

Doing it the *WIMBA* way...
**an initial evaluation of a voice tool
for teaching and learning**

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Background

The University of Adelaide Internationalisation Committee Meeting(2006)¹ included the goal

“To provide international students with a high quality student experience...”

- Provide a welcoming and supportive environment for international students.
- Provide English language and academic support services for...international students to realise their academic potential.

¹ University of Adelaide Internationalisation Committee Meeting, 11 December 2006

Context of Presentation

- Focus group
 - Introductory Academic Program (IAP) postgraduate students
- An evaluation of draft argument essay assessment
- Discussion
 - Evaluation of 'traditional' formative assessment in conjunction with 3 minute 'podcast'

Introductory Academic Program

- Aims to introduce new international students to the demands of postgraduate study including:
 - The development of independent research skills
 - Critical reading and thinking
 - Gaining an understanding of and a willingness to participate in a student-centred learning environment
 - The expectations particular to academic writing genres

The writing task

- 1,000 word essay researched and completed in approximately 3 weeks
- Assessment / review process in previous IAPs
 - Assignment is reviewed by an assessor using 'track changes' (genre / syntax)
 - Written comments on assessors summary sheet (Assessment criteria for research paper)
 - 1:1 session with teaching staff

Problems with this scenario

- Considerable time was spent with students in the 1:1 consultation explaining the assessors comments
- Difficulty for students is likely a combination of factors
 - Unfamiliarity with expectations of argument genre
 - The use of track changes can give the appearance that the text is undervalued in many areas (emphasis on syntax/grammatical issues)
 - Students relative lack of English (specifically in relation to written explanations in the context of academic writing)

Situation pragmatics

Time constraints with the IAP led staff to explore alternatives for providing meaningful feedback so that students could attend their 1:1 sessions better informed and, also, with the conditions for further development of their drafts underway.

The WIMBA voice tool was seen as a possible means to help achieve this and to improve assessment

Pre implementation: staff perspectives

Some initial reluctance by IAP staff

- What was the 'value' of WIMBA? After all, students had been provided with formative written feedback and therefore had the information to hand
- Spoken feedback prior to 1:1 meetings would be largely superfluous
- Possibly time consuming for both groups

However, the students made use of WIMBA and in ways which had not been anticipated.

Process

- Each student (26 in total) submitted an on-line draft and the marker responded with:
 - 'Track changes' comments
 - Written formative feedback
 - In addition the assessor, using WIMBA, recorded a 3 minute podcast for each student which elaborated on their written comments. This included further explanation, exemplification and clarification of points raised using 'track changes' and the Assessment criteria sheet

Process (continued)

- Draft assignments and WIMBA podcast were returned concurrently by email to the students in a computer suite (Napier 107)
- Students were able to listen to the podcast alongside the on-screen written version.
- Students could listen to the podcast as many times as they wanted.
- Following this session students made individual appointments to discuss their drafts with the IAP academic staff.

The following day IAP students evaluated the effectiveness of the track changes/ WIMBA voice tool combination in a survey.

Survey

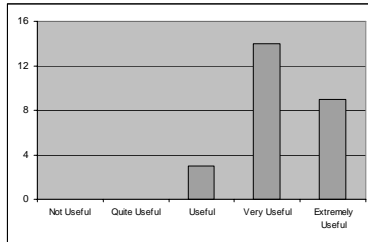
1. How useful was 'track changes' editing?
2. How useful were the comments in the text (ie those that were in brackets)?
3. How useful were the marking sheet comments?
4. How useful were the audio comments?
5. How useful was the combination of written and audio comments?
6. Approximately how many times did you listen to the audio in the computer room?
7. What particular information were you listening for in the audio?
8. If you listened to it more than once why did you do that? For example, were you unclear about some particular words or meanings or were you trying to find out something else?
9. Was there anything in the written/audio feedback on your paper that you think you could apply in your future assignments? Please explain.
10. Did you discuss your feedback with anyone else (staff or students) in the session? If so, what kinds of things did you talk about?
11. Do you have any other comments/suggestions about this feedback session?

Summary of student responses

- Overall quite positive
 - Students valued the combination of written and oral assessment
 - Students 'moved' between the two types of feedback during the computer room session to inform their understanding
 - Gained a greater appreciation of the issues with their texts which informed the 1:1 meetings

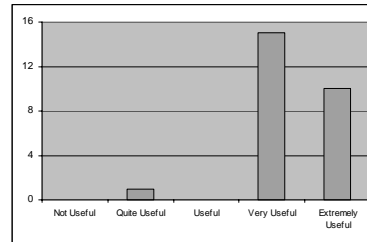
Responses to questions

1) How useful was 'track changes' editing?



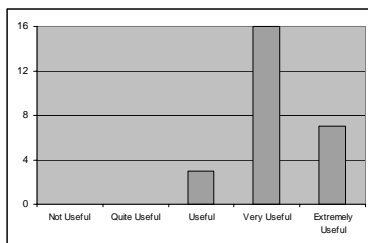
Responses to questions

2) How useful were the comments in the text?



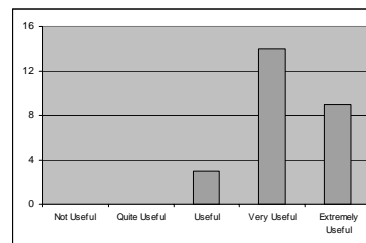
Responses to questions

3) How useful were the marking sheet comments?



Responses to questions

4) How useful were the audio comments?

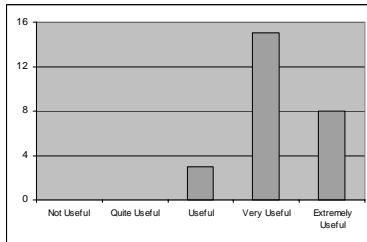


Further details:

Complement 8
Focus attention
more 6
Identify a broader
range 5
Personalisation 2

Responses to questions

5) How useful was the combination of written and audio comments?

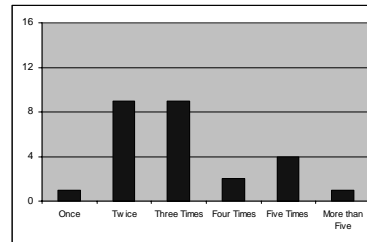


Further details:

Complement 8
 Audio provides greater detail 7
 Provides greater overall clarity 7
 More comprehensive 2

Responses to questions

6) Approximately how many times did you listen to the audio in the computer room?



7) What particular information were you looking for in the audio?

Wider range of responses:

Weaknesses/errors 8
 Comments/Feedback 7
 Cohesion 2
 Logical structures 2

8) If you listened to it more than once, why did you do that? For example, were you unclear about some particular words or meanings or were you trying to find out something else?

For greater understanding 10
 Making sure of something 7
 Improving my essay 5
 Listening comprehension 3

9) Was there anything in the written/audio feedback on your paper that you think you could apply in future assignments? Please explain.

Cohesion-paragraphs and sentences 9
 Referencing related 6
 Word choice/grammar 8

10) Did you discuss your feedback with anyone else (staff or students) in the session? If so, what kinds of things did you talk about?

1 said no- everything is clear
 12 talked with staff
 8 talked with other students
 Others didn't distinguish between the two

Variety of topics:

Cohesion, structure, referencing, clarity of comments...

11) Do you have any other comments/suggestions about this feedback session?

Overall very positive:

Several students said they would like more of the same and during their academic programs

Suggestion of extending scope and interactivity

1:1 session was particularly useful

Reflection and observations

- WIMBA – ease of use
- Student enthusiasm – open discussion in computer suite between students
- Students used WIMBA as a listening exercise
- In combination, WIMBA + 'track changes' + assessment criteria sheet accommodate a greater range of learning styles
- Students attended 1:1 sessions better informed than in previous IAPs (i.e., had started working on editing their papers)

Where to now?

- For further evaluation of WIMBA's assessment potential, consider utilising a control group during the next IAP
- Ensure clarification of the focus of WIMBA with the students (some students thought it would be 'interactive')
- Retain WIMBA but possibly increase sound byte time from 3 to 5 minutes