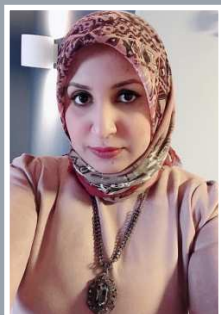


TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED FORMATIVE FEEDBACK: A CATALYST FOR STUDENTS' SELF-REGULATION



Mona Mersal

is the IATEFL TEASIG Scholarship winner for 2019. She works as an EFL instructor at the American University in Cairo, where she is also an MA candidate. In addition, she is an IELTS trainer at the British Council. Her research interests include teacher training, education leadership, and language assessment.

m.s.mersal@xed.aucegypt.edu

Feedback can be helpful or harmful depending on how it is conveyed (Archer & Hughes, 2011 as cited in Chan, Konrad, Gonzalez, Peters, & Ressa., 2014, p. 100). Effective formative feedback plays a vital role in developing students' self-regulation in the 21st century. However, teachers' feedback to students is not the only means of providing students with feedback since effective formative feedback practices involve both peer-assessment and self-assessment. In this way, students are able to take responsibility for their learning in order to develop self-regulation as well as 21st century skills. For this, teachers should help students develop the skills, knowledge and expertise required to succeed in work and life today, providing their learners with communicative, engaging, interactive and motivating learning environments where they can develop these competencies.

Current shifts in education towards using problem-, inquiry- and task-based learning as well as aligning assessment with teaching have led to changing the roles of both teachers and students. Students are the ones who should be responsible for their learning, while teachers should provide them with meaningful learning opportunities that help them enhance these competencies. However, little is known by many teachers about how to provide students with efficient formative feedback that helps them bolster their self-regulation in today's world. In this article, the aspects and functions of effective formative feedback in adult EFL classes are examined. Moreover, I shed light on how to provide students with effective feedback that assists them in building up their self-regulation and 21st century skills using two technologies, VoiceThread and Google Docs.

Aspects of feedback

Feedback involves three substantial aspects that should be taken into consideration by educators while providing students with feedback as they have a key influence on building up students' meta-cognitive skills and self-regulated learning strategies (Clark, 2012). The first aspect is formative feedback, which refers to information conveyed to students about their performance by which they adjust their learning practices to promote their achievement (Andersson & Palm, 2017; Brown, Peterson, & Yao, 2016). Its aim is to engage students with meta-cognitive strategies including setting learning expectations, monitoring learning, and reflecting on their performance. Such strategies play a key role in developing self-regulated learners who can take responsibility for their own learning. In order for feedback to be formative, it should not be given to students in the form of praise or punishment, but as feedback on how to improve their performance more efficiently (Clark, 2012). "The discursive landscape is punctuated by three question categories, each of which is formative and self-regulatory in nature: (a) Feed-up: Where are we going? This concerns itself with the sharing of learning objectives; (b) Feedback: How are we going? A question which monitors and assesses learning progression, either for a specific task or more generally; (c) Feed-forward: Where to next? This question relates to the next steps required for improvement on a specific task/project or more generally across time" (Clark, 2012, p. 211).

Another important aspect of feedback is synchronous feedback, which is concerned with providing students with tasks that allow them to receive immediate feedback. Such immediate feedback helps students to be more

engaged and enhances their performance. The third aspect is internal and external feedback. Formative feedback practices involve the process of monitoring, which allows learners to generate internal feedback and respond to external feedback (Clark, 2012).

Functions of formative feedback

Formative feedback plays a substantial role in effective teaching and learning. Students learn in a more efficient way when their performance is linked to feedback (Pereira, Flores, Simao, & Barros, 2016). Moreover, feedback boosts learners' confidence and motivation. This is simply because teachers acknowledge students' efforts and accomplishments while providing students with feedback which helps them to be more confident and motivated to learn (Yuan & Kim, 2015). Furthermore, developing students' self-efficacy and achievement is another essential function of feedback, specifically when feedback is positive. Also, the meta-cognitive strategies utilized in formative feedback practices result in promoting students' self-regulation (Brown, Peterson, & Yao, 2016; Yuan & Kim, 2015).

Formative feedback utilizing free technologies

There are free technologies that teachers can use to enhance the effectiveness of the feedback they provide their students with, one of which is VoiceThread. Users can create free accounts at <https://voicethread.com/> (see Figure 1). VoiceThread furthers the effectiveness of formative feedback as students can upload multiple types of files (e.g., images, word documents, PowerPoint presentations, videos). In addition, they can add

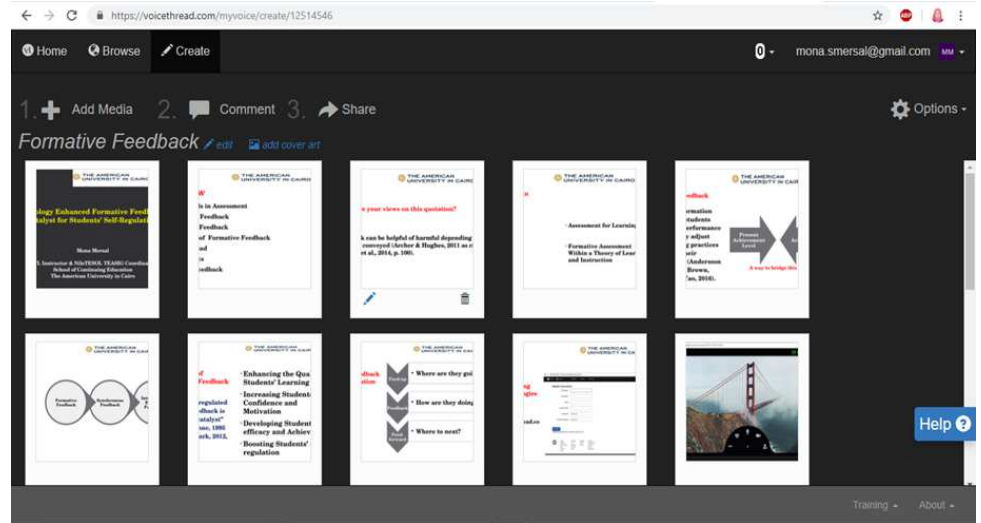


Figure 1. A screenshot of VoiceThread

comments via text, audio files and video files. Another merit of VoiceThread is that as soon as students post comments, other users receive email notifications. This enables students to share and receive timely feedback, and interact with their teacher and colleagues easily through virtual dialogues. As a result, they can act on the feedback received by modifying their performance (Yuan & Kim, 2015).

Google Docs is another free technology that can be utilized to provide students with effective formative feedback (see Figure 2). It enables timely feedback via email. Additionally, students receive feedback from multiple resources, not only from their teachers, but also from their peers. It also assists them in following up on the feedback received.

Effective formative feedback

There are many factors that should be taken into consideration while providing students with feedback.

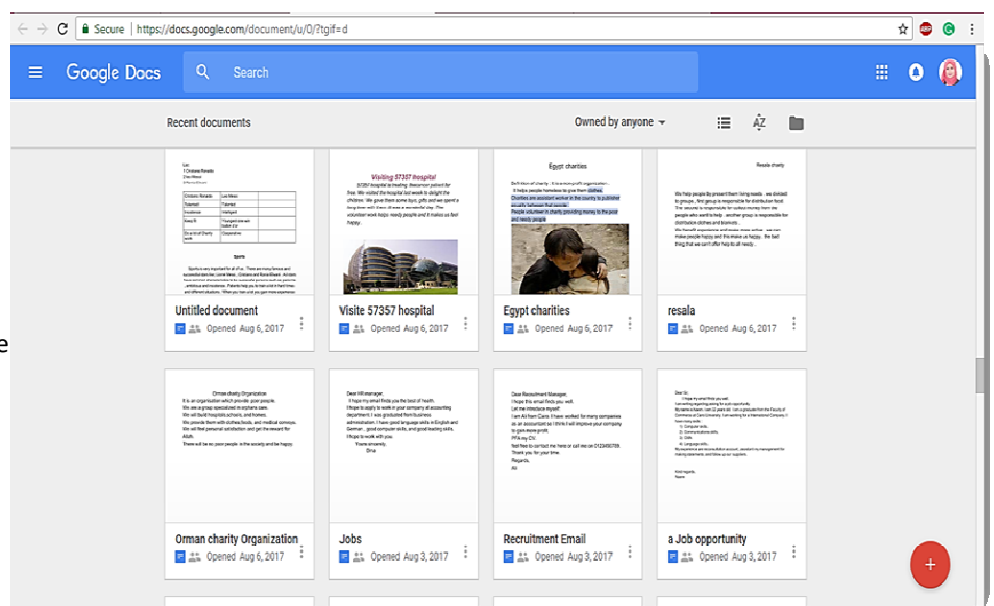


Figure 2. A screenshot of Google Docs

First, formative feedback can be more efficient when teachers focus on success. They should acknowledge students' efforts and achievements by providing them with positive content-specific feedback. Second, learners should receive immediate feedback so that they can act on the feedback received to adjust their learning. Third, teachers need to provide their learners with clear specific feedback rather than general feedback. Specific feedback informs learners about their achievements towards the learning expectations and what is needed to bridge the gap between their present level of achievement and the desired one; for this, a clear understanding of the learning targets by both teachers and learners is required. Fourth, teachers should gather evidence of

students' learning in relation to these targets and use this evidence in making instructional adjustments to promote further student learning. Finally, educators should create a feedback-rich environment by creating a risk-free, feedback-safe classroom in a student-focused environment and by increasing their active responding (Chan et al., 2014).

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