

Exploring Teacher and Student Perceptions on the Use of Digital Conferencing Tools when Providing Feedback in Writing Workshop

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ABSTRACT

Writing teachers often express they have insufficient time to provide adequate feedback during writing workshop conferences. Existing research has identified the importance of providing feedback to students and acknowledges the difficulty in finding the vast amount of time this requires. Educators have considered using digital tools as a means of solving this dilemma. This study explores the perceptions of teachers and students who used traditional face-to-face conferencing and digital conferencing tools as methods of delivering feedback during writing workshop. Participants from six middle school classrooms used face-to-face conferencing and provided feedback through Screencastify during a writing workshop. A survey of all participants and select interviews were conducted. Both a descriptive and content analysis were performed to examine the ratings and themes identified by the participants. The mean was used to compare the ratings for each conferencing method. An independent-sample *t* test was used to compare the perceptions of teachers and students regarding each conferencing methods' effectiveness and ease of use. The quantitative results indicated that teachers and students found face-to-face conferences and Screencastify conferences to be equally effective and easy to use. The qualitative results identified several advantages and disadvantages for each type of conferencing method. Overall, teachers and students found benefits in each method and indicated that each method might be useful in different circumstances.

Keywords: Writing workshop, student and teacher perception, Digital conferencing tools, Screencastify, Feedback.

INTRODUCTION

Digital tools have provided teachers with the opportunity to forge a new direction in education. Many school districts have capitalized on this change by implementing one-to-one programs which provide every student in a classroom with his/her own digital device (Warschauer & Tate, 2015). This phenomenon has changed the way teachers can provide instruction, communicate with students, and assess students. Teachers must ask themselves new questions when examining their pedagogical practices and the use of technology. When should digital tools be used? Will the use of the digital tools simply offer another way of doing the same old thing? How should digital tools be used to enhance instruction? Teachers must carefully contemplate these questions and determine whether their pedagogical practices would be advanced using digital tools and whether these tools will amplify student learning.

Research by Russell, Bebell and Higgins (2004) identified that schools with one-to-one device programs are using digital devices more in their language arts classes. Students are using their devices as part of a writing workshop. According to writing education experts such as Lucy Calkins, writing workshop is a framework that allows teachers to differentiate their writing instruction and includes the use of conferencing (Feinberg, 2007). Conferencing is necessary; it is when teachers communicate their knowledge of writing and their insights as a writing expert. Most importantly, conferencing must be done in a way that is beneficial to the students (McIver & Wolf, 1999, 56). Conferences are at the heart of writing workshop and provide students with individual feedback that improves students' writing skills. Thus, when finding ways to use digital devices in writing workshop, it is imperative that the quality of its features, such as conferencing, are not impaired.

Ruben R. Puentedura developed the SAMR model which is a framework for incorporating technology into instruction (Hamilton, Rosenberg, & Akcaoglu, 2016). In this model, he suggests that simply substituting technology with what was done before is not the most beneficial use of technology. In the case of writing workshop, substitution would be replacing paper and pencil with typing. The SAMR model suggests that it would be more advantageous to use technology to enhance the writing workshop process.

Digital tools are continuing to evolve. Now, there are apps such as Google Hangouts, YouTube Live, and Screencastify that teachers and students can load onto their digital devices. These apps can be used to make screencasts which “are digital recordings of the activity on one’s computer screen, accompanied by voiceover narration” (Thompson, 2012). Teachers are just beginning to use these digital tools to provide audio and visual feedback to their students. Thompson’s research asserts that feedback delivered through screencasts provides more in-depth explanations and creates a more personal experience than traditional written comments. His research was conducted in a college-level writing course with students; these results may not pertain to younger students. With all the digital tools available, how can teachers make sure they are taking advantage of technology to provide feedback to students during writing workshop? Indeed, there is much research still needed regarding these new digital tools, especially in the areas of online feedback and video feedback.

Writing workshop has become a common teaching method used in many elementary and intermediate language arts classrooms (Boone, 1996). This instructional model consists of creating a writing environment that encourages students to engage in the writing process with the support of their peers and their teacher (Feinberg, 2007). Students work at their own pace through the process of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Whitaker, 2005). The delivery of a writing workshop may vary by teacher, but it has a general framework. Most workshops begin with a mini-lesson for whole class instruction, work time for writing, conferencing with the teacher, and a sharing time for students to receive peer feedback (Rog, 2010).

Much research has been conducted about writing workshop. This research has demonstrated a positive correlation between writing workshop and students’ achievement in writing. Research by Coleman (2000), studied first and second-grade students’ writing skills for a year. Teachers assessed the students’ growth in writing and determined that at the end of one year, the students had made significant growth in their writing skills. Kelly (2003) had similar findings when he conducted a study at a school in a Delaware which had achieved high writing scores on standardized assessments for three years. After examining the school-wide use of writing workshop, Kelly’s study concluded that the workshop model had led to the increased scores. This resulted in writing workshop being adopted as an instructional model to be used throughout the state of Delaware.

The studies aforementioned recognized the value of using writing workshop to help students improve their writing skills. These studies also identified the significance of feedback on achievement, particularly in a writing conference. However, many studies came to the same conclusion that finding enough time for adequate feedback to occur was a problem. If teachers could find timesaving means of providing quality feedback during a writing conference, it would benefit student achievement. It is possible that technology can be used in such a way as to help alleviate the time-consuming nature of conferencing.

METHODOLOGY

This mixed method approach included the use of surveys and interviews to explore the effectiveness and ease of using digital conferencing tools to provide feedback during writing workshop.

This study was conducted at school site in central Illinois. There are approximately 738 students enrolled at research site, which the Illinois Report Card (2015) breaks down into the following categories: Racial/Ethnic Diversity, low-income Students, and Students with Disabilities. The racial/ethnic makeup of this participating school included 67.1% White, 12.7% Asian, 10.7% Black, 4.6% Hispanic, 4.6% Two or More Races, 0.3% Pacific Islander, and 0% American Indian students. It is also recorded that 22.4% of the students come from low-income families, and 10.4% of students have special needs.

The population of this study included the students and teachers of the sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade levels. Quantitative data was gathered from individuals at all three grade levels and included feedback from four sixth grade classes, one seventh grade class, one eighth-grade class, and one special education class. Qualitative data was collected from a subgroup within the sample: participating language arts teachers and six randomly selected students from each classroom.

After participating in conferences teachers and students completed a Likert scale survey using a Google Form. This survey included six questions asking participants to rate the effectiveness and ease of using each of the digital conferencing tools.

Qualitative data was collected using group interviews. All teachers who participated in the study were invited to participate in the group interview. A random sample of the students from participating sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade classes were selected to participate in a group interview. Responses made during the group interview were recorded using a recording device (phone, computer, etc.) and were captured digitally. A word and phrase frequency counter were used to identify a pattern of commonly used words used during the interviews.

Interviews were used to elicit more details about experiences using the digital conferencing tool. The questions used in the interview were open-ended and encouraged teachers and students to elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages to using the digital conferencing tool. The interview questions for the teachers and students have the same intent but were worded slightly different; the student questions were broken down into simpler, single step questions. The following research questions were used to address the perceptions about using digital conferencing tools to provide feedback during writing workshop.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of using a face-to-face conference to provide feedback during writing workshop?
2. What are students' perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of receiving teacher feedback in a face-to-face conference during writing workshop?
3. What are teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of using Screencastify when providing feedback during a writing workshop conference?
4. What are students' perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of receiving teacher feedback in Screencastify during a writing workshop conference?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Some terminology was consistently used throughout this research and, therefore, is briefly defined.

- Writing workshop is a model for structuring classroom instruction in an authentic, meaningful way. Although every writer's workshop is bound to look different, they generally include a mini lesson, time for individual writing, and the sharing of written work (Peha, 2003). Conferencing between peers, or between teacher and student, often occurs as part of the shared time of writer's workshop. This is a time for an individual student to receive feedback regarding their writing: style, flow, grammar, spelling, et cetera (Peha, 2003).
- Screencastify is an application that allows screencasting. During screencasting, users can provide audio-visual feedback to others while displaying what is on the user's computer screen.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions teachers and students had about the use of digital conferencing tools to provide feedback during a writing workshop conference. Teacher and student impressions about the traditional face-to-face conference were compared to the use of Screencastify.

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

The first research question was designed to determine teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of using a face-to-face conference to provide feedback during writing workshop.

The data revealed as shown in Table 1 that 71% of teachers had a positive perception of the effectiveness of this type of writing workshop conference. Descriptive analysis showed a mean of 4 and a standard deviation of approximately 0.82. Overall, the data shows that the participating teachers had a positive perception of the effectiveness of conducting face-to-face conferences during writing workshop.

With respect to the ease of face-to-face conferencing the data shows that 86% of teachers had a positive perception of the ease of this type of writing workshop conference. Descriptive analysis showed a mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of approximately 1.46 (Table 1). Overall, the data shows that the participating teachers had a positive perception of the ease of conducting face-to-face conferences during writing workshop.

Table 1. Teachers’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness and ease of using face-to-face conferences to provide feedback

Survey questions	Ratings		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
The effectiveness of providing feedback to students using a face-to-face	0%	29%	71%
The ease of using face-to-face conferences to provide feedback to students	0%	14%	86%

In addition, teachers identified many advantages and disadvantages to using face-to-face conferences. Three main themes emerged: the ability to ask students questions, the value of a back and forth conversation, and the use of positive feedback. Several teachers shared that they gained valuable information when they were able to ask questions and have a conversation with the student about their writing. These conversations were a formative assessment and a chance to determine what students needed help with to improve their writing. The teachers also agreed they were more likely to provide positive feedback in their words, tone, and nonverbal responses.

The teachers also acknowledged there were some disadvantages when using a face-to-face conference. The themes that emerged included, distractions, quality of feedback, time, and room. The teachers recognized that the classroom environment often causes distractions which can reduce the quality of the feedback. These distractions may keep the students from listening to the feedback or they may cause the teacher to lose their train of thought. In addition, if a teacher needs to correct a distraction in the classroom, they may be pulled away from the conference. Teachers also discussed the tendency to not have enough time to provide a quality conference to each student. Some teachers remedy this by having short conferences, while other teachers focus on having conferences with students who demonstrate a greater need for the conference. Lastly, teachers shared that some classrooms do not have a lot of space and make having a face-to-face conference cumbersome. Kneeling next to a student isn’t very comfortable and tends to make the conference shorter.

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

The second research question was designed to determine students’ perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of receiving teacher feedback in a face-to-face conference during writing workshop.

The data revealed as shown in Table 2, that 82% of students had a positive perception of the effectiveness of receiving this type of feedback during a writing workshop conference. Descriptive analysis showed a mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of approximately 0.77. Overall, the data shows that the participating students had a positive perception of the effectiveness of face-to-face conferences during writing workshop.

With respect to the ease of face-to-face conferencing the data shows that 80% of students had a positive perception of the ease of receiving this type of feedback during a writing workshop conference. Descriptive analysis showed a mean of 4.27 and a standard deviation of approximately 0.86 (Table 2). Overall, the data shows that the participating students had a positive perception of the ease of face-to-face conferences during writing workshop.

Table 2. Students’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness and ease of using a face-to-face conference to provide feedback

Survey questions	Ratings		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
The effectiveness of providing feedback to students using a face-to-face	0%	18%	82
The ease of providing feedback to students using a face-to-face	4%	16%	80%

Further, students recognized several advantages and disadvantages of using a face-to-face conference. Three main themes emerged: better quality and detailed feedback, conversational feedback, and the use of positive feedback. Several students shared that when they could have a conversation with the teacher, they were able to ask specific questions to meet their needs. They believed this provided them with better quality and more detailed feedback to help improve their writing. The students also felt their teacher tried to provide positive feedback during their conference. This was noted in the teacher’s word choice, tone, and facial expressions.

The students also acknowledged there were some disadvantages when using a face-to-face conference. The following themes emerged during the discussion: distractions, feedback not as effective, forgetting feedback, teacher not able to conference with everyone, and intimidation. The students recognized that the classroom environment often causes distractions which can reduce the quality of the feedback. These distractions interfered with the students’ ability to hear and comprehend the information the teacher was sharing during the conference. Students also noted that since there was no written record of the feedback, they often forgot the feedback and what they should be doing to improve their writing.

Another common statement was the frustration of not getting a writing conference. Students expressed the frustration of raising their hand and seeing that the teacher didn’t have time to get to their questions. They also felt that this made the teacher feel rushed as the conferences that were taking place, which made the teacher hurry and perhaps not provide as good of feedback. Finally, several students made comments relating to eavesdropping and privacy. When a teacher is having a face-to-face conference, the information being shared is often heard by others in the class. Some students reported that this intimidated them and discouraged them from asking questions or seeking help.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

The third research question was designed to determine teachers’ perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of using Screencastify when providing feedback during a writing workshop conference.

The data shows that 72% of teachers had a positive perception of this type of writing workshop conference. A descriptive analysis was performed, uncovering a mean of 3.7 and a standard deviation of approximately 0.95 (Table 3). Overall, the data shows that the participating teachers had a positive perception of the effectiveness of using Screencastify during writing workshop. Moreover, 72% of teachers had a positive perception of the ease of using Screencastify. A descriptive analysis was performed, uncovering a mean of 4 and a standard deviation of approximately 1.16 (Table 3). Overall, the data shows that the participating teachers had a positive perception of the ease of using Screencastify during writing workshop.

Table 3. Teachers’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness and ease of using Screencastify to provide feedback

Survey questions	Ratings		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
The effectiveness of providing feedback using Screencastify	14%	14%	72%
The ease of using providing feedback Using Screencastify	14%	14%	72%

Teachers pointed out several advantages and disadvantages using Screencastify conferences. There were three main themes that emerged: time to have more conferences, the ability to provide quality feedback, and feedback could reflect a positive tone. During the interview, the teachers discussed the value of having time to do more conferences and the time it takes to conduct a quality conference. Several teachers felt that the feedback they provided on Screencasting was generally more thought out and thorough. Since the Screencasting was conducted outside of the language arts classroom, teachers found they were able to conduct more conferences overall. Teachers also felt they could be animated and positive in their screencasts which would help the students feel that the feedback was more positive.

The teachers also acknowledged that there were some disadvantages when using Screencastify for conferences. The following themes emerged during the discussion: background noises during recording and the lack of back and forth conversation. The teachers shared the issues they had with background noises when they were recording their screencast. One teacher’s computer was very noisy, which caused problems with the recording

process. Others discussed problems with dogs barking or the realization that they were saying “um” and “uh” repeatedly. This caused the teachers to re-record several times, until they decided that the screencasts didn’t have to be perfect. The teachers again explained the dilemmas that occur when there is no back and forth conversation with the student. The teachers brainstormed what it would be like to have the students respond with their own Screencastify to the teacher. However, the teachers didn’t feel like this would be much better since it would not create a *real-time* conversation.

RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

The fourth research question was designed to determine students’ perceptions about the effectiveness and ease of receiving teacher feedback in Screencastify during a writing workshop conference.

The data revealed that 82% of students had a positive perception of the effectiveness of receiving this type of feedback during a writing workshop conference. Descriptive analysis showed a mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 1.05. Overall, the data shows that the participating students had a positive perception of the effectiveness of receiving feedback using Screencastify during writing workshop. In addition, the data indicated that 84% of students had a positive perception of the ease of receiving this type of feedback during a writing workshop conference. Descriptive analysis revealed a mean of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 0.95 (Table 4). Overall, the data shows that the participating students had a positive perception of the ease of receiving feedback through Screencastify during writing workshop.

Table 4. Students’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness and ease of using Screencastify to provide feedback

Survey questions	Ratings		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
The effectiveness of providing feedback using Screencastify	7%	11%	82%
The ease of using providing feedback Using Screencastify	5%	11%	84%

Students noted numerous advantages and disadvantages for of using Screencastify conference. There were four themes that emerged: better quality feedback, better understanding of what to do with the feedback, feedback was not intimidating, positive feedback was provided. Students acknowledged that they liked the idea of working with new technology. They also found several benefits from using Screencastify. Resoundingly, they felt that the feedback the teachers provided was better feedback and they understood how to use the feedback. Students elaborated by sharing that they felt like the teachers weren’t as rushed on the screencast and that the information they provided was more detailed. In addition, they preferred seeing their own document and having the teacher use the pointer to show exactly where they were providing the feedback. The ability to put in headphones and be the only person to hear the feedback from the teacher was also preferred. Several students shared that they enjoyed hearing their teacher’s comments and the tone in the teacher’s voice as they were providing the comments. They felt the tone was positive and helpful. The tone and privacy of the comments made the students feel less intimidated to receive the feedback on their writing.

The students also acknowledged there were some disadvantages when using Screencastify. The following themes emerged during the discussion: distracting noises, feedback took longer to use, and no back and forth conversation. The students noticed the distracting background noises that the teachers mentioned in their interview. Some students found the noises interesting and focused on trying to figure out what was making the noise, instead of focusing on the feedback. The students also didn’t like the amount of time it took to use the feedback provided with Screencastify. The students felt the teachers were providing a lot more information and, thus, they had a lot more to correct. They also found having to pause the recording, fix the problem, and then continue the recording a little cumbersome. Finally, the students also recognized the lack of back and forth conversation with the teacher. They said they like being able to ask the teacher a question when they have it, rather than having to wait.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions teachers and students have when using digital conferencing tools to provide feedback during a writing workshop conference. This included what teachers and

students perceived as the advantages, disadvantages, concerns, and suggestions surrounding the use of Screencastify as compared to traditional face-to-face conferencing.

FACE TO FACE CONFERENCING

Overall, the data suggests that teachers and students had similar perceptions regarding the use of face-to-face conferencing. The outcome of the survey showed that the perceptions of both teachers and students was positive regarding both the effectiveness and ease of using face-to-face conferencing, although there was some variance in the data. While a minimal amount of previous quantitative data was found on this topic, the results obtained as part of this research corresponded with the qualitative data collected during the group interviews.

Teachers and students both discussed the importance of having a conversation when providing and receiving feedback during a writing conference. The consensus among teachers was that a back and forth conversation made the conference more productive and authentic. Some teachers felt better equipped to provide feedback when stopping at a student's desk. They believed a conversation was an easy way to assist students in improving their writing. In addition, having a conversation in real-time provided feedback based on what the students were currently working on and thus made the information more valuable to the students. Past research supports this belief. Kelley (2003) noted that conferencing is most beneficial when it is a conversation between the teacher and student, with both parties listening and speaking.

Many students also expressed the value of having a conversation during the face-to-face conference. One student noted that when they had a conversation with the teacher, "I could ask questions about the comments the teacher provided and get quick answers." The importance of this type of response was also articulated in research conducted by Algrim (2013) which identified that students "crave immediate feedback" from their teachers. Students also asserted that conversations provided an opportunity to ask questions about the feedback they received. A student explained, "I can have a conversation between me and my teacher instead of just listening to what they are saying or reading what they typed and then trying to fix my writing." Students' statements revealed that they also valued the real-time conversation. Many comments related to discussing what they are currently working on and receive feedback on that instead of getting feedback from their teacher on something they worked on a couple days ago. It was obvious from the comments of both students and teachers that the ability to have a conversation when providing and receiving feedback was considered very valuable.

While teachers and students acknowledged the benefit of having a conversation during a face-to-face conference, they also recognized the amount of time it requires. Most teachers expressed frustrations regarding trying to meet with all the students who needed assistance. This obstacle was well documented in prior research as well. Research by Algrim (2013), Christopher, Ewald, and Giangrasso (2000) and Smithson (2008) concluded that writing conferences are valuable, but time-consuming, and result in teachers having very limited time to confer with students. A few teachers shared that due to time constraints, they often must choose which students to spend their time with during class. This may mean that students who struggle more in writing receive more feedback and time from the teacher than students who tend to do well.

Students also expressed frustration about the lack of time to meet with their teacher. As noted earlier in Algrim's (2013) research, students "crave immediate feedback." Thus, it was not surprising when several students echoed the frustrations of raising their hand to meet with their teacher only to find themselves having to wait. One student summarized the problem as, "If you're one of the people waiting for the teacher, then you end up waiting for a long time. The teacher might get sucked into a conversation while there are other kids waiting. Finally, you just give up." Another student added, "Or even worse, you wait forever and then the teacher begins walking toward you. Then, someone suddenly puts their hand up in front of yours and steals the teacher away from you." The anger and resentment in not getting help in a timely manner was tempered with students understanding that the teachers were trying to get to all the students. They realized this was a flaw in the conferencing method instead of a problem with the teacher.

SCREENCASTIFY FEEDBACK

Overall, the data suggests that teachers and students had similar perceptions of both the effectiveness and ease of conferencing using Screencastify. The perceptions tended to be relatively positive, although there was some variance in the data.

Teachers and students found a variety of advantages and disadvantages to using Screencastify to provide and receive feedback during a writing workshop. During the interviews, teachers and students stressed the importance of having a conversation during conferences. Both groups felt the best conversations took place during the face-to-face conferences. Losing the back and forth of comments and the ability to ask and answer

questions in real-time was a definite disadvantage of Screencastify. One student described it by saying, “You can’t just talk to the teacher and explain to them why you did something, and you also can’t ask them questions.” One student did note that it was possible for the students to use Screencastify to send a screencast back to the teacher. This fact surprised several of the students; however, they still felt this would take too much time to do and then they would still have to wait for a response.

Teachers and students did appreciate the fact that teachers could provide feedback more frequently because of Screencastify. The dilemma of having many students to conference with and not enough class time to do it in was not a problem with Screencastify. Teachers were able to create the screencast outside of class and give students a link to watch and listen to the feedback. Since conferencing was no longer confined to just class time, teachers and students felt that more conferences could be conducted, thus providing students with more feedback. This finding could provide a new understanding of how to deal with the obstacles created by time-consuming conferences as note in Smithson’s (2008) research. Smithson noted a need for studying time-saving measures when using the workshop model. Screencastify could provide an answer to this problem.

With respect to the positive nature of Screencastify conferences, several teachers expressed that they could share their excitement for what the student wrote during a Screencastify and provide more positive comments. One teacher explained this by saying,

Writing is such a personal thing – you’re sharing your inner thoughts and your words with the reader. I know I get so busy in the classroom trying to bounce around to everyone that my love for the student’s writing doesn’t necessarily show through. Instead, I am all business trying to quickly get through as many conferences as possible. But when I used Screencastify to provide my feedback, I found myself laughing, and smiling, and expressing my interest and appreciation for what they student had written. I felt more positive about that type of conference and I think the student did too.

This thought was echoed by many of the teachers. Indeed, the students did feel that conferences provided with Screencastify were generally more positive and less intimidating. Several students shared they felt more comfortable receiving feedback through Screencastify. They noted that there were more positives provided during a screencast and as one student stated, “I could hear the tone and emotion in my teacher’s voice which helped me understand that the comments were not mean, but meant to be helpful instead.” Several students also shared that they felt more comfortable getting the feedback through Screencastify. The student explored this thought by sharing that they could get the information without the awkward or intimidating feeling of having to look at you teacher and hearing them tell what they need to work on. They also appreciated that feedback provided with Screencastify was private. They wouldn’t feel the embarrassment of other people hearing about their errors like they do in face-to-face conferences.

Both teachers and students believed that the Screencastify conference provided quality feedback. Several teachers shared that during the creation of the screencast, they didn’t feel as rushed as they had with the face-to-face conferences. They were able to spend more time thinking and talking through the feedback without any interruptions. Subsequently, this created detailed feedback that included asking students questions to promote thinking.

Students also noticed the thorough feedback provided when their teacher used Screencastify. They felt they received “a lot more detail and good information.” One student shared, “My teacher really told me what they liked and why they like it instead of just saying *Good Job*.” The students agreed that the teachers could spend time explaining what was wrong so they could fix their writing and make it better. An eighth-grade student explained,

During face-to-face conferences, the teacher is too busy because she has lots of kids to get to, so you don’t get a good quality analysis with that type of conference. But with Screencastify, I get so much more and better-quality comments from her because she isn’t so rushed.

This finding supports previous research by Thompson (2012), who asserted that feedback delivered through screencasts provides more in-depth explanations and creates a more personal experience than traditional written comments.

Most students agreed that using the feedback from a Screencastify conference required more time than using other conferencing methods. Students found that they were revising and editing their writing as they were going through a screencast. They weren’t sure if this made it just feel like it took longer, or if it took longer. One student explained, “It can be kind of annoying to use Screencastify because you have to pause it, fix your writing, un-pause, and do that over and over again.” Other students shared that using the feedback in

Screencastify took more time because the teachers were providing more feedback than they did with the other conferencing types. It was interesting to note, that even though the students felt it took more time to use the feedback, none of the students reported ignoring the feedback, as they had with the other two conferencing types. This is similar to the results Lunt and Carran (2010) reported in their research. They found that students were “ten times more likely to open audio feedback than written feedback” (as cited in Leibold & Schwarz, 2015, p. 43).

While students may have found using the feedback from Screencastify more cumbersome, they reported that they had a better understanding of the feedback when the teacher used Screencastify. During the interviews, several students shared that the combination of: seeing their writing on the screen, watching the pointer moving around on their writing, and hearing their teacher elaborate on comments, really helped them understand how to improve their writing. They also noted that with Screencastify, they were able to listen to the feedback repeatedly until they completely understood what the teacher was saying. One student shared, “If my mind started to wander during a face-to-face conference, I would have missed the information, but if that happened during Screencastify, I could just go back and listen to it again.” Others shared that hearing and seeing the feedback helped them stay focused and understand the feedback better.

One of the implications from the research is to help teachers consider which type of conferencing method to use based on the type of feedback necessary at the time. This study and past research indicated the difficulty with finding enough time to conduct a conference in class. The research also determined that having a conversation created the most effective feedback. Thus, teachers may want to examine what type of feedback a student needs as they are looking over a student’s writing. If the student is at the beginning stages of their writing piece and appears to be on track, then perhaps a face-to-face conference is not necessary and using a digital tool would be a better, time-saving option. However, if the teacher is confused by the student’s writing or notices that they need significant help, using a face-to-face conference might provide better feedback. Teachers can save class time for conferences that would be best served through a face-to-face conversation, and then provide feedback to the remaining students using digital tools outside of class time. Organizing conferences in this manner would be a better use of the teacher’s time and could provide a solution to the overall dilemma of conferencing.

Finally, it would be beneficial to learn whether a student’s academic ability, social-emotional needs, or learning style would impact the effectiveness of a conferencing method. This information might compel teachers to adjust the conferencing method to one best suited for the student. Thus, combining further research with this study can provide a better overall perspicacity of how teachers can provide feedback in a way that is most beneficial to student learning.

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