Evaluative Misalignment of Students’ Writing Assessment Criteria: Hypothesized Consequences and Causes

Background

- Writing is a complex and iterative process of generating, organizing, translating, and refining ideas.
- Assessment is integral to each stage, and students’ assessment criteria can influence how and whether they enact these processes.
- **Evaluative misalignment** occurs when the criteria employed by student writers differ substantively from those of their audience (e.g., teachers and peers) or normative expectations about writing.
- This mismatch may interfere with writing outcomes by affecting how and whether students engage crucial writing processes and practices.
- We consider four potential sources of evaluative misalignment:
  - **Writing Knowledge**: students may not understand or know the criteria associated with key writing tasks or genres.
  - **Metacognitive Awareness**: students may not monitor or regulate their writing process or outcomes using available criteria.
  - **Writing Motivation**: students may forego careful or meaningful assessment due to lack of interest or self-efficacy.
  - **Writing Beliefs**: students may devalue the purpose of assessment or focus attention on a limited set of writing criteria.

Sources of Misalignment

- **Automated Textual Analysis**
  - Used natural language processing tools to reveal linguistic features that predict essay ratings.
  - High school students ($n = 126$) attended to fewer features than teachers; only partial overlap.
  - Undergraduates ($n = 70$) rated writing quality and author traits for four essays: no errors, low level errors, high level errors, or all errors.
  - Rating scale: 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest).
  - Showed stronger sensitivity to low level errors.

- **Perceptions of Writing Errors**
  - Undergraduates ($n = 70$) rated writing quality and author traits for four essays: no errors, low level errors, high level errors, or all errors.
  - Rating scale: 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest).
  - Showed stronger sensitivity to low level errors.

- **Writing Processes and Outcomes**
  - Planning
  - Drafting
  - Feedback
  - Revising

- **Evaluative Misalignment**
  - Student writers’ cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational profile may guide their selection and implementation of assessment criteria.
  - How are varying forms of misalignment related to specific writing challenges or outcomes?
  - How might the efficacy of writing instruction be further bolstered by addressing alignment?