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## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

### Exploring the Impact of Student-Elicited Video Feedback on Evaluative Judgement: An Online Case Study

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Students are active players in feedback processes, often seeking and eliciting feedback information to understand expected quality standards regarding their assignments. While student-elicited feedback can benefit learning, little is known about its impact on students' evaluative judgement and how best to leverage it. Hence, this paper examines two technology-mediated feedback encounters elicited by a student through videos sent to her teachers in a blended unit of a postgraduate education course at an Australian university. The student sought feedback information to understand whether her project proposal met the task requirements. Results showed that those two feedback encounters were productive, suggesting that these interactions iteratively refined her focus and calibrated her understanding of the quality standards of the assignment. By exploring the conditions that enabled the student to elicit feedback encounters, we identified that strategies used in the context of the unit, like earlier opportunities for feedback, timeliness of feedback comments and use of video feedback to provide clear, detailed, and supportive information could potentially enable productive feedback encounters. Additionally, our findings suggest that a relational perspective of feedback is equally important to build a trusting and supportive environment that encourages students to elicit feedback encounters.

*Keywords:* Feedback encounters, Video-feedback, Relational feedback, Technology-enhanced feedback, Evaluative Judgement, Qualitative study case

#### Introduction

Feedback is widely recognised as one of the most powerful influences on students' learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wisniewski et al., 2020) when it leads to meaningful impact. Over the last decade, a strand of scholarship expanded feedback perspectives from information transmission to dialogical, interactional and relational processes (Carless, 2012; Esterhazy, 2019; Nicol, 2010). This shift has positioned students as the main drivers of this process (Henderson et al., 2019), who not only receive but also seek and elicit feedback information to understand expected quality standards. Students often seek information about their work while preparing summative assignments (Fischer et al., 2023) to monitor their progress (Butler & Winne, 1995; Nicol, 2010) and gauge the quality standards required of them to produce high-quality work. From relatively recent sociocultural conceptualisations of feedback, this practice can be framed as student-elicited feedback encounters (Esterhazy, 2019; Jensen et al., 2022). This refers to interactions with teachers, peers or resources that can help students interpret expectations and quality standards relevant to their work.

While seeking feedback information is generally assumed to enhance uptake (Leenknecht & Carless, 2023), little is known about the impact of student-elicited feedback on their capability to make decisions about the quality of their work, a capability known as evaluative judgement (Tai et al., 2018). Some scholars argue that richer dialogic modes of feedback processes can strengthen students' evaluative judgement (Bearman et al., 2022; Henderson et al., 2018; Ilankoon et al., 2022; Nicol, 2010) and the use of video has been argued to facilitate a sense of dialogue (Henderson et al., 2018). Aiming to explore how this interplay empirically unfolds in a particular online educational context, this paper details how an online student used screencast videos to elicit feedback information from her teacher to understand whether her project proposal met the task requirements. Specifically, this study aims to explore how productive these encounters were from the student's evaluative judgement point of view. In doing so, we focus on the student's process of making

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

decisions about the quality of her work during its production. Additionally, we explore the conditions that may have enabled those encounters from a learning design perspective.

### Conceptual framing

The concept of evaluative judgement encompasses discerning quality standards, applying them to a piece of work and making comparisons that support the calibration of judgements (Boud, Ajjawi, et al., 2018; Tai et al., 2018). Researchers suggest this is not a one-off activity but a capability developed over time (Ajjawi et al., 2018; Sadler, 1989, 2010). Understood as an inherently constructivist concept, this capability is arguably fostered by social interactions (Gladovic et al., 2022; Tai et al., 2018), through which one can know whether a piece of work is good enough by required standards in a particular context (Bearman et al., 2022). Consequently, several researchers have suggested that one way to support evaluative judgement is through feedback (Bearman et al., 2021; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Johnson & Molloy, 2018), particularly when learners actively engage in dialogic modes of feedback (Ilangakoon et al., 2022).

Assessment feedback in higher education is a constantly changing field, as exemplified by the bibliometric analysis of Sun et al. (2024). Acknowledging the breadth of the feedback literature, this paper deliberately selects and draws on two conceptual lenses. The first draws on a sociocultural conceptualisation of feedback, recognising that feedback processes are situated and unfold through social encounters among students, course participants (including teachers) and resources, all revolving around work that teachers assign students to assess their learning in the context of a unit (Esterhazy, 2019; Jensen et al., 2022). Elicited feedback encounters are those in which students intentionally seek out feedback information to monitor how they are doing and what subsequent actions to take (Jensen et al., 2022). When eliciting feedback encounters with teachers or peers, students have more autonomy to decide whether to present a draft of their work, articulate their ideas, or pose general queries (Jensen et al., 2022). Feedback encounters have been reported to be productive, i.e., to have an impact on students' learning, when students make sense of information about their work or performance and act upon it to improve (Esterhazy, 2019; Henderson, Phillips, et al., 2019).

The second lens highlights the pivotal role of relationality in enabling student-elicited feedback encounters. This lens emphasises the relational aspects inherently intertwined in feedback processes that can cultivate (or prevent) rapport-building and trust (Dai et al., 2024) so students feel welcome (or discouraged) to elicit feedback encounters. Hence, we agree with the literature that states relational feedback can "create comfort zones where students are willing to seek out feedback" (Payne et al., 2022, p. 2). Teachers can design experiences that create opportunities for feedback encounters (Esterhazy, Nerland, et al., 2021). Fostering a trusting environment for students to get more involved in feedback processes should be part of it (Bugueño Araya, 2024). Such a perspective is not particularly new. An earlier strand of feedback scholarship (Carless, 2012) explored the role of trust in dialogic feedback processes, arguing that trusting relationships support the cognitive dimensions of feedback processes and may promote learner agency (Yang & Carless, 2013). Trust was identified as "the cardinal supporting emotion" (Ajjawi et al., 2022, p. 484) of feedback processes, and students are more likely to feedback uptake "within the context of an established environment of trust in which the feedback provider presents from a position of beneficence and non-maleficence" (Eva et al., 2012, p. 23). When students perceive their markers care and are genuinely committed to their learning, they are more likely to engage meaningfully with both current and future feedback from that assessor (Telio et al., 2016). Such perception of care was also empirically linked to feedback openness without defensiveness (Molloy et al., 2020).

Literature suggests that specific technology-enhanced feedback modes, such as audio or video, can be employed to help teachers communicate a sense of care and emotional engagement to students more effectively (Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Payne et al., 2022). In addition to being usually perceived as personalised, richer and clearer to prompt reflection (Henderson & Phillips, 2015), this mode of feedback is usually perceived as more conversational and as a mechanism that may improve student relationships with teachers who mark their work (Henderson et al., 2018; Mahoney et al., 2019), possibly fostering trust when it

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

is perceived that way. A few studies have shown positive effects in using digitally recorded feedback (Ryan et al., 2020), including identifying that students who engaged with it revised their assignments better and incorporated feedback into their second drafts more effectively (Yiğit & Seferoğlu, 2021). Therefore, this modality potentially offers affordances that may arguably increase the likelihood of students acting on the feedback comments (Henderson et al., 2018).

### Research methods and context

The research used a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018). The data set included email interactions between a student and a teacher, videos produced by a student, feedback artefacts including video and text-based comments, unit assessment instructions, lectures, and one student interview. Data collection was conducted following the university's ethical procedures and participants' consent, while the analysis followed the principles of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Trustworthiness measures were undertaken, such as researchers' reflexivity, member checking, multiple data sources, triangulation between different participants, and the provision of quotes.

This study took place in an education postgraduate unit taught by the authors of this paper at a large Australian university as part of a more extensive data collection for a PhD research. Two written assignments comprised the unit's summative assessment. In previous deliveries of this particular unit, teachers identified that students doing projects for the second assignment task very often misunderstood the assignment's expectations. They would devote too much attention to prototypes and products and frequently miss the main point of that assignment, which was using educational theory and research-based evidence and ideas to support their decisions while designing for learning. Therefore, students were recommended to email teachers at least two weeks before the assignment was due with their project topics to minimise the possibility of this happening, which could jeopardise the assessment of learning. No further instructions were provided on how much of their projects should be shared and what should be included in it. Conceptually, we followed the feedback literature (Esterhazy, Nerland, et al., 2021) to identify this requirement as an opportunity for students to have feedback encounters with their teachers. Additionally, students were constantly reminded throughout most of the synchronous lectures (in 5 out of 8 in the semester, for an average of 15 minutes each) about the assignment's requirements and quality standards. They were strongly encouraged to ask questions and discuss them with teachers and peers. These occasions often took the form of exemplar discussions as a way to strategically present students with opportunities to discern quality, which is one of the fundamental features of evaluative judgment (Henderson et al., 2023). In this paper, we use the concept of feedback encounter as a unit of analysis to unpack feedback processes initiated by a student in the lead-up to the second assignment of the unit.

### Findings

This paper explores two technology-enhanced feedback encounters initiated by one online student, Rebecca. She is an experienced online student who is pursuing her third fully online course. She reported that this was the first time she sought feedback from teachers using screencast videos. However, she also acknowledged being familiar with producing videos in general. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, she has worked remotely, having created instructional videos and done presentations through Zoom (Rebecca, member checking).

While the assessment design recommended that students contact their teachers, which suggests why and when she reached out to the teachers, we categorised the encounter as student-elicited because of its intentional nature and level of student influence and control in setting its timing, format and amount of shared information. Our rationale relied on the fact that she started the feedback encounter by deciding how much of her project content was presented and by choosing particular technologies to present it. Jensen et al. (2022) conceptualise the ways in which students decide to share their work affect the scope of the encounter. The more details students expose about their work, the riskier the encounter can get, potentially increasing the

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

possibility of assessors “pointing out issues that are difficult or labour-intensive to address” (Jensen et al., 2022, p.5). Therefore, we infer that the student made the decision to expose her work by increasing the level of detail presented regarding her work through a screencast video.

In this section, we describe how the student elicited feedback encounters with her marker, made sense of them, and acted on information received in her proposal. While acknowledging the complexity of identifying the feedback impact (Henderson, Ajjawi, et al., 2019a), we set out to identify how productive these encounters were, and why, within that context.

### **The first encounter**

Rebecca opted to do a project for the purpose of her second assignment. She contacted her teachers to ensure her topic was within the unit’s scope. She took the opportunity to not only email her teachers but also record a screencast video in which she talked through her project ideas for nearly seven minutes. By doing so, we understood that she initiated a feedback encounter with her teacher (Jensen et al., 2022). When she was later interviewed, she explained that her main motive for taking this action was to address an uncertainty: ‘There was some ambiguity because it was a project... so I think the ambiguity was how big could I make it?’ (Rebecca, Interview 1). Interestingly, she rationalised that ‘I think part of me was like, we got taught all of these things, I have to put them all in’ (Rebecca, Interview 1).

She decided that using a video screencast was the best approach to seeking clarification because ‘it would be much easier to explain if I was able to just speak and move around my mindmap. [...] I was also inspired by the fact that teachers used a few videos to explain concepts to us, so I figured it would be well received’ (Rebecca, member checking). While she started the video in an apologetic manner, stating, ‘I hope it’s okay that I’m doing my proposal via video’ (Rebecca, Video proposal 1), she structured her arguments for the teacher appraisal. She introduced the core educational problem that her work aimed to address and used the Design Thinking framework to methodologically outline how and when she planned to use and engage with the topics and theories taught in the unit. At the end of the video, she reiterated, ‘I’m not 100% sure this is too much or not enough’ (Rebecca, Video proposal 1).

On the following day, one of the unit’s teachers, who was also Rebecca’s marker in both unit assignments, replied to her with a video framing his head and shoulders. He commended the student for her engaging video and thorough use of the design thinking methodology. However, he stressed that the assignment would be graded more on the justification of design elements and their respective theoretical underpinnings rather than the design process itself. Indicating that her proposal was too extensive, he suggested simplifying it for the purpose of the assignment and the application of certain theoretical frameworks. He encouraged the student to feel confident and offered ongoing support, emphasising that the effort was appreciated but should align more closely with the grading criteria for her own benefit.

### **The second encounter and the outcome of the final submission**

Three days later, Rebecca sent the teacher a subsequent 3-minute video in which she presented a revised proposal. She sent it by video again ‘with the same reasoning’ (Rebecca, member checking) underpinning her rationale for sending the first video. Expressing gratitude for the teacher’s response, she appreciated his guidance in preventing her from overcomplicating her proposal. While the core proposal remained unchanged, she argued how she narrowed her focus to certain sections of the project, a refinement she acknowledged was needed to meet the assignment criteria: ‘This is my second proposal, I have dialled everything back to really focus on the two stages of design thinking that I think are assessable for this assessment’ (Rebecca, Video proposal 2). She also mentioned the theories she aimed to tackle in each section of her final work.

On the same day, shortly after her video was sent, the teacher replied by email. While he enthusiastically approved (‘this is perfect!’) and encouraged her refreshed proposal, he also acknowledged the project’s

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

extensive breadth. He emphasised depth over breadth for the assignment purpose when reiterating that she did not need to engage with various theories and frameworks for her project as ‘we are assessing you on critically playing with the few you bring to the table’. Importantly, his comments reiterate a change in Rebecca’s work, suggesting that his previous feedback video positively affected her in adjusting the project structure in a way that better fits into the task requirements. Additionally, the feedback comment of this second encounter moved on to remind her of deepening her engagement with the theory.

Notably, this shift in the teacher’s second comment confirms Rebecca’s reported change between the first and the second encounters: ‘That’s still my proposal, I just dialled down a little bit’ (Rebecca, Video proposal 2). While in the first comment, the marker recommended moving away from the project’s design and emphasised the justifications that would support her choices, the second feedback comment focuses on deepening the engagement with the literature. In this sense, we could assert that the first feedback encounter was productive enough to incite a positive change towards the assignment requirements, as she demonstrated how she would reduce the breadth of her work.

However, in a later interview, Rebecca commented that during the production of her work, she needed to navigate that same initial hesitation in tailoring her project to the assignment criteria. While she said the expectations were well understood (‘I think it wasn’t that the feedback wasn’t clear [...] and I did dial the project down a little bit’), in practice, the project ‘just got big again. I think it was just me, I wanted to do everything’ (Rebecca, I1). Additionally, when we triangulated her perspectives with her final assignment task and respective feedback comments from her marker, we identified that her final written project, in fact, missed some opportunities to engage with theories and academic literature at a deeper level – despite the marker’s recommendation in the second feedback encounter. Further scrutiny into why that was the case reveals that Rebecca knew from the beginning of the project conceptualisation that:

‘it was going to be too much [...] I guess part of me was like, Yes, this is a university assessment, but it is also me exploring things before I do it for real. So, I wanted to also make sure was a good thing for me not to just focus on the one thing, but to do, you know, a bit more, so that, for me developing it this next year I know that I’ve considered multiple things’ (Rebecca, I1).

Hence, she acknowledged that her investment in the assessment task was particularly driven by a professional project that she wished to implement in the future. In fact, she risked her marks to pursue her personal idea. While her personal project overlapped with the assessment task in certain ways, her own criteria did not exactly align with her teacher’s. In this sense, Rebecca designed one product to address two purposes. For the assessment task, she needed deeper engagement with academic literature, but such depth would not be necessary for designing the main structure of her professional project. These reasons allow us to infer why this second feedback encounter only partially impacted Rebecca’s work.

At the same time, Rebecca’s final work accomplished enough depth to be marked as a High Distinction (HD) assignment. She was able to demonstrate enough understanding of key concepts and theories as well as offer insights through synthesis, evaluation and critical comparison of the literature. Hence, according to her marker, her work demonstrated that she efficiently met the assignment’s criteria in her personal project, even though he emphasised there were opportunities missed to engage more deeply with the literature. Rebecca reported that she knew the issue regarding the project breadth ‘was coming’, as she remembered adding more features to it without really engaging with literature to support her choices. She even reported expecting the marker to mention those issues she identified by herself throughout her work but lacked enough time to keep improving (Rebecca, I1).

## Discussion

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

In this section, we approach our findings from two perspectives: the impact of Rebecca's feedback encounters on her work and evaluative judgement and the conditions that arguably enabled Rebecca to elicit those encounters. We conclude this section with implications for practice.

Combining and interpreting evidence from different data sources showed that Rebecca elicited overall productive feedback encounters, as per our definition that emphasises students' sense-making and action. The assessment Rebecca was tackling was an open-ended project, complex because of the broad criteria and the fact that she could choose her own topic, problem, focus and approach to demonstrate that she had learned the unit's content. Such complex tasks have been described as particularly challenging because they provoke an "enduring doubt, a subjective dimension where the values of the evaluator enter" (Nelson, 2018, p. 51) in making decisions about the quality of the work. She certainly understood the main points her marker recommended and partially acted upon those recommendations, which could be identified in her final work and confirmed by her marker. On the one hand, she clearly wanted to excel on the assignment, which meant meeting the articulated criteria; on the other hand, she was also motivated by drivers that sat outside of the assessment criteria (i.e., her own personal project). Arguably, those feedback encounters clarified and reinforced the expectations of her marker regarding the assignment, but were not sufficient to fully overcome the drivers of the personal project.

Reflecting upon these findings, we agree with scholarship that sees feedback impact as complex and acknowledges that students' change within their learning process does not equal simply complying with teacher's feedback information as "they may choose to act in different ways or even not at all" (Henderson, Molloy, et al., 2019, p. 271). Nevertheless, the fact that she reported deliberately not doing everything that the assessor recommended gives us insight into the multiple and competing drivers that mediate students' decisions regarding the quality of their work. From a sociocultural perspective of feedback processes (Esterhazy, 2019; Esterhazy, Nerland, et al., 2021), we argue that she effectively navigated these tensions to still succeed in the task despite competing requirements due to the opportunities available for eliciting feedback encounters. Through them, she was able to clarify – and maybe gauge – her marker's interpretations of the assignment expectations. Even though we certainly are not suggesting that eliciting feedback encounters per se is sufficient to make adequate decisions about the quality of one's work, feedback literature confirms the pivotal role of feedback discussions to calibrate students' judgements about quality standards (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018; Esterhazy, de Lange, et al., 2021) and the potential for feedback seeking outcomes to relate to high achievement (Leenknecht & Carless, 2023).

Rebecca elicited a feedback encounter and enhanced it with video technology, which afforded a higher level of richness of detail and expressiveness to present her proposal. In doing so, she extended and enriched an asynchronous interaction with her marker, probably getting richer information to make sense of the assignment requirements (if compared with peers who did so by email, for example). In addition, building on what she reported about her teachers' use of videos in the unit, which includes video feedback comments on both unit assignments, we infer that she felt a sense of encouragement to do the same as they did over the semester. Therefore, we understand that Rebecca likely perceived the unit's conditions as encouraging enough to seek richer feedback encounters that supported her in understanding the assignment requirements. This finding aligns with a sociocultural perspective of feedback that suggests these encounters are dependent on course designs and relations established in this context (Esterhazy, 2019; Esterhazy, Nerland, et al., 2021).

Confirming what the feedback literature has found, certain conditions can encourage students to seek feedback (Esterhazy, Nerland, et al., 2021; Henderson, Ajjawi, et al., 2019b) and empower students to orchestrate ongoing conversations that help them build skills in sense-making (Henderson, Molloy, et al., 2019). In this case, these conditions included:

- The unit and the assessment design accommodated early opportunities for feedback encounters prior to the final submission of the assignment, including requiring students to email them with their project's topics. This particular strategy provides extra opportunities for students to act upon feedback (Henderson, Molloy, et al., 2019). The teachers' and markers' ubiquitous invitations to

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

dialogue, identified in multiple instances throughout the unit and in feedback artefacts dedicated to Rebecca, may have contributed to such a perception.

- The marker's capacity to provide feedback comments "on-demand" in a timely manner, as the promptness of both responses was crucial for the purpose of the assignment. Feedback literature emphasises timing as one of the key principles to maximise student impact (Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Jensen et al., 2023).
- The use of video feedback to facilitate sense-making, as it is a means that students reportedly find specific, personalised, supportive, caring, motivating, clear, detailed and unambiguous, prompting reflection and constructive (Henderson & Phillips, 2015).

However, we are not arguing that the unit's design and use of technology-enhanced feedback comments are solely enough to make students seek and elicit feedback encounters. While certain formal conditions designed by teachers certainly allow space and envision opportunities for student-elicited feedback encounters to happen (Esterhazy, Nerland, et al., 2021), learners can have multiple other reasons to do so. However, we understand that finding safe grounds to seek feedback can be one of them. Students can resist seeking feedback (Winstone et al., 2017) because of, for example, fear of negative judgements and revealing inferior competence (Leenknecht & Carless, 2023). That was not Rebecca's case, although that could arguably justify her occasionally apologetic tone. From our perspective, more important is the fact that she did so not only inspired by her teachers' use of video in the context of the unit - in her words, she found it would be 'well received'. Her response suggests a certain level of trust in the teachers to present her project with as much detail as screencasts can afford. While we acknowledge that this can be a tenuous link, particularly considering her remote work, we see that Rebecca's act of eliciting a video feedback encounter could arguably have been enabled by a trusting climate within the unit, including the previous video feedback comment regarding the first assignment of the unit. That is because "without trust, students may be unwilling to involve themselves fully in learning activities which may reveal their vulnerabilities" (Carless, 2012, p. 91).

In bringing attention to implications for practice in higher education, we first reiterate the importance of setting conditions that encourage and facilitate student-elicited feedback encounters. Such opportunities could benefit from integrating technology-enhanced feedback methods, which have been extensively argued as more personalised and detailed communication channels between students and teachers (Mahoney et al., 2019; Payne et al., 2022). These conditions also include the capacity for teachers to engage in the encounter elicited by the student in a timely manner. Additionally, while we acknowledge that timely, constructive, and detailed feedback comments are fundamental, we understand that feedback is a complex process that entails more than crafting a comment and resorting to technology to enhance it. That is where a relational perspective of feedback is also key, building a trusting and supportive environment, as it "takes trust to open up the learning environment to student initiative" (Carless, 2012, p. 92). As students are more likely to seek feedback when they perceive feedback providers as approachable and supportive (Leenknecht & Carless, 2023), we suggest that creating a supporting atmosphere that encourages dialogue and minimises fear of negative judgment is also relevant.

Lastly, Rebecca's case has provided evidence that students' decisions regarding the quality of their work are mediated by multiple and likely competing drivers, including meeting academic criteria and pursuing personal or professional goals. With this respect, maybe educators – or assignment criteria – could be flexible enough to help students navigate dual purposes like Rebecca's, ensuring that feedback addresses both the academic requirements and the students' broader learning objectives or interests. This could be a way to overcome the boundaries of the task and provide more meaningful feedback for the student.

## Conclusion

This study examined the feedback processes initiated by an online student in a postgraduate education unit. It focused on two technology-enhanced feedback encounters and their impact on her assignment as a way to investigate her evaluative judgements. The findings provided insights into the student's decision-making

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

processes and actions undertaken prior to her final submission. While the feedback encounters were generally productive, they also reminded us about the complexity of investigating feedback impact. Multiple and competing drivers, including personal project goals and assignment criteria, can mediate students' decisions regarding the quality of their work. By exploring the conditions that enabled the student to elicit feedback encounters, we identified specific strategies used in the context of the unit. Strategies like earlier opportunities for feedback, timeliness of feedback comments, and use of video feedback to provide clear, detailed, and supportive information can potentially enable productive feedback encounters. Additionally, our findings reiterate that a relational perspective of feedback can be equally important to build a trusting and supportive environment that encourages students to elicit feedback encounters.

### Limitations

This study is exploratory due to the limited scale of the data set, so our inferences are certainly constrained and cannot be generalised. While the paper provides initial insights and proposes explanations, further research is needed to confirm the interpretations attempted here. Additionally, we acknowledge that Rebecca was the only student who used video to elicit feedback from one of the teachers in the unit.

### Acknowledgements

We sincerely appreciate the reviewers' valuable comments and suggestions, which helped us improve the quality of this paper.

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# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

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