Review 11

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**An Interactive Ambient Visualization for Code Smells**

In this paper, Murphy-Hill and Black designed a code smell detector plugin for Eclipse and conducted an experiment to confirm their hypotheses, given as the following:

1. Programmers identify more smells when using tool than not.
2. Categorization/detection of code smell is subjective (which is little too obvious)
3. The tool help programmer to make more confident and informed decision on refactoring. (or is it equivalent to what they have in the book? – possibly not; no cause and effect inferred)
4. The guidelines for designing smell detector reflect programmer’s need.

As a result of this experiment, they were able to confirm all hypotheses, but hypothesis 2. According to the authors, they were provided with “evidence to support hypothesis 2,” main reason being this question is really hard to confirm. Yet, from confirming all other hypothesis, they conclude that tools like this “have a place in the software developer’s toolkit.”

To cut to the point, I do agree with their conclusion. Even if I have not encountered extremely unmaintainable code, – which they call “code rot”- I do see the value of maintainability in the code and detecting the code smell will certainly help to increase the maintainability of a software.

I personally liked their design choices, such as use of negotiated interruptions for higher productivity. If there is a smell inherent from the software’s architecture and this tool keeps showing popup screens, etc., it will be detriment to the developer’s productivity and likelihood of reusing this tool will diminish dramatically. Also they chose blue, orange and colors between those two as the petal color choice for these colors are value neutral. Since one smell is not necessarily worse than the other, using green/red can be misleading.

Also I found the structure of this paper to be very interesting. I was amused by their example of Liliana, since it defined what “code smell” means without getting too technical. Yet I was not too happy to read Stench Blossom’s “manual” for about half way through.

**Question:**

1. What is “floss refactoring?”
2. What does “Professional subjects were not compensated” mean?