University of Reading

Issue 20 April 2021

InForm

A journal for International Foundation Programme professionals

Student text chat in the online IFP classroom

Maximising student engagement in pre-recorded lectures

The cycle of engagement-ways to engage students more effectively in online lessons

Adapting Foundation EAP in a pandemic: Finding the right asynchronous-synchronous balance

This issue:

Teaching and learning developments in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

InForm

Conference 2021

University of Reading

Student support and experience: In and outside the classroom

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For further information concerning any of the articles in this issue, please contact:

The Editors, InForm

International Study and Language Institute,
Whiteknights, PO Box 218,
Reading, RG6 6AA

Tel +44 (0)118 378 7227
Email inform@reading.ac.uk
www.reading.ac.uk/inform

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Mark Peace

Chair of the InForm Editorial Board

WELCOME

From the Editorial Board...

There are always developments in teaching and learning on International Foundation Programmes, as InForm has proven in its previous 19 issues. However, the pace and scope of change in the last year is truly remarkable. Of course, this was necessary because of the need for institutions to switch to online and blended teaching due to Covid-19. The developments however are a result of the resourcefulness, dedication, and effort of colleagues in the sector.

Issue 20 therefore feels particularly important for InForm as it captures and shares some of the work, developments, and experiences of colleagues from the last year. To this end and for this issue we introduced a new additional section of the journal called InForm Exchange, which allows the inclusion of shorter articles for sharing recent developments. The bulk of Issue 20 still comprises standard articles covering a number of topics and projects both related and unrelated to changes brought on by Covid-19.

Unfortunately, the Summer 2020 InForm Conference did not happen due to the pandemic. However, we are delighted to announce that this year's InForm Conference is going ahead online, hosted by the University of Kent and is happening on Friday the 9th July 2021. The theme is Student support and experience: In and outside the classroom, and we invite you to present and register. Please see the enclosed advert for further details.

Issue 20 begins with the standard articles and starts with the theme of enhancing engagement for students studying online. The first article is by Wayne Rimmer and considers students' use of chatboxes in online synchronous teaching. Anna Tranter and Amy Stickels then share a study determining key factors to consider when creating engaging pre-recorded lectures. This is followed by Karina Cicero's article that focuses on live online teaching, highlighting the importance of personalised interaction and feedback to stimulate engagement and learning. Next and changing the theme to English language teaching, Philip Davies and Jill Haldane share their experience of developing a hybridised English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course to support students studying both on- campus and remotely online. The challenges of moving English language testing online and solutions for maintaining test security are then presented by Simon Cotterill and Yen Cotterill. Student self-regulation and enhancing student-teacher dialog is then discussed by Sophia Vänttinen-Newton and Susanne Andersen, where a Self-RAG (red, amber, green) rating is used in providing feedback on formative tasks. Lina Tang and Esther Chang then share a study into student perception of formative peer assessment, and value in both receiving and giving such feedback is identified.

The move to online and blended delivery has also provided challenges in fostering a sense of community on IFPs and in promoting student interaction. The following three articles illustrate the creative solutions colleagues have been finding to address this. Firstly, Mark Holloway and Jill Fenton share an online orientation activity involving local statues and that draws on the attention statues have been receiving in the media. Faith Nightingale then reports on the creation and use of an online escape room to develop students' teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. Lastly Tony Myers and Jaime Buchanan report on the value of introducing short community building activities to the start of online classes.

For the final standard articles, we move away from developments in response to Covid-19. Firstly, Andrew Drummond gives a study on the impact of reading and listening vocabulary size on comprehension. Then Dorcas Lam Yarn Pooi uses Kolb's Experiential Learning Model in an oral presentation skills module to teach critical reflection and self-regulated learning skills. Gamification is the focus of the study by Deshan Hewavidana who compares the relative merits of activities generated using the web-based learning resources Wordwall and Kahoot. Finally, Daniela Standen and Mark Peace present recent changes to the progression requirements on an IFP and the rationale behind them.

The following new section is for InForm Exchange articles, featuring shorter, often personal, accounts of developments in the last year. To begin with we consider approaches to synchronous and asynchronous delivery of mathematics, which are also applicable to other subjects. Firstly Annette Margolis, who is both a mathematics and EAP teacher, discusses ways to promote dialog in synchronous online mathematics classes and shares experience of various online resources. Elizabeth Glaister and Paul Glaister then provide a detailed look at Open Broadcast Software (OBS), which they have used in generating asynchronous lecture recordings with a live feel. Next, we look at a couple of alternatives to using university virtual learning environments. Rachel Humphreys shares the use of Google Drive for online portfolio submission, which facilitates student reflection and development through interactive feedback. And Philip Martin and Eddie Cowling use a website approach to hosting online teaching material which has proven popular with students and staff. Back to the theme of community building, Martin Spier champions the use of 'show and tell' as an effective way to encourage interaction and get to know more about your students. The last article of Issue 20 is by Elizabeth Wilding and highlights the newly formed BALEAP Transnational Education Significant Interest Group (BALEAP TNE SIG) that will appeal to many IFP professionals involved or interested in TNE.

Thank you to all the authors for contributing to this special issue of InForm and we now look forward to the Summer InForm conference when we hope you will be able to join us.

To submit an article for the next issue of InForm or with any query email **inform@reading.ac.uk**
Further details can be found on p67.

Student text chat in the online IFP classroom

The Covid-induced implementation of video conferencing within International Foundation Programmes (IFPs) has showcased a new medium for student engagement: the chatbox. This longitudinal empirical study (n=16) explores the contribution of student text chat to the academic skills component of an IFP. Discourse analysis of contributions to the chatbox found multiple functions of text chat revealing of students' real-time response to the online learning experience. In particular, the immediacy of text chat did not preclude deep cognitive investment in tasks as evidenced by collaborative learning. The conclusion suggests that rather than a by-product of learning, text chat offers a valuable resource to IFP students.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wayne Rimmer

EAP Tutor , University of Manchester

wayne.rimmer@manchester.ac.uk

Introduction

With COVID-19 restrictions on physical proximity, there has been widespread uptake of video-conferencing tools in tertiary education. This has presented challenges when compared to the traditional classroom. For example, in reporting the repurposing of an EAP speaking activity through Zoom, Chan & Wilson (2020) concede that collaboration in breakout rooms is compromised because there is less teacher presence. However, there are features of video-conferencing without previous parallel in physical settings and one is the chatbox. A chatbox is a function whereby instructors and students can type in parallel with the synchronous delivery so that text appears in a section of the screen for public or private view. Chatboxes should be distinguished from asynchronous online discussion forums, which are generally task-oriented and invite reflective not instantaneous response (cf. Roose & Newell, 2020, in an EAP context). Equivalent to text messaging on mobile devices, a layperson would be completely familiar with the functionality of chatboxes and they are widely used in webinars (cf. Cleland et al., 2020). What is less understood is the application of chatboxes to formal educational courses and, the focus of this study, IFP.

Research on chatboxes shows that the discourse is conditioned by the online environment. In a book-length study, Jenks (2014) compared turn-taking in text and vocalized chat (online chat rooms) and finds key differences. For example, text turns are

always complete units, in that they cannot be interrupted by other users before they appear in the chatbox. However, as it is possible, and normal, for users to write at the same time, text chats can overlap in a manner that would be chaotic in spoken discourse. Moore et al. (2016) conducted discourse analysis of the chatbox interaction amongst English language teachers during an online conference. It was found that only half of teachers' textual contributions related to the content of the video conference; other purposes included interpersonal or purely phatic discourse.

The findings in both studies are relevant to tertiary educators but the literature lacks an examination of the function of chatboxes in an IFP environment. This may be because the wholescale transition of tertiary education to online provision is recent, or because chatbox language is typically so informal as to bear little correspondence to an academic register. The purpose of this empirical article is to explore the discourse function of text chat generated from IFP students.

Methodology

Data was gathered from an online academic skills course in the first semester of an IFP at a UK HEI. The students (n =16) studied a single two-hour class for eight weeks. The 16 hours of content covered academic literacy skills deemed important for progression to an undergraduate programme, for example the preparation and delivery of an individual presentation relevant to their discipline. The students represented five different nationalities and their English proficiency ranged from B2 to native-speaker competence. Due to the pandemic, all eight classes were delivered live via Zoom by an EAP instructor.

Students were introduced to the chatbox and other features of Zoom in the first lesson (familiarity was high as they were using Zoom for other IFP components). Each lesson was recorded and, with students' written permission, the contents of the chatbox saved. Text in the chatbox was analysed through discourse analysis (DA) as traditionally defined in the Hallidayean tradition (cf. Gilmore, 2015) through its attention to field (content), tenor (relationships) and mode (medium). In this context, field represents academic skills; tenor, interaction patterns; mode, the online platform. Each contribution to the chatbox comprised a unit of analysis, regardless of its length or linguistic structure. The focus was on a unit as meaning-making rather than language form. Access to each class recording allowed contributions to the chatbox to be interpreted in terms of the development of the lesson.

Results

Table 1 shows the discourse function assigned to student contributions and their frequency of occurrence. That Response is the dominant discourse category is somewhat intuitive given the critical role of questioning in the classroom (Rimmer, 2019). What was noteworthy was that students overwhelmingly preferred to write answers in the chatbox than use their microphone. To elicit an oral answer, the instructor invariably needed to nominate individual students and ask them to unmute. Answers in the chatbox had the advantage of avoiding the cacophony of a chorus of oral

Table 1 *Discourse function of student text chat*

Function	Description	Examples	Number of contributions
Response	Answers to a question put by the instructor.	'No' '1 Y 2 N 3 ? 4 Y 5 N 6 Y'	202
Clarification	Requests for assistance with tasks.	'Where are the questions?' 'Don't understand'	170
Content	Comments or questions related to the materials or tasks.	'There are no references' 'Why does she get only 8?'	149
Interpersonal	Socialisation and emotional responses.	'See you next time' 'Wow'	105
Technology	Comments or requests related to the technology.	'Could u send it as PDF?' 'I can't hear you'	64

responses. A possible disadvantage was that students slower to respond felt less incentive when they could see the question had already been answered correctly. Indeed, the data showed that when the instructor asked an open question, no more than seven students (out of 16) ever responded. Notwithstanding, the chatbox operated as an efficient method of gauging students' comprehension and engagement.

The Clarification function may have particular importance in an online environment where there is considerable potential for confusion at the task-setting stage. In a physical classroom, an instructor has more visibility and can evaluate comprehension through paralinguistic features such as students' facial expressions. Many students for considerable portions of the lesson displayed blank screens so the instructor could not judge if they were on-task until a plea for help came in through the chatbox. The following sequence, a prelude to a speaking exercise in breakout rooms, illustrates the issue:

Student: What are we discussing?
Instructor: The three questions in A.
Student: Where's that?

The motivation for Clarification seemed various but the chatbox was an active mechanism for IFP students to signal a breakdown in the task cycle relatively unobtrusively. As regards their instructors, skill was required to manage the chatbox whilst engaged in the main activity, particularly when there may have simultaneously been both public and private chats to deal with, making for a busy even fraught lesson experience.

The Technology function overlaps with Clarification as issues specifically with technology often thwarted tasks. Most chat text expressed a frustration with technology, for example Internet connectivity problems, but this category also included suggestions to maximise the technology. For example, one student gave the class instructions on using the Whiteboard feature of Zoom.

Content represented students at their most engaged as, unlike Response, this category of contributions was unsolicited. While a synchronous written response precludes large contributions (chats more than one sentence in length were rare), students used this function to demonstrate the academic skills taught. Particularly illustrative was a degree of collaboration where students built on one another's comments. Two students fed back on a text about a composite material:

Student A: It's lighter
Student B: And stronger
Student C: [URL]

Here knowledge-building is incremental and Student C brings in an external hyperlink (a common strategy in chatbox discourse) in order to demonstrate the point further. It would not be true to say that collaboration was the norm in text chat – the vast majority of contributions were directed to the teacher – but chatboxes offer a platform for autonomous co-learning.

Finally, the majority of Interpersonal discourse was phatic, for example formulaic leave-taking moves. There was little evidence of community building through the chatbox per se, reflecting a more general notion that it is more challenging to foster a sense of community in an online environment (Best & Conceição, 2017). There is the possibility that students engaged in private chat for socialisation but this was not preserved in the transcripts.

More generally, the real-time constraints of chat text mean that it does not resemble academic writing as prized in tertiary education. To illustrate, emojis littered contributions within each discourse function, not just the Interpersonal category. However, it does not follow that chat text should be dismissed as a genre within academic literacy. As demonstrated, chat text evidenced engagement that was immediate and considered. Indeed, related innovations such as the application of chatbots to language learning (cf. Lee et al., 2020) suggest that text chat is becoming more than peripheral to education.

Conclusion

Student text chat displayed a range of discourse functions and it was a key component of the synchronous delivery to the extent that students generally preferred communicating through the chatbox than orally. It should also be borne in mind that outside of formal assignments, the chatbox was the main way of students demonstrating their writing. If, as demonstrated, chat text is a potent communication tool in an IFP context, its functionality should be embraced and embedded into the programme. Whatever the post-Covid future of IFP programmes brings, online-enabled functionalities such as text chat are likely to gather momentum.

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Maximising student engagement in pre-recorded lectures

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Anna Tranter

Teaching Fellow , University of Warwick

anna.tranter@warwick.ac.uk

Amy Stickels

Senior Teaching Fellow, Course Director , University of Warwick

a.stickels@warwick.ac.uk

Warwick International Foundation Program, University of Warwick, Coventry. CV4 7AL

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for teaching. This article outlines how the delivery of lectures changed and how this is working in practice in terms of student engagement. The paper concludes with suggestions for how we can increase student engagement in asynchronous lecture provision.

Background

Prior to the pandemic, students on the Warwick International Foundation Programme attended one lecture and three seminars per week for each of their modules. Lectures were delivered to all students simultaneously, whereas seminars of approximately 15 students offered interactive activities to apply the theory taught in lectures.

By September 2020, delivery of lectures and seminars was reviewed. Seminars were transferred to a blend of synchronous face to face and online delivery. The delivery of lectures was more challenging, due to timetabling and the 2 metre spatial distancing rules. The decision was taken to provide pre-recorded asynchronous lectures, with embedded interactions, via the virtual learning environment Moodle (www.moodle.org).

This delivery method enables students to take control of where, when and how they access the information (Simpson, 2006; Clayton, Blumberg and Auld, 2010). The decision to deliver the lecture in 15–20-minute sections addressed the fact that the longer students spend on tasks the more likely their minds are to wander and their recall from the lecture decreases (Risko et al, 2011). Embedded interactions have also been found to increase concentration and what they call "task-relevant behaviours" which boost learning (Schacter and Szpunar, 2015).

Introduction to research

In 2020-21, there were 68 students, of 16 different nationalities, on the Finance and Business Management courses. 73% of these students were from China, with 3% of students from Kazakhstan, South Korea, Taiwan and Ukraine. 97% of students are non-native English speakers.

The research sets out to establish the level of student engagement with the pre-recorded lectures and whether students perceive there are better ways in which lectures can be delivered. The research had two strands:

- Analysis of Moodle analytics to determine the level of student engagement with the lectures and the embedded interactions.
- A digital questionnaire circulated to students to ascertain their experience of pre-recorded lectures and how they could be improved to aid student experience and perceived learning gain.

Moodle Analytics

Moodle gradebooks automatically record the students' attempts at any integrated learning within the Moodle page platform, including interactions developed with the online tool H5P (www.h5p.org) embedded into lectures. The data was analysed, enabling the researchers to calculate participation rates per lecture and identify trends over time. The data was taken from two half (10 week) modules – Marketing (taught to Business Students) and Micro-economics (taught to Finance students). Sampling was taken from weeks 1, 2 and 6.

Digital Questionnaire

Students were asked to complete a digital evaluation form using Microsoft forms. The questionnaire was designed with a mixture of tick box quantitative data collection questions and open-ended questions to collect qualitative data on students' engagement and experience.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Evaluation of Moodle Analytics

In both modules studied, there was a decline in the viewing of pre-recorded lectures and the use of the interactive H5P quizzes over time, as can be seen in table 1. In Marketing, week 1, 20 users viewed the materials, which reduced to 16.7 by week 6. This was echoed in Micro-economics with 44.7 users in Week 1, which declined to 33 in week 6. There was also a decline in the number of students completing the interactions over the six week period, with Marketing students falling from 66.7% to 40.9% and Micro-economics falling from 59.4% to 41.3%.

The data suggested that students were watching the lectures multiple times, although as with the use of the interactive quizzes, this diminished over time. In Marketing week 1, there was an average of 3.1 views of the lectures per user but by week 6 it dropped to 2.1 views. In Micro-economics, the view rate was higher, but the decrease was still observed – in week 1 the lectures were viewed 3.9 times, by week 6 this was 3 times. This may be attributable to student confidence levels increasing, an increased workload or students accessing the PPT slides rather than the lecture recording.

Analysis also demonstrated a marked difference in the number of views each segment of lecture received for the same week, with the first lecture having a higher number of views. For example, in Marketing week1, 22 users watched the first lecture segment, but only 17 watched the 2 subsequent sections. In week 5 – where there were 4 parts – 16 students watched part 1, but this reduced to 12 by part 4. A similar trend was also observed in Micro-economics: week 3 - part 1 was viewed by 40 users and 33 viewed part 2; in week 8 - 30 users watched part 1 but this dropped to 24 for part 2.

Evaluation of Student Questionnaires

The questionnaire response rate was 72%. Responses showed that 84% of students considered the pre-recorded lectures to be an extremely or somewhat useful resource. When timetabled, lectures were 1 hour. However, 31% estimated they spent approximately 1 hour reviewing pre-recorded lectures, with a further 31% estimating between 1-2 hours, 20% estimated between 2-3 hours and 11% over 3 hours.

Students were asked about their habits when watching these lectures. 73% reported watching, pausing and taking notes. 11% reported watching them without pausing, with another 13% reporting they watched the

Table 1 *Moodle data showing average number of users viewing lectures and % completion rate of H5P interactive quizzes per module*

	Week 1		Week 2		Week 6	
	Marketing (22 students)	Micro-economics (46 students)	Marketing	Micro-economics	Marketing	Micro-economics
Average number of users accessing lectures	20	44.7	18.3	39.5	16.7	33
Average % of users completing interactions	66.7%	59.4%	53%	57.6%	40.9%	41.3%
Average number of times lectures were viewed	3.1	3.9	3.2	3.7	2.1	3

lectures whilst completing other activities, such as taking exercise.

The pre-recorded lectures had on average 3 interactions embedded in them. 98% considered these interactions helped them to learn more, with 51% of students wanting more interactions, 40% wanting the same number and only 2% wanting fewer.

When asked about their preference for the type of interaction, the majority stated they liked multiple-choice questions because they could check their understanding, they were quick to answer and the questions improved their knowledge. However, students stated they did not always understand the correct answer and requested comments were added to the answers to explain it. Conversely, students did not like the drag and drop or the fill in the blank activity, considering these as not challenging enough. The 'pause and think' interaction was also unpopular, with comments such as "I cannot get feedback about what I thought about".

The majority of the pre-recorded lectures are accompanied by PPT slides and a transcript. 79% of students liked the fact that the PPT was there, considering them easier to navigate when recapping material. Only 27% of students reported using the transcript provided.

Students had experienced a few live lectures. However, only 42% stated that they would like more of these. Students commented that these lectures were difficult to follow and they struggled to concentrate for 1 hour. Students liked the fact that the pre-recorded lectures were delivered in sections. 42% of students commented they liked the flexibility it offered, they could manage the pace of their learning, take notes, re-watch parts of the lecture and take a break when it suited them. One student commented "just like in computer game people get satisfaction when they finish every part of it, it moves them to carry on."

In terms of how students considered the lectures could be improved, suggestions included providing PPT slides for all lectures, adding more examples to the lectures and more interactions to the video and providing greater feedback on why the answers were correct.

Conclusion

To ensure that students remain engaged with pre-recorded lectures, we make a number of recommendations.

Pre-recorded lectures should be delivered in sections. It is worth considering the number, order and content of each lecture in the series due to diminishing student engagement. Practitioners should consider whether there are other incentives they could use to encourage students to stay engaged to the end, for example giving credit for completing online tasks or linking seminar activities to lectures.

Lecture interactions are well liked, particularly if they are quick multiple-choice questions. Comments on the correct answer should always be given to aid understanding. If the lecture interventions were pre-planned rather than added as an "extra" then the lecturer could explain the reasons why an answer was correct, within the lecture itself.

Moodle analytics gives data on engagement, which could be used to nudge students to engage with the lectures or find out why they were not engaging.

All pre-recorded lectures should be accompanied by separate PPT slides, giving students another option for referencing ideas or checking their understanding. Finally, we could consider using transcripts as a study aid for watching the lecture.

Post-pandemic, the asynchronous, pre-recorded lecture has a legitimate place as an effective educational feature of IFP courses.

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The cycle of engagement – ways to engage students more effectively in online lessons

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karina R, Cicero

EAP Tutor , QA Higher Education / ONCAMPUS London South Bank University

kcicero@oncampus.global

Over the last year HE Institutions have had to switch to online tuition. When it comes to live webinars, arguably, the key to improvement and increasing enthusiasm levels is engaging students in participating actively. In my experience of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Foundation courses and in-sessional programmes for international students, it has become evident that using Blackboard Collaborate, Webex and Microsoft Teams, the kind of participation available to many students, does not easily allow for the teacher to see personalised answers. Although students may be encouraged to annotate, use polling activities and type in the chat, not all of these activities allow teachers to differentiate or provide targeted feedback. In fact, many of the participants' contributions can be anonymised, such as when annotating and submitting polling answers, if settings are not correctly prepared. What often follows these activities is a session of general feedback which, in many cases, students seem to disconnect from.

It is then a vital part of the role of the teacher to support communications in the virtual classroom, in order to set the cycle of engagement in motion, which can lead to active participation.

Background

From infancy, name stimulus is the basis for social interaction. In fact, there is evidence that states that hearing one's own name will automatically trigger attention and activate receptive ends in communication: 'Studies examining ERP response to hearing one's name demonstrate its differentiation from other stimuli at both early sensory and later cognitive stages of processing' (Thomas et al, 2019: 2). The origin of these stimuli should be the teacher, more than ever in an online setting, in order to enable and reinvent the necessary 'mediatory tools' to facilitate learning (Hall, 2007). This study proposes to start by attaching names to answers and using those names to consolidate interpersonal relations online and ensure engagement throughout (Aragon, 2003). By using platforms such as Mentimeter, Quizizz or Nearpod to complete tasks, teachers can monitor each student's participation and offer immediate targeted feedback using students' names, which can be consolidated after the task. These platforms enable students to participate in synchronous activities using their own names, receiving immediate corrections for their answers and offering a display of final scores to aid targeted feedback (Pardo, 2019). It is expected that students will feel more encouraged to participate in the next activity, if the teacher uses their names together with their answers (Aragon, 2003; Bolliger & Martin, 2018) either for praise, as an example of good practice; or to demonstrate a point to improve.

Methods

This study focuses on the findings revealed after carrying out an activity on Mentimeter for EAP students on the topic of Academic Register and Paraphrasing Techniques. The activity involved six classes of international students who took a module on Academic and Professional Development for a master's programme in Ulster University, which has many parallels with similar modules on Foundation courses. After submitting each answer to a quiz on Mentimeter, results were displayed on a leader board, where students could see if they had answered the questions correctly (Fig. 1). The teacher could also track progress. This enabled the teacher to ask each individual student about the answers they got wrong, or

simply to reformulate their answers, making feedback personalised and immediate. At the end of the activity, results can be displayed on a grid, so that all answers can be reviewed, providing an opportunity for feedback and reflection. In this part of the activity, it was noticed that if each student was asked about the answers to the questions they had got wrong, they were almost always able to remember the correct answers. Taking as an example the question displayed in figure2 the teacher can take the final feedback session to ask for improved versions of the lead-in sentence in the question, so as to encourage production skills, not just recognition. This activity was repeated with six other groups attending the same module who were later asked to complete a survey about their views on receiving immediate feedback (Figure 3).

The survey had 20 True/ False statements, which could be limiting in terms of capturing the nuances in respondents' preferences. The questions listed first seek to support my expectations and assumptions of why students might prefer anonymity. To begin with, the statements were "I feel glad when I do not have to participate in class" or "I feel anxious that people can see my answers" (Figure 3). Some other questions focus on the possible link between being named and feeling more enthused to participate actively, which is the central aim of this study. There are questions that focus on the emotional impact and the possibility of "losing face" if all the answers in a task are displayed and labelled. The final questions aim to explore students' views on seeing other students' answers. An additional step for upcoming studies should include interviews with ten of the respondents to look into their views more deeply and obtain a more nuanced understanding of their attitudes to learning online, receiving immediate feedback and the source of their engagement.

Findings

Of all respondents (69 students), only 25% stated that they were glad if they did not have to participate in class and only 35% reported feeling anxious if other people could see their answers. Furthermore, only 16% expressed feeling embarrassed if directly addressed by the teacher. In terms of the link between personalised feedback and student engagement, 96% of respondents agreed that immediate personalised feedback encouraged them to continue participating and 75% stated that they felt more interested in participating if addressed individually. In fact, 93% of respondents found that hearing their name made them more eager to remember their errors and not repeat them. (Figure 3).

Contrary to my expectations, losing face did not seem to be an obstacle among these international students. Actually, 84% of respondents stated that seeing their mistakes did not make students more anxious, so sharing results and feedback was seen a positive by most students (93%). Just over half of the respondents reported feeling less anxious if they could see that their classmates had also made mistakes. Most students stated that it helped to see their own answers after they had submitted them, while receiving feedback (97%).

Discussion

It is interesting to note how, contrary to my expectations, relatively few students found sharing their answers to be a source of discomfort or embarrassment. Instead, the vast majority considered the opportunity to see their classmates' answers and their own while receiving feedback to be a positive aspect of the task. The issue of immediacy should also be highlighted, as it seems to play a major role in aiding the process of remembering correct answers. The reaction to hearing their names mentioned was perceived by students to be positive. This positivity appeared to lead to encouragement to improve their answers and remember the correct answers, if mistakes had been made.

Foundation and international students share the feature that they are newcomers, to a country, to HE and to a second language of instruction, all of which can be daunting and perceived as an obstacle. To all these limitations, we are now adding online instruction, which can be confusing and can seem almost intangible for some students, who are taking their first ever course online in HE. The use of the platforms proposed here provides a safe place, where students can be supported and monitored. In addition, their needs and the gaps in their knowledge are displayed in these platforms without them having to speak up. It has been observed that many students might be reluctant to voice their questions, not because they regard this lesson as unimportant, but because of shyness, fear or low confidence in the target language. Taking into account the benefits of online platforms and interactive activities, such as the ones explored in this study, most courses should consider adopting at least one of them after a lecture to make sure that students have taken in concepts, and that the gaps in their knowledge are being addressed promptly. Indeed, a more personalised interaction in feedback sessions can help boost students' confidence and make these types of exchanges more fluid in subsequent sessions.

It has been noted that the limitations of this study include not only the reduced size of the sample, but also the fact that the questions are binary T/F, which limits the perception of nuances in respondents' answers. In fact, Likert scale questions instead of binary ones would have provided a more representative sample of the breadth of opinions among respondents. In future, semi-structured interviews can be included to capture views qualitatively.

Looking ahead, it will be interesting to record live sessions and to measure student engagement individually, establishing a longitudinal analysis across a number of weeks and analyse quantitatively if the number of times a student is named can be linked to an increase in active participation. As these practices become more widespread across classes in HE and pathway courses, teachers will engage more readily in adapting content to these platforms to fit the requirements of the curricula and students' needs to succeed in HE.

Conclusion

Although this is a small-scale study, the findings appear to support the importance of personalised and targeted feedback for the improvement of academic skills. With this in mind, a new approach to reconfigure interpersonal relations in online settings does appear to be required. This study seems to indicate that the sharing of names together with answers, regardless of the answers being correct or incorrect, is a positive way to help students develop their academic skills. Personalising feedback to students in this way appears to be a useful tool to support their success in online learning. As this study has demonstrated, the teacher can play an important and active role in introducing tools to stimulate students' learning in online environments; we as educators can positively influence the engagement cycle in this way. Personalised and timely feedback can then be used to help maintain and encourage good learning practices.

Figure 1 *Leaderboard in Mentimenter. Students who answer questions correctly more quickly appear at the top of the Leaderboard, which is refreshed and updated after every round of responses are submitted*

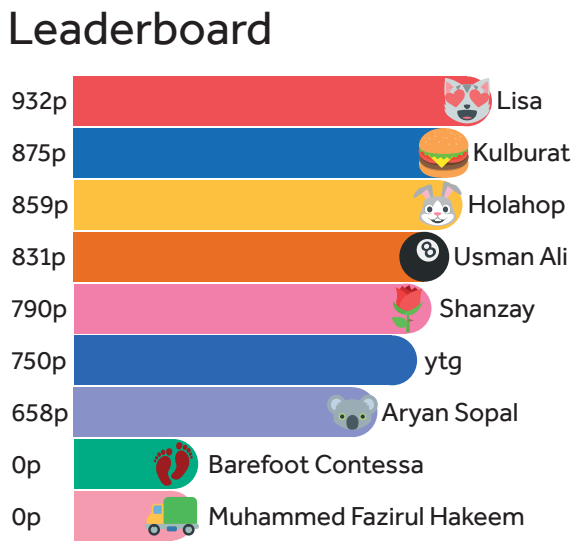

Figure 2 *Example of a question in Mentimeter where students needed to choose the most appropriate technique to improve academic style*

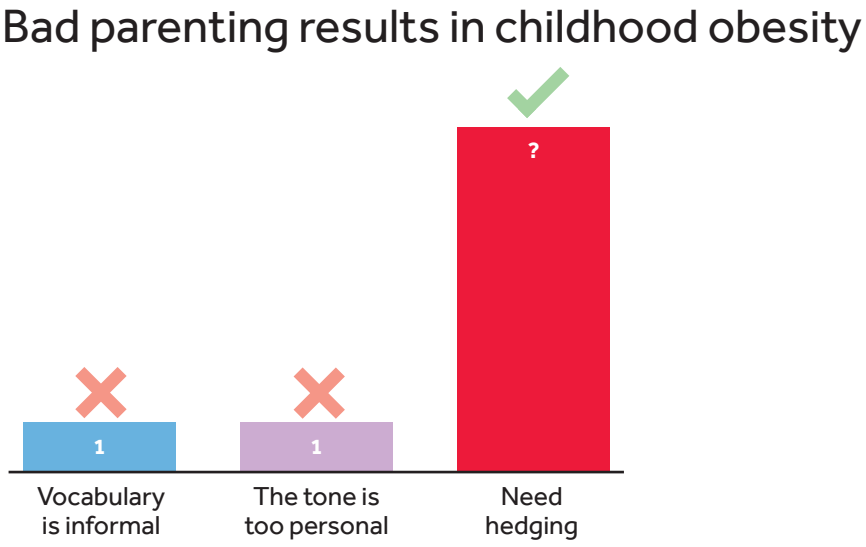

Figure 3 *Breakdown of responses in numbers of students who chose True or False in each question*

Survey- Views on Teaching and Learning Online		
	TRUE	FALSE
I feel glad when I do not have to participate in class	17	51
I enjoy marking up answers on the screen as my answer is anonymous	39	29
I feel anxious if I know people can see my answers	24	44
I like to know that my answers are personalised so that I can get feedback	62	4
I like the fact that the teacher can see I have understood the content through my answers in activities.	65	3
I feel embarrassed if the teacher addresses me personally about one of my answers	11	56
I feel more encouraged to keep participating if I get immediate feedback on my answers in class.	64	3
I enjoy polling activities	68	0
I don't like to elaborate on the answers I have given for all the class to hear.	20	48
I prefer my name to be visible when I provide answers	48	19
I feel more interested in improving if I hear my name addressed individually	51	17
I am more likely to remember my mistakes and not repeat them if I get individual and targeted feedback.	63	5
I tend to switch off if the teacher gives general feedback to the whole class.	9	59
I always take general feedback into account even if I have not made any mistakes.	53	15
I find it interesting to see what answers I got right	64	4
I think it is useful to see what my answers were when I am receiving feedback	66	2
I feel I can understand my mistakes better when feedback is directed at me individually rather than to the whole class.	53	15
I feel more anxious when other students can see my errors	21	47
I find it useful to see other students' answers	63	5
I feel less worried when I see what mistakes other students have made	35	35

For full responses to this survey see: **https://tinyurl.com/25jsv5ec**

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Adapting Foundation EAP in a pandemic: Finding the right asynchronous-synchronous balance

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Philip Davies

EAP Teaching Fellow,
University of Edinburgh

philip.davies@ed.ac.uk

Jill Haldane

EAP Teaching Fellow,
University of Edinburgh

jill.haldane@ed.ac.uk

In response to the pandemic, a university-wide hybrid teaching model was introduced, instructing course developers to create fluid courses, not fixed to either on-campus or online delivery so that students in any situation could be unified in one learning community (Bayne, 2020). With students located globally, developing a course that meets the needs of a cohort studying in different modes was pressing. This article describes the resultant hybridised FEAP course, demonstrating how asynchronous and synchronous components were integrated to meet the needs of our diverse student cohort and foster a sense of togetherness. Findings are presented to highlight the strengths and limitations.

Introduction

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Edinburgh adopted a university-wide hybrid teaching model to deal with the uncertainty posed by various restrictions. This hybrid model instructed course organisers to create a fluid course design that was not fixed to either on-campus or online delivery so that students in any situation could be brought together in one learning community (Bayne, 2020). This presented a challenge for the International Foundation Programme (IFP) and its Foundation English for Academic Purposes (FEAP) course as a core component. With students located around the globe, what kind of delivery would best meet the needs of a cohort having to study in different modes was a pressing issue. The course needed to be hybridised quickly and much of the decision-making centred on how the synchronous-asynchronous divide would fall within the course. This article describes the resultant hybridised FEAP course, demonstrating how asynchronous and synchronous components were integrated in order to meet the needs of our diverse student cohort and foster a sense of togetherness, irrespective of student circumstance. Preliminary findings are presented to highlight the strengths and limitations of this model.

The synchronous-asynchronous divide

The University's hybrid model advocated designing courses that are heavily weighted on asynchronous delivery, which is in keeping with most online learning courses (Smith, 2014; Fita, Monserrat, Moltó, Mestre, & Rodriguez-Burruezo, 2016). This is often viewed as more practicable and inclusive for online course delivery (Manning & Smith, 2018), given that students often have very different learning circumstances. This can therefore enable everyone to study more flexibly and meet the learning outcomes at their own pace. Neverthless, the benefits of synchronous delivery have been identified through research. Smith Jaggars and Xu (2016) found that interpersonal synchronous delivery correlated strongly with student performance. It is clear both delivery modes offer distinct support to students, and on FEAP we decided that a blend of both would allow us to support the widest possible range of students during the pandemic.

Reflecting on the most salient needs of our Foundation students over the years, we decided that the the course should be heavily weighted on synchronous delivery with some asynchronous elements to help bring together otherwise divided students.

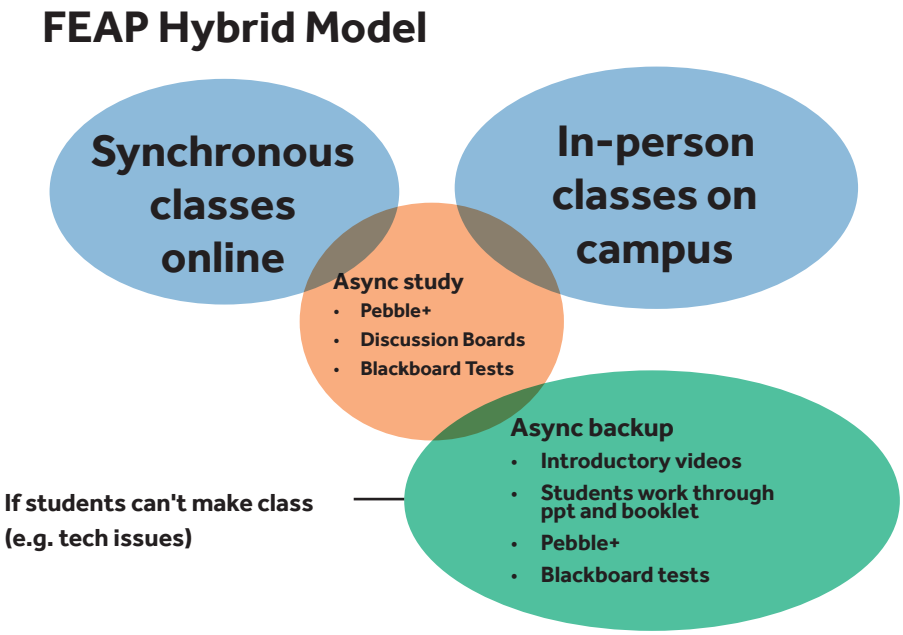

Figure 1 *FEAP Hybrid Model*

Although this method is incongruous to Edinburgh's more asynchronous hybrid model, we gained departmental support by highlighting the unique context of our students which would favour mainly synchronous delivery:

- Our young foundation cohorts tend to lack the administrative life skills upon entry to allow them to juggle an entire programme asynchronously with minimal interpersonal support.
- As the core component of the IFP, FEAP is the best situated to provide synchronous delivery to provide regular student-teacher interaction as well as a constant interpersonal support on a near daily basis.
- Managing a range of IFP subjects asynchronously with limited student-teacher interaction could cause student anxiety, and distance some from the programme and University.
- Synchronous online classes would help bring together students in various locations, fostering social and community cohesion within the programme.

Along with synchronous classes, we used Pebble+ and Blackboard's discussion boards for asynchronous activity. The former were spaces where students could submit discrete writing tasks for individual feedback from the teacher, and the latter was a space for students to post productive tasks - based on the synchronous class topics - to share with their peers across the course. This allowed all students to come together in a collective space, whether they were in Edinburgh or elsewhere, and regardless of their synchronous class grouping. The teachers would leave a generic comment each time, reflecting on students' production, offering guidance, and to maintain a teaching presence for all students (Shea, Swan, & Pickett, 2005).

Figure 1 shows how we sought to support students who may not be able to engage synchronously, either intermittently or long-term. Crucially, these asynchronous components provided a safety net for those unable to engage with the synchronous classes for any reason (e.g. technical issues) and it meant all productive practice was in the asynchronous space in order to give equal opportunity to all. We also included weekly summary videos on Blackboard for students

unable to regularly attend synchronous classes, or anyone wanting clarification, and comprehensive PowerPoints reflecting the content of each synchronous session as well as the provision of all materials in booklet form with a navigable contents page. Students could therefore access the relevant section of their booklet with the accompanying PowerPoint slides if they could not attend synchronously; any productive work would be posted to Pebble+ or the discussion board in the same way as those who attended synchronous classes. While this served to help create one learning community within the course despite an array of student contexts and engagement methods (Figure 1), there were limitations around solely asynchronous study. This course was hybridised from our face-to-face course, which is normally taught in-person on campus, and it was not possible to adapt all the materials in the short time available to fully exploit them for exclusively asynchronous study. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that attendance in synchronous classes was the ideal method of engagement and students were made aware of this from the outset, but the above went some way to mitigate against situations preventing students' synchronous study.

Preliminary findings

FEAP has now finished its first semester in hybrid form, yet students still have one semester to study. We have so far gathered feedback from teachers and students on their experiences of the first semester only. We do not yet have enough data to comment on student performance.

From the perspective of the 5 teachers on the course, its success rivalled that of the on-campus version. Many were surprised that they felt it was a better fit online than on campus. They commented that the closeness and collaborative potential brought about by online spaces facilitated student engagement. They also cited that students appeared better able to manage their studies in the online space as they did not seem to be distracted by the quotidian demands of studying abroad (e.g. finding buildings, opening bank account etc). They all felt that the learning outcomes of the course were very well met by students studying the hybrid course. However, the suitability of the discussion boards for the types of productive tasks, as well as students' engagement with the tasks themselves were highlighted as problematic. For instance, it was not felt by all that students were comfortable posting their work in a shared space and that this could be a reason for some students' lack of engagement.

In our student feedback survey, over 95% of students said that the course had taught them skills necessary for undergraduate study. The majority also said that the synchronous classes were positive learning experiences and in-class discussions were frequently identified as useful. The PowerPoints and booklet materials were also consistently highlighted as useful. At least 50% of students answered that our Blackboard platform facilitated their learning. This suggests that a blend of synchronous and asynchronous delivery was beneficial to their learning. Conversely, in line with teachers, the discussion boards were not highlighted as particularly useful.

Most notable was that in contrast to predictions, student attendance in synchronous classes was excellent (near 100% throughout). This is an important caveat to the hybrid course's efficacy, as the anticipated disruption to synchronous engagement due to technical issues or life events did not force students to revert to asynchronous study. Thus, it is not possible to evaluate how the course would have been experienced via mainly asynchronous study.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled the HE sector to innovate and deliver courses in atypical ways. In this sense, its impact has provided opportunities to rethink course design and delivery. On FEAP we designed a hybrid model that provides a blend of synchronous and asynchronous delivery so as to engage students, whatever their location or circumstance. Initial evaluation of the course highlights that synchronous delivery can be implemented successfully as the mainstay of an IFP/EAP course, and that students value the social and interpersonal experience this affords. It also shows that asynchronous components can be integrated with synchronous delivery to unify the student community and provide a support net for students unable to seek the support available in on-campus situations. That said, there are lessons to be learned about what asynchronous methods best facilitate this blend. It is hoped that our experience will help instil confidence in the benefits of combined synchronous-asynchronous delivery.

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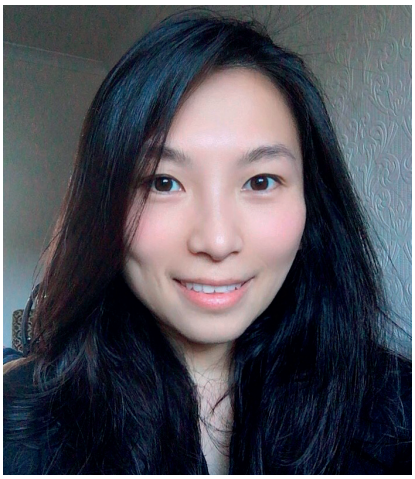
Ensuring high-stakes language assessment remains secure when moving online

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Simon Cotterill

Pre-sessional Course Director, Birmingham City University

simon.cotterill@bcu.ac.uk



Yen Cotterill

Test Developer, Birmingham City University

yen.cotterill@bcu.ac.uk

Challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic have necessitated online delivery of pre-course and end-of-course language assessment for International Foundation Programmes and other courses that attract international students. This article describes two different approaches: the transfer of a four-skill proficiency test to an eAssessment platform, and the redesign of a pre-sessional end-of-course listening test for online delivery through video call.

Introduction:

In February 2020, the closure of many international test centres and the transfer of teaching online created the sudden, urgent need for new modes of language assessment both for students wanting to study on International Foundation Programmes (IFPs) and for those already doing so. Birmingham City University's English Proficiency Test (BCU EPT), a four-skill language proficiency test, had always previously been delivered in person, on campus or overseas. To ensure test security, academic staff would personally invigilate listening, reading and writing tests and conduct speaking tests. Since BCU EPT provides evidence of language ability for entry onto IFPs, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, its delivery must adhere to strict security procedures. End-of-course assessment on pre-sessional courses is similarly high-stakes, determining whether students can progress to IFPs and other degrees. Like the BCU EPT, BCU's pre-sessional listening test had always been conducted with examiners physically present. Transferring these paper-based forms of assessment online, while ensuring they remain secure, was no simple matter.

eAssessment Challenges

eAssessment involves establishing an "online communication channel between learners and educators" (Kiennert et al, 2017). It is necessary to ensure that this channel facilitates reliable assessment of learners' ability and that information transferred across the channel is secure. While the pandemic has accelerated moves towards eAssessment, issues involved in establishing secure online tests were already in discussion: Kiennert et al. (2017) identified three key security issues in eAssessment:

- The identification of misuse
- Disclosure of information to unauthorised parties
- Fraudulent alteration of records

The third of these, involving an intruder gaining unauthorised access to private information, is something that IFP providers already have systems in place to protect against, which, for example, prevent fraudulent modification of assessment marks. However, preventing identity misuse and disclosure of test information to unauthorised parties have been major challenges for institutions attempting to securely transfer language assessment online.

Identity misuse in the form of imposters taking tests on behalf of the official candidate is something security procedures have always needed to take into account. When conducting tests in person, a candidate's identity can be established on entry to a classroom using an official form of identification such as a passport. In the classroom, a group of

candidates can then be monitored together by one invigilator. Protecting against identity misuse becomes more challenging in eAssessment, because a group of candidates simultaneously taking a test are likely to be physically, often geographically, separate, making it harder for an invigilator to effectively monitor them all throughout a test. This leads to the possibility of a different form of identity misuse – another person secretly aiding a candidate, meaning that if not administered effectively eAssessment can afford candidates more opportunities to cheat than traditional assessment (Fask et al., 2014). eAssessment also increases the risk of candidates retaining test data and disclosing it to unauthorised parties, such as people who will take the same test in future. In person, it is possible to ensure that no test papers leave a room; it is harder to ensure candidates have not recorded or taken screenshots of online tests.

eAssessment platform options

Moving BCU EPT online required significant investigation and explanation in a very small space of time. Because many institutions were trying to start using eAssessment at the same time as each other, it also required significant work to get and keep the attention of reputable providers, who themselves were working frantically to adapt services in response to the pandemic. There were no existing eAssessment products designed specifically for language proficiency tests that could be bought off-the-shelf. Available platforms needed to be tailored to the specific test format to ensure test takers could view passages and questions clearly and input their responses with ease.

To guard against identity misuse and prevent candidates from making copies of tests, eAssessment platforms offer three kinds of security:

- Auto-proctoring with serial photo taking
- Auto-proctoring with recording
- Live human proctoring

Auto-proctoring with serial photo taking involves pictures being taken at regular intervals through the candidate's webcam and the use of facial recognition technology to establish that the same person is present throughout the test. The pictures taken can be reviewed by institutions using this kind of platform after each test. Auto-proctoring with recording involves a video being recorded throughout the test through the candidate's webcam. The platform uses artificial intelligence to detect any aberrations, such as the presence of another person, and then reviews these before flagging issues to institutions, who can also view the entire video. Live human proctoring involves a human proctor who can talk to each candidate throughout the test and immediately respond to any issues that emerge. These kinds of proctoring can be combined with an automatic lock-down browser function, which only allows candidates to access pre-authorised applications and tools within the computer, thereby preventing a test taker from, for example, looking up the meaning of a word through an internet browser. Alternatively, a further level of protection can be offered by platforms with human proctors, who can view and control a candidate's screen while they take the test in order to prevent unwanted actions.

A platform with live human proctoring was selected because, as well as guarding against identity misuse, it offered the best protection against disclosure of test information to unauthorised parties. Given the limited number of BCU EPT listening and reading test versions, it was important to ensure none would be compromised. While Auto-proctoring with serial photo taking and Auto-proctoring with recording offer good levels of protection against identity misuse, they leave open the risk of candidates making records of test content. These automatic forms of proctoring allow institutions to know what has happened during a test after it ends, but only Live human proctoring allows immediate response to aberrant actions.

The transfer of BCU EPT to an online platform has been very successful, but not without issues. Initially candidates in certain regions

were unable to hear listening test audio due to firewall barriers, which required recalibration of the test platform to ensure it worked worldwide. An ongoing challenge is the greatly varying degrees of computer literacy among candidates. A further benefit of using live proctors is that they can assist candidates who encounter technical difficulties.

Redesigning a test for online delivery

A different approach to eAssessment was taken with the pre-sessional listening test, which needed to be moved online rapidly because courses were close to ending at the time of the first national lockdown in the UK. The paper-based test had included two sections with short-response questions and an integrated listening-to-writing task that involved test takers producing a summary of a short lecture. This has now been redesigned for online courses in the form of a one-to-one, teacher-student interview, delivered via video call. It involves teachers playing recordings that students respond to by either answering specific questions to demonstrate understanding of detailed information or by orally summarising what they had heard to show whether they had understood its main points. The second of these response types has been modelled on the Re-tell Lecture task in the PTE Academic test (Pearson, 2020), involving recordings of 60-90 seconds being retold to demonstrate listening comprehension. As an integrated listening-to-speaking task, the redesigned pre-sessional listening test has meant a departure from the paper-based listening-to-writing summary task, but this has worked well alongside other changes to the assessment structure, including the use of more coursework.

As a one-to-one teacher-led assessment, this new format is more time intensive than a traditional listening test, with one teacher needing a full day rather than one or two hours to assess a class. The new format has, however, allowed us to ensure identity misuse is prevented, as teachers can distinguish between their students and imposters and can see if anyone else is present alongside the test taker. Because students in the same class are tested one-by-one, there is a risk of students tested earlier divulging test content to those tested later. This means that, to protect against disclosure of test information unfairly advantaging some students, we have needed to produce multiple test versions to ensure no useful information about test content can be passed between students, who are made aware that they will not receive the same test version as their classmates. The short, 60-90 second, length of recordings means producing multiple test versions is relatively easy, compared to the far more time-consuming process of producing a version of the longer BCU EPT listening test. However, it is not always possible to ensure that the recordings used are of exactly the same difficulty level. As such, when making criteria-based assessments of candidates' oral summaries, teachers need to take the difficulty level of stimulus recordings into account when awarding marks. This can be challenging, but it is a common issue in integrated language assessment, not one exclusive to eAssessment.

Conclusion

It is hoped that these descriptions of language assessment responses to the pandemic are of interest to readers who may be considering similar moves. Such responses have certainly created opportunities for lasting changes in assessment that could benefit future learners, particularly those applying for or studying on IFPs or undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses outside their own country who would like the option of being tested at home online, even once traditional in person assessment becomes easy once again.

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Creating Sustainable Feedback through Online Dialogic Feedback Loops and a Student Self-RAG Rating

2020-21 has seen significant changes to assessment on the IFP units at the University of Bristol adapting to a blended delivery for 418 students. For the EAP units, portfolio assessment submission was favoured permitting a number of online submissions, within which students self-regulate their learning using a Self-RAG rating. This involves students choosing a progressive Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating to evaluate the application of their learning. Self-RAG rating EAP and Maths examples are discussed as the approach is similar on these units. Two important areas addressed are sustainable feedback and greater engagement with feed forward. Findings show dialogic feedback loops developing on the units, but better communication regarding the feedback process to students and teachers is needed.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sophia Vänttinen-Newton

IFP EAP Coordinator,
The University of Bristol

s.vanttinen-newton@bristol.ac.uk

Susanne Andersen

IFP STEM Coordinator,
The University of Bristol

susanne.andersen@bristol.ac.uk

The Centre for Academic and Language Development (CALD), University of Bristol, The Richmond Building, 105 Queen's Road, Bristol BS8 1LN

Developing Student Self RAG-rating

In planning for the use of feedback on our English for Academic Purposes (EAP) units, providing what Boud and Soler (2016) term 'Sustainable Feedback' was one of the principal tenets. In addition, "dialogic processes and activities which can support and inform the student on the current task, whilst also developing the ability to self-regulate performance on future tasks" (Carless et al. 2011: 3) was considered. The term 'dialogic feedback' is defined by Beaumont et al. (2011: 684) as a "continuous dialogue within a cyclical assessment process." Encouraging students to engage with feedback and move away from student reliance on teacher feedback was another principle underpinning this process. A student self-RAG rating was chosen with an aim to begin a dialogic process and encourage student self-regulation. Therefore, integration of regular online 'Feedback Moments' was not only important for students' ongoing learning and development on the IFP, but it was hoped that it would also allow us to monitor how students engaged with feedback in a blended learning environment. The RAG rating refers to a student's view of their application of learning. Students are asked to complete and upload a formative feedback sheet to the front of formative tasks. This includes their self-RAG rating, which the teacher responds to, beginning the dialogic feedback conversation.

Figure 1 shows an example of the formative feedback sheet used in our Academic Writing course, which is an EAP unit. The six criteria represent a condensed version of the summative marking criteria for the unit. When students and teachers RAG the students' work they highlight the listed assessment criteria in the individual boxes using the Red, Amber and Green (RAG) rating to show their evaluation of the students' application of their learning. Below each box with assessment criteria there is a box with room for comments and this can be used to create a dialogue between the student and the teacher. This allows students to say why they gave the rating and ask questions on how to improve, which allows the teacher to provide feed forward feedback and questions to scaffold learning. In the example in Figure 1, a student has highlighted their text yellow to represent the amber rating and a teacher has added their text comments using Turnitin bubble comments.

Creating Multiple Feedback Moments and Greater Student Self-regulation

In addition to the formative feedback sheet created as a central springboard for teacher-student dialogue, other online technology such as Padlet and the Blackboard class

Figure 1 *Formative Feedback Sheet for Academic Writing (EAP Unit)*

LANG00006 Academic Writing- Teacher Formative Feedback Sheet for Draft 1 E-Portfolio Submissions and Draft 2 of Tasks 1 and 2

RAG

- Red - if you feel you have not applied learning/not responded to peer or teacher feedback/not completed minimum tasks.
- Amber - if you have applied some aspects of learning from the week and engaged in trying to address any difficulties through seeking feedback or extra practice.
- Green – if you have clear evidence of successful application of learning from the week and/or have responded to feedback on specific areas.

TASK FULFILMENT & CONTENT	LANGUAGE USE & STYLE	TEXT ORGANISATION & PRESENTATION
(Student RAG) *Answering the question, content and source use	(Student RAG) *Accurate word choice and academic style	(Student RAG) *Introduction, thesis and conclusion
Student comments: I answered the question and included the source and citation.	Student comments: need more adamic vocabularies	Student comments: I covered all above
Teacher comments:	Teacher comments:	Teacher comments:
(Student RAG) *Analysis, stance and voice	(Student RAG) *Sentence structures, noun phrases and grammatical accuracy	(Student RAG) *Linking between and within paragraphs and use of linking devices
Student comments:	Student comments: it is well structured.	Student comments: still need to learn more about linking abilities.
Teacher comments:	Teacher comments:	Teacher comments:
Academic Integrity: (to include comments on: appropriate integration of sources; use of in-text citations and a references list)		

discussion boards were used. The purpose was to encourage students to understand that it is not only teacher feedback which is key to development, but also peer review and response to both student and teacher feedback (Carless et al., 2011). This links to the original need for creating greater feedback dialogue and encouraging greater student self-regulation. Prior to first draft submissions students posted drafts for peer review and were asked to comment on all stronger and weaker student exemplars which they found motivating (Smyth and Carless, 2020). Teachers then provided feedback comments in response to student peer feedback. Performing peer review in BB Collaborate breakout rooms was another feedback moment before first draft submissions. Finally, teacher feedback was provided on individual scripts via Turnitin QuickMarks. Common feedback to a whole group was provided in a whole class situation.

As each EAP class has a diverse range of student needs, language levels and a different subject pathway, the dialogic feedback process was non-prescriptive allowing teachers to develop individual feedback practices with students beginning with the formative feedback sheet as a springboard. Over the term the teaching team discussed various practices used: Turnitin audio feedback; QuickMarks labelled according to the marking criteria and tables in which students record how/where they have responded to feedback.

Preliminary Findings and Analysis

Writing in January 2021, there is evidence to show that some students have engaged well with the process of self-regulating their learning, self-RAG rating themselves on formative assignments. They have applied feedback to later assignments and asked questions via dialogic feedback loops to engage in feedback conversations with their tutors. Barriers initially existed with students seeing the process as one-way. This provoked crucial conversations about different feedback methods and the need in a higher education setting for students to self-regulate learning. One topic under discussion includes students requesting a mark on their first drafts and encouraging students to see the value of the feedback without the grade. Further student training in feedback methods at IFP level is certainly needed moving forward and integration of this at an earlier stage of the course next year. In addition, further teacher training needs to focus on methods and technology for monitoring student self-regulation and how to engage students in feedback conversations.

Developing Online Formative Feedback Loops on the Maths Units

Due to most students attending all the Maths sessions online and a few attending mathematics tutorials face-to-face only, it has become difficult to formatively monitor their progress and address misunderstandings during the sessions. The teacher cannot in the same way look at their individual work in the session when they are practising applying the theory and provide individual support. Based on the experiences from the end of the last academic year students were generally more reluctant to communicate and ask questions in the online environment compared to a traditional class environment. Therefore, it was decided to develop weekly online quizzes for the intended learning outcomes as a formative assessment to measure students' engagement and progress as well as providing feedback.

Preliminary Findings and Analysis

Continuous assessment increases the time students use on their studies and as a formative assessment it is a good predictor of student achievement (Shortera & Young, 2011). Formative online quizzes provide direct feedback to the individual student about their learning, but also provide feedback to the teacher in respect of which students are generally struggling and if there are topics the whole group are finding challenging. (Griffin & Gudlaugsdottir, 2006).

Monitoring the completion, students have generally engaged well as 78% of students completed 80-100% of the weekly quizzes. It has also encouraged review of content that has been covered prior to completing the

quizzes and resulted in questions being asked in sessions and drop-ins about the application of unit content before and after attempting the quizzes. Thereby, a dialogue has been created and an opportunity to provide directed support. Students were given feedback through the marking of their answers and by being given solutions for them to individually review their work. From a small sample of 101 students from a mid-unit exam in one unit it was found that there was moderate positive correlation between percentage weekly online quizzes completed before the exam and the exam result. The results agree with Myers & Myers' study (2007) which found that students' achievement increased when regular quizzes were implemented. A strong positive correlation was also found between students' performances in the weekly online quizzes and the exam result. These findings are unsurprising but confirm the importance of quizzes to engage with the unit material, using feedback to reflect on their work and develop autonomy in their studies. The informal response from students so far has generally been positive and similar to the response received from students in a study by Martins (2017). Responses show that students were learning new things through increased study time in preparation for the quizzes and valued the feedback telling them their level of understanding. This type of continued formative assessment is proving to be beneficial for students' learning and monitoring of progress and engagement, whether students are studying online or on campus.

The formative feedback sheet for Statistical Coursework Investigation (Figure 2) has been created so it reflects the assessment criteria. The intention is to open a dialogue with students about the quality of their work without the distraction of grades by using a RAG system as previously explained for the formative feedback sheet for Academic Writing in the EAP unit (Figure 1). The students reflect on their own work and submit this together with their draft. The teacher provides feedback using the same RAG system opening up communication about understanding the assessment criteria. The feedback shows what is needed to complete the work to a high standard developing students' skills and autonomy going forwards. This is a new assessment for a second term unit so there are no current findings currently on its application or use of the feedback sheet.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a dialogic feedback approach used across the IFP subject units at the University of Bristol designed to encourage greater self-regulation of student learning and to allow for effective teacher and student dialogue. Evidence is thus far apparent of student/teacher dialogue beginning on both the EAP and Maths units. Further student and teacher training now needs to continue to better communicate this process and enhance our provision at Bristol (Weaver, 2006) as well as further investigation into which online technologies can support this.

Figure 2 *Formative Feedback Sheet for Statistical Coursework Investigation*

All the points listed in the table represents the assessment criteria for the Statistical Coursework Investigation. As formative feedback to help you improve your work each point will be 'RAG'ed and highlighted in green if it needs little development, amber if it needs some development and red if it needs a lot of development. Below each point you will get comments and/or questions that will direct you on how to improve your work. There is also a yellow box for general comments. For you to reflect on the quality of your work and your progress we also ask you to submit this feedback sheet together with your draft and RAG your work.

Knowledge and understanding of research topic and statistical methods. (20%)	Analysis and visual presentation of data. (40%)	Discussion and Conclusion. (20%)	Presentation. (20%)
***Introduction** Information about the data set and background for why the data set is of interest. Research question(s) in relation to the data set stated.	***Data Analysis** Excel file with the data analysis of the data set.	***Discussion** Interpretation and implication of results as well as limitations	***Title** and **Abstract.** Title which briefly summarises the main ideas/purpose/content of the investigation. Abstract which is short and concise including aim, methods, results, and conclusion.
Comments:	Comments:	Comments:	Comments:
***Statistical methods** Detailed explanation of statistical methods used.	***Results** Presentation of results including description and graphs	***Conclusion** Answer to the research question(s) drawn from the data analysis.	***English language and grammar.** Good use of English language and grammar including subject relevant academic language. ***Structure** and **Referencing** Logical and well organised structure of individual parts of investigation. Harvard referencing
Comments:	Comments:	Comments:	Comments:
General comments:			

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Foundation students' perception towards giving and receiving peer assessment

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lina Ying Ying Tang

Senior Academic Tutor & Foundation Lecturer

Foundation, Study and Language Institute

University of Reading Malaysia

l.yy.tang@reading.edu.my

Mei Leng Chang

IFP Programme Lead

Foundation, Study and Language Institute

University of Reading Malaysia

e.chang@reading.edu.my

Many benefits are reported for the use of formative peer assessment, particularly its role in promoting assessment for learning in higher education. This paper details a study conducted to investigate Foundation students' perception and experience of formative peer assessment at the University of Reading Malaysia. Findings from this study indicate that Foundation students hold positive views in giving and receiving peer assessment. In addition, significant gender difference is seen in perceiving the usefulness of receiving peer assessment, where female students hold more positive perception than male students in this aspect.

Introduction and background

Assessment plays a vital role in higher education, essential in the assessment of learning where the extent of learners' learning is measured and often leading to grade classification and awards of degrees. In the past decade, there has been an increasing focus on assessment for learning, especially with formative practices which entails the role of assessment in promoting, enhancing and supporting learning.

In developing learners' capacity to recognise, evaluate and close the gap between intended goal and current achievement, and therefore enhancing learning, formative assessment was found to be positively correlated with student achievement (Black & William, 1998). Since then, formative assessment such as peer assessment and self-assessment has gained popularity in the educational field. Topping (2009) defined peer assessment as "an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product of performance of other equal-status learners". In the process, learners provide feedback to their peers and feedback received is used to inform and close the gap. Learners are placed at the centre of the learning process where they are trained to take responsibility and be accountable for their learning. Other benefits reported include developing learners as active learners, increasing learners' participation and motivation in learning, developing critical evaluation and professional skills and improvement in academic performance (Double et al., 2020; Vickerman, 2009).

Despite the promising benefits and potential of peer assessment in facilitating learning, educators and researchers have raised concerns with its validity and reliability, and on whether peer grading should be used to derive assessment scores. However, numerous studies have shown with the scrutiny of peer assessment, its validity and reliability could be increased, with a high level of agreement with tutor-ratings. Some guidelines for best practice include the introduction of clear criteria, having multiple assessors for one piece of work, anonymous marking, increased experience of peer assessment and having a moderation system by tutor (Vickerman, 2009). On the other hand, the use of formative peer assessment is highly advocated as it is of low stakes and enables regular feedback provision but not increasing tutors' workload at the same time (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Topping, 2009).

Literature published with reference to formative peer assessment largely focuses on language and writing at the undergraduate level but its practice in oral presentation, particularly at the pre-university level is scarcely reported. This study aims to investigate Foundation students' perception and experience of peer assessment using four key constructs – comfort, usefulness, importance and fairness, which are adopted in the literature (Cheng & Warren, 1997; Strijbos et al., 2010; Vickerman, 2009). Usefulness, importance and fairness are cognitive constructs while comfort is psychological.

Method

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with International Foundation Programme students at the University of Reading Malaysia (UoRM). Students were required to peer assess a group oral presentation by using a web-tool, TEAMMATES, that automates peer assessment by auto-generating email messages to participants, performs computerised calculations and tabulation, and disseminates results with just a few clicks. As all participants had no prior experience in using the peer assessment tool, students were given an introduction to peer assessment and the rubric used. The peer-assessed grade for each group was released to students as feedback after the presentation.

Following the peer assessment exercise, a Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to students. The questionnaire asked students' perception on the usefulness, importance, fairness and comfort in giving and receiving peer assessment. Responses were received from 66 students, 34 male and 32 female students. The data was analysed by using descriptive statistics of frequencies, means and standard deviations. Additionally, an independent t-test was applied to investigate gender differences.

Results and discussion

Referring to Table 1 and Table 2, 90.9% of students agreed that they felt comfortable in receiving formative peer assessment and 78.8% of students felt comfortable assessing their peers. This could be due to students perceiving formative assessment as a tool to improve and promote learning, rather than for grading purposes. On another note, a high level of trust and psychological safety is likely to increase students' perceived comfort, regardless of the degree of friendship (Panadero et al., 2013). Thus, for effective peer assessment, measures to increase trust and psychological safety, such as training in peer assessment could be incorporated.

With reference to the three cognitive constructs investigated, students perceived giving and receiving peer assessment to be important, fair and useful. 74.3% and 77.3% of students respectively agreed that giving and receiving assessment from peers is important. This shows that students acknowledged the importance of peer learning, where assessment and feedback given and received help them to evaluate their own learning.

80.3% and 78.8% of students respectively agreed that giving and receiving assessment from peers is fair. When it comes to fairness, concerns are often raised on the competency of learners as assessors. Such concerns are disproved by a meta-analysis by Falchikov & Goldfinch (2000) that found high correlations between grades awarded in tutor assessment and student assessment. In addition, perceived fairness can be increased with

Table 1 *Students' perception about giving assessment to other teams on oral presentation.*

	Responses				Mean	Std Dev
	SD	D	A	SA		
Useful	0	17 (25.8%)	40 (60.6%)	9 (13.6%)	2.88	0.6206
Important	1 (1.5%)	16 (24.2%)	43 (65.2%)	6 (9.1%)	2.82	0.6053
Fair	1 (1.5%)	12 (18.2%)	47 (71.2%)	6 (9.1%)	2.88	0.5688
Comfort	1 (1.5%)	13 (19.7%)	47 (71.2%)	5 (7.6%)	2.85	0.5614

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Agree (A) and 4 = Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 2 *Students' perception about receiving assessment from other teams on oral presentation.*

	Responses				Mean	Std Dev
	SD	D	A	SA		
Useful	1 (1.5%)	12 (18.2%)	43 (65.2%)	10 (15.1%)	2.94	0.6295
Important	2 (3.0%)	13 (19.7%)	38 (57.6%)	13 (19.7%)	2.94	0.7207
Fair	1 (1.5%)	13 (19.7%)	46 (69.7%)	6 (9.1%)	2.86	0.5788
Comfort	1 (1.5%)	5 (7.6%)	53 (80.3%)	7 (10.6%)	3.00	0.4961

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Agree (A) and 4 = Strongly Agree (SA)

added opportunities for peer assessment (Cheng & Warren, 1997). Therefore, training or briefing before the implementation of peer assessment is recommended to improve students' experience in the exercise.

In giving assessment to peers, 74.2% of students perceived the exercise to be useful whereas 80.3% of students perceived receiving peer assessment to be useful. The usefulness of peer assessment and feedback is often translated into its effect on students' academic performance. Most studies published refer to summative assessment but a recent meta-analysis published by Double et al. (2020) indicated a significant positive effect of formative peer assessment on academic performance compared with no peer assessment and tutor assessment. On the other hand, although some studies reported that students benefit more with being assessors than being assessees (Li et al., 2010), students perceived otherwise in this study. Further study involving qualitative methods might provide further insights into Foundation students' perception on being assessees and assessors.

In exploring gender differences on students' perception, findings of the study indicate no significant gender difference in the three key constructs of comfort, fairness and importance, but found a significant difference in the usefulness of receiving assessment ($t = -2.861$, $p < 0.05$). More female than male students perceived receiving peer assessment to be useful. This is supported in a study by Havnes et al. (2012), which reported female students placing higher demands on the quality of feedback they receive.

Conclusion

The finding that students have a positive perception of formative peer assessment suggests that more opportunities for this kind of assessment should be incorporated into module design. Although the study took place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, moving the practice to a total virtual environment is easily achievable with web-based tools such as TEAMMATES, SPARKPLUS and WebPA. This creates more feedback opportunities for students without increasing staff workload. It may also help to foster a sense of online community within a cohort and encourage social learning among learners.

Peer assessment in assessing coursework is effective in measuring groupwork effort such as individual contribution in a groupwork assessment. Extending its use into summative assessment is possible by factoring the peer assessment of groupwork contribution into the assessment score, deterring free riders and allowing development of critical evaluation in learners. Assessment for learning can thus be achieved to promote, enhance and support teaching and learning activities despite this challenging period of higher education.

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An IFY Statues Project: Situated Learning Online

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mark Holloway

SFHEA , Academic English and Study Skills Development Co-ordinator, Centre for Academic English, School of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire

m.holloway3@herts.ac.uk

Jill Fenton

Teaching Fellow & Module Convenor for Human Geography, Queen Mary University of London

j.fenton@qmul.ac.uk

The introduction in September 2020 of the Statues Project orientation task for the International Foundation Year (IFY) at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), was brought about because of moving from blended to online learning due to Covid-19. The first round of this orientation task has yet to be fully analysed. However, already it has shown remarkable learning outcomes that inform whilst challenge some critical thinking about teaching and learning practices.

Introduction

The Statues Project is an online orientation task for International Foundation Year (IFY) students that was introduced at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) in September 2020.

In any 'normal' year, the IFY at QMUL begins with a two-week orientation task in which students work together in groups to create either a video or photo essay in response to a series of questions about Tower Hamlets, where the main Mile End campus is located. Tower Hamlets is rich in culture, history, and diversity, and provides a setting for exploring themes that students will encounter in their IFY subject modules. Of equal importance to students is the fact that Tower Hamlets is their new home; as they complete the Tower Hamlets Task, they learn to navigate their new physical surroundings while developing skills and peer friendships that will serve and support them through their foundation year. The Tower Hamlets Task is an interdisciplinary collaboration. Its design draws on a combination of Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of "situated learning" – that learning is 'embedded within activity' – and the Human Geography concept of "sense of place" (Wylie, 2009, p.676); as students complete the Task, they acquire insight into where and how they learn, thus "taking their place" at university both literally and figuratively.

The Covid-19 Pandemic rendered the Tower Hamlets Task impossible. The 2020-21 foundation year began with 90% of students overseas (by choice or otherwise) and a decision was made to deliver at least the first semester of the programme online only.

The Statues Project

In considering an alternative project IFY colleagues agreed on the continuing importance of making connections between the students and the locality of the QMUL campus. It was opportune that occurring in Britain's cities at this time were controversial events around historical statues and monuments reflecting their historical associations with the British empire and slavery in particular. We began to identify statues in East London that might also be associated with this history, among them that of a former slave trader of the 17th century, Robert Milligan, whose statue was removed for safeguarding from outside of the Museum of London Docklands in Canary Wharf. (Warren, 2020).

The climate of opinion in London during the summer of 2020, and the call by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, to reassess public commemoration through monuments, with a view to improving diversity in London, suggested to IFY colleagues that an orientation project related to this would be appropriate, would introduce students to a unique moment in British history and culture as well as enable them to examine wider questions about monuments or statues within their own cultural landscapes. The Statues Project emerged.

Students were set three tasks, one to complete individually and two to complete within small groups. For the first task, they could either record a short video or write around 500 words on a statue or public monument of their choice, preferably from their home town. Students were simply asked to explain where the statue/monument is located, what it represents, and their opinion about it.

The second task introduced students to class presentations and seminar discussions. In groups, they researched a statue or monument located in East London and, within an online class, gave a short presentation on their research. The students were now familiar with four or five East London statues and monuments, thus teachers led seminar discussions around six questions, for example:

1. It is never justifiable to deface, damage, or destroy a statue. Discuss.

2. The world needs more statues of women. Discuss.

3. What is the difference between a statue and a monument? Use examples to consider the different purpose statues and monuments might have.

For the third task, students chose their groups through their selection of one of the six questions and they created a video essay in response to that question.

Student feedback on the Statues Project

Student feedback was collected via an online questionnaire immediately after completing the project, and then through a focus group held at the end of the first semester, during which participants reflected on the longer-term impact of completion of the tasks. Immediate feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Fears that students would struggle to navigate a new and potentially confusing array of online platforms (Flipgrid, Moodle, Mahara, and Teams) proved to be unfounded, with the project actually facilitating familiarisation with learning technology and students reporting effective peer support in using the required tools.

Some students reported difficulty with the first task set because of the absence or non-existence of statues in their home countries, citing religious reasons for this. Staff responded to this by encouraging a broadening of their thinking about statues to include public murals, monuments, and public artworks.

Students favoured statues that were located close to the QMUL Mile End campus - the Spurs and England footballer, Ledley King, and the suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst, whilst some chose the Cable Street mural. In one video essay, students critiqued the overall lack of statues of women; in repeating the second task, we would include in our narrative, as representations of women, race and ethnicity, the statue of a black woman holding a child in Stockwell and the statue of an everyday black woman in Stratford.

Many students described a sense of getting to know the 'real London' that contrasted with clichéd ideas of London rooted in media representations such as 'Downton Abbey'.

In the end-of-semester focus group, participants voiced appreciation for how the project had furnished them with a local sense of place through learning about statues and monuments in East London, and had facilitated an experiencing of the local within the global, especially when applying contemporary debates to the specific statue or monument chosen by them within their home countries. Through the project, students reported becoming more informed about political debates around statues, and developing their knowledge of world events.

Finally, students commented positively about the cultivating of friendships that subsequently became peer support groups, crucial given the lack of face-to-face contact for most IFY students during the semester.

Some recent theory that could contribute to critical analysis of the Statues Project

The following examples of recent theory contextualise our approaches and enquiry into the Statues Project, whether thinking about facilitating a virtual/remote experience of place, or less formal orientation activity that expresses real life and fun, whilst, concurrently, creating a community of shared learning practice.

A virtual sense of place: Hoke et al (2020) explore online/virtual field experiences and comment that the immersed field experience is part of their value, and that such meaningful immersion can be achieved

through 'Focusing in on attributes or artifacts from a real environment that shape the identity of a place or community', that stimulate students realistic experiences and thus provide a sense of virtual place (Hoke at al, 2020, p.2). In the Statues Project the student's chosen statue or monument would contribute to such immersive sense of place.

Flipped learning: the requirement for all teaching and learning to move from classroom to remote delivery due to Covid-19, has brought about a 'flip' in approaches for the IFY. Hughes et al (2016, pp.127-128), in discussing 'flipped' library orientation for international first year undergraduates, aim for student library literacy in meaningful 'real life' ways, fostered through 'fun searching activities, which students tend to prefer'. The Statues Project exemplifies such flipped orientation.

Community of inquiry: Picciano (2017, p.173), discusses the 'community of inquiry' model for online learning environments, that supports 'active learning environments or communities dependant on instructors and students sharing ideas, information and opinions'; interaction is attained through students and teachers using discussion board, video conferencing and other electronic means of communication. Vlachos (2010, p.252) recognises that between students such community motivates towards cooperation and communication, and enables 'freedom to develop their own personal styles and intelligences, and therefore, take control of the learning process'. This community of inquiry is indicated in the interactions that occurred between students and their peers and teaching staff in the Statues Project.

Further exploration of a theory of online education: The Statues Project, as part of the online IFY programme, is worth examining through Anderson's (2011) discussion of a theory of online education, that is further explored by Picciano (2017), who comments 'As blended learning, which combines face-to-face and online instruction, evolves into the dominant form of instruction throughout all levels of education, it serves as the basis for an integrated model.' (2017:187). Conversely, Covid-19 has necessitated the removal of the face-to-face component of such integrated model and has brought about one that is non-integrated. It might therefore be timely to enquire if this non-integrated model of learning, triggered by Covid-19, suggests a revisiting of Picciano's earlier analysis.

Conclusion

The introduction in September 2020 of the Statues Project orientation task for the IFY QMUL, was brought about because of the need to move from blended to online learning as a consequence of Covid-19. The first round of this orientation task has yet to be fully analysed, and pending such analysis, it is about to be repeated for the January Start IFY students. Already the Statues Project has shown remarkable learning outcomes that inform pedagogy theory, whilst challenging some critical thinking about learning practices.

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Using an escape room to develop transferable skills

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Faith Nightingale

Module Convenor for PDP Modules, Queen Mary University of London

f.nightingale@qmul.ac.uk

Thinking of creative and innovative ways to improve students' skills is a challenge, especially through distance learning. Encouraging students to communicate, solve problems and work as a team are key skills that need developing at university and are vital in the workplace. Students need a safe space to practise these skills through a stimulating, enjoyable task. This article discusses how an escape room challenge was used with university students to develop soft skills during their year 1 Professional Development Planning module.

Introduction

University students' focus is often solely on the development of hard skills or knowledge. However, transferable or soft skills are vital not only for success in the university, but also in the workplace. International Foundation Programmes (IFP) bridge the gap between skills and knowledge. IFPs enable students to develop the academic and soft skills necessary to better prepare them for undergraduate study. Research shows students are more likely to successfully complete their undergraduate degrees after an IFP (Spooner & Clear, 2016; Mabila et al., 2006).

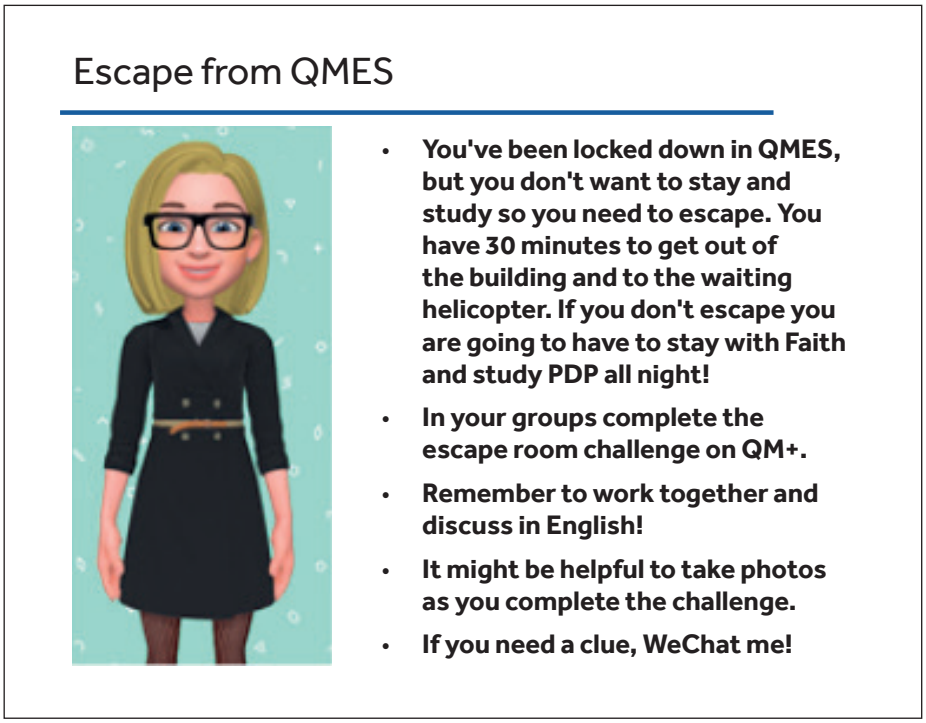
At Queen Mary Engineering School (QMES), a joint partnership between Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), UK and Northwestern Polytechnical University (NPU), China, developing young engineers' skills and abilities plays a key role. To develop these skills, Personal Development Planning (PDP) modules have been introduced as core modules within the degree programme to enhance the transferable skills that Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduates often lack (Reimer, 2002). PDP1 acts like an IFP as there is a focus on academic skills, building students' communication abilities, critical thinking and teamwork, as well as preparing them for the unfamiliar student-centred learning approach, whilst all the time having an engineering emphasis.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, giving face-to-face classes has become impossible, so while students sit together in the lecture rooms on the NPU campus, the teacher joins through online conferencing software to conduct the classes. The main challenge with this is to maintain a high engagement and interaction rate with students; therefore innovative tasks and learning materials need to be developed.

Gamification is commonly used to increase student motivation (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2017) and escape rooms are being more commonly used in education, mostly as table-top activities or break-out boxes (Schaffhauser, 2017). This method has proved popular with students (Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2019), but using online technology to facilitate this (Vergne, Smith & Bowen, 2020) is a newer phenomenon with limited research.

An escape room is defined as, "a game in which participants confined to a room or other enclosed setting (such as a prison cell) are given a set amount of time to find a way to escape (as by discovering hidden clues and solving a series of riddles or puzzles)" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Designed to foster teamwork, creativity, speed and patience, teams are usually given 60 minutes to escape their chosen themed adventure (The Escape Game, 2018). First created in Japan in 2007,

Figure 1 *The introduction/information given in class.*



they are now popular across Asia (The Escape Game, ibid) which is one reason why the QMES escape room was designed, as students had expressed their enjoyment of completing real-life ones.

The escape room challenge was designed as an interactive online activity for the Covid-19 pandemic as it was not possible to conduct the original teamwork activity. It was therefore vital to provide the same engaging and stimulating activity the original activity would have delivered.

Method

Escape from QMES task

The aim of the escape room was to develop the teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills of the students. It was the final activity of a lecture on teamwork skills, during which the attributes needed to work effectively as a team were discussed, which included communication and discussing ideas, creating a team manifesto and how to be an effective team member. Riebe, Girardi & Whitsed (2016) argue that this kind of teamwork pedagogy is something that universities should be focussing on in order to develop skills for team-based work environments, a focus in the employment market.

A plan of the story with the rooms and locks was designed to reflect the students trying to escape from QMES. This involved firstly escaping from the classroom, then from the school on the fourth floor and finally the building.

The students were split into groups of 5 or 6 and expected to work using one computer which forced them to communicate to try to solve the clues. The students were given a scenario (figure 1), a time limit of 30 minutes and some clues to begin the challenge. Groups then had to work through the different clues and scenes in order to escape (figures 2-4). Should they require a clue, they

Figure 2 *Informational clue for students to collect*

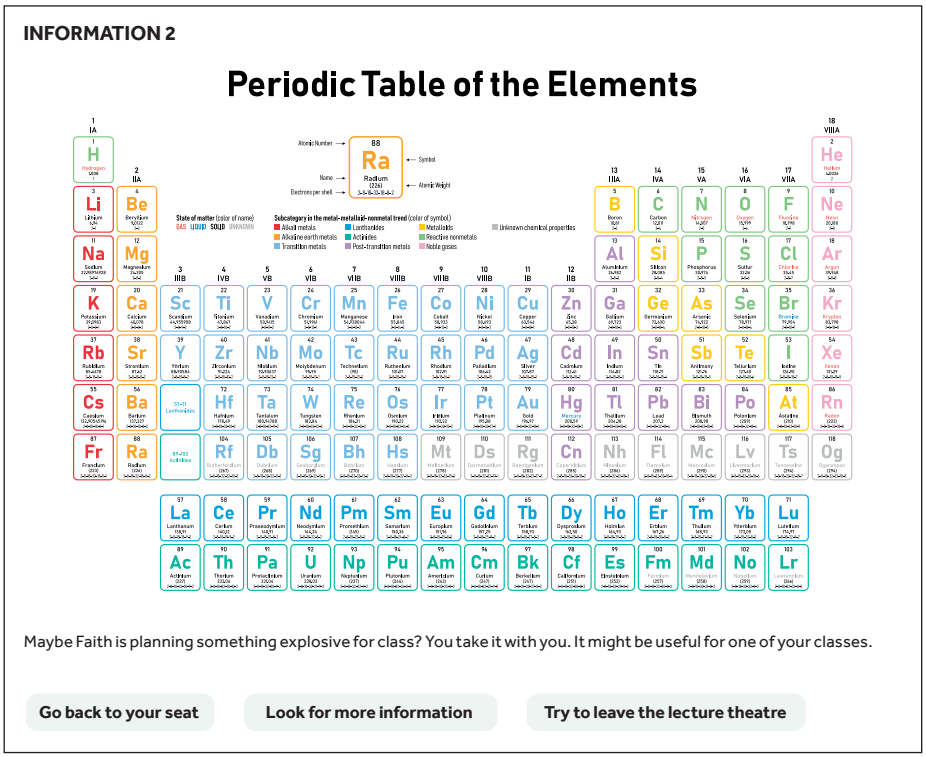


Figure 3 *Scene 4, Innovation lab*

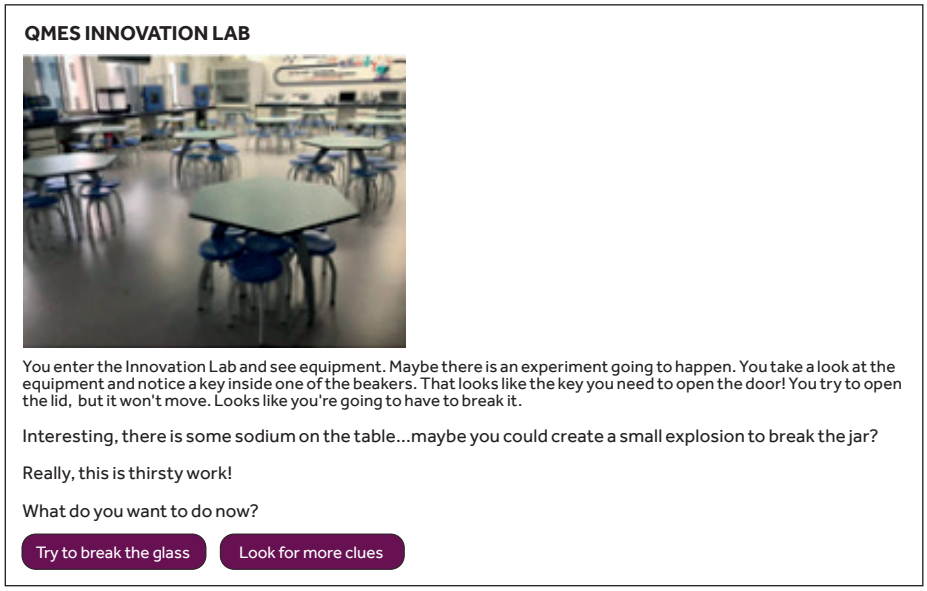
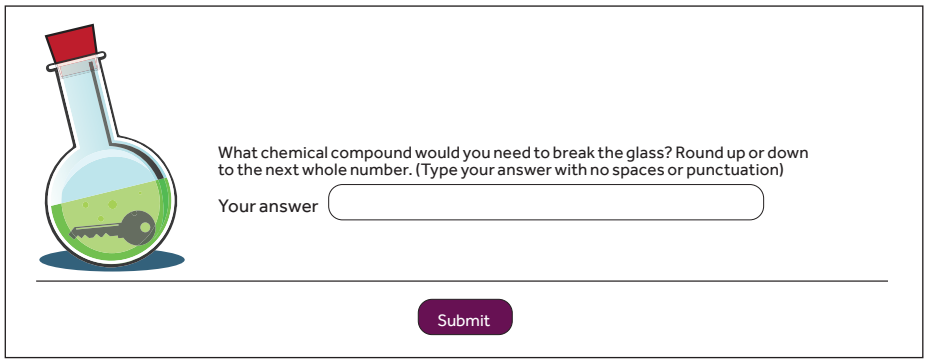


Figure 4 *An example of problem solving to move to the next scene*



contacted the teacher via WeChat Work where they received a hint.

The escape room was designed as a 'lesson tool' on the Moodle platform QMPlus, provided by QMUL. This was the easiest option as Google Forms is not available in China and Microsoft Forms lacked the capability.

Development decisions

When designing the escape room, real pictures of the school (figure 3) were used as well as an avatar of the teacher (figure 1) to make it more realistic as students were not physically escaping from the school. The scene was set to reflect the students' real-life experience of being in QMES and leaving a lesson which should have made the steps easier to follow as it is something done daily.

Planning is a key element of the escape room as it is important to understand the steps students need to take as well as what happens and where they go once something has been guessed incorrectly. This starts with choosing an exciting theme, followed by planning the scenes and then the puzzles within them. Understanding the capabilities of the online tool is also important so that it aligns with the designer's vision for the escape room.

After the challenge, students produced a 200-word reflection following Gibbs' reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988), using a set of given questions. Reflections were added to students' individual portfolios. This enabled students to reflect on the skills they had developed by doing this task (e.g., teamwork, communication, problem solving etc.), what they could improve on for next time and how well they had met the learning objectives.

Additionally, the students completed a survey as this was the first time this type of activity had been conducted. The survey asked 6 questions related to enjoyment of the escape room, the skills that were developed, interest in further escape rooms and an open-ended feedback question. 137 students responded to the survey and the results are shown below.

Results and Discussion

Figure 5 shows the skills that the escape room helped students develop. The blue bars show students' answers to the multi-select question regarding skills development. 90% of students rated teamwork as the skill that the escape room developed, with problem solving and communication skills following with 78% and 77% respectively. Time management and technical/computing skills were mentioned the least.

The orange bars show students' responses when they were asked to rate their most developed skill where 39% rated teamwork as the most improved, with problem solving second (24%) and communication and critical thinking in third and fourth places with 15% and 13% respectively.

Figure 5 *Skills developed in the escape room*

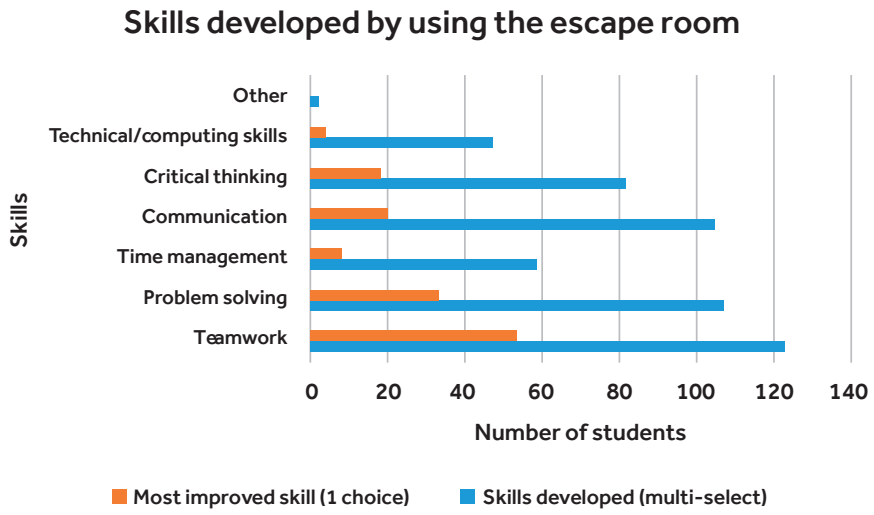


Figure 6 *Usefulness of the escape room*

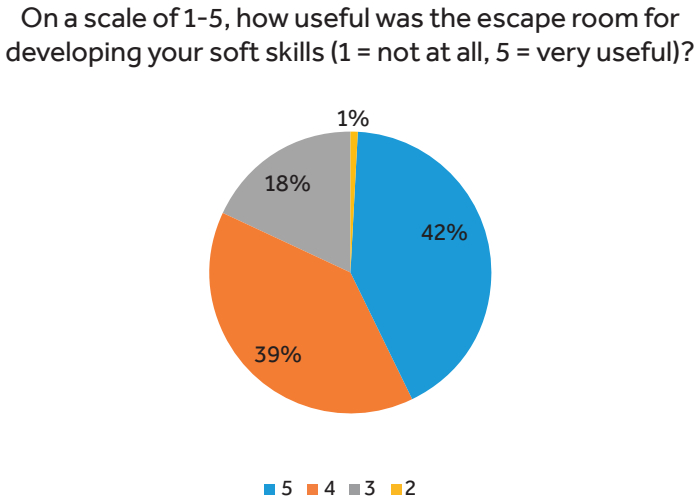
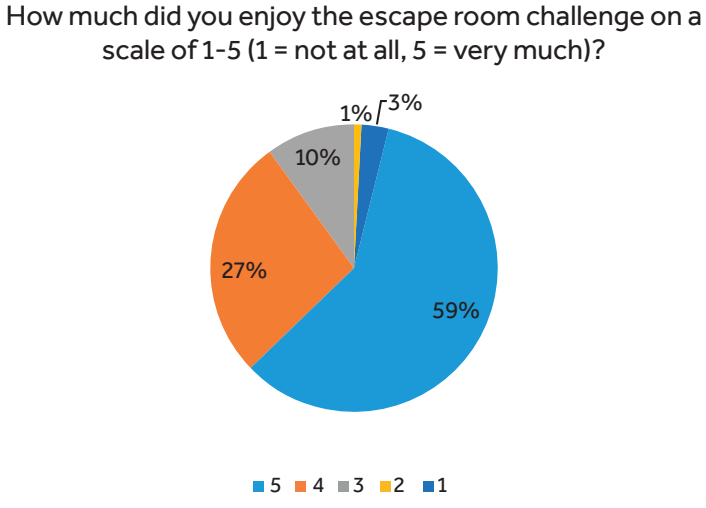


Figure 7 *Enjoyment of the escape room*



This shows that the aims of the escape room were achieved. This is further confirmed in figure 6 which shows that 42% of students rated the escape room activity as very useful, or 5 out of 5, for developing their soft skills. A further 39% rated the usefulness as 4 out of 5. It is important to note that only half of students did manage to escape, so a high usefulness rating shows high engagement and satisfaction with the activity.

86% of students rated enjoyment as 4 or 5 out of 5 as can be seen in figure 7. Enjoying activities is vital as it helps engagement and therefore development of skills in students as they are more likely to continue with the activity and try to complete it.

In the open-ended question, students were asked for their overall feedback. Students noted the need for more hints and tips or easier clues and some found the escape room too difficult. Students also commented on the enjoyment of the task and new and stimulating experience of the escape room. Interesting comments included making an escape room based more on their majors as they had enjoyed the chemistry question that was set.

This therefore gives a good opportunity to develop an interdisciplinary escape room challenge with the engineering department. By developing an interdisciplinary approach, this will show students how modules are linked together and how soft skills are important for their future career path as also noted in the literature. It also gives students the opportunity to use and develop their specialist knowledge which will make the activity more meaningful and therefore add validity.

Conclusion

It is clear that the escape room achieved the aims of developing the students' teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills and is something that is useful to engage students in online learning. Using the escape room enabled students to enjoy a new and novel approach to learning. This is particularly important as the move to online learning has been a completely new experience for the year 1 students and has caused some difficulties and resistance to blended learning. IFP students would also benefit from the skills developed in this activity as critical thinking and critical analysis are key aspects of developing academic literacies and success at university.

As this is the first time this activity was conducted, it can be deemed a success. Conducting research on this has also shown areas for improvement and development opportunities within QMES. For the future, creating an even more tailored escape room focussing on engineering related content would be seen as even more valuable for students and would increase their engagement. This is something that could be used across modules and could regularly develop not only the essential engineering knowledge that students need, but also their transferable skills which will not only help them in completing their university degree, but also prepare them for a real-life work environment.

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Overcoming the remote in remote learning: the value of community in the virtual classroom

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tony Myers

Assistant Professor, Academic Language and Literacies Department, Zayed University, Abu Dhabi

Tony.Myers@zu.ac.ae

Jaime Buchanan

Senior Instructor, Academic Language and Literacies Department, Zayed University, Abu Dhabi

Jaime.Buchanan@zu.ac.ae

This paper examines the use of planned community-building activities in lessons for foundation and non-foundation students in a higher education institution in the United Arab Emirates with the aim of improving participation and attendance rates in online lessons. It looks at two approaches and their perceived effects on learners.

Context

When face-to-face classes were transferred online in March 2020 in response to the spread of Covid-19, initial concerns centred around content coverage and test security. While these remain issues for emergency remote teaching, or ERT (Hodges et al., 2020), this research stems from a less tangible matter relating to the difference in affect found in remote classrooms. In particular, it became clear after the first term of working in the new environment that teachers felt a disquiet at the lack of participation in synchronous, online lessons. Many students were attending passively, logging on, without evidence of lesson engagement. Students were equally unhappy with the new learning situation. End-of-course questionnaires revealed large-scale alienation from university life, as well as a general unhappiness that surfaced most often in the interstices of regular lesson progression.

During the second term of learning online, many teachers intuited that students keenly missed the opportunity to participate in a university community. This led to a perceived decline in mental health, exacerbating the engagement issues found in the first semester. As a response to this, the authors found themselves fulfilling a more pastoral role, spending additional class time engaging with the students on non-academic issues than would have been the case in face-to-face scenarios. The students seemed to respond to this with enthusiasm, an energy and engagement that they then brought to the academic content of the lessons. It appeared to us that such incidental conversations were meeting emotional needs that we did not initially realize the students had. The literature on the functions of teachers in online learning always includes a social role (Alvarez et al., 2009; Bawane & Spectar, 2009; Berge, 1995). However, the competencies identified by Shé et al (2019), including maintaining 'a cordial learning environment' (p.35), do not answer to the wider needs that have emerged as a result of the enforced conversion to ERT which is more of 'a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances' (Hodges et al, 2020) than a planned form of remote learning. This shift had left our learners feeling isolated from their natural community. Indeed, the students expressed a greater sense of belonging to the classes which involved extended social interactions than those without, resulting in an increased commitment and engagement in the classes.

The research design

It was decided therefore to experiment with different formalized methods of developing a sense of community in the classroom to ascertain both if students found them helpful, and if one was better. Two approaches emerged. The first method involved creating a small scenario on a Google Form and offering students a choice of options. Students selected their preference, explaining why in roughly 20 words. Students were allowed five

minutes to complete the exercise before the results were discussed in class for a further five minutes. Sample scenarios included *Would you prefer robots looked identical to humans, or completely different, and why? and If you had to accept one of these (Living by yourself on a desert island for a year, Living with your worst enemy on a desert island for six months, Living in the Arctic with your family for two years), which would it be and why?* The second approach involved exploiting opportunities for social engagement on an ad hoc basis, for one to five minutes, discussing non-academic matters that arose through informal chat at the start of class. This approach was far less structured, since it relied on naturally occurring points of discussion. A strategy that proved repeatedly successful, however, involved enquiring after students' mental and emotional health when they seemed especially reticent to participate.

An end of term questionnaire was devised to ascertain student responses to attempts at community building. Students in four foundation classes and two non-foundation classes were sent the survey, with 39 students completing the questionnaires, which consisted of 11 multiple choice and short-answer questions focusing on student impressions of sense of belonging and their own participation in this class compared to conventional online classes.

The results

Most respondents expressed a preference for face-to-face classes (see Figure 1). Part of the general preference for face-to-face learning may be attributed to how connected they felt to the rest of the class. Students indicated increased alienation from their classmates, with 82.5% of them saying they felt less close to each other online, 15% say they felt as close, with only 2.5% stating that they felt closer (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 *Student responses to the question 'Do you prefer online or face-to-face classes?' as a percentage of 39 respondents*

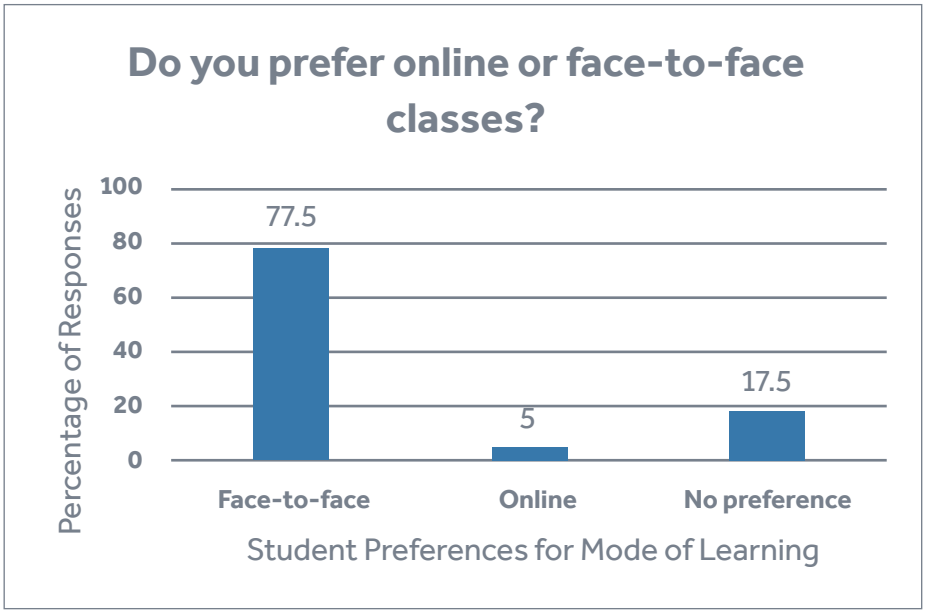


Figure 2 *Student responses to the question 'How close do you feel to your fellow students in your other online classes?' as percentage of 39 respondents*

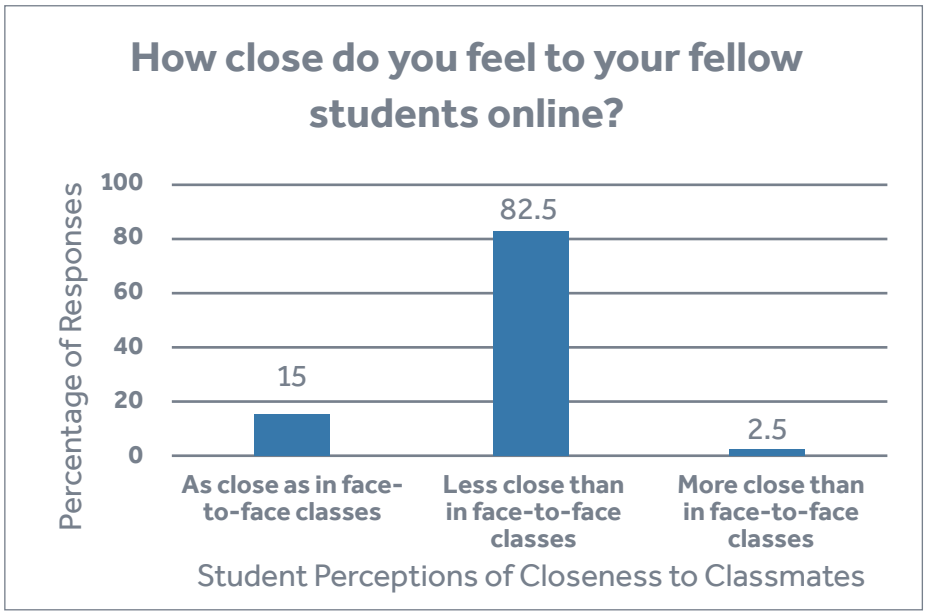


Figure 3: *Student responses to the question 'Have you made any friends in your online classes this past year?' as percentage of 39 respondents*

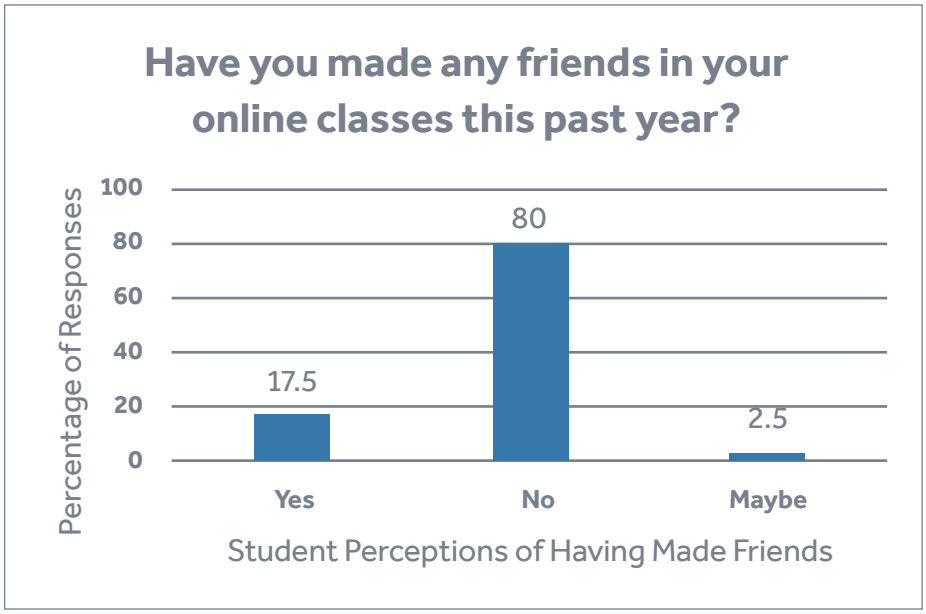
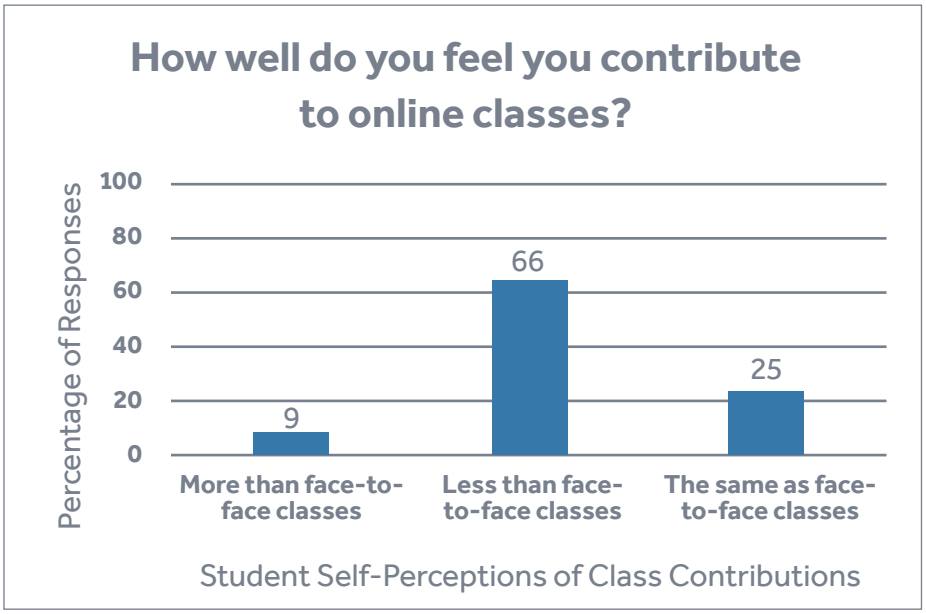


Figure 4: *Student responses to the question 'How well do you feel you contribute to online classes?' as percentage of 39 respondents*



Potentially arising from this, 80% of students felt that they had not made friends in their online classes (see Figure 3).

Significant correlation was identified between how strongly students felt a part of online classes and how well they felt they contributed to class. Over 66% of learners felt that they contributed less in online classes than in face-to-face ones (see Figure 4), and an equal proportion of respondents stated that they were more likely to succeed academically on a course if they felt part of a class (see Figure 5). This affective barrier was what the interventions were designed to overcome.

Of the interventions, 77.5% enjoyed the choice questionnaires held at the beginning of the classes, while only one student declared they did not, the rest being unsure (see Figure 6). Participants in the ad hoc approach including informal chat about daily life were similarly positive at 80%, while 20% were unsure (see Figure 7). This seems to have had a corresponding effect on whether students felt a part of the class or not, with 77.5% of students stating that the interventions fostered a greater sense of belonging (see Figure 8). One concern that was assuaged by the research was whether students would find any value in discussing non-academic matters in class. In an open-ended question about this, the vast majority of students responded positively, with comments like 'yes , because it keeps the student active and will make them participate more', and 'I feel it's important to build a good relationship between the teacher and the student to have a great class so yes'.

Discussion

The overall response to the community-building initiatives has been positive. Students expressed a greater sense of belonging, finding more opportunities to interact socially. As one student commented, the interventions fostered a relaxed, social atmosphere where 'I don't feel that we are actually in class'. As teachers, we also noted improved attendance, contributions and engagement.

Partly, this seemed to be connected to the socialization aspect of the interventions - the way in which opportunities for social interaction helped lower the affective barriers to contributions, but also legitimated what they wanted to discuss. In this sense, the interventions seemed to meet the emotional needs of the students for a connection to the wider world outside of the confines of the Covid bubble. This was particularly noticeable for students in the foundation courses, who were new and therefore particularly at risk of estrangement from the academic process having never established a real community of learning in the university face-to-face.

The interventions also seemed to work in another way. As most students had had limited exposure to synchronous online learning prior to the Covid shutdown, they were understandably cautious about contributing. However, the social interventions appeared to work as rehearsals for the academic discussions. Students imitated the forms of academic discourse with social behaviours such as questioning the sources of information, taking sides in a discussion, and supporting arguments with evidence. Doing this with content they were familiar with and happy to discuss allowed them to apprentice themselves to the online learning community without also having to grapple with new content at the same time. This may also have helped in lowering the affective filter.

Recommendations

While the study was a small-scale exploration of online community building efforts, some promising results point to possible effective practice. Chief among these seems to be recognizing the importance of community belonging to students' university experience. This is not just a desirable addition to the educational experience, but, for many, seemingly a prerequisite for the successful uptake of learning outcomes. As the results suggest, time spent apprenticing students into key academic literacy behaviours, such as expressing and defending a stance,

Figure 5 *Student responses to the question 'Do you think it helps you succeed academically if you feel part of a class?' as percentage of 39 respondents*

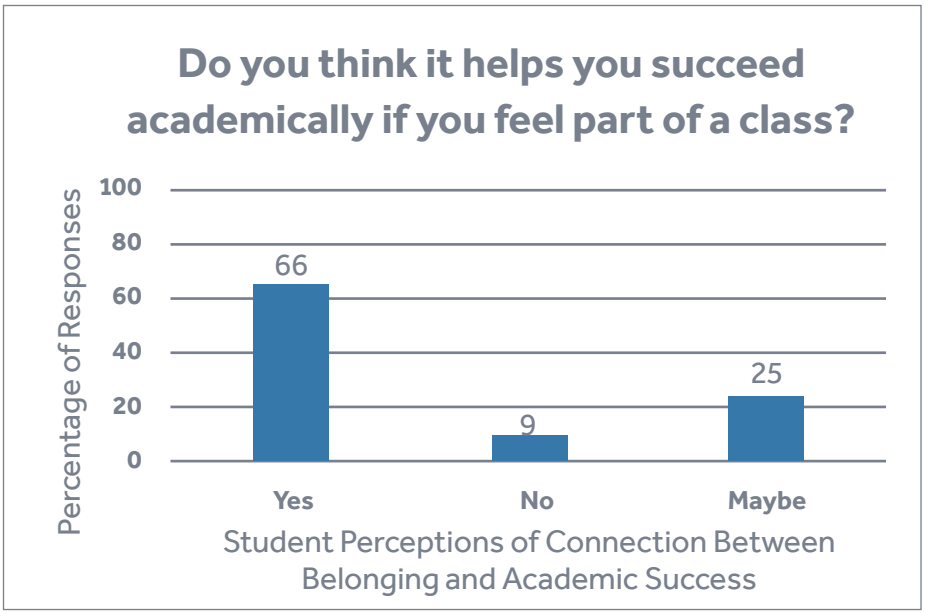


Figure 6: *Student responses to the question 'Did you enjoy the Choice questionnaires at the beginning of your classes?' as percentage of 39 respondents*

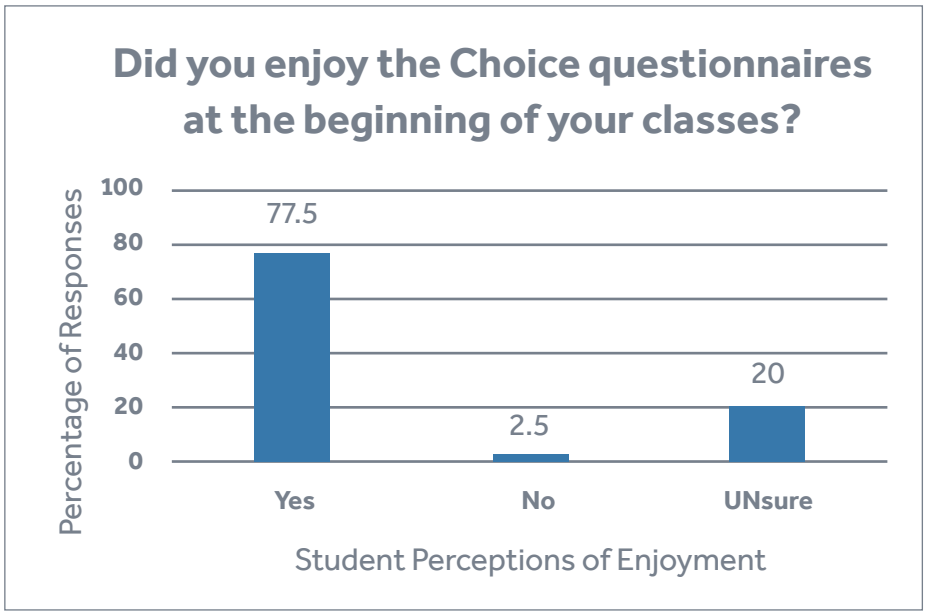


Figure 7: *Student responses to the question 'Did you enjoy the non-academic discussion in your classes?' as percentage of 39 respondents*

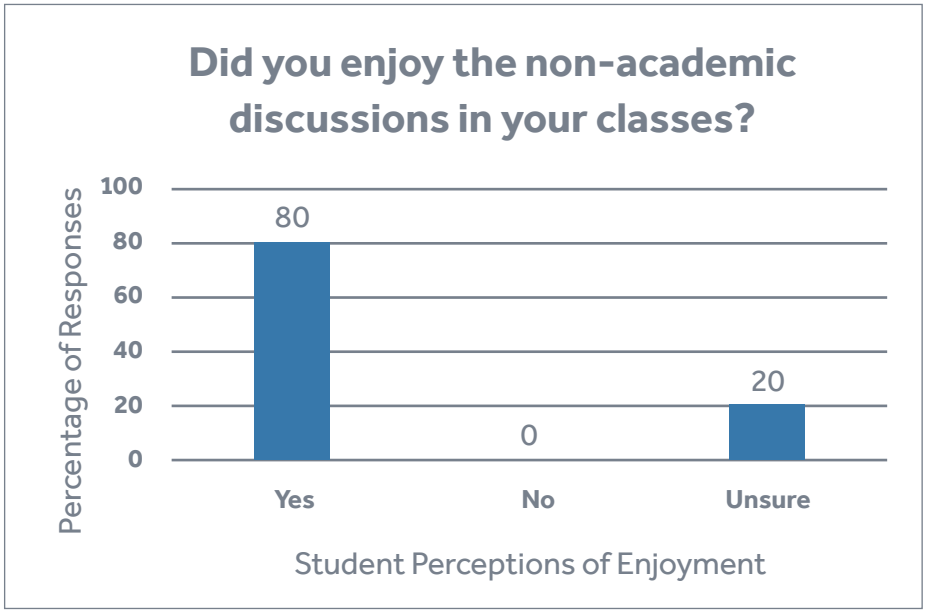
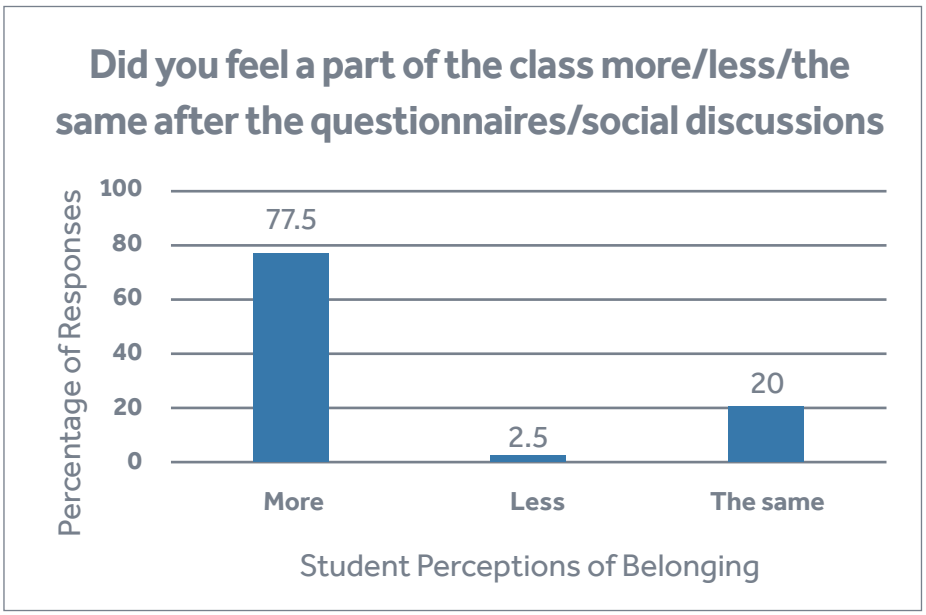


Figure 8 *Student responses to the question 'Did you feel a part of the class more/less / the same after the questionnaires/ social discussions?*



or responding to other perspectives can develop student confidence and set participatory expectations. Any actions the class tutor can take, therefore, that encourage a sense of community will help engage students and facilitate learning. This should be considered an aspect of lesson planning in online class preparation.

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Comparing the reading and listening vocabulary size of foundation students

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Drummond

EAP Tutor, King's College London

andrew.drummond@kcl.ac.uk

While vocabulary size can have a large effect on students' education, the size of listening and reading vocabularies can differ. Previous research has shown that some foundation students have a written vocabulary size likely to impede academic reading comprehension, but this study directly compares the size of students' listening and reading vocabularies by analysing the results of two vocabulary tests. A model is provided which predicts how much of lectures and business textbooks these students might understand based on their test results. The model predicts that the lectures will be more adequately understood than the textbooks for these students.

Introduction

The size of students' vocabulary can have an impact on their achievement in higher education (Milton & Treffers-Daller, 2013). A student's reading vocabulary size (the number of words for which form-meaning relations are adequately known when read) is not necessarily the same as listening vocabulary size (the number of words for which form-meaning relations are adequately known when heard), since it is possible to know the orthographic (written) form of the word but not a phonological form (spoken) and vice-versa. In order to understand a reading text adequately, 95% of the running words, including proper nouns, ought to be known (Schmitt et al, 2011) equivalent to a gap in word knowledge of one in 20 words. 95%, however, is the beginning of a range in which advances in coverage bring improved comprehension, with 98% coverage being the more desirable target (Schmitt et al, 2011). Understanding a listening text adequately, however, can be done with less coverage: 90% seems to be the point where adequate comprehension begins (Van Zeeland and Schmidt, 2013). Research into the vocabulary size of foundation students has shown that some will struggle to read texts written for educated native speakers (Drummond and Croxford, 2018). It would be informative to know, however, if foundation students' listening vocabularies were sufficient to linguistically process the content of lectures and to compare this to the affordances of their reading vocabulary size. That is the methodology of this study. The hypothesis was that the students' listening vocabulary size would be smaller than their reading vocabulary size, as had been the case in Milton et al. (2010) which could potentially impact their reception of orally transmitted content.

Method

This study compares the orthographic and phonological vocabulary sizes of nine students at the beginning of a foundation year (2019-20), which had been extended for them by four weeks to provide additional language practice due to their lower IELTS scores relative to the rest of the cohort. Ethical clearance was granted for the study. Table 1 gives biographical data for these students.

Table 1 *Biographical data on the 9 participants*

Student	Age	Nationality	IELTS Overall	IELTS Reading	IELTS Writing	IELTS Speaking	IELTS Listening	IELTS Texts	Years studying English	Gender
1	18	Chinese	5.5	5.0	5.5	5.5	5.0	3.0	6	F
2	18	Chinese	5.5	6.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	1.0	12	F
3	18	Chinese	5.5	6.0	5.0	5.5	5.5	2.0	7	F
4	18	Chinese	6.5	7.5	5.5	5.5	7.0	3.0	13	F
5	20	Chinese	6.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	7.5	3.0	14	F
6	18	Chinese	5.5	5.5	5.0	5.5	5.0	3.0	12	F
7	19	Chinese	6.0	5.5	5.5	6.0	6.0	6.0	13	M
8	19	Chinese	5.5	6.0	5.5	5.5	5.5	2.0	15	F
9	18	Saudi	6	6.5	5.0	7.0	5.5	3.0	15	F
Mean	**18.4**		**5.8**	**6.0**	**5.2**	**5.7**	**5.9**	**2.9**	**11.9**	

The entire cohort of this extended foundation program (50+ students) were invited to sit listening and reading vocabulary tests but only nine students attended. Students sat in exam conditions and completed the listening vocabulary test first, followed immediately by the reading test. The Listening Vocabulary Levels Test (McLean, Kramer & Beglar, 2015) was chosen to determine listening vocabulary size, along with the newest version of the Vocabulary Levels Test (Webb, Sasao & Ballance, 2017) for the reading vocabulary size. These were chosen because the assumptions and structure of these tests are similar, allowing for a direct comparison of phonological and orthographic vocabulary size. In both tests, the words are arranged into five levels of word frequency. Essentially, a sample of words from the most common five levels of word frequency is tested, from the most common 1000 word families (1k) up to the fifth most common 1000 word families (5k). 1k words are much more common, contributing to a much larger extent to the above comprehension thresholds. The listening test given to Chinese students presents recordings of tested items in English and four multiple choice options in Chinese. The reading test, however, presents both the tested items and multiple choice answers entirely in English.

Results 1

Contrary to the hypothesis, the first notable result is that, for many students, their listening vocabulary size appears larger than their reading vocabulary size in contrast to Milton et al., 2010. Table 2 shows the percentage of correct answers in the test, and for six out of nine students, their listening score is higher. In addition, the mean percentage of correct answers of the whole group for the listening test (81%) is higher than for the reading test (75%), although the two sets of scores are not sufficiently different to prove statistically significant in a two-tailed, independent sample T-test (p=.21). Students with a larger listening vocabulary than reading are highlighted below.

Table 2 *Percentage of correct answers in listening and reading vocabulary tests*

Student	Listening correct answers (%)	Reading correct answers (%)
1	**75.00**	**60.00**
2	**77.50**	**68.00**
3	83.33	88.67
4	75.83	77.33
5	**92.50**	**89.33**
6	**82.50**	**71.33**
7	**77.50**	**66.67**
8	**80.00**	**68.67**
9	83.33	88.67
Mean	**80.83**	**75.41**
SD	**5.40**	**11.07**

Since both sets of test results can be observed at five levels of word frequency (1k-5k), predictions can be made on the proportion of words a student knows at each level, assuming that the vocabulary sample tested for each level is large enough (Gyllstad, Vilkaitė, & Schmitt 2015). If the lexical profile (how much of a text is composed of words at given frequency levels) of a written text is known then the individuals' test scores can be applied to that text to estimate how much lexical content of that text the individual is likely to comprehend (coverage). The same calculation could be made for a listening text, such as a lecture. In this way it can be predicted whether students' lexical knowledge, as represented by their test scores, might be sufficient to understand those texts adequately.

Results 2

The next part of the paper provides a lexical profile of reading and listening texts at a level these students might encounter, so as to model whether their lexical knowledge would be adequate to comprehend them. A small corpus of 9 lecture transcripts, six from the BASE corpus (see acknowledgements below) and three from our foundation program, was used to calculate the lexical profile of lectures similar to those which students might be exposed to on their foundation programme. Coverage at each frequency band was calculated with Antwordprofiler (Anthony, 2014). Details of the lecture corpus are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 shows 90% coverage of these lectures (the threshold suggested above) could be afforded to students knowing 1k-2k words families plus proper nouns etc. Since many of our foundation students are preparing to enter the Business School, published figures (Hsu, 2011) from an investigation into lexical profile of business textbooks have been used in table 4 for the coverage calculation regarding written texts.

A cumulative reading of Table 4 indicates the 1k-4k word families plus proper nouns are required for adequate comprehension of these business textbooks (95% coverage), which is double the vocabulary size requirement for the lecture corpus.

In Table 5, students' estimated coverage values of these reading and listening texts are given, generated by treating the percentage of correct answers at each level as the extent of knowledge of the corresponding frequency level in the texts. Students are given full 'credit' for proper nouns and marginal words. The rows in bold are where adequate coverage thresholds are not met, assuming that word knowledge beyond the 5k would not significantly affect coverage:

Table 5 shows there are six students not meeting the adequate coverage threshold for the written texts (95%) and none for the listening texts (90%). This indicates

Table 3 *Lecture Transcript Corpus*

Total Running words	No. of lectures	Mean coverage values at each word frequency band (%)					
		1k	2k	3k	4k	5k	Proper nouns etc.
97807	9	83.3	6.8	4.7	1.0	0.5	2.5

Table 4 *Lexical profile of business textbooks from Hsu (2011)*

Mean coverage values at each word frequency band (%)					
1k	2k	3k	4k	5k	Proper nouns
76.72	11.62	3.50	2.59	1.33	2.31

Table 5 *Predicted coverage of lectures and textbooks for each student (%)*

Student	Coverage of lectures (%)	Coverage of business textbooks (%)
1	92.1	**91.3**
2	96.5	**92.8**
3	93.9	**94**
4	96.5	95.2
5	98	96.4
6	93.3	**91.2**
7	92.7	**86.8**
8	96.6	**94.3**
9	96.4	96.3

Table 6 *A breakdown of coverage loss by word frequency band*

Student	Percentage of coverage loss by frequency band (%)				
	1k	**2k**	**3k**	**4k**	**5k**
1	0.0	2.3	1.3	1.6	1.1
6	2.5	1.2	0.8	0.9	0.9
7	5.1	2.7	1.4	0.8	0.9

that for these students, increasing reading vocabulary size is the greater priority. To illustrate this further, table 6 shows how much coverage of the reading corpus would be lost at key frequency bands for students with the lowest predicted coverage (students 1, 6 and 7).

Since higher frequency words (1k-3k) make up so much of written texts, gaps in these areas can affect coverage dramatically. For example, student 7 lost over 5% from gaps in 1k knowledge alone. With full knowledge of 1k-3k lexis, these students would have approached or exceeded the 95% threshold, with 94.9%, 95.7% and 96% coverage respectively. They would, therefore, be better equipped to comprehend such texts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, earlier research (Drummond and Croxford, 2018) has shown that the written vocabulary size of some foundation students is probably not large enough to afford adequate comprehension of reading texts and this research confirms those results. This study adds to that by comparing the coverage predicted by students' listening and reading vocabulary sizes. The results suggest that the reading vocabulary size of these students, not their listening vocabulary size, is likely to be the larger barrier to their progress, in contrast to Milton et al. (2010). The implication is that thorough diagnostic vocabulary testing for all foundation students is required, followed by vocabulary extension work for those with gaps in frequent vocabulary (1k-3k). IELTS scores by themselves are not precise indicators of vocabulary size (Drummond and Croxford, 2018), and it would not always be correct to assume that listening vocabulary was the larger issue for foundation students.

These conclusions are somewhat tentative given the limitations of this study. The sample size is small and is composed mostly of Chinese students. Turnout for the study was low, presenting the possibility that keener students selected themselves. Knowledge of isolated words under test conditions may not equate precisely to comprehension of lectures due to cognitive load of subject, features of connected speech, and fatigue. Larger and diverse samples of students tested with a variety of vocabulary testing instruments could help determine the extent to which increasing reading or listening vocabulary size is the greater priority for foundation students, and potentially help predict this on the basis of demographic features such as first language.

Acknowledgements

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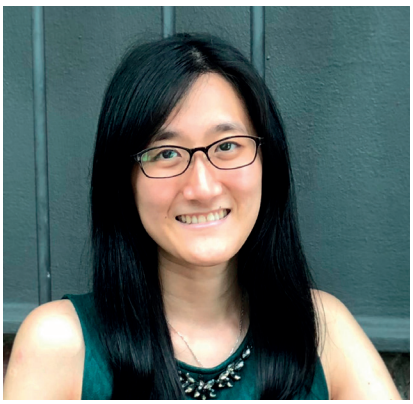
An experiential learning approach to oral presentations

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dorcas Lam Yarn Pooi

Assistant Professor,
University of Nottingham Malaysia

dorcas.lam@nottingham.edu.my

An in-sessional English module focusing on Academic Presentation Skills was redesigned to be a journey of experiential learning for students. Using Kolb's experiential learning model as the theoretical framework for pedagogical design, the module revolved around actual presentations that served as the central experience for students. Other activities and content of the module were intentionally designed to guide students through a systematic cycle of critical reflection based on Kolb's model leading to an internalization of personal learning. Students' feedback shows an appreciation of the process and some degree of realization of their role as independent and active reflective learners. Finally, the article considers the implications of this approach in other learning contexts and proposes additional measures that can be adopted to assist students in the reflective process.

Introduction

Oral presentation skills are arguably one of the most essential skillsets for academic success as presentations are often used as a mode of assessment and a channel for knowledge-sharing in higher education. Additionally, studies have also shown that effective presenters are highly valued in the workplace and even recommend presentation skills to be incorporated systematically into the undergraduate curriculum (Fallows and Stevens, 2000; Pittenger, Miller, and Mott, 2004). However, the body of academic literature on the development of oral presentation skills among university students is rather sparse. Where they do exist, most of the studies in this area either explore the development of effective assessment guidelines or investigate the use of self- and peer-assessment in presentations (Aryadoust, 2015; De Grez, Valcke, and Roozen, 2009). Set within the context of an international foundation programme, this article explores an experiential learning approach to oral presentations with the aim of equipping foundation students to be self-regulated learners.

An in-sessional module on oral presentation skills

The Centre for English Language and Foundation Education (CELFE) at the University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNM) introduced an in-sessional module on oral presentation skills with the aim of preparing foundation students for the demands of undergraduate studies. The module is offered as general academic support for all foundation students. Additionally, it is also offered more particularly to students who met the English language pre-requisite for the foundation programme but have not met the English language requirement for their intended undergraduate programmes. As such, the learning objectives of the module do not pertain only to presentation skills, but also language proficiency for an academic presentation.

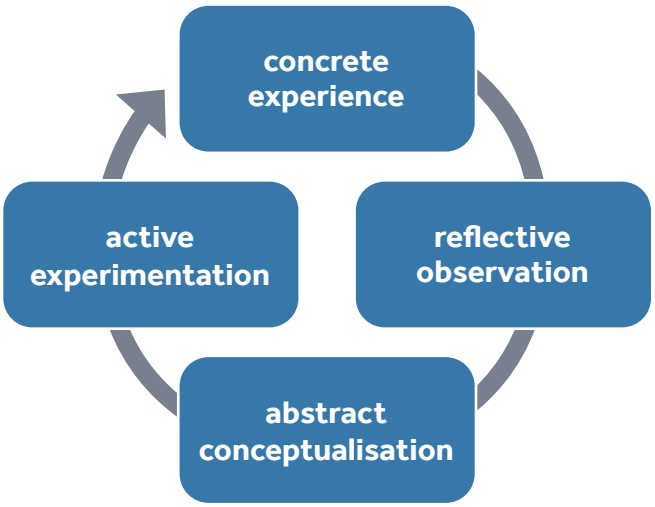
This module runs for 5 weeks during the semester, meeting for two hours every week. As the module is not credit-bearing, numeric or letter grades are neither assigned nor computed. However, students were given descriptive feedback and evaluation of their performance in the assigned tasks.

Kolb's experiential learning model: a reflective cycle

Kolb's groundbreaking work on experiential learning (1984) serves as the theoretical framework for the design of the teaching and learning activities conducted in the module. Situating experience at the heart of learning, Kolb posits that learning takes place when one interacts critically and objectively with one's experiences (1984). The design of the presentation tasks in this module thus seeks to create a central experience of oral presentation for the students and then systematically guides them through the process of critical reflection leading to personal learning. Students were assigned two different group presentation tasks as part of the module: (1) informative presentation and (2) persuasive presentation. The presentations were conducted two weeks apart, and each presentation was individually video recorded. The informative presentation was simple in subject matter, requiring students to inform the audience about an aspect of their culture and show how it is similar to or different from another culture. The persuasive presentation, on the other hand, requires a slightly higher level of criticality in presenting the content as students had to take a persuasive stance on their chosen topic.

Kolb's model, as illustrated in Figure 1, emphasizes a concrete experience that commences the reflective process, and the first presentation was designed to provide students with such an experience. Kolb emphasizes active involvement in learning, and this first task required students' active participation. Upon completing the presentations, students were asked to watch the video recording of their own presentation, and then complete a written reflection with prompts guiding them to reflect on the strategies that they had used in the presentation and evaluate their effectiveness. Watching their own presentation on video and articulating a written reflection in response to it brings students through the process of reflective observation, which requires learners to step back from the task to review the experience. Studies that pinpointed the inaccuracy of self-assessment often point to the assessors' lack of objectivity (Dunning, Heath, and Suls, 2004). However, when students watch a video recording of their own presentation, they occupy the role of the experiencer while simultaneously distancing themselves (stepping back) from the experience to take on the role of an objective observer. Parts of the written reflection also facilitated the process of abstract conceptualization as students were prompted to evaluate the effectiveness of their presentations and explain how it might be effective or ineffective. Finally, the persuasive presentation offered students an opportunity for active experimentation as they were asked to identify areas for improvement and articulate how they will do things differently for the second presentation. They were thus encouraged to implement and experiment with new strategies for the persuasive presentation. This cycle is then repeated for the second presentation as a continuation of the students' learning experience.

Figure 1 *Kolb's experiential learning cycle*



An analysis of the reflections

Studies have shown that self-assessments are often inaccurate when incentives are involved (Tejeiro et al., 2012). However, the fact that this in-sessional module is a non-credit bearing module mitigates the incentives for overrating oneself and the repercussions of underrating oneself. Additionally, although the reflections required students to take an evaluative look at their own presentations, they were not "assessments" per se, and this encouraged students' honesty and objectivity in the reflections.

The reflections completed by the students covered all aspects of presentation skills as identified by Tsang (2017) and even included a few more that pertain to the specific learning outcomes for this module.

In the evaluation that students completed for the module, the "presentation and reflection" activity scored an average of 3.17 out of a total score of 4 when students were asked to rate how helpful a certain teaching and learning activity had been to them (1:

Table 1

Categories	Sample students' reflection
Speech / vocal related features	"The effective strategy that I have used during the presentation is I was using microphone to speak out as my voice is quite soft." (Student 1)
Body language (including eye contact)	"Compare to the last presentation, I think my posture has been improved" (Student 3)
Psychological features	"I was very nervous and forgot what I have to say . . . I have to calm down when I'm presenting." (Student 4)
Language proficiency / use of language	"I need to think about the words I am using and choose more precise one as there were certain times I just skipped some parts of my presentation with incomplete sentence and meaning." (Student 7)
Content	"Be more persuasive. Include clear objectives and overview of the presentation. The presentation was too short, we should have included more content or explain more." (Student 2)
Use of visual aid	"I suppose that there are some aspects that we can enhance to make the presentation more effective such as making the slides more easily comprehensible and catchy . . . our group, as a whole, can improve in terms of the quality of slides" (Student 17)

not at all helpful – 4: very helpful). It ranked second among the list of activities designed to help students develop their academic presentation skills, surpassed only by "feedback from the instructor."

In the same evaluation, some students who identified the "presentation and reflection" activity as being most helpful in the module made the following comments:
"From that I manage to check my mistakes and try to make them better. This has been very helpful since I could also watch my friends spoke and try to reflect their with mine so that I can get better."

"It is more useful when watching myself presenting because normally we will not look at our own presenting. By looking on it we will know which part we should improve rather than hearing advices from others because advices from other may be not that acceptable but the most direct way is to look at ourselves. Besides, we can see the way we present and review ourselves and correct ourselves."

Conclusion

Beyond the context of oral presentation, Kolb's reflective cycle can also be adopted in other classrooms through the purposeful facilitation of linkages between assessment tasks (concrete experiences) so that students do not approach each task in isolation. Reflective activities like journaling and peer-to-peer sharing of experiences can be incorporated between tasks to prompt students to critically evaluate their past experience and articulate learning points that can be implemented in a future experience.

It would also be worthwhile to explore the possibility of improving students' ability to reflect on their experiences by encouraging active peer-to-peer interaction in the process. This could be achieved through the use of peer assessment alongside students' self-assessment and peer-to-peer dialogues in the process of self-assessment.

Although 5 weeks is admittedly too short to yield immediate improvements in students' oral presentation skills, the greater goal of setting in place a reflective cycle surrounding the presentations in this case was to equip students to be self-regulated learners who are capable of setting goals for themselves, assessing where they are in relation to the goals, and then systematically taking steps to achieve them (Zimmerman, 2002). The greatest benefit in this approach to oral presentations is in acculturating students to a reflective cycle of learning.

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Wordwall vs Kahoot: The game-based learning battle

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deshan Hewavidana

IFP Subject Lead for Business, University of Bristol

deshan.hewavidana@bristol.ac.uk

According to Icard (2014) and Perrotta et al. (2013), game-based learning, the concept of using games to support teaching and learning, has been growing in importance within education. One reason is due to its impact on soft skills and motivation, consistent with De Grove et al. (2012) and Prensky (2003). My interest has been inspired by usage of online games in my lessons to raise student engagement, specifically Kahoot and Wordwall. Kahoot is a free game-based student response system where learners use available technology to respond to multiple choice questions from the educator, whilst Wordwall (2018) is a similar website that has the aim of providing interactive activities that educators can customise in order to 'create better lessons quickly' (Wang, 2015). The purpose of this study was to investigate the implications of game-based learning on student achievement for a group of international foundation students at the University of Bristol.

Literature review

One major benefit of game-based learning is that it sustains student interest according to Ebner & Holzinger (2007). This viewpoint is supported by Ya-Ting (2012), who argues how gaming software enables learners to develop soft skills such as confidence.

Games also support active learning processes, with Zemelman et al. (1998) suggesting they achieve this through integrating problem-solving skills (Icard, 2014). These findings agree with Perrotta et al. (2013) who discovered that games positively influence deep knowledge acquisition, with learners benefiting from many visual elements of game-based learning. Additionally, Bransford et al. (2000) and Kim & Reeves (2007) argue how integrating technological devices such as computers makes learning convenient and accessible. This can lead to learners becoming immersed in games when they were positioned in a meaningful context (Maddux, et al., 1997).

Finally, Gros (2007) claims that lecturers are central in driving engagement and achievement within game-based learning, given their expertise to facilitate computer-based experiences that foster the cognitive abilities of learners (Wouters & Van Oostendorp, 2013).

Data collection

In order to collect data to achieve the purpose of the study, Kahoot and Wordwall were tested on a Level 3 Foundation Business class comprising of 10 students. Their achievement was measured through their performance during the different activities that each software offered. The specific topic they were investigating was business communication and the use of these games and how they support the learning outcomes will be examined.

The data collection period occurred over 1 month (10 lessons), and in order to investigate the effectiveness of game-based learning, the usage of a Kahoot or Wordwall activity was altered for each of the first 8 lessons.

Findings – Wordwall

Given that Wordwall allows its users to produce various activities, an interactive wordsearch was firstly constructed, which involved learners identifying key words regarding business information and matching them to their definition (see Figure 1). Specifically, this was a starter activity whereby students were cold-called and used an interactive whiteboard to make their decision. The main objective of this game was to attract learner attention

which was important given that this was a morning lesson.

The class correctly matched 91% of the answers (10/11) in 15:05 minutes, with one student commenting: "Wordsearches help to redirect my focus, especially in the morning when we are tired".

Another Wordwall activity that was used in order to diversify the learning was a matchup (see Figure 2). In terms of findings, the class scored 80% (8/10) on the activity, which is lower than the 91% scored on the wordsearch. One learner outlined: "Although I appreciate the activity, it actually negatively impacted my understanding of data policies".

This suggests that the matchup activity potentially damaged student achievement and was not as influential in redirecting student attention towards a learning goal.

Another major task I devised was a whack a mole, which consisted of inviting one student to the front of the class and tapping on the moles which corresponded with the correct answers to a set question (see Figure 3).

One of the major findings was that participants found the gameplay unique as a teaching technique, with one participant stating: "Whack a mole is such a novel way to test understanding and reflexes".

Additionally, whack a mole helped highlight mistakes students made through its individual breakdown, which was useful for the non-participants in the class to identify common misconceptions (see Figure 4).

Findings – Kahoot

Regarding Kahoot, students participated in the same multiple-choice quiz that helped assess their ability to produce corporate communications. The purpose of these

Figure 1: *Illustrates what students saw when completing the wordsearch activity, with many praising the colourful features of the interface and user-friendly design*

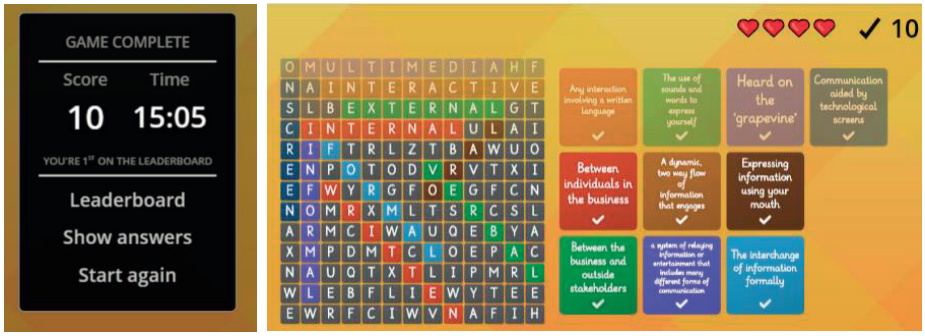


Figure 2: *This is the result of the Wordwall matchup activity on student achievement, with many commenting on how it is less interactive than the previous wordsearch*

Figure 3: *Demonstrates the gameplay of the whack a mole activity in Wordwall*

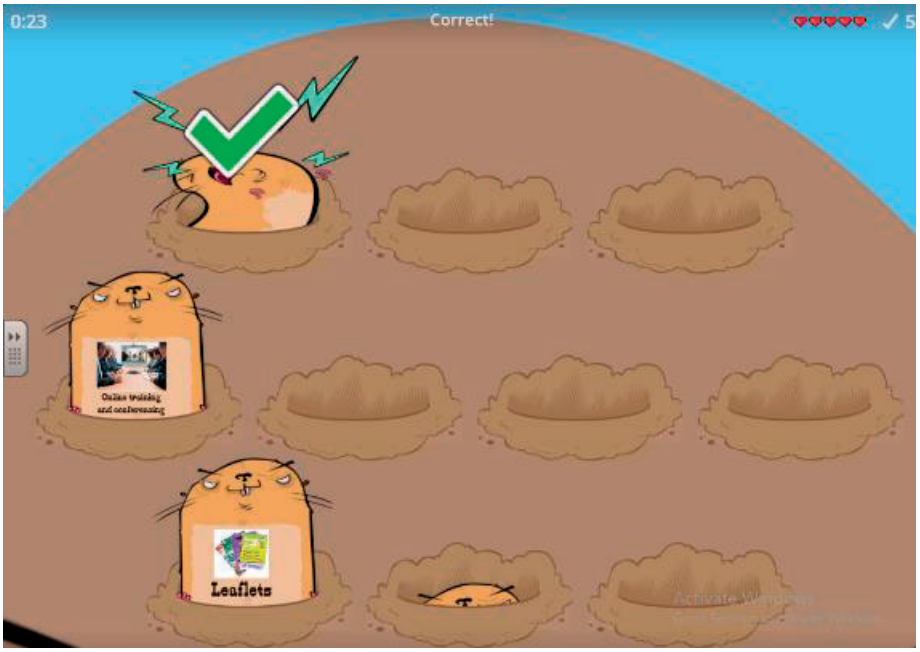
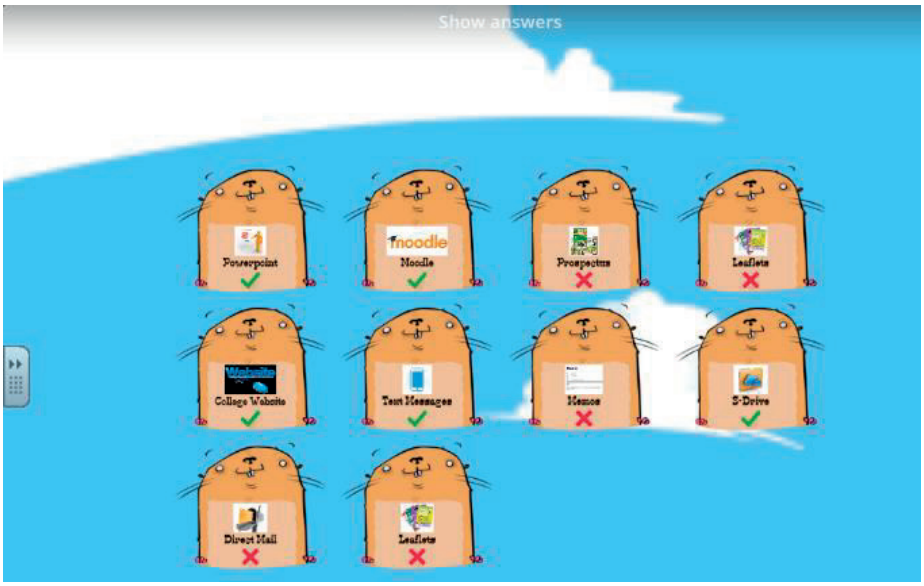


Figure 4: *Highlights the results screen students were shown following completion of their activity*



Kahoots was to compare the levels of engagement with the results that had been obtained from Wordwall. For the first Kahoot, students were given 20 seconds to answer each question and scored points depending on the speed and number of questions they answered correctly.

With respect to engagement, the average rating was 3.9 out of 5 from the Kahoot website for assessing how fun the quiz was.

The following week, the same quiz was incorporated, but students were given 10 seconds. In terms of student engagement, the average score was 2.4 (see Figure 5). This represents an almost 40% decrease in the satisfaction felt by the students after completing the first Kahoot, with one student commenting: "I did not like this Kahoot as 10 seconds is not enough to read all the options, which is difficult as some of us have learning needs and do not like to be rushed".

This suggests that Kahoot as a game-based learning platform over time has lost some effectiveness, with the reduced time to answer each question potentially contributing to issues such as anxiety and tension felt in learners.

Discussion

In the literature, Kocadere & Çağlar (2015) outlined how one primary benefit of using game-based learning is its positive impact on student engagement, with Siewiorek et al. (2012) explaining how user interest and motivation is enhanced through exposure to such technology (Perrotta, et al., 2013).

With respect to findings in this study, results indicate that students were engaged with at least one of the platforms, although this was not necessarily due to motivational factors, with one learner commenting: "I engage with game-based learning because it is what is planned for the lesson, I do not enjoy it as I am here to write assignments".

Additionally, Plump & LaRosa (2017) feel that Kahoot as a platform has great potential given its ability to provide real time feedback that allows students to reflect on their progress (Wang, 2015). However, in this study the usage of the quiz is found to not add value to their learning over time, with one student commenting: "Kahoot glorifies the achievements of only the top 3 students whilst the rest of the class just make up the numbers".

This is consistent with Kocadere & Çağlar's (2015) belief that those not on the leaderboard may suffer from low confidence, supporting the idea that Wordwall may be more effective in nurturing students.

In terms of particular Wordwall activities, 90% of pupils found the interactive wordsearch to be their most preferred activity, given it fosters coordination skills and social problem solving (Vygotsky, 1978).

Consequently, the diversity of games offered is important in determining which platform is more preferred, although the degree of collaboration could also be integral in outlining why Wordwall was more effective than Kahoot.

Conclusion

Firstly, it is recommended that educational institutions have a clear structure that allows them to experiment with such technology before conducting any official investigations, in order to witness first-hand the impact of game-based learning.

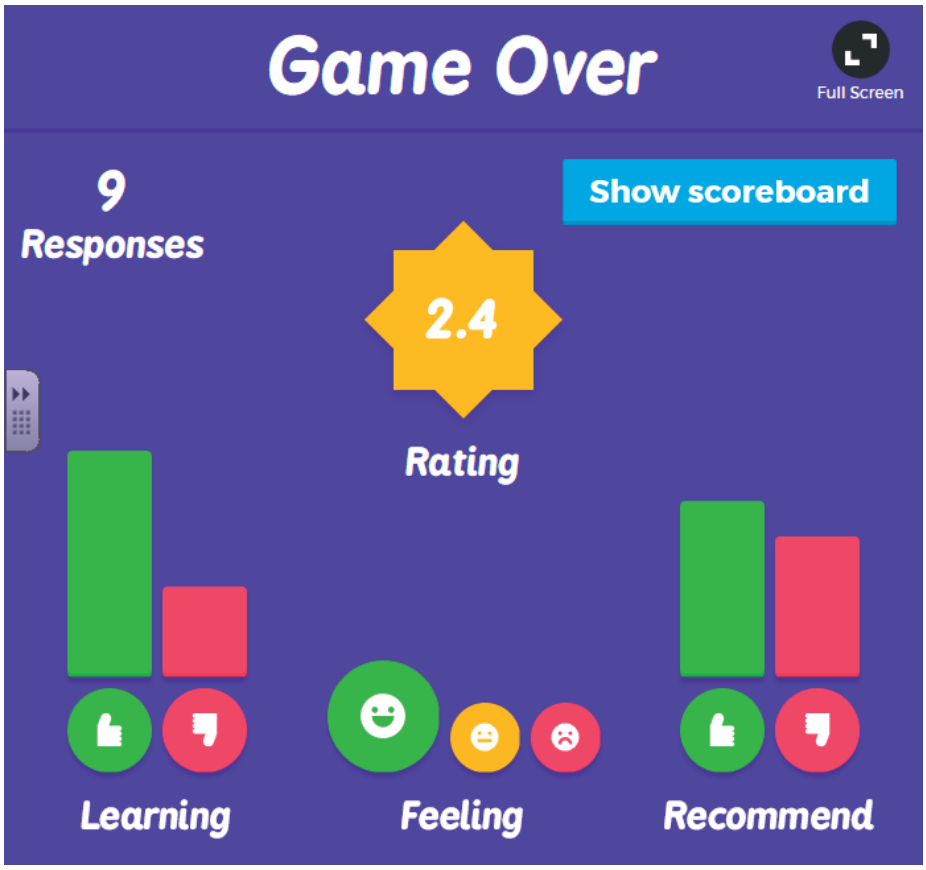


Figure 5: *Illustrates the key statistics upon completion of the 10 second Kahoot quiz, with an average satisfaction rating of 2.4.*

Secondly, it is essential those tasked with creating game-based learning activities demonstrate a clear, creative and consistent approach to this initiative. This could occur through holding talks enabling leaders to communicate its benefits to a wider audience given how students need to be excited by such a change.

Finally, future studies could investigate the impact of game-based learning across a longer time span. This is because the current investigation revealed an increase in student engagement over a month, although more time is needed for practitioners to examine what true impact this technology has on deeper learning for students, with the recommendation being at least half the academic year.

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Harmonising progression and qualification requirements for foundation students at a UK HE Institution

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniela Standen SFHEA

School Director of Teaching and Learning, International Study and Language Institute, University of Reading

d.standen@reading.ac.uK

Mark Peace

International Foundation Programme, International Study and Language Institute, University of Reading

m.h.k.peace@reading.ac.uk

A need for consistency and simplicity of progression requirements for transition from foundation level to undergraduate was identified at the University of Reading to apply across its various programmes. In addition, a recent trend of capable students failing to qualify at first attempt and choosing to accept places at other institutions, rather than to take resits, demanded that the progression requirements be reviewed to increase progression at first attempt. Changes have been made and the simplified rules with modest lowering of some requirements have resulted in positive gains in qualification.

Introduction/Background

With increased provision in foundation level studies at the institution, the need emerged to harmonise progression and qualification requirements across the two major routes into undergraduate study: the 'International Foundation Programme' (IFP), delivered both in the UK and in a branch campus in Malaysia and 'Programmes with Foundation Year' (PwFY) delivered on the UK campus.

The PwFY are for UK students who did not meet their offer for direct entry for undergraduate study or did not do the right 'A Level', and fulfil a widening participation role. The IFP recruits mainly international students, where qualifications in home countries are not recognised as equivalent to UK Level 3 qualifications. Students on the PwFY are on an integrated four-year programme with progression onto the undergraduate programme on successful completion of part 0. The IFP, in contrast, is a standalone programme and on successful qualification, students go through an admission process to continue with their undergraduate studies.

The harmonisation process had to consider the very different needs of the two cohorts and be mindful of the continuing trend for lower requirements for direct entry into UG studies, both nationally and at the institution. This is of course driven by institutional demands for increased UG student numbers and is something that can be supported by greater progression of foundation students through lowering of progression requirements.

Literature review

There is a substantial body of evidence showing that student achievement at 'A Level' is a reliable predictor of success in undergraduate study (e.g. Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2010; Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2003). Prior academic attainment other than 'A Levels' (e.g. SAT and GPA) are also reported as reliable predictors (Richardson, Abraham & Bond, 2012; Robbins et al., 2004; Wamala, 2016). Huws et al, (2006: 133) is a contrasting voice, finding that that "the subjects studied at A-level, and the grades obtained, did not predict performance at university".

Aderibigbe and Noma-Osaghae (2019) postulate there are other non-academic factors and individual attributes that are potential determinants, although these are not easily measured. van Herpen et al.

(2017) researched a range of non-cognitive predictors and found that "pre-university effort positively predicted 1st year retention" (52); a number of other studies also mention gender (Huntley, Whitehead, Cullinane, Nixon & Huntley, 2017; King and Aves, 2012). Finally, relevant for the international students on these programmes are the findings of Birch & Rienties (2014) on the value in bridging cultural differences in preparation for first year studies of a British Education.

Although the studies quoted are often context or discipline specific, they exemplify the complexity in identifying reliable predictors other than achievement at Level 3 studies. The experience at the institution reflects these findings. Therefore, when reviewing progression consideration was given to setting requirements at a level that ensures that students meeting them are capable of success at undergraduate level, but not so high as to be to the exclusion of capable individuals. This latter point is now expanded on in support of lowering progression requirements.

Student progression through the ONW process

It has always been recognised on the IFP that in some cases students who have not met the progression requirements should still be considered for progression, termed acceptance with 'ordinances notwithstanding' (ONW). The ONW process for borderline students allows schools to consider them for entry onto their degree with existing marks. Despite offering a 'second chance' for admission, the ONW process creates uncertainty for students, who if not accepted need to take resits. The non-standardised nature of the process and demand on human resources to pursue it, also make it undesirable if the same can be achieved with lower progression requirements.

Students increasingly avoiding resits

In recent years (2018 and 2019) there has been a noticeable drop in the proportion of IFP students requiring resits that take them, as shown in Table 1.

This change perhaps reflects the increasingly competitive market for international students and greater awareness amongst IFP students of the opportunities to gain places at other universities that are willing to accept them with lower grades. This also presents an argument for lowering progression requirements to enable more able students to qualify at first attempt and therefore remain at the institution.

Table 1 *The percentage of IFP students taking resits out of those requiring resits to progress. Data from the IFP at the University of Reading.*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Proportion of IFP students requiring resits that take them (%)	79	80	78	70	83	86	67	59

Table 2 *Simplified progression criteria for the IFP at the University of Reading*

Previous progression criteria (pre 2020)	New progression criteria (2020)
Threshold 40% average No module below 35%	**Option 1** 40% average No module below 35%
Standard 60% in 2 modules 40% average on 2 other modules No module below 35%	**Option 2** 55% in 2 modules 40% average on 2 other modules No module below 35%
Higher 1 60% average 60% in 2 modules No module below 40%	**Option 3** 60% average 60% in 2 modules No module below 40%
Highest 1 65% average 70% in 1 module No module below 40%	
Highest 2 70% n 1 module 60% in 1 module No module below 40%	**Option 4** 60% average 70% in 1 module 60% in 1 module No module below 40%
Highest 3 65% average 70% in 2 modules No module below 40%	

Changes to the progression and qualification criteria

In adapting the existing progression requirements, the priority was simplifying the criteria and balancing the competing demands of improving progression, while ensuring only students capable of success at undergraduate level progress. This resulted in modest reductions in some progression requirements, while also consolidating the previous 7 criteria into 4 as seen in Table 2.

Reductions in progression criteria were applied specifically to the Standard requirements and two of the Highest requirements. The threshold and higher requirements were unchanged.

Following the development of the new criteria, Schools were then asked to select the progression requirements that most closely matched their admission requirement. In most cases Schools selected the updated version of the previous requirement. There were 3 exceptions with one school selecting the option above their previous requirement and two schools selecting the option below.

Impact of the new progression requirements

The new rules were introduced for the final results of 2020 and we can evaluate their impact by comparing the percentage of students qualifying compared to the number that would have qualified by the old rules. For

the purpose of this paper, we can conduct a similar analysis on the two previous years.

Table 3 shows that the new progression requirements result in an increase in student progression at both first attempt and after resit. Averaging over all students for the three years gives an increase in progression at first attempt of 6.2 % due to the new rules. The data for Table 3 did not consider students that were progressed ONW. Percentages of students progressing ONW for each year are 4.3 % (2018), 7.5 % (2019) and 5.4 % (2020), with the old requirements active in 2018 and 2019 and the new requirements applying in 2020. Therefore, we can see that despite the new requirements in place in 2020, the ONW process was still applied.

Table 3 *Percentage increase in the number of students progressing due to the new progression requirements. For years 2019 and 2018 the new requirements were retrospectively applied.*

Year	First attempt	After resit exams
2020	+6.3	NA*
2019	+4.5	+6.0
2018	+7.4	+7.4

*The figure for 2020 is not included because the resit students were determined by the new requirements. For the other years the resit students were determined by the old requirements and then compared to the new requirements.

Discussion

The increase in progression of about 6% due to the new progression requirements is similar to that of the ONW process (5.5% weighted average over 2018-2020 by cohort size). Therefore, the new requirements without ONWs do not achieve greater student progression than the old requirements with ONWs. For an overall increase in progression the ONW process still needs to be applied. The combined effect for 2020 of the new requirements with the ONW process is an increase of 11.7 %, compared to the old requirements without ONWs. Because the ONW process was applied with the old and new requirements, the real increase in progression due to the new requirements is well represented in Table 3 and the 6.2 % average at first attempt.

Conclusions

The simplified progression requirements with some moderate reduction of criteria have resulted in an increase of about 6% in the number of students meeting the progression requirements at first attempt. For a high progression programme such as the IFP, this is significant. Lowering the progression requirements has not negated the need for borderline cases to be considered for progression ONW for overall progression numbers to be increased with the new requirements. Such consideration should be given after the first attempt, rather than waiting for the resits, to improve the chances of the student remaining in the institution.

While the literature review found that many factors can affect how successful students are at undergraduate level, student grades at level 3 are considered the most reliable predictor. Nevertheless, in future research other factors such as student engagement, which is widely monitored at foundation level, should also be considered to gain broader insight. Whether the score requirements set through this project have succeeded in achieving the balance between retention and ensuring future success, should become evident as students progress in their studies and should be the subject of further research.

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My digital transformation: applications for the mathematics classroom during and beyond the pandemic

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Annette Margolis

EAP and Foundation Mathematics Tutor, Birmingham International Academy, University of Birmingham

a.margolis@bham.ac.uk

As an EAP teacher it is expected I promote speaking skills, but, with my other 'teaching hat' on, promoting 'oracy' to encourage mathematics students to deepen their knowledge through dialogue is vital too, and the online classroom is not without its communication challenges...

No sooner had I dipped my toe into University teaching after a sixth-month hiatus last March, it was decided I was clinically vulnerable and I was advised to work from home. In that brief return to campus before the pandemic took hold, I was fortunate to have enjoyed one train journey with my fellow commuters, the 'Train Gang', bringing me up to speed with on campus happenings. I hadn't realise how much I missed exchanging ideas with colleagues face-to-face. The next time we met up was on Zoom. However, to make it more like the lived experience my Zoom background consisted of a West Midlands train carriage and I was able to give my colleagues a virtual tour of the much missed Bromsgrove station.

That Zoom call was somewhat emblematic of my year online, in that I have attempted to bring the 'real' teaching experience into the every day interactions in the digital classroom. To this end, I have armed myself with a fleet of online tools which I have tried out on a daily basis and this article is my attempt to share these with the wider mathematics and English teaching community.

My actual teaching timetable is a fifty-fifty split between Foundation Mathematics for Science Majors and Foundation EAP Language Support Teaching, for those students whose IELTS scores are 5 and under. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the mathematics syllabus consists of pre-calculus algebra and in the spring term it focusses on calculus.

It may be expected I promote speaking skills in my academic English teaching, but in mathematics teaching too, I work to facilitate 'Oracy' (Millard and Menzies 2019: 9); that is to deepen understanding through dialogue and promote articulation of challenging concepts.

And the move to online teaching has not changed this, except perhaps there is even more need for students to engage in educational chat and articulate their ideas, especially for the non-UK based, as the online classroom may be their only immersion in spoken English, as well as providing the opportunity to promote fluency in academic discourse (Cummins 2008). The online platform at the Birmingham International Academy is provided by Zoom (2020) and I find its chat function in conjunction with breakout rooms can be exploited for mathematics discussion. As I move from one breakout room to the next, participants may have their cameras off, but counter-intuitively, it does not preclude their 'learning chat' and I am cheered to hear students sharing ways of solving, say, quadratic equations. After class, I email students to say how well they are working and suggest websites for further study. As regards assessments in Mathematics, we run a weekly online test for the whole cohort. In addition to

this I am keen for students to test their own knowledge with quizzes from Transum and Mathsisfun

There is overlap; a few students have me as both a mathematics and EAP tutor. Even the ones who do not, are happy to explain how they might tackle mathematical problems as a 'warmer' in English classes. Whereas I use Mathsbot to provide algebra tiles in mathematics classes, I have found its Cuisenaire Rods (Mullen 1996) are excellent for demonstrating word stress online. And the question 'What is the weather like where you are?' at the beginning of class, which can induce climate envy, provides an excellent opener, as many of the students are zooming from their home countries.

In addition to those mathematics quiz websites, there are a number of additional internet resources available. Mathsway and Desmos at the beginning of term were an expedient addition to the Zoom whiteboard, as writing mathematical notation without an electronic pen or visualiser was somewhat challenging. Fortunately, my dexterity has improved and I find the annotation of documents and slides an essential addition to my online toolkit. I have used Padlet too, to build a wall of documents, outside class and have found the lesser known Lino perfect for providing post-it notes for revision classes. There are challenges. After one unnaturally quiet five minutes, I found myself outside my own Zoom room and on checking Outlook there was an avalanche of student emails asking if I were okay. Since then I have my iPad on standby as an alternative to the laptop. Recently I attended MathsJam2020 hosted on Gather-Town . We each had our own avatar and could wander freely around a virtual conference centre, almost as though we were there in person. In comparison, monitoring groups via Zoom breakout rooms appears rather clunky. I am hopeful that this is one of the many digital transformations we might adopt and adapt for distance learning post-pandemic. To misquote Lennon and McCartney: 'I don't want a revolution, I want to change my digital world, that's evolution.'

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1) Zoom Video Communications, Inc (2020)

https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/204772869-Zoom-Rooms-User-Guide

I curate my Zoom background depending on the 'audience'. I have also started recording my mathematics classes before I teach them so that I can spot flaws in delivery. I also record discussion videos for mathematics conferences: https://tinyurl.com/b4z271vz

2) https://www.mathsisfun.com/algebra/inequality-quadratic-solving.html and https://www.transum.org/software/SW/Starter_of_the_day/Students/Quadratic2.asp?Level=8 provide quizzes with answers which students can check themselves in class. For teachers keen on information gap activities Transum generates random questions which adds an extra communication challenge.

3) https://mathsbot.com/manipulatives/rods I saw a video of Jim Scrivener using Cuisenaire Rods (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjLG4oM-IWU) to explain syllables and word stress to students; these online rods can be used to similar effect with students working in pairs to check their pronunciation hypotheses.

4) https://www.mathway.com/Algebra and https://www.desmos.com/calculator provide a way for the technically challenged teacher to write clear mathematical notation. The latter is a graphing calculator, which is an online tool and app to show students a 'picture' of the function and the roots of a quadratic equation. It is used before reworking, or rather detecting backwards in a 'Columboesque' manner, to the actual solution, thus focussing on process rather than product.

5) Both https://padlet.com/ and https://linoit.com/ provide a wall of materials and/or comments which can be collaborative or teacher controlled depending on how the settings are applied, and advantageously can be used as a one-stop materials shop.

6) https://gather.town/ There is a free version of this for up to twenty-five participants. It allows for wandering around a virtual conference centre and mingling with other guests. Their equivalent to 'breakout' rooms are virtual quiet spaces where you can have conversations without being overheard.

Asynchronous lecture content recording for mathematics using Open Broadcaster Software (OBS)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Paul Glaister

Professor of Mathematics and Mathematics Education, University of Reading

p.glaister@reading.ac.uk

Elizabeth Glaister

Lecturer in Mathematics & Mathematics Teacher, University of Reading & Kendrick School, Reading

During their long careers, the authors have taught a combined total of more than 50,000 hours of live classes to mathematics students at different levels. Many of these classes have been for foundation level students at the University of Reading over the last 35 years. The resources and technologies – hardware and software – available have evolved substantially during this time, from blackboards to whiteboards to SMART Boards and personal computers – including a range of versatile Microsoft and Apple products. These advances have been accompanied by a proliferation of first rate, technical software for supporting teaching, learning, and assessment with the aim of improving the acquisition of mathematical knowledge and skills, along with deep understanding of concepts, through its use in the development of, and production of high-quality, impactful materials.

But neither of us was fully prepared for the challenge of preparing asynchronous online recordings to replace in-class teaching necessary because of the impact of Covid 19. What was originally a daunting challenge back in the Summer of 2020 has turned into a valuable opportunity, which has prompted us to rethink our lecture style and delivery for the future, as well as providing high-quality alternative provision during the current pandemic.

Our initial thoughts when thinking about planning and preparing for recording 'core content' for asynchronous online access was that we wanted to retain, as far as possible, those aspects of our live, face-face classes which are integral to the teaching and learning of this 'content'. In this we acknowledged and had to accept, reluctantly, that there would be much that would be lost in such a delivery-style with (clearly) no interaction and therefore no opportunity for changes of pace or approach, or for reinforcement. But this was unavoidable given the alternative 'blended' model of teaching the University had to adopt, in common with most programmes across all universities, with students located across the globe in different time zones and with other demands on their time and availability to 'attend' live, online sessions. We also knew, however, that we would be able to address these potential shortcomings of asynchronous recordings by complementing them with the accompanying live, interactive tutorials/seminars/support sessions, and in response to students' needs.

As we set about our search for a 'solution', we were also mindful that we needed something which had more functionality than using a voiceover for Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, or LaTeX Beamer (or similar) presentations.

By chance, and at just the right time, we were fortunate to become aware of Open Broadcaster Software (OBS, 2021), which is

open-source software. The primary use we made of this software was to record hundreds of hours of recordings of core lecture content using the powerful functionality OBS accords. OBS had enabled us to achieve everything that we set out to, and yet we have only scratched the surface of its power, capability, and versatility.

Using Open Broadcast Software (OBS)

In using OBS, our primary goal was to make lecture recordings which allowed us to feel that we are delivering these 'live', while also taking advantage of all the resources we might normally wish to deploy, with the result that students also feel that they are viewing and listening to these as if delivered 'live'. The power of OBS is that, in effect, it allows us to teach, and to capture the various inputs we would normally use if doing this live in a lecture theatre/classroom. To enable the recording output to have that live 'feel', OBS features the ability to switch seamlessly in real-time between different modes of 'delivery' and inputs, not unlike 'live online streaming', meaning that we are able to bring in different media. The key features we needed and which OBS supports are:

a. a front-facing (fixed) laptop webcam, to address the whole class or when referring to input displayed on the computer screen (see also (e) and (f));

b. a free-standing webcam to be positioned as necessary, to address the whole class when using inputs other than the computer screen (see also (c) and (d));

c. a visualiser for capturing written mathematics and diagrams, for which we would normally use a whiteboard or similar, as shown in Figure 1;

d. an iPad or similar for annotating electronic documents, for which we would normally use a SMART Board or similar, as shown in Figure 2;

e. static applications within a Window, e.g. Internet pages in a browser or static files such a PDF files using Adobe Reader, which we would normally use in a class, as shown in Figure 3;

f. dynamic software applications such as Microsoft Excel, or mathematics specific applications such as Wolfram Alpha, Matlab, GeoGebra, Desmos, which again we would normally use in a class, in this case for interactive demonstrations, as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

There is no postproduction editing required, which saves a significant amount of time compared to achieving the same result with other solutions.

Along with the accompanying live interactive sessions, the recordings are not the only learning materials provided to students. For each topic there is a considerable body of written material, exercises and worked solution. Our recordings are intended to complement and enhance this material rather than to be the starting point for student engagement.

As to be expected, it would be challenging to provide a guide to OBS, and to explain and demonstrate its various features and functionality, through the written word, even with multiple screenshots etc such as the one in Figure 6; indeed, to fully embrace and showcase the technology it would be natural to utilise the technology itself and achieve this through videos.

We have therefore recorded a video (Glaister & Glaister, 2021a) which introduces and provides an overview of OBS, including an illustration of how to record a video for asynchronous use. This is accompanied by a short video recording made using the scenes previously introduced (Glaister & Glaister, 2021b), followed by a separate video explaining how to set-up those scenes with their associated sources used in OBS (Glaister & Glaister, 2021c). Readers who first wish to see a demonstration of how OBS functions before reviewing the videos to explain how to achieve this should start with Glaister & Glaister 2021b.

The opportunities afforded by the provision and use of online asynchronous material recorded using the impressive OBS software will enhance the learning experience of all students on our various courses for some years to come even when we retune to predominantly face-face teaching. There is certainly a significant advantage to students being able to review sections of recordings at any time and as often as they wish.

All of this applies equally to teachers of any subject discipline who could master OBS and utilise the functionality to best suit their needs. Teaching at all levels, regardless of the topic, is likely to make use of a variety of educational technology tools, together with more traditional written, verbal, and visual inputs. This is certainly true of other mathematical, physical and quantitative sciences which make use of interactive tools such as graphical and computational software, dynamic visualization, online experiments, etc, as well as more traditional written materials.

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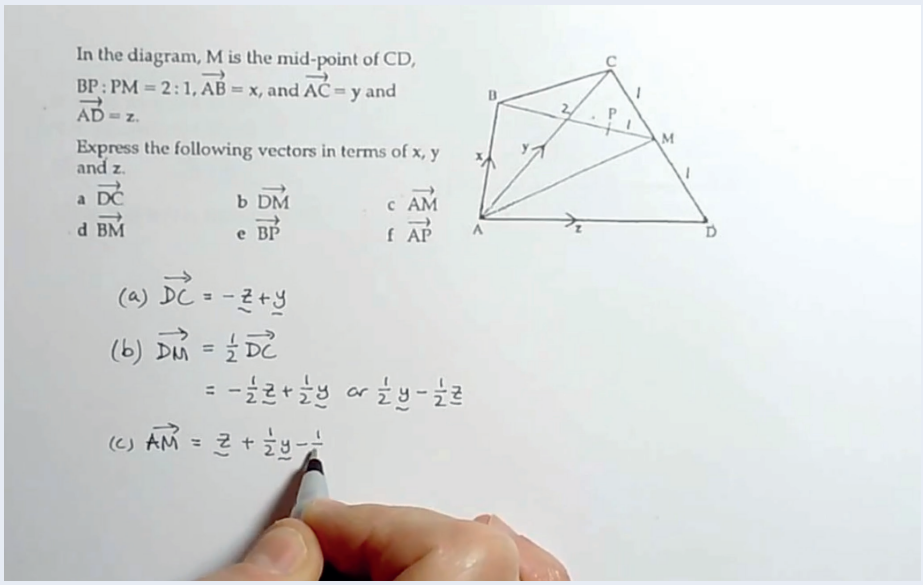

Figure 1 *Using a visualiser for capturing written mathematics and diagrams.*

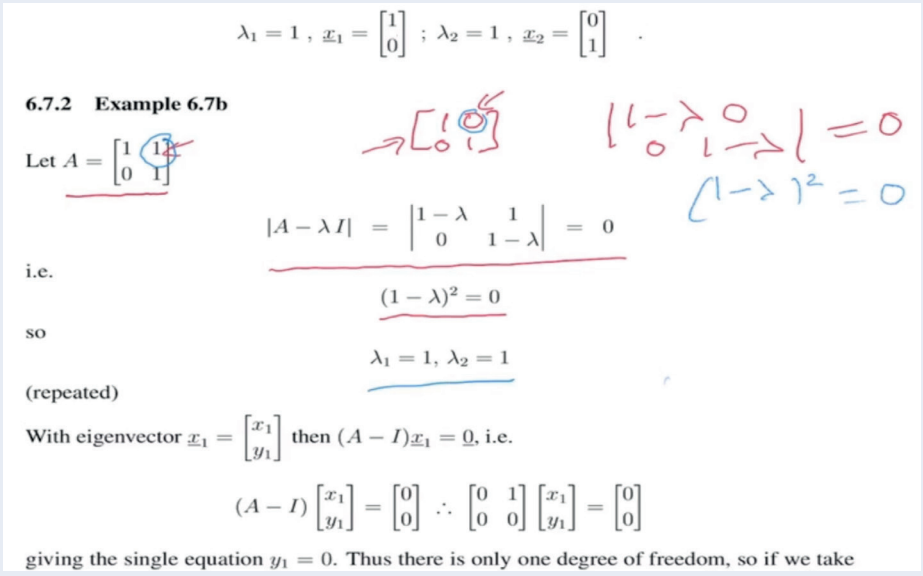

Figure 2 *Annotating an electronic document using an iPad.*

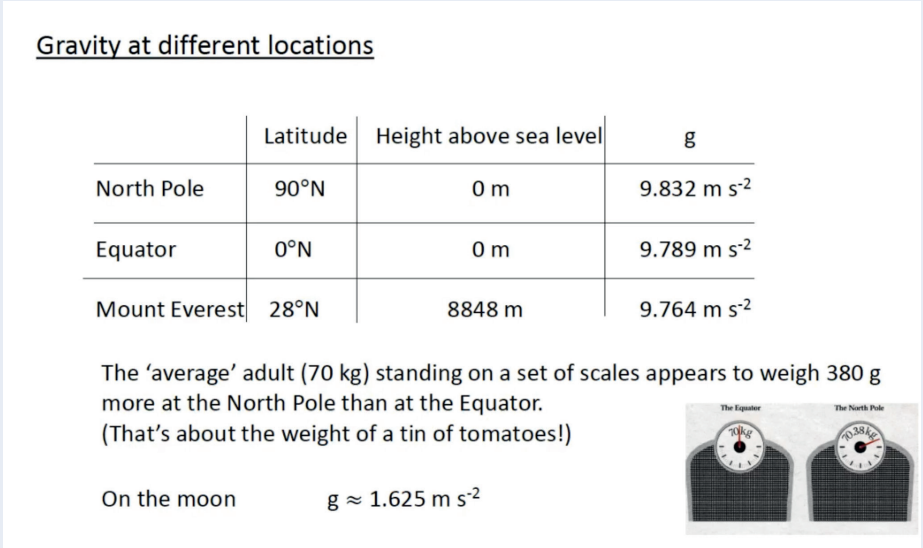

Figure 3 *Displaying a static document.*

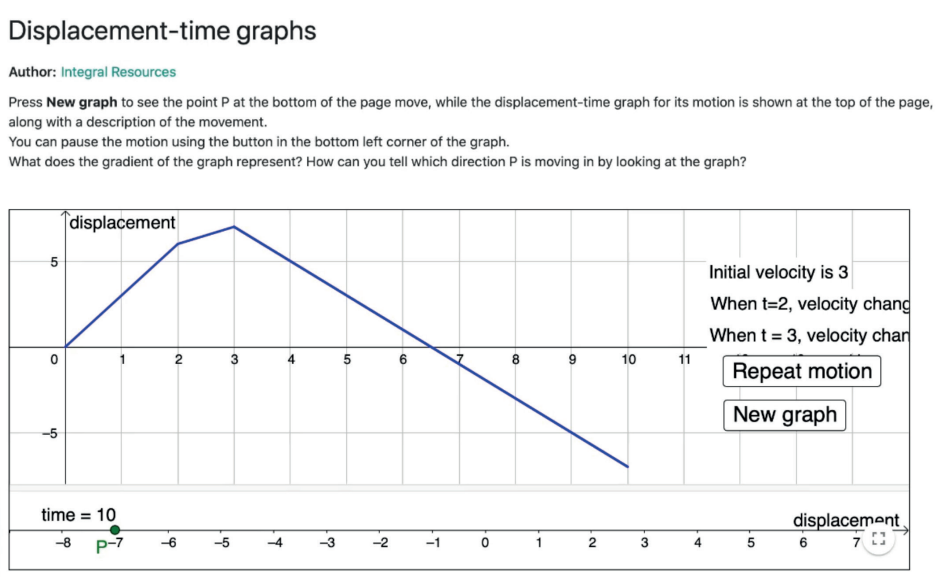

Figure 4 *Using a dynamic software application – GeoGebra*

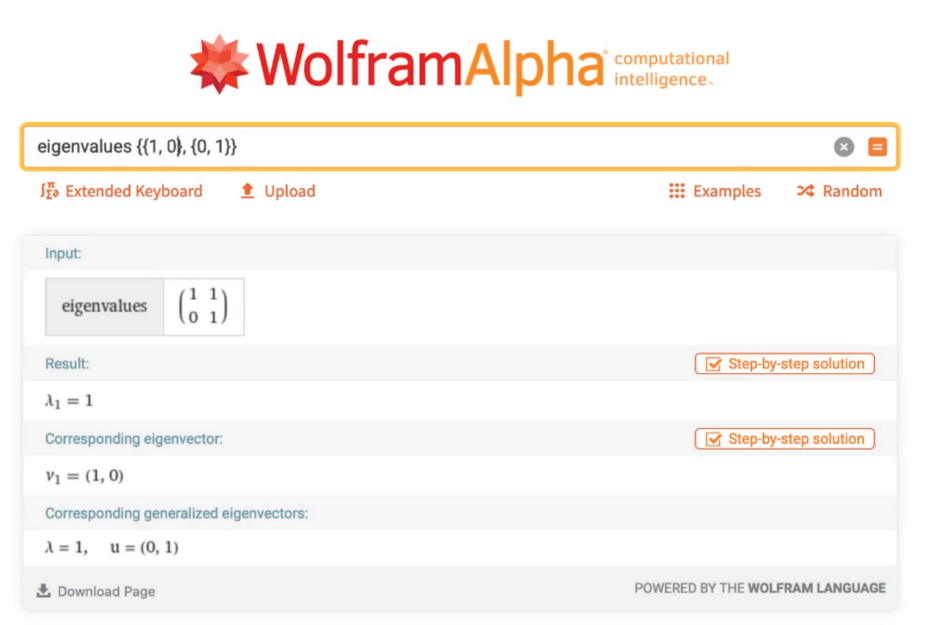

Figure 5 *Using a dynamic software application – Wolfram Alpha.*

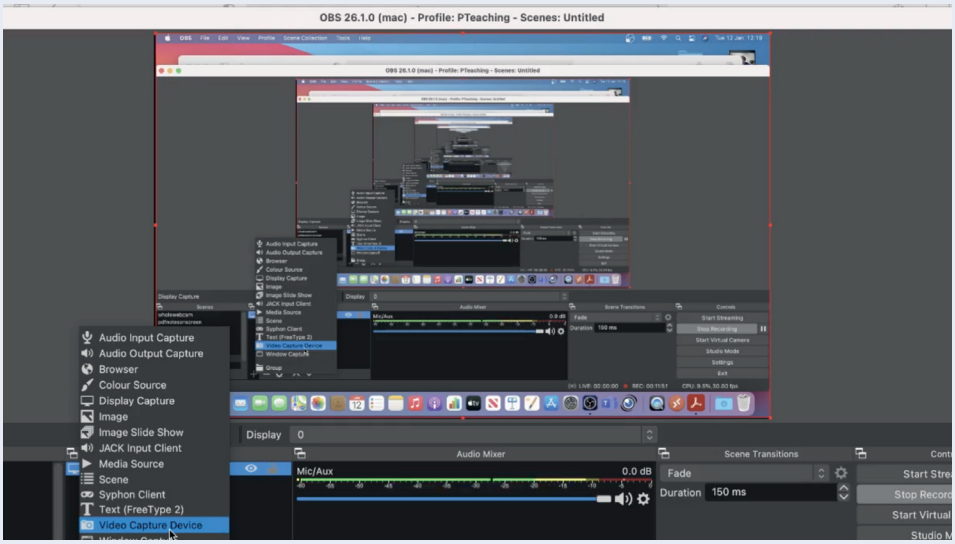

Figure 6 *A screenshot of the OBS interface showing some of the various display windows, menus and options.*

Introducing an online reflective portfolio to evidence progress in Academic English

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Humphreys

(Former) Head of Learning and Teaching, IFCELS

Rachel.Humphreys500@gmail.com

This article examines the advantages and challenges for both teaching staff and students in the introduction of an online reflective portfolio to evidence progress in Academic English on a foundation programme. It highlights how this change enabled a more reflective, dynamic and personalised approach to students' continuous assessment.

Students on the English Language and Academic Studies (ELAS) and International Foundation Programme (ICC) in the IFCELS department at SOAS University of London had always submitted paper-based portfolios which evidenced their progress in Academic English and made up an important part of their formative and summative continuous assessment. Having attended HEA training on inclusive and alternative assessments and following suggestions from colleagues and an external examiner, it was decided to trial an e-portfolio on the ELAS programme with the aim of introducing something more dynamic and reflective that, unlike the paper folders, students could take away with them and hopefully refer to in their future studies.

Choosing a platform

Originally the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) was the preferred platform. However, further examination revealed that it was complicated to introduce multiple new assessed elements into the existing marks framework. It was decided to use Google Drive as this allowed for the relatively straightforward set up of individual folders for students where they uploaded a Google Doc for each piece of work, and a class folder for the teacher, with programme managers and external examiners having access to all class folders for administrative and scrutiny purposes. Google Drive also had the benefit of being fairly flexible and adaptable to both teachers' and students' levels of technical ability. Those teachers with greater technical skills set work through Google Classroom, whereas other teachers and students preferred to produce and mark work in Word and then upload this to their Google Drive folder.

Advantages

A key advantage of asking students to submit their work on Google Docs was that this facilitated greater reflection and a more active response from students. If teachers write a feedback comment on a piece of work using the comment facility, Google Docs and Word give students the possibility to respond and many took that opportunity. Many students also made further revisions and improvements to their work, as this was so much easier to do in an online document than a paper-based one. In addition, the electronic format facilitated feedforward and more personalised learning, with teachers being able to direct students to relevant websites, apps or VLE pages for additional support or remedial language work via clickable links.

One of the key summative tasks in the portfolio was re-writing a formative piece following teacher feedback. This worked much better as an online activity and became a far more streamlined and reflective activity for students. One of the programme tutors, Emma Hilton, redesigned the submission form for this piece of work, so that the feedback from the formative task was tabulated at the top of the rewrite document, with an extra column inserted for the teacher to comment on how the student had addressed this feedback in their rewrite. Students then wrote their rewrite in the space below the feedback, meaning they were more likely to look at it and take note and were

reminded that their teacher would be looking at how they had responded to it when they assessed the rewrite. In the space below the rewrite, students were asked to complete a short reflective task considering, for example, what they had found challenging, how they could improve and develop their skills and what they might do differently in future (see **figure 1** right).

There were other advantages around student progress and administrative procedures. It was easy for the programme team to see whether any students were not submitting or keeping up with work and put necessary support mechanisms in place. There were no longer piles of paper folders gathering dust in the programme offices and convenors and externals could carry out scrutiny online without being sent boxes of folders.

Challenges

While both teaching colleagues and students embraced this new project good naturedly there was considerable anxiety around some of the technical processes. The programme team devised reference guides on how to set up the folders and upload documents but found they needed to run several separate initial and remedial training sessions for students and teachers. As we now all know after the summer of 2020, students are not necessarily the digital natives we thought they were, and many were not familiar with Google Drive or Docs. There was considerable extra work involved in the set up of the folders for both teachers and programme managers and there were also data protection and access issues to consider. Students had to be trained to save their work to their folders and not just email their work to their teacher and expect them to do it for them.

Conclusions

Overall, the trial of online portfolios was a success and it was decided to roll them out across the ICC programme as well. The interactive and reflective approach meant that the portfolios had more of a process than a product approach to them and increased students' engagement in and focus on their own language improvement. Student feedback was positive – in particular, they liked the fact that they had a visual record of their progress that they could take away with them at the end of the course. Colleagues liked the fact that they could see students engaging with and reflecting on feedback at a deeper level. Both teachers and students felt that they had improved their digital literacy as a result and students gained digital skills that would be useful for degree level studies.

I would like to thank SOAS colleagues Emma Hilton, Elizabeth Hollis-Watts, Jeshmeen Kanjee, Alison Goodliff and Debbie King for their work on this project.

Figure 1

Writing Task Rewrite – Feedback and Reflection

Name:
Essay Title:

Feedback on initial task and points to work on for rewrite	Achieved? (your teacher will complete this after you submit your rewrite)

Further comments on rewrite:

Write your second version of your task here:

Student's Reflective Section
when you have finished your rewrite, write a short reflection here.

Your reflection could consider any/all of the following:

1. **What did I find most challenging about this task?**
2. **What is the most important thing I have learned from this task?**
3. **What will I do differently in my next piece of writing?**
4. **How can I improve and develop my weakest skills?**

Bypassing Blackboard: creating a new digital study space

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Eddie Cowling SFHEA

Assessment Lead, International Pathway College, University of York

eddie.cowling@york.ac.uk

Phil Martin

Associate Lecturer, Language and Study Skills, International Pathway College, University of York

phil.martin@york.ac.uk

The 'digital classroom' has presented us with a wealth of teaching input in the form of audio-visual media, websites and apps that can make classes more engaging, but the sheer volume of opportunity can also be overwhelming. This, coupled with unlimited cloud storage, can lead to banks of teaching materials that quickly become overgrown and disorganised. Teaching teams often face multiple versions of class activities or slides, and for coordinators having to bring these together on a student facing Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) it becomes difficult to manage.

In the summer of 2019, a small teaching team on the University of York's Language and Study Skills module began using website builders to host teaching materials in a way that was intended to be more organised and accessible. We started with individual lessons in some supplementary language classes, and these worked well enough that we began to expand the site to host material for the whole module. Freely available site builders such as WordPress are extremely simple to use, and allow users to embed graphics, text, video and audio cleanly into pages that are accessible, look great and are easy to navigate. Since York is a 'Google University', the logical choice was Google Sites; however, there are many platforms that work in a similar way. Building subpages and menus is also straightforward, and it is possible to host a wealth of digital resources on a single URL. For the students at York, this meant they had a digital coursebook and all their module information in one place.

The design process over the summer went smoothly, and a prototype Site was ready for the new cohort of students in September of 2019. Google Sites was used for teaching materials and module information, while Blackboard remained the submission point for assignments. This made things straightforward from a policy point of view: there were no GDPR issues as there was no student information stored or logging in required. What we found straight away was that Sites provides advantages over standard VLEs in terms of aesthetics and functionality. The smooth, uncluttered page layouts are more attractive and easier to read, and navigability is also improved. It generally takes fewer clicks to get to where you need to be. In fact, exit survey data revealed that over 90% of the cohort involved in the beta version found the new site easier to use than Blackboard.

In this first iteration of development we used Sites as a canvas on which to organise the module. While it obviates the need for clunky VLEs and over-crowded shared drives, one of the limitations is that by itself it offers few opportunities for interaction. So, in early 2020 we began integrating interactive learning objects to open up the site a bit more to asynchronous self-study. These take a bit more getting used to, but provide exciting opportunities to create professional looking and cognitively engaging activities that can be embedded into a VLE or a website builder.

That initial pilot ran for two full teaching terms of the module. Although the platform had worked well and we had already been able

to make refinements, we had to revert to Blackboard as our main host for the summer teaching as, due to the pandemic, many of our students returned to mainland China where they were unable to officially access Google platforms. Nevertheless, we'd gained a valuable year's worth of experience in terms of how the platform was received by teachers and students. The next stage was to explore what was and was not working and refine accordingly.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers from the module. We discuss how they have used the platform, the practical and pedagogical challenges, the student experience, and if/how they feel it enhances or transforms provision. Interviews are being carried out across the teaching team from each individual term, and so interesting comparisons can be made between, for example, pre-lockdown, lockdown, and post-lockdown provision. To complement the interview data, interviews, surveys, and end-of-term evaluation feedback were also analysed. This mixed-method approach enables us to gather varied insight from all platform users at a time when students are scattered around the world, many under lockdown. Key lessons are now emerging which are helping us refine and improve the system:

The value of a one-stop shop approach

Both educators and learners are emphasising the ease of access, user-friendly navigation, and the value of 'everything in one place'. Particularly within multi-teacher modules, tutors report how much easier it is to plan and prepare seminars. Emerging student data is similarly positive. They describe the site as engaging and easy to use, and stress how it is particularly useful for self-study when they can review and revise at their own pace, in accordance with their individual needs.

Reflecting how students work, study, and live

The free Google Sites platform is compatible and user-friendly on all devices, and a related emerging theme from the research is that a 'website approach' to materials provision reflects how students work and live. Research continues to be mixed over whether or not learners prefer screen or paper (Clinton, 2019, Vincent, 2016), but it is understandable that students value at least having the option, and the pandemic has demonstrated the need for materials which can be easily shifted online, easily editable, and easily accessible on all devices.

Effective interaction: a work in progress

As discussed, a challenge has been converting a rather one-directional site into something more interactive, where users can tackle engaging tasks via rich, accessible content, all on a very limited budget. E-learning authoring software such as Xerte and H5P has undoubtedly helped with this and feedback has been encouraging, but further research is needed into the user experience and to what extent such tools enhance provision.

A wealth of other strengths and limitations are being identified via the ongoing research: how to tackle screen distraction, the role of document-based platforms (and indeed pen and paper) in today's digital world, the role of the teacher when delivering a site-based approach, to name a few. We will explore these areas in greater detail during the next phase of the data collection, and hope to share findings with the InForm community.

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Show & Tell – An Underrated Activity

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Spier

Lecturer, Canterbury Christ Church University

martin.spier@canterbury.ac.uk

The article looks at the transition to online teaching with a particular focus on fostering a sense of community within a group of new students on a Pre-sessional Course in Academic English Skills and International Foundation Programme. For the writer, the possibilities of the 'show and tell' activity were awoken by an online channel during the first lockdown in March 2020. The activity was transferred to the online classroom with excellent results in introducing students to each other and helping to plant the seeds of a strong online community.

Before I begin, and before I am accused of a great disservice to show and tell in my title, I must admit that I am the one who is guilty of underrating this particular activity. For years I have regarded it as the butt of a joke in a US sitcom, film comedy or an episode of The Simpsons. My mind was swayed during the first lockdown in March 2020. Denied the chance to meet colleagues for a coffee and a chat, I looked for virtual alternatives and discovered The Cosmic Shambles Network channel on YouTube. The morning show hosted by Robin Ince and Josie Long, part of the Stay at Home Festival, introduced me to the benefits of show and tell over eight weeks and more than one hundred episodes. After a brief greeting and introduction, almost every episode would begin with Robin, Josie - and occasionally their guest - holding up to their webcams a personal item. They would give each item a backstory which, in the tradition of the Reithian principle, would inform, educate and entertain. I soon understood what Ince meant when he described his show and tell event at the 2013 Edinburgh Science Festival as 'a springboard for people to investigate further' (Edinburgh Science, 2013). The items and the stories connected to them would regularly tempt me to dive into the Google rabbit hole to find out more.

The thought of getting students to find out more about their fellow classmates is what got me thinking about bringing show and tell to my online classroom. When the university switched to online teaching in March 2020, the September 2019 cohort studying on the International Foundation Programme (IFP) had already fostered a sense of community during the first semester of face-to-face teaching. As the academic year came to an end and the summer pre-sessional course awoke from its slumber, closely followed by the 2020/21 IFP, there was a need to give each student a social presence within each online group, to give them the opportunity 'to project themselves socially and emotionally as "real people" through the medium of communication being used' (Garrison & Archer, 2003, p.29); the medium of communication in this case being the dry surroundings of Blackboard Collaborate. I modelled my expectations with my own show and tell during one of our sessions; with the live recording available to students for review. My item was a souvenir Osborne Bull from a family holiday to Spain; Osborne Bulls are large black metal silhouettes of a bull which can be seen standing beside the roadside when driving in most parts of Spain. My presentation gave a little background on

their history and I explained the emotional connection to the item; spotting the bulls became a family game of i-SPY when these dark figures suddenly appeared, often dramatically on a distant hilltop, as we made our way across the country. I set the task for students to present their own items a few days later, acknowledging that 'providing opportunities for students to share information is a useful tool in helping to develop community' (Major, 2015, p.247).

The presentation day went beyond my expectations; the students embraced the task and seemed to glow in allowing light in on their lives. I encouraged students to ask follow-up questions and there was a strong interest in genuine experiences, as we were hearing real stories about classmates rather than following the dilemmas of a fictional student in an EAP coursebook. It also enabled me to find out a little more about who I was teaching. Kanaoko's painting from Australia, a gift from her host family, gave me an insight into her English-speaking experience and her life in Japan; the framed picture survived a fall from the tremors of an earthquake and now spends its time leaning against the wall at ground level in case the tremors return. The most poignant moment though was Chang-Min's pitcher's glove. A baseball fanatic, Chang-Min was a member of his high school team until injury and surgery to his throwing arm ended his dreams of ever joining the baseball leagues in Korea or the United States. His glove now sits on his shelf, a monument to a life of what could have been. Suddenly his propensity to log in five or ten minutes late to the online sessions made sense. What kind of substitute is Blackboard Collaborate to a young man who possibly still has dreams of pitching a perfect game for the Los Angeles Dodgers? The presentations ended with a homework task where I asked students to watch the recording of the lesson again and answer a series of IELTS-style questions about each presentation. Admittedly, designing those questions was rather labour intensive, but in preparing the activity I was concerned that students would reject the sugar of the speaking activity without the medicine of a follow-up that would develop their listening skills. Looking back, were the questions needed? I think it certainly helped to underline the sense that I had been listening. The students returned to those recordings and enthusiastically answered all of the questions; they were able to fill in the gaps and identify the stance of the speakers with aplomb. I would argue that the extra work was worth the effort.

Major (2015, p.253) states that 'accomplishing the elusive goal of planting the seeds from which a strong community can grow requires a combination of encouragement, patience, and the use of appropriate activities and tools.' For what seems like the most basic of activities, so much so that I myself once regarded it as something of a classroom cliché, the activity helped individuals to bloom and the group to bond. My apologies, show and tell, for neglecting you for so long. Thank you to the class of 2020/21, for one of the most memorable classroom experiences I have ever had.

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What the BALEAP TNE SIG could do for you

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elisabeth Wilding

Professor and TNE Programme Director, University of Reading

e.a.wilding@reading.ac.uk

CO-AUTHORS

Susan Finlay

Lecturer in EAP, Glasgow College, UESTC, University of Glasgow

Jennifer MacDougall

English Language Programme Director, Glasgow College, UESTC, University of Glasgow

Joanne Shiel

Associate Professor, SWJTU-Leeds Joint School, Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, University of Leeds

This article gives an overview of the significance of transnational education (TNE) for the international foundation sector and outlines the challenges and opportunities that working in TNE may offer. Colleagues involved in teaching English for Academic Purposes in TNE contexts are invited to join a new special interest group, the BALEAP TNE SIG, and to become part of a community of practice where we can all learn from each other.

On 26 November 2020, over 70 participants gathered online for 'Teaching in the time of Corona', a webinar where Susan Finlay and Jennifer MacDougall explored the teaching and assessment challenges posed by the pandemic at Glasgow College, UESTC, a joint educational degree programme in China. Aimed at EAP teachers working in transnational-education (TNE) contexts, and hosted by the BALEAP TNE special interest group, the session successfully achieved its aims of encouraging collaboration, sharing practice and heightening awareness of TNE practices globally. With the majority of participants engaged in foundation-level teaching, it became clear that this SIG could be of relevance to IFP practitioners.

The BALEAP group was set up early in 2020, before the pandemic had struck too much in Europe, with the goal of bringing together EAP professionals working in transnational contexts so they could share their experiences. TNE, broadly defined as teaching and learning where students are based in a different country to an awarding institution, is a large, and growing, area of UK HE activity. With over 700,000 students studying on UK TNE programmes every year, for example at offshore campuses or joint educational institutes located outside the UK, EAP professionals in the IFP sector may increasingly find themselves working in this context. The pandemic is very likely to have intensified this trend, as global movement of students outside their home countries has become more difficult and unlikely, certainly in the short-term. The success of online learning and teaching may even have made this kind of mass movement unnecessary or less desirable in the longer-term.

Those who do not work in transnational contexts might wonder what there is that is 'special' about this kind of context and whether it merits a 'SIG' of its own. In many ways, TNE and 'home' IFP contexts are broadly similar. On the surface, at least, major programme features such as intended outcomes, course design, and materials development may even be the same. The students are undergoing a parallel transition from school to university; they need to reach a level of accomplishment in English and acquire the academic literacy and skills required for successful study at university. The EAP specialist is often the 'first responder' to student needs. Nevertheless, our own experiences, in line with the published research, indicate that transnational is different.

For example, while both TNE and UK-based IFP students have to deal with the transition from school to university and get to grips with a culturally different system, they differ in that the TNE students often have to deal with two systems at once rather than a new country. Often offering a UK or dual degree in a student's own country, and thus marketed as the 'best of both worlds', TNE programmes generally involve a unique level of collaboration and exchange. Another key difference is who is doing the teaching, or how, as most collaborative TNE ventures involve some kind of mix of teaching teams from the partner institutions. This situation brings a set of challenges, including those arising from differences in pedagogical approaches, institutional expectations, and quality assurance traditions. However, it also provides a rich seam of potential for deepening our experience and examining our own positions – on education, on pedagogy, on EAP. Another crucial factor is that the TNE context inevitably involves a blend of administrative and management teams which can provide the students with more support than they would have in an individual institution – or less. Both institutions have to become accustomed to potentially unfamiliar strategic and operational systems and the EAP specialist may find themselves in the middle of two potentially conflicting or at least confusing ways of operating. They may even feel lost or isolated. Indeed, one aim of the SIG is to help members to avoid the feeling of isolation that working 'offshore' might bring and to make sure that the parent organisation is more inclusive of TNE staff and students. A simple example of addressing the issue this year was requesting the use of the phrase 'students starting their Leeds degree' rather than 'coming to Leeds to start their degree' in a welcome speech. Staff development that addresses the specific features and challenges of TNE programmes and that encourages input from both sides of the partnership is another area where improvement is often requested.

The primary aim of the SIG is thus to create a community of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where colleagues with an interest in TNE can meet to share ideas or good practice, and engage in discussion, debate and exploration together. We are building a collaborative space in which we can explore diverse ideologies, ways of 'doing and knowing' across cultural and global spaces, where different 'knowledge traditions' exist (Furlong & Whitty, 2017). As a community, we recognise the uncertainty of our own knowledge base (Eisner, 2002) and the need to be critical in our reading or interpretation of the very diverse contexts within which we work (p. 380). We hope to become what Eisner (ibid) describes as 'collaborators in knowledge construction who bring to the table of deliberation a kind of insider knowledge' (p. 381). Through this collaboration, we can more systematically reflect on what we are doing and what we can learn from our experiences in this field (Schön, 1983) to enhance our future practice. Our outputs will include the cascading of knowledge, as well as joint scholarship, projects, and research. These activities can all feed back into enhancing our teaching and learning, as well as our visibility within HE.

The SIG is still new and the conversation is just beginning. We invite IFP practitioners to join and help shape the group, whether you are already involved in TNE or wish to engage further with practice, ideas, and issues emerging from the TNE context. We also welcome suggestions for future webinar topics and for themes for our online coffee morning sessions.

To find out more, visit our blog: https://baleaptnesig.wordpress.com/

The BALEAP TNE Committee

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This is a call for papers for Issue 21 of *InForm*

The submission of papers is now invited for the twenty first edition of InForm from members of the academic community associated with international foundation programmes. Issue 21 will be published in December 2021.

We are interested in articles related to the variety of academic disciplines commonly found across international foundation programmes and remind contributors that InForm is not predominantly an English language teaching journal. InForm also includes a letters page with readers' responses to the articles included in previous editions. Letters should be no longer than 200 words.

Journal articles (of no more than 1500 words) should be sent by email to **inform@reading.ac.uk** by 12.00 pm on 30 September 2021.

For more information and a full writer's guide please visit **www.reading.ac.uk/inform**

If you wish to discuss an idea for an article, please email us on **inform@reading.ac.uk**

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For more information, please contact:

International Foundation Programme

University of Reading
Whiteknights
PO Box 218
Reading, RG6 6AA

inform@reading.ac.uk
Tel (0118) 378 7227
Fax (0118) 378 5427

/theuniversityofreading
@UniofReading

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