PROMOTING ACADEMIC VOCABULARY LEARNING THROUGH SCREENCAST FEEDBACK

Cet article présente une proposition pédagogique sur le potentiel innovant d'une méthode numérique relativement nouvelle de rétroaction utilisant le " screencasting ". Les options pratiques qui se dégagent de son utilisation semblent améliorer l'apprentissage du vocabulaire académique en L2 grâce à un retour d'information explicite, direct et interactif. La proposition découle des pratiques de rétroaction par screencast entreprises dans un contexte d'écriture L2 tertiaire facilité par Zoom, impliquant des sessions de conseil de thèse de premier cycle avec des étudiants dont l'anglais à des fins académiques (EAP) n'est pas la langue maternelle.

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Introduction

The pandemic driven pedagogical shift to online instruction prompted us to seek innovative digitalized practices that would at the very least not threaten the quality of teaching and learning. While the jury is still out on whether we chose wisely and succeeded in maintaining our instructional quality online, some positive discoveries are worth sharing. Within that framework, this article makes an instructional proposal for the innovative potential of *screencasting* to promote L2 academic vocabulary learning through explicit, direct and interactive feedback. The proposal stems from interactive screencast feedback practices undertaken in a tertiary L2 writing context involving three approximately twenty-minute-long undergraduate thesis advising sessions with non-native speaking English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students. While many other *screencasting* software options exist (see https://screenrec.com/screen-recorder/screencast-software/ for a comparison), the live feedback sessions were captured via Zoom and shared with the students. While vocabulary was a dominant focus of the screencast feedback, so too were grammar and thesis structure but they are not covered here.

Conceptual Roadmap

The proposal is organized around several assumptions about screencast feedback and L2 vocabulary learning:

1. Technology-assisted feedback should provide learners with an **audio-visual record**, be **information rich** and **clear enough** to promote follow-up application

2. Screencasting should rest on a **demonstration as feedback pedagogy** and learner involvement in the feedback process where knowledge appropriation is socially-mediated (McLain, 2021).

3. L2 vocabulary teaching and learning through **digitalized feedback** should involve **multiple contextualized exposures** that **explicitly target form, meaning and/or use**

4. Both feedback and L2 vocabulary teaching and learning should include **space for interaction**

The article will now briefly offer a descriptive overview of *screencasting* and our current understanding of L2 vocabulary learning followed by a more detailed discussion of how the above assumptions translate into digitalized screencast feedback that promotes L2 vocabulary learning.

Screencasting and Feedback

Screencasting can be defined as an online tool that harnesses oral and written corrective feedback in audio/video recordings presented to students either synchronously (live interaction) or asynchronously (delayed and independent consumption). While asynchronous screencast feedback is undertaken in the absence of the student, they can still listen to recorded comments on video captures, and watch the cursor movements and instructor annotations (Bush, 2020). In synchronous screencasting, the learner participates in the feedback process. This latter option is the focus of this article. Screencast feedback has already earned pedagogical praise for the following reasons: the increased quantity of explicit feedback; the explanatory density of audiovisual scaffolding through demonstration with examples; the observation, apprenticeship and dialogue around the modeling; the improved saliency and understandability of the vocabulary specific use in context; the improved exploitation of the feedback in follow up integration of the targeted vocabulary; and the personalized nature of the interaction and feedback (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017; Ali, 2016; Orlando, 2016; Séror, 2012; Mahoney, Macfarlane & Ajjawi, 2019; Ghosn-Chelala & Al-Chibani, 2018). If that is not enough, the screencast feedback also generates the repetition and reinforcement long associated with multiple (explicit) exposures to vocabulary deemed necessary for acquisition to occur (Nation, 2015; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2011; Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2015; Tavasoli et al., 2020). Taken together, a case can

be made linking screencasting with the digitalized type of high impact feedback that increases the likelihood of lexical uptake by (L2) learners.

Academic Vocabulary Learning in L2

Much of our understanding of vocabulary teaching rests on the prevailing split between intentional (direct/explicit instruction) or incidental (indirect attention) approaches to vocabulary learning mediated further by task type, interaction, lexical load and a focus on form, meaning and/or use and more recently, the choice of digital tools supporting one or both approaches (Nation, 2015; Schmitt& Schmitt,2011; Richards, 2015; Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2015; Yang, 2021). Academic vocabulary is subject to the same understanding but refers to items common to a range of academic genres but less common to other kinds of texts.

The Practical View

In the academic writing context featured here, students often over relied on the word *big* to mean *significant, key, essential, important, large, and central*. Prior to the writing assignment in which the word appears, *big* was tagged as being too informal for the academic register of thesis writing and students were instructed to avoid it. In response, the synchronous screencast feedback enlisted the following seven options. Each option targets the repetition, reinforcement, recycling, elaboration and consolidation associated with L2 vocabulary learning. Space limitations prevent a full transcript.

1. Glossing of the problematic words

through verbal and written annotation either in the body of the text and/or in the margin using the insert comment function. This provides the consciousness raising function associated with getting students to notice the reason for isolating the targeted word and provides the initial set of repetitions.

Microsoft Office User
Insert comment function

In the synchronous screencast feedback event sentences were flagged verbally and in writing if they contained the word *big*. The sentences flagged included *big-*

Synchronous screencast feedback removes the guessing from what students think was meant by a specific set of comments, suggestions, corrections, and/or modifications because of the space available for interaction and renders the information about vocabulary use, among other language type information, salient, explicit, and useable.

gest one, big population, big idea, big amount, big role, and *big debate.* While these are not incorrect pairings, they may be considered less academic than the following options which were explicitly offered both orally and in written form in the right-hand margin.

The student wrote the following sentences with the word big:

Microsoft Office User
The most significant one being…biggest is not academic

Within the two different enterprises there are major differences, the biggest one would be within the advertisements.

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There has been considerable debate

There has been a big debate about…

The ads target a big population.

The company had the big idea to…

A big amount was spent on advertising.

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Definitely used in speech but not academic writing

The ads definitely played a big role (definitely flagged in the same sentence)

2. Discussion and check for understanding of the comments/ suggestions? This discussion generates the repetitions, and reinforcement associated with multiple exposures.

T: If you refer to your handout on academic register, big has been flagged as informal. See the column in the handout with big and do you understand my comments/suggestions?

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Biggest to most X

S: Oh yeah, I forgot. I see now. Will change them.

3. Demonstration with commentary and examples to introduce more appropriate, relevant, or other lexical options. This recycles the targeted items via repetition and reinforcement.

T: Here are some alternatives. Let's see how they fit into your sentences. biggest most significant one, big significant/large population, big key idea, big large/significant amount, big essential/key role, and big considerable/significant/important/key debate. A verbally-annotated demonstration ensued in which the different

Holli Schauber
less academic than the following options: biggest most significant one big significant/large population, big key idea, big large/significant amount, big essential/key role, and big significant/important debate.

options were introduced and inserted as comments into the margin. In addition to the explicit direct corrective feedback strategy used, the screencast event involved stating the sentences with each of the lexical options cited above and referring to the written reinforcements already provided. This provided the multiple exposures.

4. Student observation and notetaking. This exposes the learner to the possible applications of the word through processes of elaboration and consolidation.

S: I see what you mean and I will make the necessary changes.
T: You don't need to take notes because you will get a recording of this feedback.

5. Clarification of comments and suggestions in response to learner questions. This allows students to consolidate their understanding of the form, meaning and uses of the alternate words for big within the contexts they initially used them.

S: Can I use these words every time for big?
T: Many of them can be used interchangeably but in some cases you will need to change the form of the word, like biggest to most significant or most important.

6. Application of the suggested lexical items by the student as a verification process in the presence of the teacher. This permits the learner to consolidate their understanding of the word use through demonstration.

S: So if I write big population, I should use significant or large.
T: Both those options work but the word large invokes the image of size more than significant which has a more abstract quality to it.

7. Recording of the zoom session shared with the student to support further writing. This gives students the option of revisiting the recorded session and reviewing the targeted words as a reference for application and recycling in future writing tasks.

T: Listen to the recording again and try to apply them to your writing for the follow up section. Please include a corrected version by highlighting the changes in blue.

S: I will, thanks. This is really helpful.

Student Perspectives

Students A and B offered the following comments in response to my questions about revisiting their zoom screencast feedback recordings:

A. *Listening back to the zoom recording and having my paper in front of me opened, following up with each line of my paper, directly adjusting the mistakes, applying the comments directly and working in parallel was so helpful to me, it gave me a little more space to think about the comments and get what was the point of the sentences. Even that I took notes while having the direct mini conference, I found after listening back to the recording that I missed out few comments that I wasn't aware of.*

B. *Really helpful to hear and see the comments again because sometimes you understand things while they are being said to you but then you forget. This brings back what you understood at the time and makes it clear again.*

Conclusion and recommendations

A practical proposal was made, involving seven steps, for the use of synchronous screencast feedback as an **innovative information delivery system** to promote vocabulary learning because of the many advantages it confers. Synchronous screencast feedback removes the guessing from what students think was meant by a specific set of comments, suggestions, corrections, and/or modifications because of the space available for interaction and renders the information about vocabulary use, among other language type information, salient, explicit, and useable. Evidence suggests that digitalized interactive feedback involving rich explanation, demonstration and interaction backed up by audio-visual traces provide learners with the multiple exposures recognized as essential to successful vocabulary learning. In solicited feedback from the students, they revealed that the live synchronous sessions were extremely valuable in terms of the increased clarity, personalized nature, and explanatory details of the information. They appreciated the audio-visual record.

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Screencasting's innovative potential to promote explicit, direct, and interactive feedback.