Expert Feedback is Does Not Always Mean High Quality Feedback

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# ABSTRACT

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Good feedback is a critical part of the learning process, particularly in creative fields. Expert feedback is often hailed as the highest quality feedback due to experts’ domain knowledge and experience. However, even among experts, good feedback is rare. This short paper presents an analysis of expert feedback given to over <<x>> students from three iterations of an undergraduate design course. We found that from over <<x>> feedback comments, only <<x%>> were considered being of high quality. Our results suggest that though expert feedback is often highly valued from students, it is not always helpful and greater efforts should be made to teach instructors provide more effective and helpful feedback.

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# INTRODUCTION

From writing essays to developing web applications, formative, iterative feedback is critical to the success of creative projects. Both giving and receiving feedback encourage self-reflection and critical thinking upon one’s work. In educational settings, feedback is especially important for showing students where they are, where they should be, and how to get there. Unfortunately, the practice of giving good feedback is not an explicitly taught skill. Even experts are often unware that their feedback is ineffective.

While peer feedback is more easily scaled in large educational settings, expert feedback is more valued by learners. Recently, systems have emphasized the potential reuse of expert feedback to allow this feedback to better scale.

## What are the Characteristics of Good Feedback?

Effective feedback in general is specific, actionable, and justified. Specific feedback is directly related to a particular part of the work or rubric criteria. Actionable feedback provides a concrete suggested next step for learners to progress. Justified feedback provides an explanation or reasoning to help learners understand why the feedback was given.

The detection of these characteristics is of great interest to natural language processing research in the context of detecting whether feedback is actionable and how to improve this feedback.

This paper provides an analysis of feedback provided by teaching staff from three iterations of an undergraduate design course. <<x>> total feedback comments from <<x>> teaching assistants (TAs) were rated in terms of whether they were specific, actionable, and/or justified. to provide evidence that even experienced feedback givers often fail to provide effective and high-quality feedback.

# METHODS

## Feedback Dataset

Our dataset consisted of 4,077 total distinct feedback comments. These comments were provided by 20 different TAs over the course of three iterations of an undergraduate design course. TAs provided feedback comments on a total of 10 weekly assignments for each course iteration. These assignments ranged from written explanations to paper prototypes to functional web applications.

## Feedback Ratings

Two independent raters rated whether each feedback comment was specific, actionable, or justified with a binary 1 for yes or 0 for no. Each rater rated a half of the total dataset. An overlap sample consisting of 30% of the total overall sample was rated by both raters as a measure of interrater reliability. The interrater reliability between the two raters was high (<<x>>).

# results

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## Most Feedback is Not Specific, Actionable, & Justified

**Longer Comments Tend to be of Higher Quality**

## Key Words and Phrases May Be Indicative of Quality

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