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Tinkering with Comments: Tailoring Practice by Spying on Written Artifacts

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Tinkering with Comments: Tailoring Practice by Spying on Written Artifacts

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Purdue University Writing Lab
IWCA Conference, Chicago, Illinois, November 2017
Overview

• Overview of two IRB-approved research projects
  • Why Code
  • Methods
  • Participants

• Asynchronous Online Tutoring (Josh)

• Social Sciences Graduate Writing Group (Amy)
Why Coding?
Methods: Asynchronous Online Tutoring

• Coding of marginal and summative tutor comments
  
  ✓ Coded using Nvivo
  ✓ Inter-rater Reliability—Kappa Coefficients & Percentage of Agreement
  ✓ **Type:** Global, Surface, Meta-textual
  ✓ **Focus:** What is the comment about?
  ✓ **Mode:** How does the comment communicate?

• Interviews with tutors

Inter-Rater Reliability

Kappa Coefficient

• Lowest—0.4811
• Highest—1.0
• Most frequent—1.0

• Guidelines for interpreting
  • 0.4-0.75 = Fair to Good agreement
  • Over 0.75 = Excellent agreement

Percentage Agreement

• Lowest—84.21%
• Highest—100%
• Vast majority >90%
Sample Coded Comment

Comments from a single bubble

This is a very important point, and I think that it clearly communicates the purpose of this paragraph.

Codes for each independent clause

Type: Global
Focus: Content
Mode: Praise

Perhaps it should move to the beginning of the paragraph?

Type: Global
Focus: Organization
Mode: Qualified Command
Methods: Graduate Writing Group

- Manual coding of marginal comments (pen and paper)
- Comments could receive more than one code per method
- Inter-rater reliability by “compare and discuss” method

Method 1: Style of Feedback
- ✓ Corrective
- ✓ Directive
- ✓ Interactive
- ✓ Evaluative

Method 2: Focus of Feedback
- ✓ Deletions
- ✓ Insertions
- ✓ Discipline-Specific
- ✓ Organization
- ✓ Sentence Level
Sample Coded Comment

Reader Comment

I would lead with this thought. The logic here should be that deployment poses a threat to the attachment system, thereby causing family members to experience anxiety and threat regarding safety and comfort.

Coding
Method 1: Directive & Interactive

Method 2: Discipline-Specific (General Content) & Organization (Paragraph)
Methods: Important Similarities

• Emergent code/A priori code hybrid
• Code refinement or clarification in the early stages
• Development of a coding scheme
• Codes based on writing center values rather than writer values
Participants

Asynchronous Tutoring (Josh)

• Tutors—“Christen” & “Ellen”
  • NS
  • Grad
  • 1st year Tutor

• Writers—94
  • 38 NS & 56 NNS
  • 38 Undergrad & 56 Grad+
  • 17 had 2 sessions
  • 15 had > 2 sessions

Graduate Writing Group (Amy)

• Social Sciences Research Institute
• ~4-6 regular attendees
• Focus on 2
  • “Mary”—experienced grad & WG
  • “Lisa”—1st yr. grad & WG
Asynchronous Tutoring

Coding Tutor Comments
Impetus

Tutor training:
• While tutors receive training for face-to-face sessions, they receive very little formal training for asynchronous online tutoring.
• What type of training would most benefit tutors, and on which areas of asynchronous tutoring should this training concentrate?
Type, Focus, and Mode – Christen and Ellen

Type, Focus, and Mode

- Christen
- Ellen

Type:
- Global
- Surface
- Meta-textual
- Content
- Correctness
- Organization
- Style
- Style-clarity
- Style-format
- Style-genre
- Advice
- Command
- Criticism
- Explanation
- Miscellaneous
- Praise
- Qualified Command
- Qualified Criticism
- Questions
- Closed question
- Open question
- Recast

Focus:
- Type
- Focus
- Mode
Interviews: General Patterns

What would you say are the most common issues that you address in online submissions?

• Ellen: A lot of grammar. Mostly grammar. Even if they don’t really need help with grammar, or they actually really want help with the structure of the paper, they usually still say grammar ... even though, as a tutor, you know they don’t really want help with grammar, it [the appointment form] says grammar, so I try and help with that no matter what if they say it.

• Christen: The most common request is grammar ... but I always still make an effort to comment on global issues.
Interviews: General Patterns

When you’ve identified something to comment on, how do you decide what to say?

• Christen: Sometimes it’s questioning, like “I’m not following you here, what is this? What do you mean here?” Sometimes ... I might say “ok, so your thesis seems to be XYZ... is this accurate?” or “I’m having trouble following you at this part of the paper, can you strengthen your topic sentences?” ... as much as possible, I try to write down what I say out loud.
Three Applications

• Comparing comments written to L1 and L2 English writers
• Comparing summative and ‘side’ comments
• Observing change over time
Proportion of Type, L2 & L1 Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L2 Writers</th>
<th>English L1 Writers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Ellen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Christen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Ellen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Christen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proportion of Focus, L2 & L1 Writers—Ellen

- **Content**
- **Correctness**
- **Organization**
- **Style-clarity**
- **Style-format**
- **Style-genre**

**L2 Writers** vs. **English L1 Writers**
Proportion of Mode, L2 & L1 Writers—Christen

- Proportion of Mode, L2 & L1 Writers

L2 Writers vs. English L1 Writers
Interviews: L1 and L2 English Writers

What would you say are the most common issues that you address in online submissions?

• **Ellen:** A lot of sessions in the summer I feel like I’ve been getting a lot more online sessions with a lot of international students, and a lot of international students want help with grammar.
Proportion of Type, Summative and Side

- Global:
  - Ellen: Surface
  - Christen: Global

- Summative:
  - Global: 60%
  - Surface: 40%

- Side comments:
  - Global: 60%
  - Surface: 60%
Proportion of Focus, Summative and Side – Christen

- Content: 45%
- Correctness: 15%
- Organization: 10%
- Style: 30%
- Style-clarity: 35%
- Style-format: 5%
- Style-genre: 5%

Summative: blue bars
Side comments: orange bars
Proportion of Mode, Summative and Side – Christen

Advice  Command  Criticism  Explanation  Miscellaneous  Praise  Qualified Command  Qualified Criticism  Questions  Closed question  Open question  Recast

Summative  Side comments
Interviews: Summative comments

When you’ve identified something that you need to comment on, how do you decide what to say?

• Ellen: So, when I’ve identified something, it depends on what it is. If it’s, like, structure, then I phrase what I want to say differently. That’s more for something I can say as a summative comment at the end… organization, larger order concerns, that kind of stuff, that’s something I feel comfortable more so saying in a summative comment.

• Ellen: If it’s grammar, I’ll usually go ahead and start [reading the document] and I’ll just start working on the grammar from the beginning… as soon as I start picking up patterns.
Proportion of Type, Early and Late Sessions – Ellen

- **Global**
  - Early sessions: 60%
  - Late sessions: 60%

- **Surface**
  - Early sessions: 40%
  - Late sessions: 40%
Proportion of Mode, Early and Late Sessions – Christen

- Advice
- Command
- Criticism
- Explanation
- Miscellaneous
- Praise
- Qualified Command
- Qualified Criticism
- Questions
- Closed question
- Open question
- Recast

Early sessions
Late sessions
# Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutor Comments</th>
<th>Coding Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| It seems to me that there should be a transition here that introduces technological field experiences. | Focus:  
Josh—Content  
Vicki—Organization |
| Your use of punctuation is clear and appropriate. | Focus:  
Josh—Correctness  
Vicki—Style-Clarity |
Graduate Writing Groups
Coding peer comments
Mary, Method 2
Comparing Comments that Mirror Each Other

Deletions
Insertions
Discipline-Specific
Organization
Sentence Structure
Mary, Method 2

Opposing Movement of LOC and HOC Comments

- Deletions
- Discipline-specific
Lisa, Method 2, Percent of Total Comments

Deletion  Insertion  Discipline Specific  Organization  Sentence Structure

13  14  15  18  20  23

0%  10%  20%  30%  40%  50%  60%  70%
First Year in WG Comparison, Method 2
Percents of Total Comments

Mary

Lisa

Deletions
Insertions
Discipline-specific
Organization
Sentence Structure

Outlier

Gap size
Comparison of Discipline-Specific Comments—Paper 15

Data Handling

Measures

Visual Models

Style Guide

Content

Other

Lisa

Mary
Discipline-Specific Comments for Mary, Paper 18

- Data Handling: 34%
- Measures; Visual Model: 0%
- Style Guide: 8%
- Content: 58%

Legend:
- Data Handling
- Measures; Visual Model
- Style Guide
- Content
Lisa, Method 1, Percents of Total

Corrective  Directive  Interactive  Evaluative  Linear (Corrective)
Comparison Method 1, Corrective and Interactive
Comparison, Method 1, Percents of Total Comments
Note: Lisa's large amount of discipline-specific in Paper 15 is due to a focus on APA style.
References


Questions?

Feel free to contact us for more information:

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