

Chapter 6

A Theory–Practice Research Framework for Video–Enhanced Learning, Assessment, and Feedback

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses a two-year project that explored the impact of video-enhanced learning, assessment, and feedback on undergraduate first-year students in higher education. Underpinned by a pragmatist epistemology, and arguing the case for a design-based methodological approach within a theoretical framework embracing the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, the community of inquiry, and the conversational framework, the chapter explores contemporary research into assessment and feedback, uses of technology-enhanced learning to promote inclusivity, and educational applications of asynchronous video.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Following the introduction of the National Student Survey (NSS) in 2005, undergraduate students in the UK consistently signalled their desire for improvement around their experience of assessment and feedback (Higher Education Funding Council for England, HEFCE, 2011). Statistical data from the NSS has confirmed research suggesting that students feel they receive feedback which is either incomprehensible or lacking in detail, and that they receive this feedback too late for it to have any impact on their academic performance (Hounsell, 2007; Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell, & Litjens, 2008). Echoing these sentiments, the National Student Forum called for greater use of technology in the assessment and feedback process (National Student Forum, 2009).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0426-0.ch006

An increase in the number of students entering university in recent decades has been accompanied by ever-larger numbers of students declaring a disability on entry to these institutions, with the number of students undergoing diagnostic assessment for specific learning difficulties during their time in higher education also increasing significantly over the last twenty years (Richardson & Wydell, 2003). Concurrently, legislation has been enacted which affords equality of educational opportunity for students affected by a learning difficulty such as dyslexia or an autistic spectrum condition, with a requirement placed on universities to ensure that any such students are not disadvantaged by the assessment and feedback process (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, HMSO 2001; 2010).

While research has focused on the use of audio in the assessment and feedback process (e.g. Northcliffe & Middleton, 2007; Rotherham, 2009; Stewart, 2009), video has been relatively overlooked. The process of creating audio has traditionally been simpler and less expensive than that required in the production of video, and the respective file-sizes of audio and video assets make audio an easier option for the purposes of distribution. In recent years, however, there have been significant improvements in both compression techniques and in the availability of bandwidth required for the distribution of video over the internet, resulting in research into the influence of video on the assessment and feedback process being both practical and timely.

Against this background, this chapter develops a theory-practice research framework which forms the backdrop to a qualitative investigation into the influence of asynchronous video on the learner experience of assessment and feedback conducted at a university in the north of England. The second of these three chapters (Chapter 7) discusses the design, development, refinement and integration of a series of bespoke video-based interventions to form an integrated model of video-enhanced learning, assessment and feedback. The third of these three chapters (Chapter 2) evaluates the student experience of video-enhanced learning, assessment and feedback, presenting illustrative cases which highlight the impact of the interventions on the experience of six students, including two affected by dyslexia and one with Asperger's Syndrome (AS).

Epistemological and Ontological Backdrop

The study emerged against an underlying framework that draws on research into both cognitive and social theories of learning, and is underpinned by a pragmatist epistemological position which follows philosopher and educator John Dewey's twin assertions that "[the] educational process has two sides, one psychological and one sociological, and that neither can be subordinated to the other or neglected" (Dewey, 1929, p. 291). To this end, the investigation took place in a broadly constructivist space, drawing on and situated between social and cognitive constructivism.

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