



香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

Enhancing the Usefulness of Automated English Language Diagnostic Feedback to Students

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Abstract:

Student Oriented Language Advisory Resource, SOLAR, is an online system to provide individualized independent learning guidance to students through their completing some Internet-based language tests. The primary purpose is to foster motivation and ownership of language learning among CityU students and the main role of SOLAR is to provide diagnostic language information on students' language performance and suggestions on ways that they can become better language users. This initiative supports the University's goal to improve language instructions to maximize the benefits to our students. Based on students' performance in the tests, feedback is generated electronically and reports are sent to students by email within a day or 3 days depending on the skills being diagnosed. In each report, students are given information related to their overall performance, strengths and weaknesses identified in the test and some related independent learning guidelines. The initial version of the SOLAR system has been developed by the English Language Centre to test the effectiveness of the approach and to pilot the feasibility of the initiative. An evaluation of the usefulness of the initial system was conducted and findings show that in general both students and language teachers regarded the resource useful in serving the intended purpose but the usefulness of the feedback may need to be further improved to make the suggestions more accessible to students in order to motivate them to work on their weaknesses more promptly. Apart from benefitting CityU students, improvements made to the system and experience gained in this project will provide useful piloting information on generating student-friendly feedback for a joint institutional diagnostic and placement testing system to be developed by City University of Hong Kong, Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University and Hong Kong Institute of Education.