Gamification MOOC

The Experience of Being a Virtual Ethnographer

Being a virtual ethnographer these past few weeks has been an insightful and rewarding experience, which has helped me better understand the process of ethnography as 'an "adaptive ethnography which sets out to suit itself to the conditions in which it finds itself" (Hine 2004). I did not have a clear question when I started, but participant observation brought possible ideas to light. It was fascinating to see how the community constructed and organized itself, and initially I thought this would be my point of focus. However, after doing some research into peer assessment and seeing several issues with peer marking, I decided to further explore this area.

I did not seek consent from Coursera nor from the individual participants, and 'lurked' rather than participating as I was concerned about not being allowed to continue my research. However, with hindsight I realize that it would have been useful to be involved and announce my presence in order to do written assignment 1 and better evaluate peer feedback.

While participants' identity has been removed in the screen shots I am aware that there is still traceability from the name of the MOOC and discussion forum titles.

Introduction to the Micro Ethnology

There are 3 assignments on the gamification MOOC, which are all peer assessed. Participants are required to mark five peer submissions. My micro ethnography focuses on some of the issues that arose with the peer marking of assignment 1.

A Bit of Background on Peer Assessment

For a single assignment within a single MOOC, there are thousands of peer raters evaluating thousands of assignments. Because of the scale, there is limited instructor supervision and feedback. Many of the MOOC participants are international and there is a large variation in their native language, culture, values and worldview. Without a teacher overseeing the process, there is also very little sense of obligation or incentive for students to take the peer assessment process seriously.

Peer assessment in MOOCs needs to be 1) simple and easy to understand for students; 2) efficient in execution; and 3) limited in that each student rater is asked to rate no more than a handful of other students' assignments.

A scoring rubric is provided for each assignment, the latter usually in the form of a project, and students are instructed to complete the assigned project and submit it online. Each project is distributed to randomly selected peers, who are asked to assess the assignment. Each student rater then judges the quality of the project based on the predetermined scoring rubric. Raters are also asked to provide some written comments. The score along with the written comments are then made available to the original student who submitted the project.

Accuracy of Peer Assessment Results

One of the biggest issues with peer assessment is how accurate the results are as the performance of one novice is being judged by another. Potential issues include peer raters misjudging the quality of the submission or judging it highly because the raters and the submitter share the same set of common but erroneous misconceptions. Or equally troubling, a peer rater judges a submission as poor due to the rater's own misconceptions about the subject matter.

Although several studies suggest that peer assessment results correlate well with instructor ratings for highly structured tasks with narrowly defined correct responses (Bouzidi & Jaillet, 2009), there are still doubts regarding the general accuracy of peer feedback.

Assignment 1

You are an employee of Cereals Incorporated, a large manufacturer of breakfast food products. Your supervisor, Madison County, approaches you because she knows you recently took a course on gamification, which she has heard will revolutionize marketing.

She tells you that Cereals Inc. is about to release a new line of ready-to-eat breakfast pastries, and she wants to know whether to use gamification as part

of the marketing strategy. The breakfast pastries will be aimed at the 18-35 age bracket. Surveys show members of this demographic often skip breakfast because they don't want to eat the typical cereals of their youth, and they are too active to cook their own breakfasts. Market research indicates that the pastries are likely to appeal more to women than men by a 65%-35% ratio. Cereals Inc. has a 35% share of the overall breakfast food market, but only a 10% share of the fragmented ready-to-eat segment.

Provide as many reasons as you can why gamification could be a useful technique to apply to the situation your manager has presented to you. Explain why these reasons address the specific scenario provided.

At this stage, focus on the problem rather than the solution. In other words, describe the goals of the project, not the particular game elements or other techniques you plan to use. We strongly encourage you to watch this week's lecture segments before attempting this assignment.

RUBRIC

There are two components to the score for this assignment. The first is a quantitative measure and the second is a qualitative assessment of the submission. Give a score for each component according to the rubric below. You may optionally also provide free-form feedback to the student.

The submission should be the student's own work. If you conclude that a substantial portion has been copied without attribution from another student or an online resource, assign a score of "0" to both components.

Quantitative Measure

Did the student provide a list of reasons to use gamification, and an explanation for each one?

0 No answer or completely irrelevant answer.
1 1 reason.
2 2 or more reasons.

Qualitative Measure

Were the reasons explained convincingly? Grade this criterion independently of the number of reasons. In other words, if only one reason is provided but it is explained in a clear, convincing, and thoughtful manner, award 3 points for this portion.
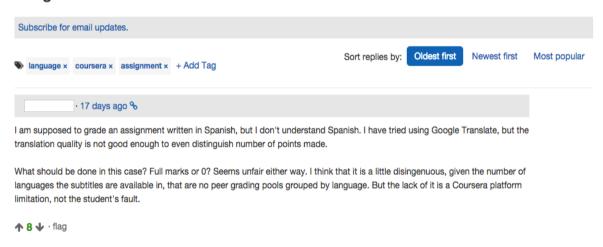
0 No answer or completely irrelevant answer.
1 Reasons with no explanations.
2 Explanations that were obvious or vague (such as "gamification would be good for Cereals Inc. because it would sell more breakfast pastries").
3 Explanations that were clear, convincing, and thoughtful. These could be (but need not be) tied to examples or frameworks in the lectures, such as the

Foursquare factors identified in Lecture 3.1: engagement gap, choice, progression, social, and habit formation.

What I liked was...

You've written 0 words

What could have made this submission better was...

You've written 0 words

Issues

Issue #1

To instructors: please explicitly urge students to use English in written assignments.

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· 17 days ago

I am supposed to grade an assignment written in Spanish, but I don't understand Spanish. I have tried using Google Translate, but the translation quality is not good enough to even distinguish number of points made.

What should be done in this case? Full marks or 0? Seems unfair either way. I think that it is a little disingenuous, given the number of languages the subtitles are available in, that are no peer grading pools grouped by language. But the lack of it is a Coursera platform limitation, not the student's fault.

↑ 8 ↓ · flag

There does not seem to be anything on the Coursera website or in the rubric which specifies that participants must submit their assignment in English. A second participant also had an issue with an assignment written in Russian and other participants offered to help translate.

The staff intervened but did not answer the question regarding Google Translate.

STAFF · 17 days ago ⚭
We try to provide subtitles to the videos for those who don't understand English. For the written assignments, you could also try Google Translate to help you understand (google.com/translate). While we encourage English we don't want to prevent others from participating either! Thanks for the feedback.

The community uploaded assignments onto the forum, which were translated by other participants and then asked if it was possible to mark according to the languages the participants spoke.

The staff replied:

STAFF · 16 days ago ⚭   Posted in To instructors: please explicitly urge students to use English in written assignments.
Hi all, We did specify to write in English, so if you do not want to try to translate, feel free to give a 0. I looked into this and we have no way of reassigning the assessments. Hopefully you don't have more than 1 out of 5 in non-English. Thank you!

The author of the thread points out that it is not stipulated anywhere on the website that the assignments have to be in English and the community work out their own solution:

Anonymous · 16 days ago ⚭
How about this as short-term solution: 1. Do your best with google translate (or any other translator) 2. Mark accordingly 3. Mark down by 1 point 4. Make sure you tell your students that they were marked down because they wrote in a language other than English Yes, marking down might seem unfair if the course instructions didn't specify that assignments have to be written in English, but that keeps nobody from applying common sense. Also, this first assigment is equivalent to 5% of the total grade, so by marking down by 1 point you effectively mark down their total grade by 1%, which is equivalent to one wrong answer in a quiz. That's the most gentle slap on the wrist you could possibly give. ↑ 5 ↓ · flag

There was also an issue with a participant receiving feedback in Spanish for an assignment written in English.

Signature Track · 3 days ago ⚭
I also scored 8 out of 10 and had the same problem with feedback... I received only 2 written feedback (btw one was in spanish). I am disappointed as well... ↑ 0 ↓ · flag

Issue #2

Participants were unsure whether they should penalize poor English or focus on the content of the assignment and there was also a request for guidelines to be made much stricter.

| Signature Track · a day ago % | Posted in Grading of non-english written assigment |

"I think we can't give a low grade for finding syntax or spelling mistakes"

Well, from my second assigment I have lower grade because of bad structure of text and bad written sentences - I'm also non-native speaker - and I was pretty angry of that people. :)

| Signature Track · a day ago % | Posted in Grading of non-english written assigment |

For me when I do the peer reveiws and I do mention "language" -- however, it's always in context of the language used can be more direct. Not in terms of grammar or syntax. There are some people who love to answer in a non-direct manner to a question asked (a bit like Yoda, pardon the Star Wars reference) -- and these may even include native English speakers. They are what I call "word wasters" -- for want of a better term. But I will never grade someone lower just because of bad grammer.

Issue #3

Many participants were not given written feedback along with their final grade, and felt this would have been useful to understand their grade and what they could have done better. There was some debate over whether feedback should be mandatory (at least 50 words) but the general consensus was that this would lead to 'bogus feedback', written simply to meet the course criteria.

| · 3 days ago % |

i'm a bit disappointed post-written assignment 2. I received 8 out of 10 which I don't know if it's right or wrong but all five of my reviewers left no negative feedback and only 1 left positive feedback.

It's very hard to see where I should be improving/what I'd done wrong without this.

Is this a reason that people aren't forced to at least write something in the feedback boxes? Especially if they are not giving full marks. I worked hard to find something positive and negative to write on every person that I graded!

↑ 18 ↓ · flag

| · 3 days ago % |

I am currently taking a course called ''An Introduction to E-commerce'' from Nanyang University and it has been a great surprise to see that there, written feedback on peer-reviewed assignments is mandatory.

One drawback might be that the effort put into a course would be bigger (but again, isn't this what we all should be aiming for?) but the huge positive aspect is that we would all leave the course with a better understanding of a subject.
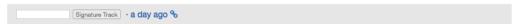Other MOOC platforms also have mandatory written feedback on peer-reviewed assignments!

Later edit: I've got 10/10 so this is not necessarily about the score, it's really about the fact that mandatory feedback would make all of us think more about the content and hence, learn more!

↑ 0 ↓ · flag

Issue #4

Participants suggested that it would be useful to be given sample answers as they felt there was no point taking a course if they did not know whether what they were learning was what they were supposed to be learning.

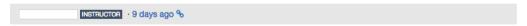**In summary**

Despite the above issues, the participants seemed generally pleased with most of the feedback they were given and dealt with issues well as a community.

One of the instructors did point out that there is some leeway in the overall grade that takes into account inaccurate peer feedback.

Points to be considered for future peer assessment:

- the rubric should clearly stipulate that both the assignment and feedback should be written in English

- if this is not feasible as everyone should be encouraged to participate then the author should be responsible for translating his assignment in whichever way he chooses
- it should be mentioned in the rubric that the focus is on content not grammar (or that marks should be deducted for poor use of English)
- feedback should be made mandatory and the grade justified
- it would be useful to provide sample answers to the assignments so that the participants could check to see how well their answers compared

References

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