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Title: Points of Satisfaction in Tutor-Student Interactions
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Abstract: There are many aspects of social relationships that are daily occurrences, yet most of them go unspoken and unwritten. We examine these unwritten tendencies in interactions in a classroom environment, where there is an implicit power dynamic. This study characterizes the ends of these interactions and the factors that feed into them. The analysis of the ends of interactions, referred to as "points of satisfaction" in this work, is performed on two tutorial sessions in an introductory computer science course in an Australian university. Both the tutorial sessions are led by one tutor, the same one for each, with the main task of these sessions being to discuss and complete problems related to the lecture. Parts of conversations, what we call episodes, have been purposefully picked, transcribed, and analyzed and compared against each other, using the analysis technique of Roth, described in his book "Rigorous Data Analysis: Beyond 'Anything Goes'". As we look at the patterns for points of satisfaction in the episodes, we notice that the episodes generally fall into two categories: one where all parties in the interaction are satisfied (or have their goals met), and one where the tutor makes a command decision to end the interaction. This suggests an inherent power asymmetry about the point of satisfaction in an interaction. As we comment on in the work, this hints at the broader scope of study and potential generalization in this area of research, with interesting insights and hypotheses being formed around power, authority, and expertise in the classroom, as well as further depth in the characterization of these points of satisfaction.