

Traditional and Online Student Reactions to the Video Tutor Component of MyMathLab [Abstract]

Developmental Mathematics students in both traditional and online environments have used the MyMathLab environment to assist them in learning basic algebra skills. One component of the environment is the video tutor, which is a computer-based series of video clips featuring an instructor who explains and demonstrates how to work various problems in the section being covered.

This presentation describes the findings of a qualitative research study in which 10 students and 3 instructors were observed and interviewed to learn the students' reactions to the MyMathLab environment. Five students were online students, and the other five were students in a traditional classroom setting. Much of the feedback revolved around the video tutor in particular. Patterns that emerged in the study are described and supported with quotes from the research participants.

Students noted the features of the video tutor that they both liked and disliked. Features that students liked included the ability to pause, rewind and replay, or skip sections of the video; the decreased pressure of watching the video without the sense of being rushed by classmates or the instructor; and the presence of a human being playing the role of an instructor on the video. Features that some students disliked were the artificiality of a computer-based tutor; the pace at which the tutor spoke; and the low level of difficulty of examples worked relative to the assigned problems in the section. Some students also noted that integrating the video tutor more fully with other components in MyMathLab would be helpful.

Some differences emerged between traditional and online students' reactions to the video tutor and the way in which these students used the feature. Online students relied much more heavily on the MyMathLab environment than did their traditional student counterparts; however, of those students who did use the MyMathLab environment, traditional students were more likely to use the video tutor. Online students often chose not to use the tutor, citing reasons such as not enough time and a preference for reading the material and working it out on their own.

Some possible gender differences in students' reactions were also suggested. Female students were the only ones to stress the importance of interaction in their learning, or to comment on the importance of a human figure in the tutor to step through the material. Females were also more inclined to be bothered by the artificiality of a computer-based tutor.

Implications of these findings for online and traditional instructors are discussed in the context of complementing the software with other instructional methods to best leverage the MyMathLab features for different students.