

Innovative Practices in Instructor E-feedback: A Case Study of E-feedback given in Three Linguistic Courses during the COVID 19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the instructor's electronic feedback practices during the COVID 19 Pandemic in terms of the nature of the content of e-feedback, the formulation, the challenges, and the multimodal nature of the instructor's e-feedback. This study used a qualitative case study to obtain data from the instructor's e-feedback in three linguistic courses as delivered, practiced by the single English language instructor. The instructor's e-feedback via Blackboard and WhatsApp platform and the follow-up interview were analyzed qualitatively. The findings indicate that (1) the highest number of instructor's e-feedback focused on global issues as compared to local issues, (2) the instructor composed his e-feedback in the form of eight main categories: explanations, suggestions, clarifications, questioning, repetitions, statements, praises, and commands, (3) the instructor used more screencasts for providing e-feedback, followed by written and audio modes respectively. The thematic analysis (4) revealed the instructor's positive impression on providing e-feedback through these interactive modes (written, audio, and screencast) and a range of challenging issues such as students' preference issues, technical issues, timing issues, financial and areal issues. This study is significant because it provides us with a comprehensive picture of the patterns of the feedback content, the formulation of the e-feedback, the multimodality of the instructor's e-feedback, and the significant issues that emerged from the instructor's e-feedback practices. However, further research should include a relative group of instructors to determine the impact of e-feedback on learners.

Keywords: Blackboard, Covid-19 Pandemic, e-feedback, linguistics, screencast, WhatsApp

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Introduction

The outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic presents significant challenges for societies worldwide, with significant and complicated implications for higher education institutions, primarily in the field of English language learning and teaching (Draissi & Yong, 2020). During the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic and beyond, the direct shift to online education has fully emerged as an inevitable option in all schools and universities (Bao, 2020; Basilaia & Kvavadze 2020). A fully online course usually requires an extensive design of the lesson plan, instructional tools such as audio and video content, and technical support teams (Bao, 2020).

Instructors, regardless of their level of experience and training, generally find it challenging to produce and deliver clear, helpful, and timely feedback and actively engage learners with it (Stern & Solomon, 2006; Lunt & Curran, 2010). The integration of technology in the education system has broadened the way instructors provide electronic feedback (e-feedback) to their second/foreign language learners. Computer and human generated-mediated feedback can be delivered electronically, synchronously, and asynchronously (Ene & Upton, 2014, 2018; Goldstein, 2006). Generally, instructor feedback has conceived as information provided in a dialogic way by an instructor to the learners (Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020). Recent studies have emphasized the need for e-feedback due to its effectiveness (AbuSeileek & Abualsha'r, 2014; Ene & Upton, 2018; Henderson, Ryan, & Phillips, 2019; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Chang, Kelly, Satar & Strobl, 2017).

Instructors are increasingly relying on various electronic tools in providing e-feedback to their students, Google Docs (Alharbi, 2019; Saeed & Qunayeer 2020), screencasts (Bakla, 2020; Cunningham, 2019; Tseng & Yeh, 2019), track changes in the word processor (AbuSeileek, & Abualsha'r, 2014), WhatsApp (Susanti & Tarmuji, 2016); Microsoft word and screencast (Cavaleri, Kawaguchi, Di Biase & Power, 2019). However, providing feedback is a complex process; instructors need to determine if revisions are required for content or organization (Elola & Oskoz, 2016).

Studies that explored the written and audio-visual e-feedback have received little attention (Mahoney, Macfarlane, & Ajjawi, 2019). However, instructors are the ones who determine how to use the e-feedback; instructors' e-feedback has been so scarcely studied (Ene & Upton, 2018). It suggests that instructors' e-feedback needs to be explored in terms of the patterns of instructors' e-feedback during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study is significant because it provides us with a comprehensive picture of patterns of the feedback content, the formulation of the e-feedback, the multimodality of the instructor's e-feedback, and the issues that emerged from the instructor's e-feedback practices. With the growing use of distance learning in teaching and learning of English language during the COVID-19 Pandemic, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the nature of content issues addressed via the instructor's e-feedback in the three linguistic courses?
- (2) In what ways does the instructor formulate the e-feedback in the three linguistic courses?
- (3) What is the multimodal nature of instructor e-feedback in the three linguistic courses?

(4) What are the significant issues that emerged from the instructor's e-feedback practices in the three linguistics courses?

More specifically, this case study presents findings of an analysis of one instructor's e-feedback given in three linguistic courses (sociolinguistics, phonetics, historical linguistics) in terms of the nature of content issues addressed via instructor's e-feedback, the formulation of the e-feedback, the multimodal nature of instructor's e-feedback and the significant issues emerged from the instructor's e-feedback practices.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

E-feedback has grounded on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. The sociocultural theory sees feedback to be critical, and yet given that feedback is seen as a process of interaction between instructors and learners (Lantolf, 2006). Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding covers how feedback is delivered through the dialogue between instructor and learner. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) classified some features of effective scaffolding in a second language context to help instructors provide effective scaffolding. They suggested that scaffolded assistance should be offered when needed and removed immediately as the student can perform the task, provided according to changing proficiency needs of the learner, and; must be given in conversational interaction; both instructor and student must be actively involved.

Instructor feedback is a kind of scaffold when it is offered dialogically and constructively to the learners (Alharbi, 2019). Instructors' feedback is also known as a scaffolding mechanism in which instructors support language learners to recognize the several issues and errors in their tasks (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). E-feedback is known as computer-mediated corrective feedback and technology-supported feedback refers to feedback that is conveyed using various technological tools (Ene & Upton 2014; Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020).

Supportive Technological Tools of E-feedback in an Online Environment

Electronically providing e-feedback on student tasks via various electronic devices has become popular among language instructors, particularly in university contexts (Ene & Upton, 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Saeed & Ghazali, 2019; Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020). The multimodal options for e-feedback have developed from written to audio, video, and screencast feedback on foreign and second language (Chang et al., 2017). Language instructors have a wide range of new ways of developing and providing language learners with e-feedback, such as Google Docs (Alharbi, 2019; Neumann & Kopcha, 2019; Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020). These studies suggest that Google Docs can serve as an effective channel for instructor-learner and learner-learner interactions.

Other studies reported other ways for providing e-feedback such as Blackboard LMS (Ai, 2017; Basabrin, 2019), Wiki and Facebook (Demirbilek, 2015); blogs (Arslan, 2013; Dippold, 2009; Yaku & Aydin, 2015), WhatsApp (Susanti & Tarmuji, 2016), track changes (AbuSeileek, & Abualsha'r, 2014), discussion boards (Guasch, Espasa, & Martinez-Melo, 2018; London, 2019).

Previous research on instructor e-feedback Ali (2016); Elola & Oskoz (2016); Harper, Green & Fernandez-Toro (2018); and Orlando (2016) has focused on providing e-feedback via screencast. The majority of instructors valued multimodal screencast as more detailed lends itself to higher-level conceptual issues (Orlando, 2016), promoted more informal and supportive communication (Borup, West, & Thomas, 2015), more time-efficient, and promoting quality (Henderson & Phillips, 2015).

Bakla (2020) provided e-feedback via a three-format, namely screencasts, a free audio add-on (Kaizena), Written Feedback as marginal comments. The SL learners did not favor a particular feedback mode, but they highlighted the potential benefits and drawbacks of each mode.

Audio feedback has proven to be favored by both instructors and students. Instructors delivered e-feedback via recording audio to their students' tasks on global issues rather than local concerns since the audio mode explains macro-level issues more freely compared with written comments (Cavanaugh & Song, 2014).

Additionally, Cavanaugh and Song (2014) reported that lack of training in using audio in distance class generated challenges in delivering e-feedback. Higher word counts generated via audio feedback, and more comments made for explaining misunderstanding, giving praise, showing good practice and justification marks (Chalmers, MacCallum, Mowat, & Fulton, 2014); providing audio feedback was found to be more detailed, supportive, and personalized compared to the written feedback (Gould & Day, 2013).

There are also other studies (Alvarez, Espasa, & Guasch, 2012; Cavaleri et al., 2019; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Ene & Upton, 2014; Harper et al., 2018) that illustrated the various patterns of instructors' e-feedback. Shariq (2020) reported that the active use of corrective feedback improves learners' perception and attitudes towards the English language skills. Cavaleri et al. (2019) employed directive, suggestion, explanation, model, question, praise, and interpersonal feedback. Alharbi (2019) reported five types of e-feedback; question, statement, suggestion, directive, and correction; suggestions, explanations, examples, and advice (Harper et al., 2018), suggestions, clarifications, statements, praises, and commands (Elola & Oskoz, 2016), directive, explicit, principled and systematic (Ene & Upton, 2014), suggestions and questions (Alvarez et al., 2012).

Methods

The present study used a qualitative case study which is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam 1988, p. 16), to obtain data that enriches our understanding of the instructor e-feedback in three linguistic courses as delivered, practiced by the English language instructor.

Settings and Participants

The study was conducted in the college of sciences and arts, Methnab, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. The instructor holds a Ph.D. degree in linguistics; he has been teaching English and Linguistics for eight years. The instructor exchanges e-feedback with third-year university students at the Department of English and Translation. Their ages range from 21-23

years old. As far as the number of students is concerned, there were (14) students enrolled in Sociolinguistics, (12) in Historical Linguistics, and (25) in Phonetics.

In the current study, the same instructor taught all of the three linguistic courses, namely: Sociolinguistics (ENG-365); Phonetics (ENG-354); Historical Linguistics (ENG-358), during the second semester in 2019-2020 academic year. The instructor and the students belong to different cultural backgrounds. Hence, the instructor, a native speaker of the Urdu language, whereas all of the participants were English learners whose first language was Arabic.

After the Pandemic began to spread in the Kingdom, the online teaching sessions started in March 2020 which ended in May 2020. Thus, the online teaching sessions ran for six weeks (three hours a week). The electronic platform was the only solution for the academic and other different activities during the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic.

All three linguistics courses were delivered using Blackboard, a learning management system. The instructor determined some delivery changes and created three WhatsApp groups for exchanging the e-feedback due to the restricted time of online classes. The students feel comfortable asking questions, clarifications, and exchanging e-feedback with their instructor in the WhatsApp group. The instructor synchronically as well as asynchronously provided e-feedbacks through Blackboard, WhatsApp and e-mail platforms, and he played an important role as a facilitator, source and provider of the e-feedback.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study used two types of data: instructor e-feedback practices and semi-structured interviews. The data was obtained from the three WhatsApp groups, e-mail, and Blackboard platform. The data obtained from instructor e-feedback in the three linguistic courses, namely: Sociolinguistics (ENG-365) which covers the topics related to the relationship between language and society; Phonetics (ENG-354) which enables students to understand, describe and use all segmental and suprasegmental features of English and Historical Linguistics (ENG-358) which introduces students to the nature of language change during the second semester in the 2019-2020 academic year.

The instructor delivered e-feedback via three modes (written, audio, and screencast) in the form of written feedback via WhatsApp messages, Blackboard chat-box and posts, and e-mails; audio feedbacks include WhatsApp voice messages and blackboard sessions; while screencast feedbacks include Blackboard sessions conducted for online classes.

The data were analyzed using a qualitative analysis. The data of instructor e-feedback was analyzed in terms of its types, content, and delivery mode. The instructor's e-feedback type was categorized as the feedback provided (i.e., explanations, suggestions, clarifications, questioning, repetitions, statements, praises, or commands). The instructor's delivery mode of the feedback was categorized as (written, audio, and screencast), whereas the content of e-feedback was categorized as (global vs. local issues).

The instructor also participated in a semi-structured interview that was guided by a set of open-ended questions. These questions addressed the issues related to the instructor's experience

in online teaching, his preference for delivery mode, and how it affected the way he constructs the feedback, content of e-feedback, type of e-feedback as well as challenging issues emerging from instructor e-feedback practices. Finally, categories mentioned above of instructor e-feedback were measured using a simple quantitative analysis, including the number and percentage of each category.

Findings

This section presents the findings obtained from this case study into three main conceptual themes: the nature of content issues addressed via instructor e-feedback, patterns of constructing the instructor e-feedback, and the multimodal nature of instructor e-feedback. In addition, four themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview.

The Nature of Content Issues Addressed via Instructor E-feedback

Based on the qualitative analysis of instructor e-feedback, the instructor uses WhatsApp messages, Blackboard chat-box, posts, screencasts, and e-mail for teaching linguistic courses and exchanging e-feedback with his students. The analysis of the instructor's e-feedback indicates that he exchanged e-feedback focusing on various content issues in linguistic courses. The qualitative study that started on the foci of feedback revealed that the different electronic platforms such as; Blackboard and WhatsApp helped the instructor to target issues in students' activities in the three linguistic courses at the global and local levels. The instructor e-feedback concentrated on global (content, structure, and organization) and local issues (vocabulary and grammar).

As shown in Table one, the nature of content issues played an important role in promoting instructor-learner e-feedback exchange in the three linguistic courses. In other words, the quantification of the instructor e-feedback exchanged via Blackboard and WhatsApp presents a fascinating insight into the intensive engagement of the instructor and the learners in feedback on linguistic courses. The instructor provided a of total 402 e-feedback comments on the three linguistic courses; sociolinguistics, phonetics, and historical linguistics, via Blackboard and WhatsApp.

First, the findings show that the instructor e-feedback addressing global issues (313, 78%) in students' activities in the three linguistic courses, such as content, structure, and organization, outnumbered the feedback focusing on local issues such as vocabulary and grammar (89, 22%). Therefore, most of the instructor e-feedback concentrates on global issues.

Second, the below instructor e-feedback exchanges (402 total) were also quantified to determine the amount and percentage of e-feedback exchanged in each linguistic course. The findings show that among the three linguistic courses, the instructor provided the highest number of e-feedback in Phonetics (206, 51%), (163, 41%) of which focused on global issues. In contrast (43, 11%) focused on local issues in phonetics.

Furthermore, this is followed by sociolinguistics in which the instructor provided a total number of (100, 25%) e-feedback distributed as global issues (75, 19%) and local issues (25, 6%). Finally, the Historical linguistic got the lowest e-feedback provided by the instructor as

indicated by the total number of instructor e-feedback (96, 24%) that focused on global (75, 19%) and local issues in Historical Linguistics (21, 5%).

The above findings indicate that the highest number of instructor e-feedback focused on global issues compared to local issues in all three linguistic courses. This means that due to the type and the content of the linguistic courses, instructor and learners tended to focus on global issues.

Table 1. *Number and percentage of content issues addressed via instructor e-feedback*

Foci of feedback	Sociolinguistics	Phonetics	Historical Linguistics	Total
Global issues	75 (19%)	163 (41%)	75 (19%)	313 (78%)
Local Issues	25 (6%)	43 (11%)	21 (5%)	89 (22%)
Total	100 (25%)	206 (51%)	96 (24%)	402 (100%)

The following excerpt presented in Table two shows an example of instructor e-feedback targeted on the content issues; global and local issues:

Table 2. *Sample of the instructor e-feedback focusing on the content issues*

Foci of feedback	Instructor e-feedback
Global Issues	Instructor: Your assignment is missing the conclusion and reference section. Watch the lecture again and arrange your assignment as discussed in the lecture.
Local Issues	Instructor: Rewrite the answer to the fourth question, as there is an incorrect use of verbs in the passive sentences.

Patterns of Constructing the Instructor E-feedback

The qualitative analysis of the instructor e-feedback shows that the instructor composed his e-feedback in the form of eight main categories: explanations, suggestions, clarifications, questioning, repetitions, statements, praises, and commands. As Table three illustrates, quantification of the way instructor e-feedback presents a fascinating insight into the various ways used by the instructor in replying to the comments of his students across the three linguistic courses. The findings also show that among the three linguistic courses, the instructor constructed the highest number of e-feedback in Phonetics (206, 51%), followed by (100, 25%) in Sociolinguistics and finally (96, 24%) e-feedback in Historical Linguistic.

It is evident that explanations scored as the most frequently e-feedback formulated by the instructor (68, 17%), followed by commands (57, 14%), questioning (56, 14%), repetitions (55, 14%), praises (52, 13%), clarifications (47, 12%), suggestions (42, 10%) and finally statements (25, 6%).

This finding clarifies how the instructor constructed and varied his e-feedback according to the nature of the issue(s) provided by the students in the three linguistic courses. The way the instructor composes the e-feedback plays a role in creating opportunities for instructor-learner collaboration.

Table 3. Number and percentage of instructor's construction of e-feedback

Type of feedback	Sociolinguistics	Phonetics	Historical Linguistics	Total
Explanations	20 (5%)	32 (8%)	16 (4%)	68 (17%)
Suggestions	12 (3%)	21 (5%)	9 (2%)	42 (10%)
Clarifications	11(2%)	26 (6%)	10 (2%)	47 (12%)
Questioning	10 (2%)	31 (8%)	15 (4%)	56 (14%)
Repetitions	13 (3%)	29 (7%)	13 (3%)	55 (14%)
Statements	9 (2%)	13 (3%)	3 (1%)	25 (6%)
Praises	13 (3%)	24 (6%)	15 (4%)	52 (13%)
Commands	12 (3%)	30 (7%)	15 (4%)	57 (14%)
Total	100 (25%)	206 (51%)	96 (24%)	402 (100%)

Table four below illustrates samples of the various types of e-feedback formulated by the instructor targeted the eight main categories:

Table 4 Sample of instructor's various types of e-feedback

Type of feedback	Instructor Feedback
Explanations	The second part of the assignment deals with the transcription of Arabic text which you did not do carefully. You need to work more on Arabic fricative sounds.
Suggestions	If you compare these Arabic sounds concerning articulation, you will more clearly know how they are different.
Clarifications	Let me clarify your mistake. English loanword in Arabic is cream, not 'sukkar.'
Questioning	Before I move to the next topic, can you tell me the difference between accent and dialect?
Repetitions	Your answer is partially correct. Let me explain to you again; Historical linguistics deals with language change over time, or we can say language development, while the History of linguistics deals with the development of linguistics.
Statements	Bilingualism is a language policy which enforces the status of a language as a national or official language. False statement
Praises	Well done! Keep it up!
Commands	Transcribe the five sentences the way you transcribed the words given in previous chapters.

The Multimodal Nature of Instructor E-feedback

The mode of delivery; written, audio, and screencast e-feedback via the electronic platforms like Blackboard and WhatsApp used by the instructor to deliver the feedback to students is another finding of the qualitative analysis of the instructor e-feedback, which indicate that the instructor uses a variety of providing e-feedback in the three linguistic courses. The instructor provided a total number of 402 e-feedback comments via three different modalities, written, audio, and screencast, as Table five illustrates, on the three linguistic courses; sociolinguistics, phonetics, and historical linguistics via Blackboard and WhatsApp.

First, the findings illustrate that the instructor provided screencasts e-feedback (207, 52%) in students' activities in the three linguistic courses, outnumbered the e-feedback offered by written e-feedback (102, 25%) and audio e-feedback (93, 23%). Therefore, most of the instructor's amount of e-feedback was offered via screencast across the three linguistic courses.

Second, the delivery mode used by the instructor to provide e-feedback exchanges (total 402) was also quantified to determine the occurrences and percentage of the amount of the instructor e-feedback offered through written, audio and screencast modes in the three linguistic courses. The findings show that among the three linguistic courses, the instructor provided the highest number of screencast e-feedback in Phonetics (108, 27%), followed by (54, 13%) screencast e-feedback in Sociolinguistics and (45, 11%) screencast e-feedback in Historical Linguistics. Written e-feedback was more frequent in Phonetics (50, 12%), whereas written e-feedback occurred less frequently in the Sociolinguistics (28, 7%) and (24, 6%) in Historical Linguistics.

Finally, audio e-feedback was more frequently provided by the instructor in the Phonetics (48, 12%), whereas (27, 7%) were communicated via audio e-feedback in Historical Linguistic. The lowest e-feedback provided via audio e-feedback indicated by the total number of instructor audio e-feedback (93, 23%) was in Sociolinguistics (18, 4%).

Table 5. Number and percentage of multimodal of instructor e-feedback

Mode of e-feedback	Sociolinguistics	Phonetics	Historical Linguistics	Total
Written	28 (7%)	50 (12%)	24 (6%)	102 (25%)
Audio	18 (4%)	48 (12 %)	27 (7%)	93 (23%)
Screencast	54 (13%)	108 (27%)	45 (11%)	207 (52%)
Total	100 (25%)	206 (51%)	96 (24%)	402 (100%)

The above findings indicate that the highest number of instructor delivery modes of providing e-feedback was through screencasts mode, followed by written and audio modes, respectively. The fact that screencast e-feedback appeared to be favor interactivity more than written and audio e-feedback because screencasts have interactivity features such as a combination of graphics, text, voice, mouse movements, annotations, and highlighting. Moreover, the provided screencasts e-feedback appeared to give detailed commentary. Therefore, the instructor may have found it relatively easy and interactive to use screencasts mode rather than written and audio modes. Thus, the screencast is categorized as an innovative feedback mode for use in language classes.

Findings of the Qualitative Analysis of the Interview

The researcher conducted this semi-structured interview to identify the significant issues that emerged from the instructor's e-feedback practices in the three linguistics courses. The researcher adopts a qualitative approach and thematic analysis to gain insight into the instructor's perspective. Furthermore, the following four themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview: instructor's experiences in online teaching, instructor's perception and impression of using Blackboard and WhatsApp platforms in providing e-feedback, valuing of e-feedback practices, and challenging concerns arising from instructor e-feedback practices.

First Theme: Instructor's Experience in Online Teaching

The first interview question was asked about the instructor's experiences in online teaching. He stated, "I attended several online training programs on online teaching using 'blackboard collaborate ultra' organized by the University that helped me a lot". He added "I have a good experience in using computer applications".

Second Theme: Instructor's Perception towards Using Blackboard and WhatsApp platforms in Providing E-feedback

The instructor stated, "At the beginning of the task, the teaching and providing e-feedback online via Blackboard and WhatsApp was challenging for me. However, it became easier as I became engaged in doing so." He also added, "It was a wonderful way to provide e-feedback through these interactive modes that contain great tools". He stated that "There are several useful options such as; live sessions, screencast, chat-box, discussion forum, evaluation, etc. in blackboard program that make teaching and providing e-feedback interesting and easy" and "The use of WhatsApp and e-mails is not new to us, but they also play a great role in sharing written messages, voice messages, videos, and images, etc."

Third theme: Valuing of e-feedback practices

The instructor expressed his preference and how the various delivery modes: written, audio, and screencast, affected the way he constructed the e-feedback on the local and global issues. The instructor stated, "The screencast mode is preferable, of course, as it covers other modes as well. We can share the screen, comment section, PowerPoint presentation, and e-books. This mode provides audio-visual feedback with more detail to the students". He also stated, "The content of e-feedback depends more on the type of courses. Since these courses are different from skill courses, the feedback on global issues becomes more important rather than the local issues. Though, the serious local issues cannot be ignored as well".

Fourth Theme: Challenging Concerns Arising from Instructor E-feedback Practices

The instructor reported various challenging issues emerging from instructor e-feedback practices. They are discussed under the following sub-themes.

Students' Preference Issues

The instructor showed some challenging concerns regarding the students' preferences while providing e-feedback. He asked the students about their preferences, and their answers vary based on delivery mode from written, audio to screencasts. Therefore, the instructor decided to use a mix of delivery modes in providing e-feedback that may suit the majority of the students. He stated, "I used a variety of delivery modes: written, audio, and screencasts; while providing e-feedback to meet the preference of a large majority of the learners."

Technical Issues

The instructor reported that the technical issues faced by both the learners and the instructor hinder the providing and receiving e-feedback. The instructor stated, "Technical issues such as weak internet connection, unsupported file type, failure of microphone, speakers and camera, the large size of video files, unsupported documents, technological awareness hindered the providing and receiving e-feedback effectively."

Timing Issues

The instructor reported challenges regards concerning the timing of providing and receiving e-feedback. He said that he could not offer immediate (timely) feedback based on the learners' needs. The instructor stated, "As there was no fixed time for the students' queries, some students were sending questions, messages late at night which made the situation difficult to respond at the same time."

Financial and Areal Issues

The instructor showed challenging concerns regarding the students' financial background and the place they are living. He said, "Some students with low financial background face the difficulty with managing computers, laptops, modern mobile devices and the internet expenses."

Discussion

The present study was carried out in responding to the challenging issues in instructor e-feedback and the gaps highlighted in recent empirical studies surrounding the instructor e-feedback practices (Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Ene & Upton, 2018; Mahoney et al., 2019). This study contributes to existing research by identifying the nature of content issues addressed via the instructor's e-feedback (global vs. local issues), presenting insight into the various ways used by the instructor in composing the e-feedback, the multimodal nature of the instructor's e-feedback, and the significant issues emerged from the instructor's e-feedback practices. This case study presented significant findings indicating that the exploitation of various electronic tools to provide e-feedback on student tasks supported the instructor's e-feedback practices.

The findings of this study confirm the results of other studies in terms of the nature of content issues addressed via the instructor's e-feedback on both global and local issues. The findings show that the instructor's e-feedback addressing global issues in the three linguistic courses outnumbered the feedback focusing on local issues. The feedback on global issues becomes essential rather than the local issues. However, the severe local issues cannot be ignored (Alharbi, 2019; Cavanaugh & Song, 2014; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020).

Cavanaugh and Song (2014) found that instructors provide more e-feedback on global issues than local issues. E-feedback directed to global issues tended to generate more interaction (Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020). The instructor provided more comments on global issues via screencast and fewer comments via written e-feedback (Elola & Oskoz, 2016); Screencasts offer more explanations on global issues (Bakla, 2020; Orlando, 2016; Cunningham, 2019; Silva, 2012). Video feedback was used to discuss the global issues while local issues were discussed via written feedback in Microsoft Word (Silva, 2012).

The finding of the present study presents a fascinating insight into the various ways used by the instructor in composing/ formulating his e-feedback in the form of eight main categories: explanations, suggestions, clarifications, questioning, repetitions, statements, praises, and commands. This finding also supports the finding of a few other studies regarding the effective formulation of instructor e-feedback (Cunningham, 2017; Guasch et al., 2018; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Harper et al., 2018; Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020). The various types of instructor e-feedback encourage instructor-learner interaction, as learners need to react to these feedback types (Saeed & Qunayeer, 2020).

Other categories have emerged from instructor e-feedback such as directive, model, question, suggestion, explanation, praise, and interpersonal commands were all influenced by the instructor's perception of the learners' individual needs and personalities (Cavaleri et al., 2019; Elola & Oskoz, 2016). Questions and suggestions lead to more students' engagement as this form of e-feedback encourages them to respond actively (Guasch et al., 2018).

However, the ways the instructor formulated and varied his e-feedback according to the nature of the issue(s) plays an essential role in creating opportunities for instructor-learner collaboration. The in-depth explanation is provided via screencasts e-feedback (Alharbi, 2017), video feedback contains explanations, suggestions, and praise (Cavaleri et al., 2019). In this regard, the instructors employed suggestions, explanations, more examples and provided advice about the structure via screencast compared to written feedback mode (Cunningham, 2017; Harper et al., 2018). This study also contributes to earlier research. Our findings on the multimodal nature of instructor e-feedback suggest that screencast e-feedback appeared to favor interactivity more than written and audio e-feedback because screencasts have interactivity features such as a combination of graphics, text, voice, mouse movements, annotations, and highlighting.

This finding agrees with some previous research on the multimodal nature of instructor e-feedback (Alvira, 2016; Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Harper et al., 2018; Ghosn-Chelala & Al-Chibani, 2018). Screencasting encouraged the instructor to deliver more detailed feedback and explanation than written and audio e-feedback (Ghosn-Chelala & Al-Chibani, 2018).

Due to its multimodality, screencasting can enhance students' uptake of e-feedback. The use of written, oral feedback is widely accepted by students, and the use of screencasting is promising (Alvira, 2016; Stannard, 2008). Bakla (2020), in this regard, reports that the highest number of correct revisions was made via audio mode compared to written or screencast, and the EFL learner highlighted the potential benefits and disadvantages of each mode. The instructors and learners valued multimodal screencast as more detailed (Harper, Harper, Green, & Fernandez-Toro, 2012; Orlando, 2016; Silva, 2012), whereas the audio feedback is efficient, practical, more detailed than written feedback (Lunt & Curran, 2010).

The interview analysis revealed a range of challenging issues such as students' preference issues, technical issues, timing issues, financial and areal issues. Although the various technological tools of e-feedback in the online environment support and facilitate the instructor's e-feedback practices, it sometimes poses challenges for the instructor and the learners. This finding is in agreement with (Alharbi, 2019; Cavanaugh & Song, 2014; Henderson et al. 2019), lack of skills, internet connection and formatting issues (Alharbi, 2019), feedback practices, contextual constraints, and individual capacity (Henderson et al. 2019), instructors' training (Cavanaugh & Song, 2014).

Conclusion

The present study was carried out in responding to the challenging issues in instructor e-feedback and the gaps highlighted in recent empirical studies surrounding the instructor e-feedback practices. The present study found that the instructor's e-feedback more focused on global issues as compared to local issues. The instructor composed his e-feedback in the form of

eight main categories such as explanations, suggestions, clarifications, questioning, repetitions, statements, praises, and commands, the instructor used more screencasts for providing e-feedback, followed by written and audio modes respectively. Furthermore, a range of challenging issues such as students' preference issues, technical issues, timing issues, financial and areal issues have emerged from the thematic analysis. The present study has several implications for EFL instructors. This analysis of instructor e-feedback has enabled us to have a comprehensive picture of the nature of content issues addressed via the instructor's e-feedback. How do the instructors formulate/construct their e-feedback electronically, and the various significant issues that emerged from the instructor's e-feedback practices. The ways the instructor prepared and varied his e-feedback according to the nature of the issue(s) play an essential role in creating opportunities for instructor-learner collaboration. In turn, this collaboration leads to engagement and successful revision.

In this view, instructors need to consider the learners' individual preferences and need concerning the delivery mode from written, audio to screencasts to help them respond, negotiate and address the e-feedback effectively. Furthermore, the instructors need to consider the various challenging issues that may emerge from the instructor's e-feedback practices.

This study also addresses several limitations that need to be addressed in future investigations. First, this case study is based on analyzing one instructor's e-feedback in three linguistics courses that might have affected our findings. Therefore, future research should include a relative group of instructors' e-feedback. Second, this study involved only the analyzing one instructor's e-feedback delivered via Blackboard and WhatsApp platforms. Therefore, future studies are recommended to investigate the use of other electronic platforms and explore how EFL learners respond to the instructors' e-feedback and their perception of the e-feedback.

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