sharing of the techniques used to record the group tasks along with the feedback "mechanism" employed to ensure that all groups both listen to and comment upon each others' work.

And mud in your eye?

Paul McLaughlin *(paul.mcLaughlin@ed.ac.uk)* **Wesley Kerr** *(wesley.kerr@ed.ac.uk)*, University of Edinburgh

We show that using screen recording with simultaneous commentary can be successfully delivered as feedback on a large undergraduate course. The system worked with Microsoft products, Excel and Word, and was integrated with screen recording software (Camtasia from Techsmith) in a seamless package that launched with button clicks. Students rated the overall quality of feedback more highly if it were in video form. In the context of the "A Word in Your Ear Conference", there are several interesting comparisons, both technological and cognitive. Does the visual channel add anything, or might it indeed detract by overloading the students' short term memories? Might there be some parallel in the old joke "theatre on the radio is superior because the scenery is better"? We will reflect on these issues.

Case Study: E-feedback for formative assessment: can it improve student learning and assessment efficiency?

Tony Milanowski *(tony.milanowski@plumpton.ac.uk)*, Plumpton College

The role of effective feedback is crucial to the success of formative assessment. The traditional styles of feedback to students are not always effective and the advent of new digital techniques provides alternative avenues to improve the student learning experience. Digital techniques also appear to offer teaching staff the ability to improve the quality of their feedback, as well as reduce the effort needed to generate this feedback. To evaluate the usefulness of these new feedback formats, a case study was undertaken involving 29 level two wine production students, in which the students received varying styles of feedback for a single assessment. The feedback process was evaluated in terms of ease of use, quantity of feedback, time taken and student experiences. Overall the study indicated that e-feedback could provide improvements to the system of formative assessment.

Formative and summative audio feedback in Politics: reflections and review

Dr. Nick Robinson *(n.robinson@leeds.ac.uk)*, University of Leeds

Reflecting on my experiences of lecturing a level 2 politics module (Making of the EU) with some 90 or so students on it, this paper offers thoughts on the advantages (and perils!) of audio marking.

Building on the introduction of the VLE in Leeds, which allowed for the posting of audio recordings of the lectures and the occasional additional podcast, led me to consider the merits of audio feedback for the students.

My practice of encouraging students to submit essay drafts (formative feedback), which they receive comments on in order to improve their work, led me to wonder if my historical pattern of reading, commenting, and follow-up meetings with students could not be more effectively managed with comments being offered as an audio file. Some 40 students submitted drafts and received some 7-10 minutes of audio feedback each. Anecdotal discussions with the students revealed that they had welcomed this method (including a student with a hearing disability), finding it exceptionally helpful and genuinely engaging. What was also surprising was that only 1 of the 40 students actually felt a need for a follow up meeting to clarify the comments (a major change).

Building on this experience, I then offered audio marking (summative feedback) for all of the module cohort (some 90+ students). As this was given in the summer of 2009 I have not yet had the time for systematic review with the students. Anecdotal comments from the students via email so far have been highly enthusiastic. However, in advance of the conference I intend to host a series of focus group meetings with the

students to discuss their experience of audio marking. I also intend to have a systematic discussion with both the second marker and external (both of whom I understand had some technical issues with the audio files) - again this will be fed back at the conference. Finally, I fully intend to produce a podcast in MP3 format for the conference which will provide an overview of the project as a whole, covering the process and review. This will accompany a brief written paper.

A short summary of the project has already been made by the University of Leeds Staff and Departmental Development Unit. This is available at:

http://www.sddu.leeds.ac.uk/online_resources/podcasting/case_studies.html#audio_feedback

There is also a podcast developed by SDDU at:

http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/podcasts/ltal01_audiofeedback.mp3

Listening to Law students listening to me

Simon Sneddon *(simon.sneddon@northampton.ac.uk)*, University of Northampton

This paper presents the outcomes of a follow-up survey of Masters Students who had received audio feedback for two modules over the course of one academic year. The first set of audio feedback, for a module with five students, was carried out as part of the Sounds Good 2 project. The second set, for a larger module of 20 students, was informed by the students' comments from the first session. The first group were all LL.M students who also formed part of the second group, alongside students from the MA International Relations and MSc Criminology courses. This group also included one student with visual impairment. The audio feedback was given on a piece of coursework which was worth 60% of the assessed work for the module, and for both, the feedback was communicated to the students through an individual blog on the module's Blackboard site. This ensured that students could only access their personal feedback. The Blackboard site also held a second blog, accessible to all students, on which they could post comments about how they felt the audio feedback differed in effectiveness from the traditional written feedback. The feedback from the students who had had two sets of audio feedback was all positive, and from the students who had experienced it only once, it was also largely positive. Negative comments were limited to technological rather than ideological issues.

This paper will show that in this instance, the use of audio feedback enhanced the engagement with and experience of learning, teaching and assessment, and had additional impact on issues concerning accessibility. It will also outline the ways in which audio feedback will be developed in line with the evaluations received, and used in the next iteration of both of these modules.

Initial experience of using audio feedback for general assignment feedback

Scott Turner *(scott.turner@northampton.ac.uk)*, University of Northampton

As part of the Sounds Good 2 project, providing general feedback to computing students has been investigated, alongside written individual feedback. The use of audio for group feedback was done to provide a richer, friendlier source of feedback to the students – which lasted in this case four minutes, whilst avoiding potential problems with external examiners and the time take to produce audio feedback to each student.

The students reactions to this approach and how the tutor, through an unexpected reaction, knows the feedback has been listened to, will be discussed.

A Quick and dirty word in your ear

David Lomas *(d.lomas@shu.ac.uk)*, Sheffield Hallam University

The Physiotherapy team at Sheffield Hallam conducted an internal dialogue around the issues to do with the amount, detail, consistency and usability of written feedback. The conversation was driven by the results of the National Student Survey and comments from external examiners regarding feedback. On reflection, limitations for writing feedback comments on an assessment grid were believed to have resulted in feedback that was more to do with justifying marks than with providing useful formative feedback. This poster reports on the findings of a pilot involving 93 students and 12 examiners that resulted in favourable responses from a small sample of students, despite some initial concerns amongst staff about using technology and time management. The teaching team concluded that the approach was not onerous and that it was able to give meaningful and personal feedback in a timely fashion. The team, whilst recognising the need to be highly organised, is committed to using audio feedback as a method of choice for future assignments.

WORKSHOPS

Hands-on audio feedback

Robin Gissing *(r.p.gissing@shu.ac.uk)* **Juliun Ryan** *(J.P.Ryan@shu.ac.uk)*, Sheffield Hallam University

This practical workshop offers participants the opportunity to run through some of the technical options in producing audio feedback. A variety of MP3 recorders, laptops, other portable devices and PCs with common audio recording software will be used and evaluated during the session. Participants will design and produce examples of audio feedback with reference to design principles.

Opportunities for screencast feedback and audio feedback embedded in Office documents will also be introduced.

By the end of the workshop participants will be confident in using the technologies and familiar with the principles that shape realistic and effective methods of audio feedback. A set of handouts will be available from this session on selecting and using related technology and the design principles.

Using audio to encourage a dialogic model of student feedback: what makes it work?

Peter Hartley *(p.hartley@bradford.ac.uk)* **Will Stewart** *(w.stewart@bradford.ac.uk)*

University of Bradford

Assessment feedback is a problem! While the National Student Survey indicates high levels of satisfaction with teaching in our universities, students are less happy with the assessment and feedback that we provide. Many feel that they receive feedback that is neither detailed nor useful in helping them clarify things they did not understand. In order for feedback to be useful, it has to be meaningful (Laurillard, 2002), with the best feedback actively engaging tutors and students in a dialogue that supports learning (Price et al, 2008).

Conventional feedback on written assignments (written comments and/or summary critique) typically adopts a 'transmission model' of feedback, and this has considerable problems, not least the assumption that students will translate and decode our comments in the way we intended them to (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

While several studies have demonstrated staff and student satisfaction with audio feedback, they have typically not explained in any detail how/why it 'works' or under what circumstances it 'works best'. Mainly based on findings from the JISC-funded Audio Supported Enhanced Learning (ASEL) project (http://www.aselactive.com/), this workshop will examine the use of audio feedback as a way not only of providing more meaningful feedback to students, but also as a channel for engaging students in a dialogue about their learning. Using principles and concepts drawn from both educational and communication theory, we will compare and contrast audio with written feedback in terms of its usefulness and potential to improve student performance.

A Practical guide to the implementation of audio feedback

Elaine Stringer *(e.w.stringer@shu.ac.uk)* **Doug Emery** *(D.R.Emery@shu.ac.uk)*

Sheffield Hallam University

Drawing upon their experience of using audio feedback from the past 2 years, the presenters will share their knowledge of introducing and maintaining the use of audio feedback in a nursing programme. There will be time for you to explore factors which could influence you if you wanted to introduce audio feedback. There is plenty to discuss, for example changing colleagues attitudes, identifying a suitable method, arranging training, managing and supporting staff, distributing feedback and much more. Working on the principle that forewarned is forearmed this session could save you a lot of time and stress.

Student Panel

Amanda King, Shane Nugent, Ben Partridge, and Lila Campbell

Experience and reflections

Four students from Sheffield Hallam's Students as Researchers Project reflect on their experience of feedback and the ideas they have picked up on during the day for how audio and technology might be used to more effectively enhance learning. Students will be taking questions from the floor in this session.
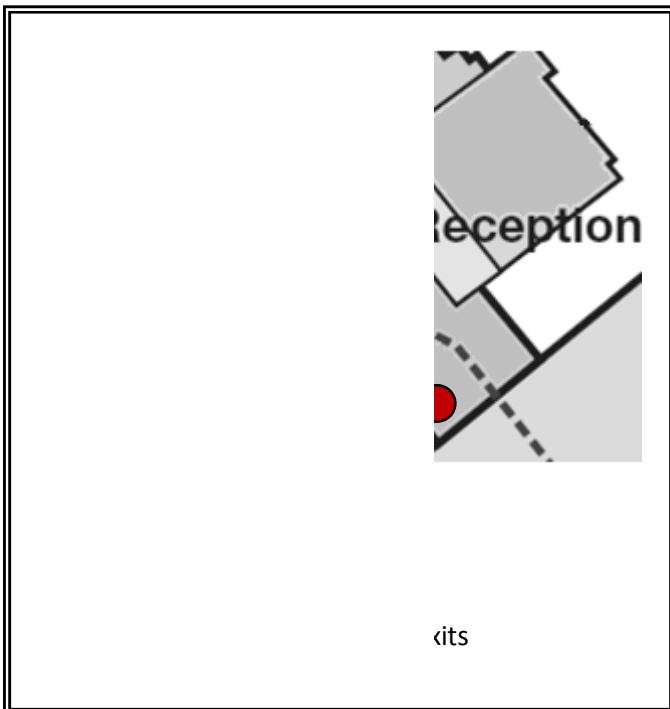
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* Short Paper=Pp, Poster=Pos, Workshop=Wk

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