

Santiago Canyon College Analysis of Students Using Smartxt Software to Enhance Learning

Compiled by the RSCCD Research Department

September 2009

During Summer 2009, the SCC Academic Success Center piloted a program that used the Smartxt software to integrate a multi-sensory and interactive e-text platform to create a virtual, “Teacher within the Text.” This strategy involved embedding the instructor’s study strategies annotated with the instructor’s voice. The goal was to provide students tools to enhance their reading and understanding of the textbook. The students could hear, see and interact with the text while also using multiple study skills tools to annotate the text. The 34 students enrolled in Nick Magalousis’ Introduction to Anthropology were selected to be the very first group to pilot test this software and the following is their feedback on their experience with Smartxt:

Summary of Findings:

- More than half of the respondents used the following Smartxt functions:
 - Read the instructor’s embedded notes to focus on their reading (60%)
 - Used the highlighting and outlining tools (60%)
 - Copied and pasted notes into a Word document (54%)
- Over one-third of the respondents stated that they were able to understand vocabulary better and that they “interact with the text more” for this anthropology class than in other classes.
- About half of the respondents found Smartxt beneficial as a study skill tool (51%) and that it increased their ability to understand class lectures (48%).
- One-quarter of the respondents stated that Smartxt assisted them to focus more while reading and got them more interested in reading their textbook.
- Twenty-one percent of the respondents stated that Smartxt increased their level of preparedness for test, but only 12% stated that they got better grades on tests.

- One-third found Smartxt assignment “encouraged me to increase my engagement in the subject” and has made them more interested in the course.
- Seventy-six percent of the respondents found Academic Success Center staff to be helpful.

Respondent shared additional comments regarding Smartxt (provided at the end of the report) that program staff may find useful.

Detail of Responses:

1. How often did you use the following aspects of the Smartxt Learning Software?

Very often **Often** **Sometimes** **Rarely** **Never** a. Listened to the text read aloud 15% 21% 24% 21% 18% b. Used the dictionary for definitions 18% 18% 21% 15% 27% c. Read the instructor’s embedded notes to focus my reading 20% 40% 30% 3% 6% d. Used the highlighting and outlining tools 30% 30% 24% 12% 3% e. Copied & pasted notes into a Word document 27% 27% 21% 12% 12%

2. Compared with reading textbooks in other courses, did Smartxt help you with any of the following?

Very often **Often** **Sometimes** **Rarely** **Never** a. I was able to focus more while I was reading. 9% 18% 27% 36% 9% b. I was able to remember what I read better. 9% 15% 33% 30% 12% c. I got a better grade on the test. 3% 9% 24% 46% 18% d. I got a better grade in the course. 3% 10% 28% 41% 17% e. I became more interested in reading the textbook. 9% 16% 22% 31% 22% f. I was able to understand vocabulary better. 9% 31% 28% 19% 13% g. By hearing words pronounced, I was better able to understand them. 6% 15% 24% 27% 27% h. I was able to interact with the text more. 15% 21% 39% 15% 9%

Very much **Quite a bit** **Some** **Very little** 3. To what extent have the supports available in

this course affected your motivation to study? 6% 39% 21% 33% 4. To what extent have the supports available to you in this course affected your confidence in your ability to learn? 6% 33% 30% 30%

5. Would having Smartxt-type supports in other courses make a significant difference in your learning process? 18% 21% 42% 18%

6. To what extent has this class offered your interest in alternative study tools? 15% 21% 39% 24%

7. 3% (n=1) of the respondents stated that they have been identified as having a learning

disability?

8. 100% of the respondents stated that they do not currently used programs/services such as DSPS, CALWorks or EOPS.

9. Please select the response that best describes your experience using Smartxt:

Strongly

	Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly	Disagree
a. Smartxt was beneficial as a study skill tool.	9%	42%				
b. Smartxt increased my ability to understand the textbook.	6%	24%	30%	24%	15%	24%
c. The Smartxt assignment was useful and worthwhile.	6%	36%	21%	24%	12%	18%
d. Smartxt increased my level of preparedness for the test.	9%	12%	33%	36%	9%	6%
e. The Smartxt assignment encouraged me to increase my engagement in the subject.	6%	30%	30%	24%	9%	30%
f. The Smartxt assignment has made me become more interested in the course.	9%	24%	27%	30%	9%	27%
g. This assignment increased my ability to understand the class lectures.	9%	39%	12%	30%	9%	3%
h. The assistance I received from the Academic Success Center staff was useful and worthwhile.	38%	38%	9%	13%	3%	3%
i. I would recommend the Academic Success Center to others.	27%	30%	21%	15%	6%	6%

Additional comments regarding Smartxt respondents shared:

- The directions could be a little clearer. The “how” functions should be explained clearly. - Smartxt is a really useful study tool, but because of the way this anthropology course is set up, it was not super beneficial. I feel it would be very useful in other courses though. - Nope, good job though - This would be a very useful tool, however when it is reading to you, it’s very hard to understand. It sounds too much like a computer, and it will pronounce simple words wrong. If the software was better, it would be extremely useful tool. - Not highlighting words while being spoken aloud. - There should be quizzes for each chapter to make sure we comprehend the material. - I think it should be implemented to use in all courses. It is very helpful. - It’s useful when you have already read the text and can quickly review key points and concepts. However, if you’re using Smartxt before reading the text, it would be distracting. - The software pronounces numerous words incorrectly. - I like how you get to choose different voices to read the text to you. - There were certain words the Smartxt could not pronounce such as “have”. - Automated voice sounded weird, too distracting. - I’m a visual learner, so having a computer read for me is really useless. I’d prefer videos. - The idea for Smartxt is good, however, application usages are very limited to those who struggle with reading or comprehending verbal sound of words. Therefore, it is actually a significant waste of time for students already comfortable with their current style of studying and reading. This program should be absolutely voluntary to those that want to use it and should not be required by all

students. - This did not benefit me personally, but I can see how it may help others. - The reader's voice was actually not helpful at all. It was quite distracting. But the instructor's highlighted portions were helpful in showing me where to focus. - The Success Center staff was very helpful and able to answer questions I had. - I liked it a lot. I'm not an auditory person, but the listening feature will be great for others. - I prefer reading from a physical book. I'm sure it was useful to others, but not me.