

Cavanaugh, A. J. (2013). A comparison of audio comments and written comments: Student and instructor preferences and instructor feedback patterns. (Doctoral dissertation, Towson University, 2013).

Dr. Andrew Cavanaugh

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Dissertation Abstract

Providing feedback to students on their writing represents one of the most important features of an online writing course. Two methods of providing feedback to students on their writing—written commentary and audio commentary—have emerged in the literature. However, most studies that have examined these two methods have been conducted in face-to-face classes, where students can approach the instructor for clarification about the commentary. The limited studies that have been conducted on written and audio commentary in online classes have often featured non-writing classes in which revision of work was not a part of the course design and in which the commentary was given to various tasks in the class, not to student papers. This study examined the use of written and audio feedback in five 100-level online composition classes. Through instructor surveys and interviews, student surveys and interviews, and quantitative analysis of the comments themselves, the study examined how commenting patterns change between written and audio commentary, whether the provision of audio commentary represents a scalable option for instructors, what form of commentary students preferred for comments on different aspects of their papers, whether instructors found one method to result in more student improvement in writing over the other method, and whether students found one method to result in improvement in their writing over the other method. The findings of this study indicated that significantly more words were used for audio commentary than for written commentary but that an interaction effect occurs across instructors in their commenting patterns between the use of written and audio commentary. The findings also show that student comprehension on global- and middle-level issues in papers is improved through the use of audio over written commentary. The findings were not conclusive on whether one medium results in more improvement in student writing over the other medium. Instructors do find the use of audio commentary a scalable option when compared to the use of written commentary.