

Skipping Feedback Can Improve Retention

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Questions

- Can reducing feedback enhance verbal learning?
- Can students select appropriate feedback strategies?

Background

- Feedback entails providing the correct answer after a learner tries to respond to a question.
- There is a near-universal belief that feedback enhances verbal learning.

The Problem

- What if total study time is held constant?
 - Feedback takes time that might be spent on more productive study activities.

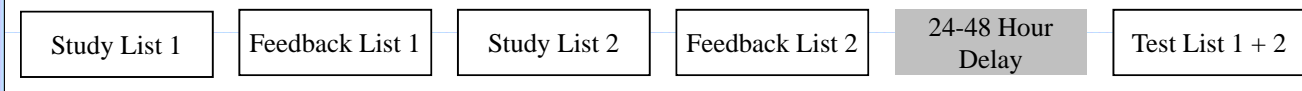
Hypotheses

- Providing feedback only after incorrect responses will enhance study efficiency and therefore enhance learning.
- Students may be poorly equipped to decide which items require feedback (Kornell & Bjork, 2008).

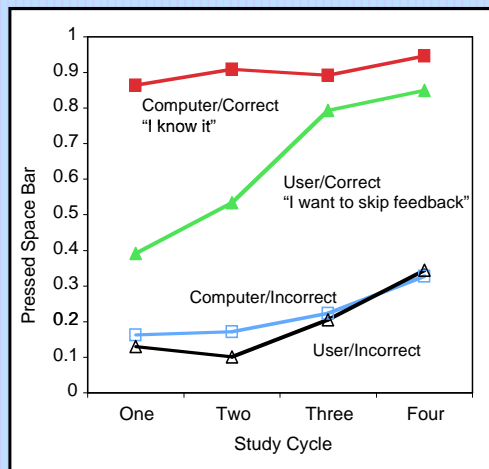
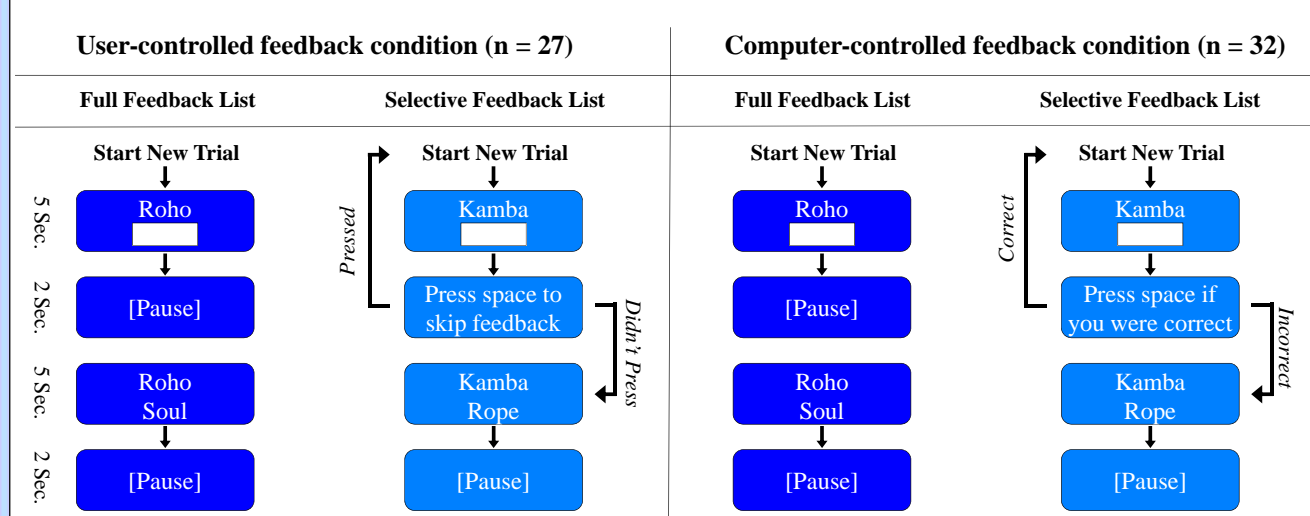
Method Overview

Participants learned two lists. Total study time was fixed. During the feedback phase, on the *Full Feedback* list, each pair received 4 test/feedback trials; on the *Selective Feedback* list, skipping feedback allowed time for additional trials.

Session Procedure

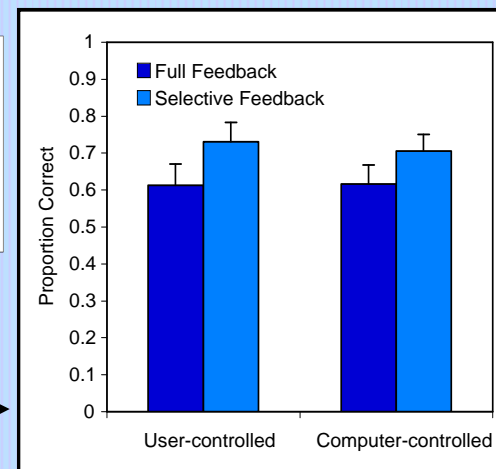


Feedback Phase



Following a correct response, participants in the Computer condition (red line) pressed space more frequently than did participants in the User condition (green line).

The two groups benefited equally from selective feedback.



Discussion

- Reducing feedback enhanced verbal learning by allowing time for alternative study activities (i.e., tests).
- The effectiveness of reducing feedback was equal in the User and Computer conditions.
- Early in the study phase, participants chose not to skip feedback on items they felt they knew.

Conclusion

- Reducing feedback enhanced verbal learning.
- Students used selective feedback effectively.

Acknowledgments

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References

Kornell, N., & Bjork, R. A. (2008). Optimizing self-regulated study: The benefits-and costs-of dropping flashcards. *Memory*, 16, 125-136.