

Interactive Oral Assessment Project

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Abstract

The Department of Languages at the Open University is always keen to explore the use of new technologies to deliver its language courses more effectively and dynamically. Although students are offered regular tutorials, face-to-face and online, and work through a series of activities on DVD Rom, the practice of the oral is a crucial issue in our modules.

Following a project run in Spring 2009 in collaboration with Learnosity, we offered a two-strand 6-week free pilot module starting in October 2010 aimed at students who had just completed our French Beginners module and at those who had just completed our level 1 English for Academic Purposes module.

We designed a series of activities aimed at practising oral competency by using Talkback® (powered by Learnosity). Students accessed those on their mobile, landline or Skype or through an Iphone App. Their recordings were immediately available on the Learnosity website to both students and tutors who could mark and provide feedback, oral and written.

Both groups were asked to report via weekly short online questionnaires recording their experience. Through this project, we wanted to explore the possibility of using Talkback® for oral practice and possibly for assessment purposes.

The results obtained were very encouraging and provided a wealth of data which we are still analysing. Students reported increased confidence and tutors reported a noticeable improvement of oral skills. We are now exploring how we can take this project forward within the Department of Languages.

In my presentation, I will aim to discuss our findings on the behaviour of students, the most successful activities to design for this environment and our plans for further research.