

Kirsty Davidson
Napier University.

Uses

- ◆ Investigating a piece of software under development
- ◆ Introducing students to the use of learning technology
- ◆ Investigating students' usage of computer-based materials

Process

1. Identify your situation and/or materials for investigation

These could be:

- ◆ learning technology materials still under development into which formative evaluation could feed;
- ◆ piloting software in order to provide information for a subsequent implementation strategy.

2. Identify key areas of interest

These can be:

- ◆ the usability of the software;
- ◆ the student's perception of the software as a learning tool.

3. Plan your evaluation session

Decide whether you or another person, acting as a facilitator, are to be running the session.

Try to select tasks which explore different features of the software and which are relevant to its anticipated usage with students.

4. Practicalities of application

Check the timing of the session against the students program – volunteers are not likely to be so forthcoming at the start of term or the day before an exam.

Check the student knows where the studio is and can get there and back in time for classes.

Before the session check the software runs OK on the computer in the studio.

Two cameras should be set up, one pointing at the students upper body to catch face and hand movements, the other pointing at the monitor. These images are then combined into a split screen video.

A microphone should be attached to the student and possibly the facilitator so that sound is captured.

Try and time the session so that the student has covered at least some of the material in the software.

Check availability of studio, computers with the software and technical help. Pressgang two to four student volunteers.

Ensure the task is achievable within about half an hour.

Assure the students that it is the software which you are evaluating, not them. Sit beside them and encourage them to speak out their thoughts with prompts like 'why did you do that then?', 'what are you thinking just now', 'what do you think of...!', etc.

Ask the technicians to overlay a timer on the video to make it easier to locate specific sections etc.

5. Analysis

At least a rough transcription of the video is useful for reference purposes.

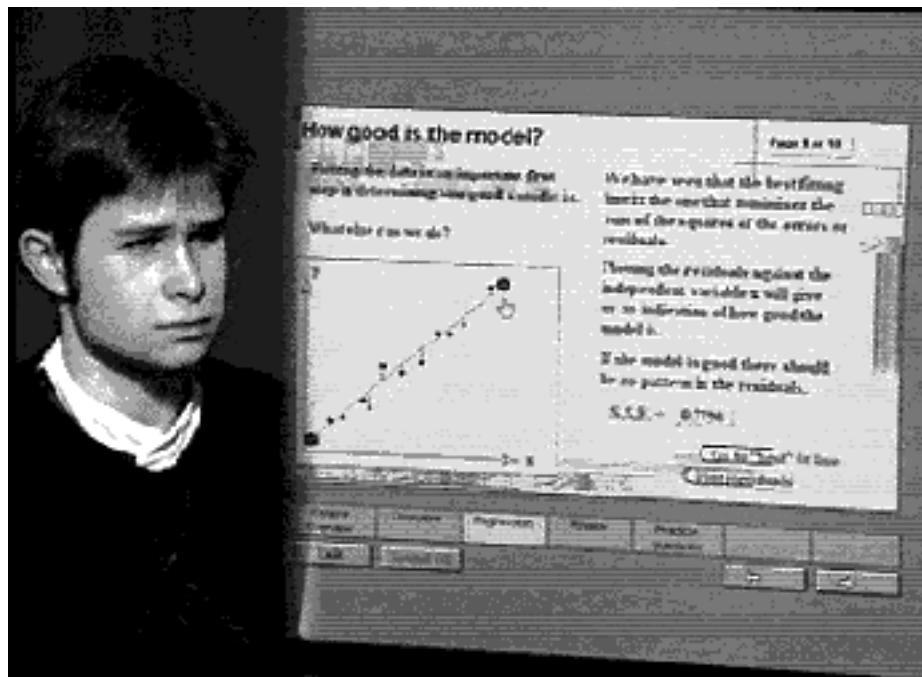
The video can be viewed as often as required for different purposes.

Snippets are very useful for demonstrating a point during a talk and/or livening up a conference presentation

Variations

This technique could be used for evaluation of, or staff development in, any form of independent learning.

Example screen shot from a split screen video



Other Relevant Pages

Recipes

- Supplemental Observation
- Interviews
- System Log Data
- Ethnography
- Trials
- Designing experiments

Information Pages

- Learning styles
- Transcribing
- General Issues
- Interviewing
- Working with groups
- Student sample

Serving suggestions

References