

PAPER

Using the Podcast for Feedback: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

In virtual environments, it is essential for the teacher to structure the learning experience and guide knowledge using various feedback tools. Therefore, the objective of the present study was to analyze the effectiveness of using podcasts as a formative evaluation tool. A phenomenological-qualitative methodological strategy was proposed to report the process of a learning experience through the design of cases. To achieve this goal, data collection techniques such as observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis were employed. The qualitative analysis from the teacher's perspective revealed the primary areas for improvement in academic writing. In response to this, a process for providing corrective and suggestive feedback was proposed, utilizing comments and podcasts. In particular, the best-performing groups were those that most frequently utilized the multimodal resources for preparing and providing feedback in newsrooms. From the students' perspective, they valued the feedback process in virtual environments because it allowed them to identify mistakes made in the writing process and improve their writing by considering the teacher's comments and the criteria of the rubric.

KEYWORDS

podcast, feedback, evaluation, formative evaluation, evaluation criteria

1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic marked the beginning of an accelerated and forced cycle of changes and innovations in the field of education. According to a UNESCO report, 70% of the global student population was affected by the emergency measures implemented in response to this situation [1]. One of the major changes was the transition to virtual environments, which represented an unusual and unexpected but necessary and mandatory reform in university educational institutions [2]. On the other hand, learning management systems (LMS) were the primary tool for communication and conducting distance classes. This is how various platforms like Moodle, SWAD, Chamilo, and Google Classroom were designed [3]. In this regard, Forbes Peru reported in 2022 that 86% of universities in Peru utilized these tools.

Currently, virtual learning in higher education has taken a predominant role, exceeding expectations. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of

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universities offering new, fully-online programs, with hybrid options. These are specifically focused on student audiences with work or occupational responsibilities who do not have access to a traditional face-to-face training system [4]. This educational approach is associated with the benefits it can offer to students in this context, as it provides them with the opportunity to pursue their academic activities while simultaneously working towards their professional goals [5].

In this context, the acquisition of digital skills by teachers and students is an essential requirement that is integral to a new profile involving the use of innovative tools. In this context, the term “disruptive teaching” is used to describe an approach that deviates from the traditional method of transmitting knowledge [1], [6]. The authors focus on the redefinition of the roles of teachers and students, who now have greater responsibility for their learning and greater mastery due to the disruption of traditional teaching by information technologies. Likewise, teachers were the first to learn and unlearn, as well as to apply skills and strategies that would empower them as capable educators in a challenging and unfavorable context [7].

On the other hand, in this context, the design of learning processes involves students playing a more central and participatory role. This suggests that students set important goals for their own learning, such as monitoring, controlling, and regulating their thinking, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation during academic activities, among other factors. Navaridas-Nalda et al. [8] pointed out that research in this area has identified a growing demand among university professors for designs, procedures, and instruments that facilitate the adaptation of evaluation activities in virtual or hybrid environments. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the role of digital technologies in online or blended environments as a tool or support for student participation during the evaluation and feedback process [9], [10]. Furthermore, the educational value of remote training processes is undeniable.

When feedback is developed effectively, it can have a powerful impact on the student. However, the issues related to this process, including its effectiveness and unfulfilled potential, remain relevant in this field. In this regard, one of the factors evident is the lack of student involvement in this process, which is reflected in indifference and a lack of progress in their own learning [11]. Likewise, the essence of formative assessment can be enhanced and expanded through the integration of digital technologies and the new learning requirements of the twenty-first century. The value of these technologies lies not only in their practical utility but also in their capacity to transform the way we learn [10], [12].

This is how our focus is drawn to the podcast, a tool that gained more prominence in virtual environments during the pandemic. The emergence of the Internet has made it a widely used and accessible tool in everyday life. It is, therefore, an audio or video file that can be distributed or transmitted over the Internet [13]. Similarly, its influence on digital media has been significant for years. In Spain, the percentage of Internet users who consumed podcasts fluctuated between 39% and 62% in 2019. It became evident that the audio format started to attract more interest from audiences, especially when it became accessible on all mobile devices and functional while engaging in other activities or routines [14]. Consequently, considering the constant quest for effective strategies that accompany and support educational processes in virtual environments. The podcast proved to be a valuable resource for formative evaluation and feedback. This emphasizes the potential of this medium to promote autonomous learning and student motivation outside of traditional teaching [15].

In the current context, where remote or online teaching has become established in higher education, it is crucial to ensure the efficient adaptation of the formative evaluation process to the environment. To accomplish this, it is essential that the student take on a much more active role. However, in the university context,

this is not yet very apparent [16]. Therefore, the question arises: How can I engage my students through the feedback I provide in a virtual environment? The objective of this work is to demonstrate the effectiveness of using online tools, such as podcasts, to support the process of providing formative feedback in virtual higher education environments, with the aim of ensuring its success and sustainability.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative phenomenological in nature, allowing for the collection of information in an immediate and personal manner using techniques and procedures based on direct contact with the people or reality being investigated [17], [18]. It describes the proposal by the teaching team of the Department of Humanities at a private university in Metropolitan Lima in 2023. The study summarizes the results of the educational experience of feedback through podcasts in the Communication I course. This course took place between March and July 2023 and included the participation of 24 students.

For data collection, the participant observation technique was utilized throughout the course. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with students. These helped to provide a thoughtful assessment of the educational experience. It should be noted that in this context, the researcher positions himself “as a subject who can accurately access the reality being investigated” [19]. In other words, knowledge and understanding of reality are achieved through a process of engagement and immersion [17]. On the other hand, the documentary analysis enabled us to track the students’ progress and their corresponding grades. The organization and analysis of information involved data reduction as well as quantitative and qualitative analysis of evaluations and evaluation records. It is important to note that data processing is conducted solely for scientific purposes and with the explicit permission of the participants.

To contrast and analyze the information obtained, data triangulation was applied using a combination of qualifications, written evaluations, interviews, the evaluation rubric, and the theoretical framework documented in this article. Descriptive statistics were used to present the research data. The Table 1 lists the techniques, instruments, and categories used in the triangulation process.

Table 1. Techniques, instruments, and categories used in the study

Technique	Instrument	Categories
Observation participant	– Observation log and protocol of the experience.	– Each piece of evidence was analyzed to determine emerging categories.
Interview Structured	– Interview Guide	– Instrument categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perception of evaluation and feedback 2. Degree of knowledge about agents and roles in the feedback process 3. Degree of knowledge about the object of evaluation – It will be analyzed again to determine emerging categories.
Analysis documentary	– Observation log – Evaluations submitted by students – Evaluation records – Evaluation rubric	– Each piece of evidence was analyzed to determine emerging categories. – The rubric has five criteria or categories: hierarchy of ideas, construction of paragraphs, coherence and cohesion, use of orthographic and grammatical rules, and rules of citation and reference.

Note: Own elaboration.

3 RESULTS

The findings of this phenomenological research on the use of podcasts as a tool for feedback focus on two perspectives: that of the teacher and the student. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the results obtained from the data provided by the participating teachers and students.

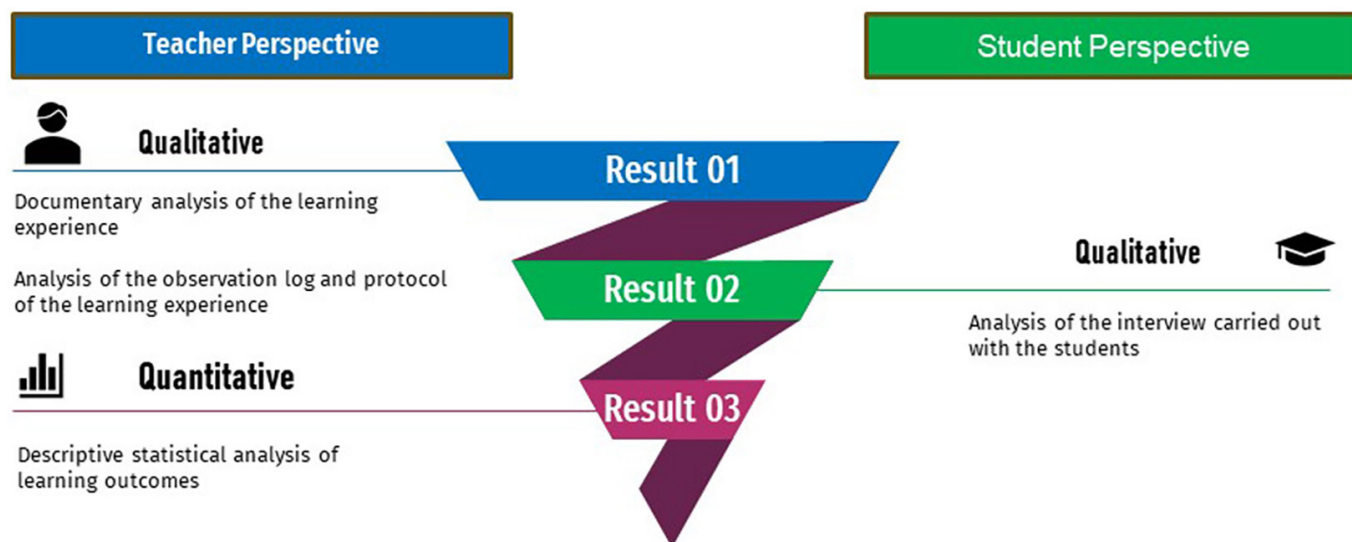


Fig. 1. Proposal for analysis of the results from the perspective of the teacher and student

3.1 Teacher's perspective

The learning experience aimed to enhance skills for writing expository texts. To achieve this goal, aspects of improvement in the teaching-learning process were identified, specific actions were based on opportunities for improvement, and a reflection on the results and assessments was conducted. In response to this, the study results have been categorized into qualitative and quantitative assessments of each perspective.

The concept of learning is approached through various theories and definitions, all of which undoubtedly emphasize the changes in the mental structures of the learner. In this sense, the learning experience is a social learning process with varying durations and levels of complexity [20]. From experiences involving low cognitive demand to those involving high cognitive demand, the process is reflected in the results observed in tasks or products presented by students [21]. In this section, the design process and the results demonstrated by the students will be presented.

The learning experience as an improvement process. The learning experience involved the ADDIE instructional design, which emphasizes five stages: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation [22]. Figure 2 illustrates the synthesis of the instructional design process for implementing the feedback activity using podcasts.

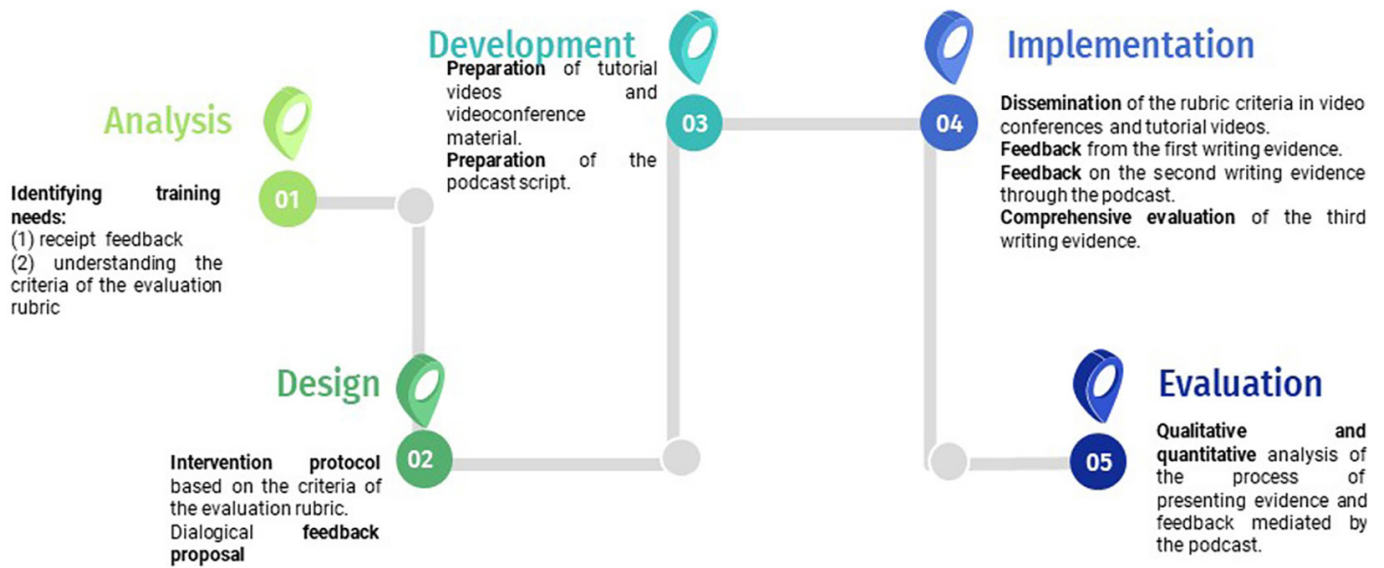


Fig. 2. Stages of the learning experience as a process based on the ADDIE model

The first three stages are analysis, design, and development. They focus on the conceptual and strategic proposals to ensure that the objectives of the training strategy are met. The first three phases are described below. First, an analysis of the formative needs in the teaching-learning process. In this sense, two fundamental aspects have been established to enhance students' academic skills: receiving formative feedback and understanding the criteria of the writing rubric. Secondly, I designed an intervention protocol based on disseminating the criteria of the drafting rubric and proposing dialogic feedback. During the third phase, known as the development phase, the video tutorials and class materials used in the videoconferences were created. The materials presented and explained the criteria of the writing rubric and encouraged their use in the newsrooms being evaluated. The podcast script has also been designed. In this case, the evaluation criteria of the rubric and the principles of corrective and suggestive feedback were considered [23].

During the most dynamic phase of the learning experience, we considered implementing dialogic and reflective actions. Three actions were taken. First, the evaluation rubric criteria were communicated during the video conferences and in video tutorials sent prior to the first writing assignment. The expository paragraph was then reviewed, and feedback was provided to systematize the successes and areas for improvement in the text. At the next stage of the activity, the students handed in their second writing assignment. Following this delivery, as a third step, corrective and suggestive feedback was provided via the podcast. The feedback highlighted opportunities for improvement through comments and suggestions from the teacher on the presented paragraphs. Additionally, written comments were included. Following this feedback, students presented the course's integrated writing assignments.

On the other hand, during the evaluation phase, we considered the quantitative analysis of the results as expressed in the final grades. The descriptive and interpretative qualitative analysis of the teacher's log was conducted based on the analysis categories aligned with the progressive focus of the qualitative data [24], [25].

Teacher assessment of the learning experience. The primary goal of the learning experience was to develop a teaching practice aimed at enhancing the fundamental academic writing skills of the 24 students who were part of the work teams. The valuation categories are presented in the following sections:

Training needs. In the evaluation rubric of the three pieces of evidence presented, three criteria stand out: the hierarchy of ideas, the use of an enumerative discursive strategy that allows for an orderly and logical enunciation of ideas, the use of coherence and textual cohesion resources, and spelling and grammatical accuracy. Based on this, training opportunities were identified in the process of providing corrective and suggestive feedback. After reviewing the initial work, the subsequent training needs were identified, as outlined in Figure 3.

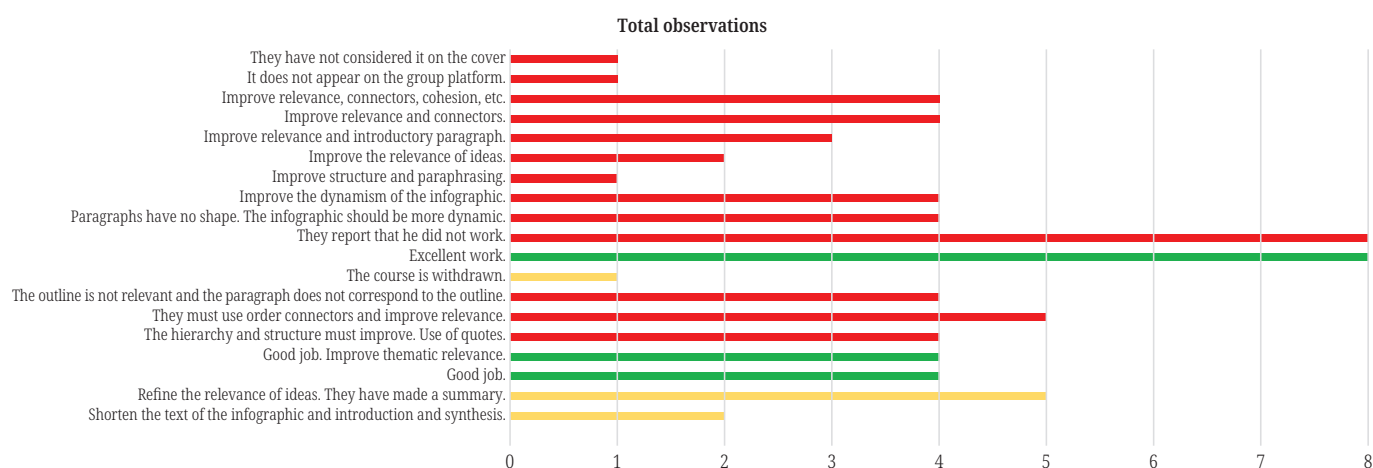


Fig. 3. Opportunities for improvement identified in the first review of the work

In summary, the opportunities were grouped into five categories: (1) improving the relevance and hierarchy of ideas; (2) refining the proportion between the text itself and the cited text; (3) enhancing the sentence syntax; (4) improving the score; and (5) enhancing the understanding of the evaluation's objective in relation to the type of text. This hierarchy of educational priorities was considered when providing feedback and developing the podcast script.

Teaching intervention—dialogue through digital tools. After identifying areas for improvement in the expository texts submitted by students in the virtual course, it was decided to incorporate various digital tools to enhance communication with students. The selection of tools for teaching literacy to students depends on the learning objectives, evaluation criteria, and methods for providing feedback, as well as the content and tone of the message being conveyed. Likewise, the integration of tools into the Blackboard Learn virtual environment was considered. This integration provides access to various tools, including SCORM lessons, announcements, discussion forums, messaging, and individual evaluation options for presenting works and questionnaires [26], [27].

Indeed, sharing information and receiving feedback from a variety of sources allows for a more effective understanding of the criteria and instructions to be communicated and fosters a positive approach to learning [28], [29]. Therefore, considering the benefits of these digital tools, it was decided to utilize three formats: textual, audio, and audiovisual, both in the preparation and feedback of the writing assignments. Figure 4 illustrates the purpose and mechanisms of the elements being used.

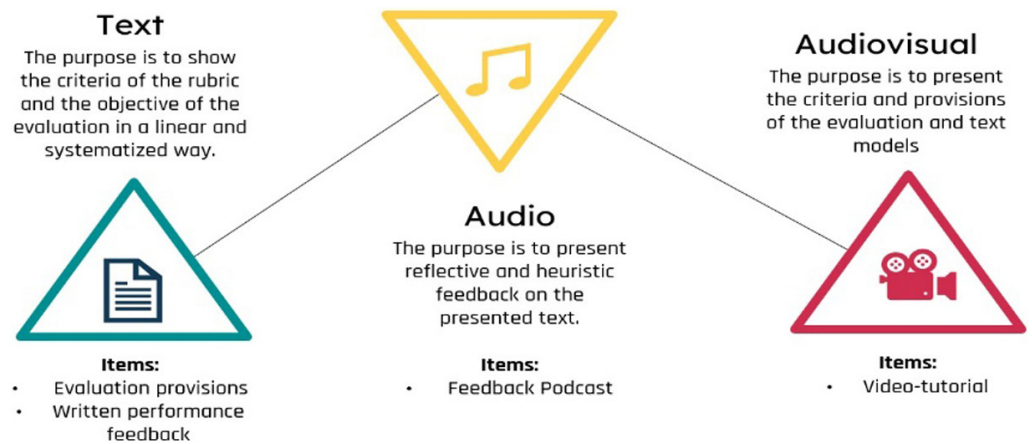


Fig. 4. Mechanisms and purposes of multimodal formats used in the evaluation and feedback process

Assessment of the essays submitted by the students. During the learning process, grades were recorded in the assessment log to enable the teacher to monitor the performance of each of the four students on the five teams. Likewise, the successes and errors in the students’ writing were recorded. To achieve this goal, the areas for improvement identified during the diagnostic process were considered. The cumulative ratings show that the performance was maintained by high-performing team 12. On the other hand, in the medium-performance teams, group 03 was able to increase the average grades, while team 13 maintained the average performance. Finally, the proposal’s impact was evident in the ratings of groups 02 and 19, which initially had below-average performance (see Figure 5).

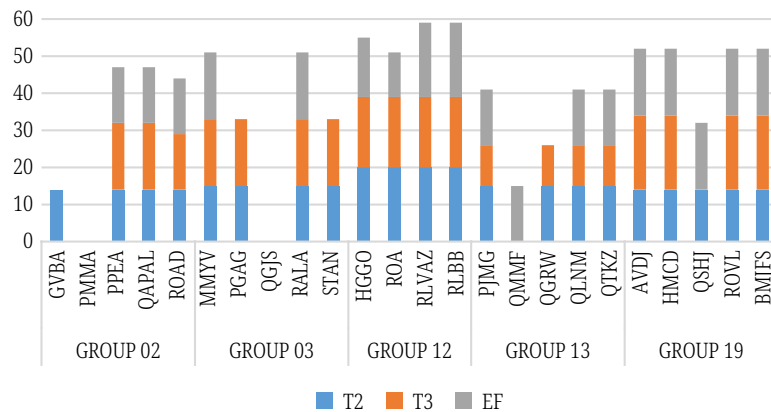


Fig. 5. Cumulative grades by group

3.2 Student perspective

The learning and assessment experience involved mobilizing various academic and metacognitive abilities. In this way, most of the participants interviewed emphasized the importance of following the instructions provided by the teacher in the video conferences, watching the video tutorials, and reviewing the evaluation rubric. Regarding feedback, students reviewed the comments submitted and listened to the podcasts in order to incorporate the improvements into their future assignments. The qualitative analysis of the content has enabled the detection of

significant responses within the predetermined categories. Additionally, emerging categories have been identified.

Concerning the predetermined categories of the study, the students' assessments were largely positive. The study emphasized the crucial role of feedback and the teacher as a mentor or expert, who must influence aspects of improvement and provide specific guidelines regarding the writing rubric. It should be noted that some students demonstrated a higher level of awareness regarding the feedback process, their role as learners, and their understanding of the writing rubric's knowledge and importance. This characterization is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings in the default categories in the interview guide

Default Categories	Finds
Perception of evaluation and feedback	Most students perceive that feedback is situated in an evaluation process that is valuable in detecting strengths and weaknesses. For example, 17-year-old AVDJ comments: "... <i>It's important, because they give us the points we've gone wrong on and provide guidelines to improve them.</i> " On the other hand, "I consider feedback to be a sensible way for the student to see the mistakes they have made." HMCD, 18 years old.
Degree of knowledge about agents and roles in the feedback process	Students assume that, in this process, the teacher is a guide who guides the learning process, defined as a path. In addition, they indicate that the student must be attentive to the guidelines and errors that the teacher points out. As 18-year-old HMCD mentions, " <i>The duty of a teacher is that of a guide and the student assumes the role of the guide.</i> " He also commented the following: " <i>Feedback is the way in which the guide explains how the student has to walk along this path.</i> "
Degree of knowledge about the object of evaluation	The students highlighted not only the importance of the rubric to know the evaluation criteria, but also expressed the importance of the presentation of the rubric by the teacher. In this regard, a student commented: " <i>Teacher, we have been guided by the rubric to be able to create the paragraphs in detail and not make mistakes when writing.</i> " QRJA, 16 years old. Another student commented that " <i>there are times when I use the rubric and there are times when I don't</i> "; However, he admitted that " <i>you see how you are going to qualify and you can make different modifications so that the most appropriate work is delivered.</i> " PVML, 17 years old. Finally, HMCD, 18 years old, expresses his meticulous analysis to know exactly what the teacher will evaluate in each evaluation process: " <i>I am always aware of the rubric. Before I do a job, I am very attentive to the explanation.</i> " Indeed, the teacher " <i>explains the criteria of the rubric and provides examples in which she highlights what aspects are associated with the rubric</i> ".

Note: Own elaboration.

Regarding the emerging categories, students emphasized the significance of the course in acquiring fundamental writing skills. They are aware that these skills will enable them to tackle academic challenges, particularly in terms of efficient communication. They also emphasized the importance of highlighting errors made during the drafting process. Finally, they mentioned that receiving adequate feedback motivates them and fuels their desire to excel. The findings of the newly identified categories are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings in emerging categories

Emerging Categories	Findings
Importance of the course for the development of writing skills	In this section, it can be seen that the students valued both the aspects of form and the aspects of substance in relation to the construction of an academic text. <i>“It helps us improve writing through spelling, grammar, connector types.”</i> RLVAZ, 16 years old. On the other hand, <i>“I have always thought that the Communication 1 course serves me in the development of the thesis, at the time of citation. That is, what kind of appointment. Also, it is important to use connectors and fine-tune coherence.”</i> RLBB, 17 years old.
Perception about multimodal tools	Learners value positively all the resources available so that they can take advantage of the learning experience and feedback. In particular, they find them useful in providing examples and frameworks. <i>“He sent some audios as feedback from T3 and, also, some videos that were sent to T2 with the aim of reinforcing the basic knowledge for writing.”</i> RLVAZ, 16 years old.
Motivational aspects	Most students were encouraged by the feedback process, especially when the result is high: <i>“I was quite encouraged by the result. It was very complete feedback.”</i> HMCD, 18 years old.
Suggestions for improving the feedback process	In general, they suggest that the feedback process continue to be customized to understand, in greater detail, how to continue to deepen their writing processes. They suggest increasing synchronous feedback spaces: <i>“This [will allow us] to exchange opinions among all as if in a synchronous way,”</i> says 16-year-old RLVAZ.

Note: Own elaboration.

4 DISCUSSION

Feedback is an integral process that requires a workspace for collaborative work between students and teachers to be developed. It is important to develop a strategy that helps students understand the course requirements and evaluation criteria in accessible terms that are coherent with each participant’s reality. Therefore, the findings of the present research enable us to initiate a discussion based on the following criteria:

In this research, the focus was on the effectiveness of using podcasts as a formative assessment tool to improve basic writing skills. To achieve this goal, a didactic intervention was conducted with undergraduate first-year students. The educational experience was designed to incorporate multiple modes of technological tools that enhance students’ reflective processes. First, it is necessary to establish a baseline by considering students’ initial grades and their background, as explained in the results section. This aligns with the research conducted by Gutierrez et al. (2019) [30], which emphasizes the significance of setting clear goals and objectives and the potential for implementing feedback based on performance evidence. Similarly, this aligns with the findings of Orrego (2019), who highlights the importance of informing students about the feedback methods that will be used during the work sessions [31].

Secondly, the evidence presented by the students was used as a starting point to determine the learning needs related to basic writing skills. This identification of needs was aligned with the feedback protocol, in which the podcast and asynchronous comments were considered as tools for providing corrective and suggestive feedback. During the interview, the students emphasized the importance of the teacher being explicit in identifying and verbalizing the mistakes. They also highlighted the need for clear guidelines to improve the text, including references such

as models and tutorials to enhance understanding of the assigned task. This reported situation aligns with the criteria outlined in references [10], [15], [32].

Thirdly, in the dialogic process, it is important to have an evaluation protocol and a multimodal space that allow feedback to be recorded in an organized and dynamic manner. In this instance, the Blackboard Learn platform offered an organized learning environment with features that, in conjunction with open resources, facilitate the interpretation of content in a dynamic and meaningful manner while also allowing for the monitoring of learning progress. Indeed, Caycho Rueda (2021); Amri and Alasmari (2021) and Ziegler and Lehner (2021) emphasize the importance of Blackboard Lean tools and functions to provide an accessible and adaptable environment for teacher didactics and learning personalization [26], [33], [34].

Finally, in terms of teaching and the student perspective, it is important to consider the accurate construction of verbal and non-verbal messages. In terms of the first aspect, we considered the verbal elements of the message, including verbalizations related to the identified errors, as well as audio recordings and annotations related to areas for improvement. In terms of emotional aspects, the students believed that feedback affected their mood. Therefore, nonverbal and attitudinal aspects were considered, including the use of empathetic and assertive communication. The podcast's significance lies in its ability to humanize the message and demonstrate the teacher's tone, thereby motivating improvement through verbal communication. In this regard, the contributions of Grigoriadis et al. (2013), Felipa Andrade and Páez Paredes (2021), Zhou (2017), Herrera Solórzano et al. (2023) highlight the importance of considering the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the message [13], [15], [35], [36]. In terms of emotional aspects, affectivity, empathy, and assertiveness, the atmosphere of dialogue and reflection were identified as factors that promote the development of a text [31], [37].

The limitations of the current study are associated with the asynchronous nature of the course, as the timing of comment review varies. In some instances, it was observed that certain students did not review the instructions or provide feedback. In this regard, Máñez (2020) asserts that this can occur due to a lack of motivation or ignorance about the evaluation criteria [38]. In addition, Hernawan (2021) stated that the acceptance of podcasts could mediate and influence behavioral aspects such as social, cultural, and personal expectations [39].

The study has two-fold implications and scope. At the theoretical level, it systematizes the contributions and main findings of research on feedback. At the same time, it demonstrates the importance of this process for enhancing fundamental writing skills. At the methodological level, the study adopts a case study structure, focusing solely on describing and analyzing the results of the 2023–1 semester.

In conclusion, it is recommended to continue researching in this field, as the implementation of feedback has significantly enhanced student's assessment of the course. In turn, it is recommended to supplement the studies with quantitative methods.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Feedback is a process of exchanging knowledge in which the learner must understand the evaluation and quality criteria that the teacher or expert will use to assess a task. After qualitatively analyzing the evidence collected from the educational experience, it is concluded that the formative feedback process becomes more effective when interactive tools and media, such as podcasts, are utilized. It also enhances the learning experience by presenting the message in a format enriched with both verbal and non-verbal elements.

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