

Cooperative Production of Knowledge on the Web: Co-authorship in Question-and-Answer-Websites

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Introduction

One possibility of co-authorship on the web lies in editing, that is the subsequent revision of postings by the original author or others. An exemplary study of editing in a learning forum can be found in Lindemann et al. (2014). In this poster, some of their conclusions are being considered, but the main focus lies on the parallels between editing and the conversation-analytic concept of repair (see for an overview Kitzinger 2013). The findings presented in this poster are the result of an ongoing genre analysis of the Question-and-Answer-Website *Stack Exchange*, which is part wiki and part forum. They show that the functions of editing exceed the sole purpose of collaboratively collecting (factual) knowledge.

Data and method

The findings presented in this poster are the result of a genre analysis (Günthner/Knoblach 1994; Luckmann 1986) of a Question-and-Answer-Website. The data consist of several pages from *German Language* which is a community within the platform *Stack Exchange*. The bilingual community is dedicated to the discussion of topics concerned with German grammar, etymology, meanings, translations, etc. Users post their questions and hope for other user's answers, comments and also revisions. In this poster the focus lies on the last of the three possibilities, namely the revisions done by other users than the original poster.

Findings

Editing as a linking action

- The *editing of tags* allows the navigation through the contents of the website and in further consequence enables the interaction between the users through the contents.
- It shows that one question can be attributed to more than one topic or context.
- The *editing of the layout* shows users what the formatting standards within the community are.
- Especially for new users this serves as a guidance.



- The *editing of spelling errors* shows what the community agreed upon regarding the precision of language used within the postings.
- It demonstrates the willingness to help and support others.
- All three forms of editing can be seen as a „vehicle for socialization“ (Schegloff et al. 1977: 38).



Findings

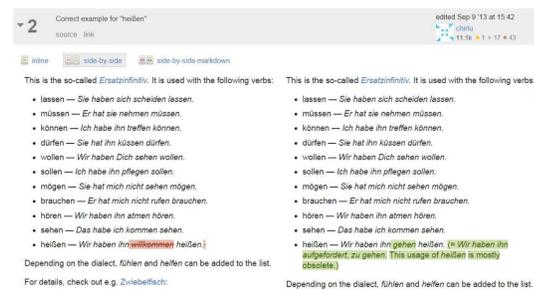
Editing as repair

- The *content-related editing of a question* is used to promote an interaction that has come to a standstill - just as repair does in face-to-face interactions.
- A 'comment'-sequence is inserted between a first turn, the 'question', and the second turn, the 'answer', in order to negotiate the repair.
- This enables the following of an answer-turn to a question-turn that doesn't contain a trouble source any longer.



Editing as revaluation of a posting

- Edits which *extend or change content within answers* can enhance the posting so that more users interact with it which in turn facilitates the production of 'correct' answers.



Conclusion

The collaborative production of postings via editing can serve several functions within the Q&A-community *German Language*. There is for example the repair-function which is similar to repair in face-to-face interaction and promotes conversation that has come to a standstill. Above that, edits can demonstrate what rules and practices are of value within the community so that they serve as a vehicle for socialization for new users. And there are edits that reevaluate postings, namely for the members of the community as well as for other internet users in general who then could become new members.

Literature

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