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Tinkering with Comments: Tailoring Practice by Spying on Written Artifacts

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Amy Elliot

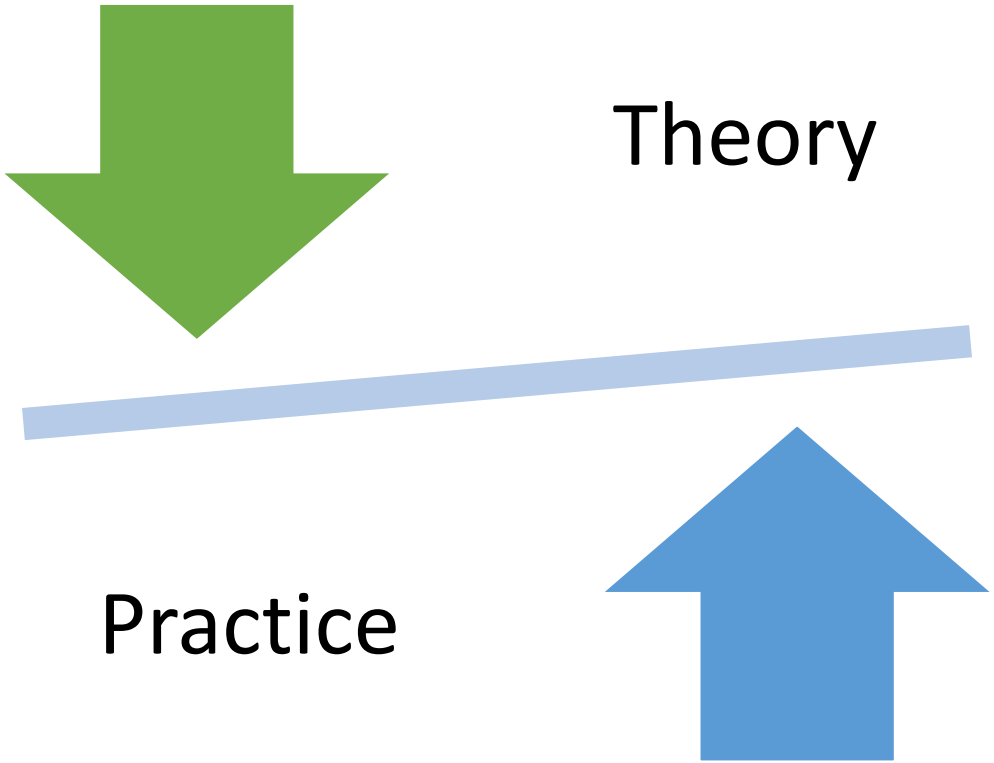
Purdue University Writing Lab

IWCA Conference, Chicago, Illinois, November 2017

Overview

- Overview of two IRB-approved research projects
  - Why Code
  - Methods
  - Participants
- Asynchronous Online Tutoring (Josh)
- Social Sciences Graduate Writing Group (Amy)

Why Coding?



Methods: Asynchronous Online Tutoring

- Coding of marginal and summative tutor comments

  ✓Coded using Nvivo
  ✓Inter-rater Reliability—Kappa Coefficients & Percentage of Agreement
  ✓Type: Global, Surface, Meta-textual
  ✓Focus: What is the comment about?
  ✓Mode: How does the comment communicate?

- Interviews with tutors

For details of this coding scheme's development, see Weirick, J., Davis, T., & Lawson, D. (2017). Writer L1/L2 Status and Asynchronous Online Writing Center Feedback: Consultant Response Patterns. *Learning Assistance Review (TLAR)*, *22*(2), 9-38.

Inter-Rater Reliability

Kappa Coeffecient

- Lowest—0.4811
- Highest—1.0
- Most frequent—1.0
- Guidelines for interpreting
  - 0.4-0.75 = Fair to Good agreement
  - Over 0.75 = Excellent agreement

Percentage Agreement

- Lowest—84.21%
- Highest—100%
- Vast majority >90%

Sample Coded Comment

Comments from a single bubble	**Codes for each independent clause**
This is a very important point, and I think that it clearly communicates the purpose of this paragraph.	Type: Global Focus: Content Mode: Praise
Perhaps it should move to the beginning of the paragraph?	Type: Global Focus: Organization Mode: Qualified Command

Methods: Graduate Writing Group

- Manual coding of marginal comments (pen and paper)
- Comments could receive more than one code per method
- Inter-rater reliability by “compare and discuss” method

Method 1: Style of Feedback

✓Corrective
✓Directive
✓Interactive
✓Evaluative

Method 2: Focus of Feedback

✓Deletions
✓Insertions
✓Discipline-Specific
✓Organization
✓Sentence Level

Sample Coded Comment

Reader Comment

I would lead with this thought. The logic here should be that deployment poses a threat to the attachment system, thereby causing family members to experience anxiety and threat regarding safety and comfort.

Coding

Method 1:

Directive & Interactive

Method 2:

Discipline-Specific (General Content) & Organization (Paragraph)

Methods: Important Similarities

- Emergent code/*A priori* code hybrid
- Code refinement or clarification in the early stages
- Development of a coding scheme
- Codes based on writing center values rather than writer values

Participants

Asynchronous Tutoring (Josh)

- Tutors— “Christen” & “Ellen”
  - NS
  - Grad
  - 1st year Tutor
- Writers—94
  - 38 NS & 56 NNS
  - 38 Undergrad & 56 Grad+
  - 17 had 2 sessions
  - 15 had > 2 sessions

Graduate Writing Group (Amy)

- Social Sciences Research Institute
- ~4-6 regular attendees
- Focus on 2
  - “Mary”—experienced grad & WG
  - “Lisa”—1st yr. grad & WG

Asynchronous Tutoring

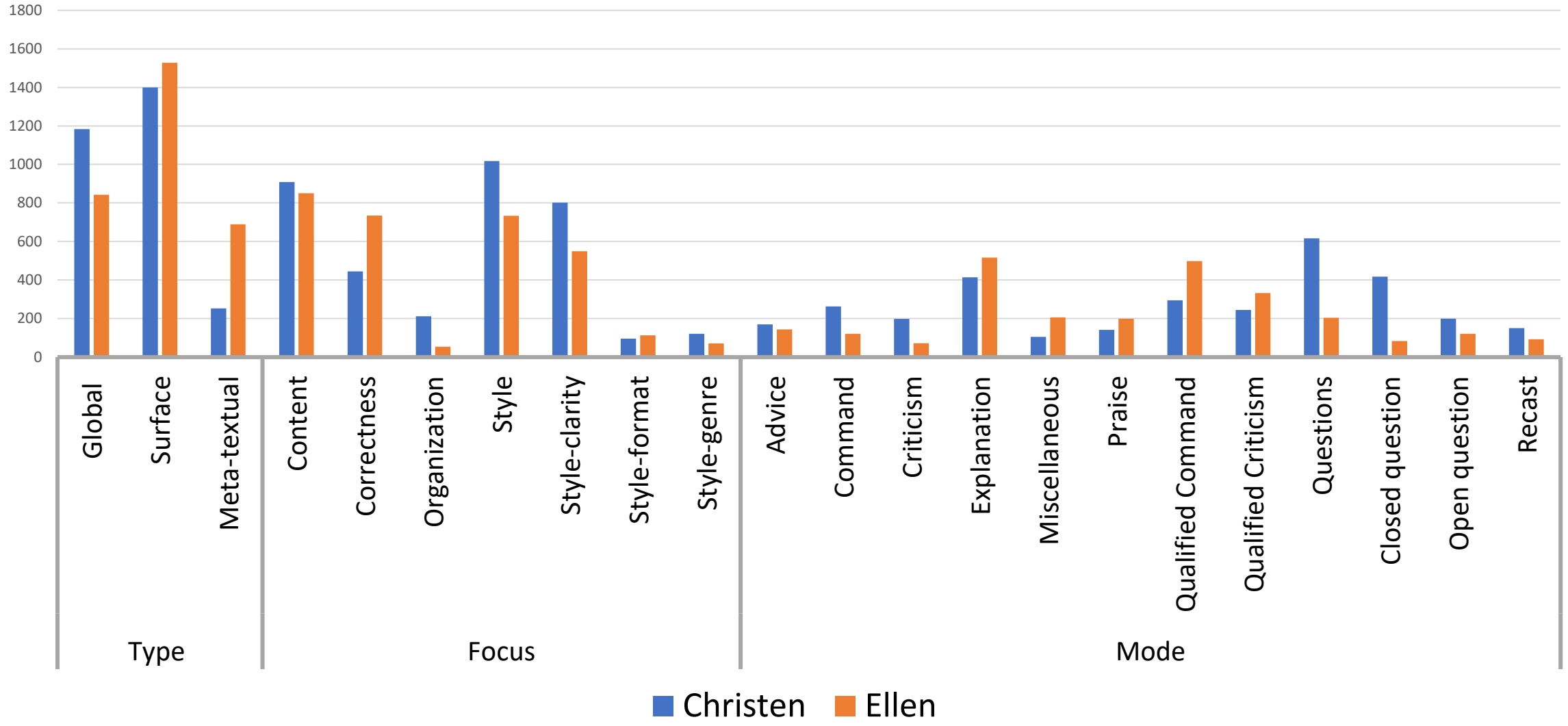
Coding Tutor Comments

Impetus

Tutor training:

- While tutors receive training for face-to-face sessions, they receive very little formal training for asynchronous online tutoring.
- What type of training would most benefit tutors, and on which areas of asynchronous tutoring should this training concentrate?

Type, Focus, and Mode – Christen and Ellen

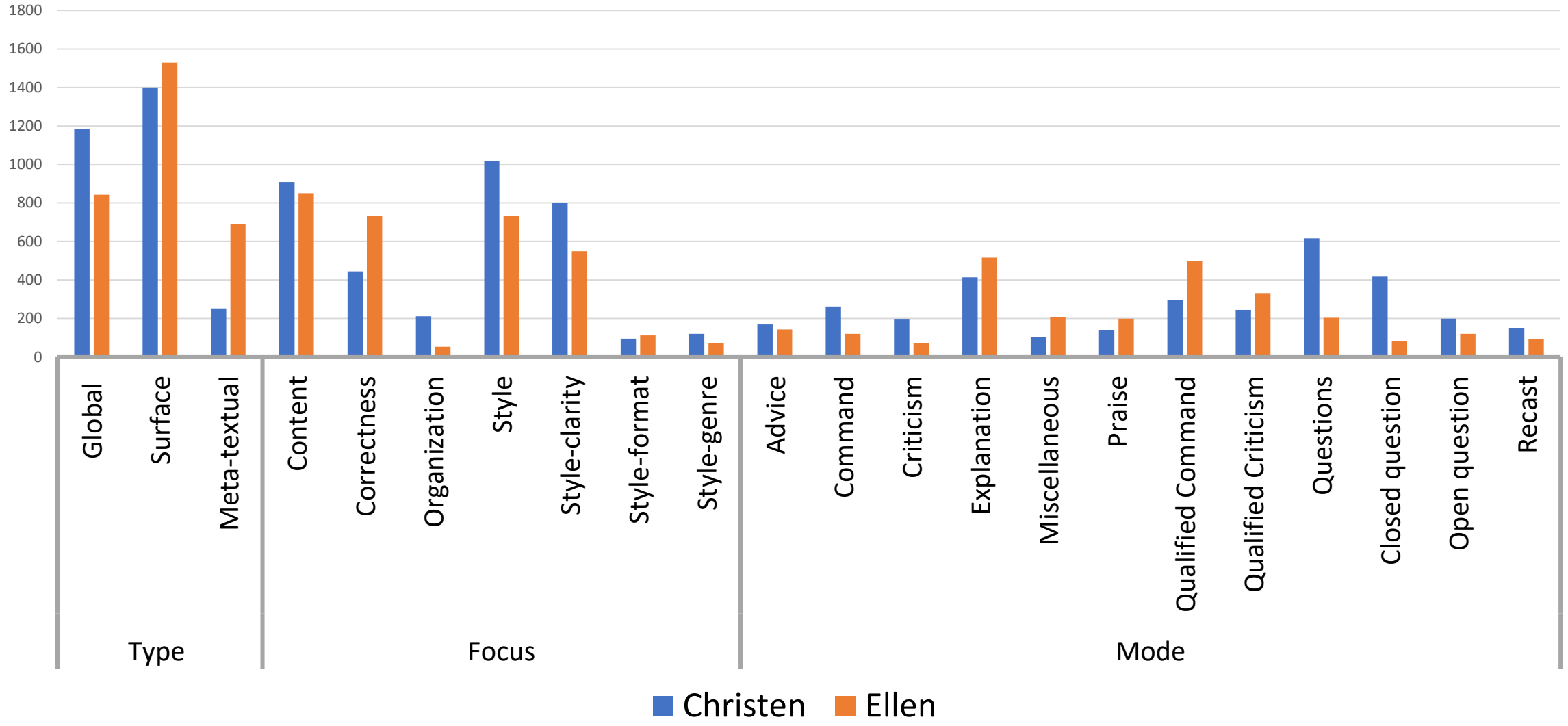


Interviews: General Patterns

What would you say are the most common issues that you address in online submissions?

- **Ellen:** A lot of grammar. Mostly grammar. Even if they don't really need help with grammar, or they actually really want help with the structure of the paper, they usually still say grammar … even though, as a tutor, you know they don't really want help with grammar, it [the appointment form] says grammar, so I try and help with that no matter what if they say it.
- **Christen:** The most common request is grammar … but I always still make an effort to comment on global issues.

Type, Focus, and Mode – Christen and Ellen



Interviews: General Patterns

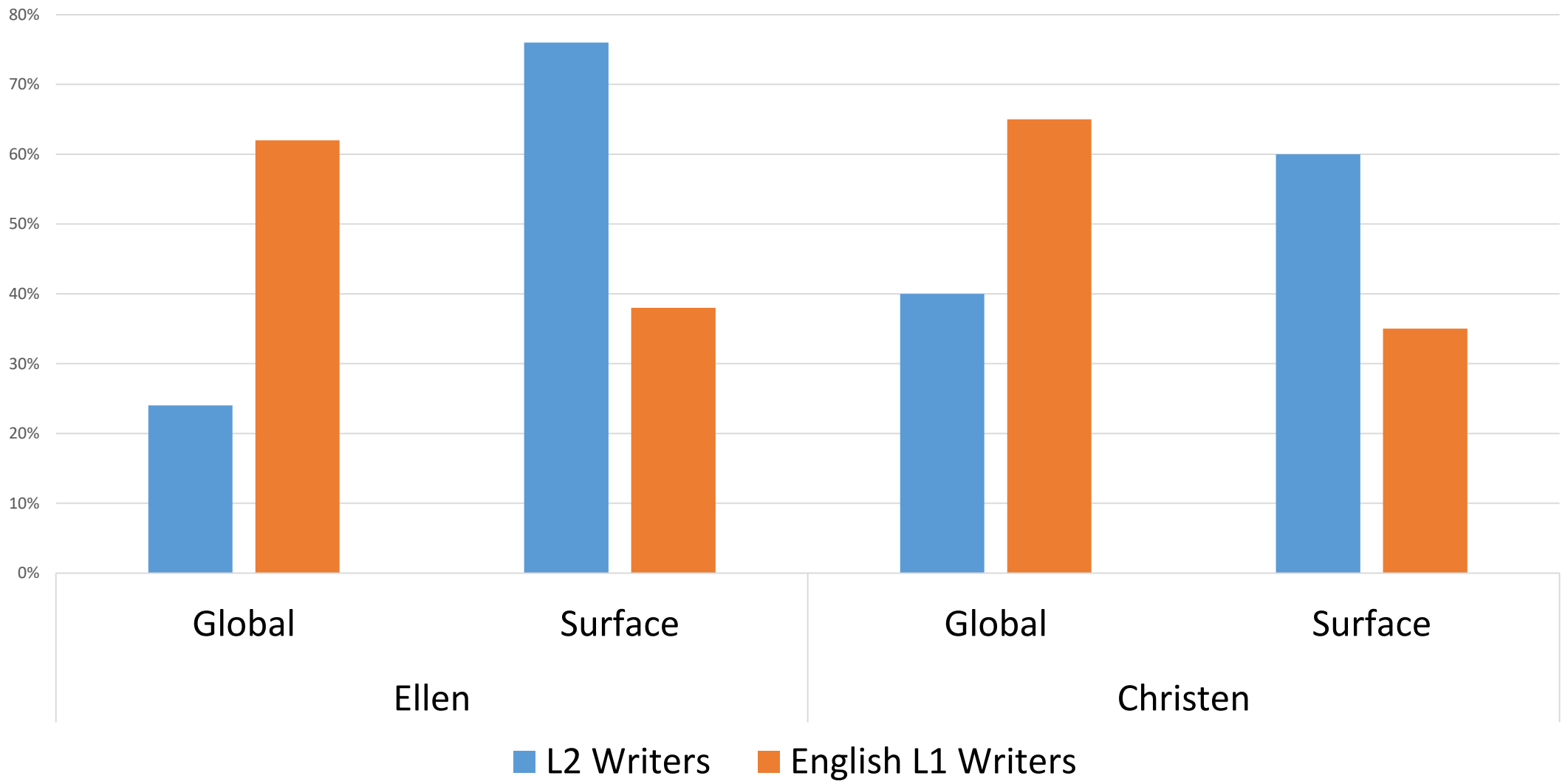
When you've identified something to comment on, how do you decide what to say?

- **Christen:** Sometimes it's questioning, like "I'm not following you here, what is this? What do you mean here?" Sometimes … I might say "ok, so your thesis seems to be XYZ… is this accurate?" or "I'm having trouble following you at this part of the paper, can you strengthen your topic sentences?" … as much as possible, I try to write down what I say out loud.

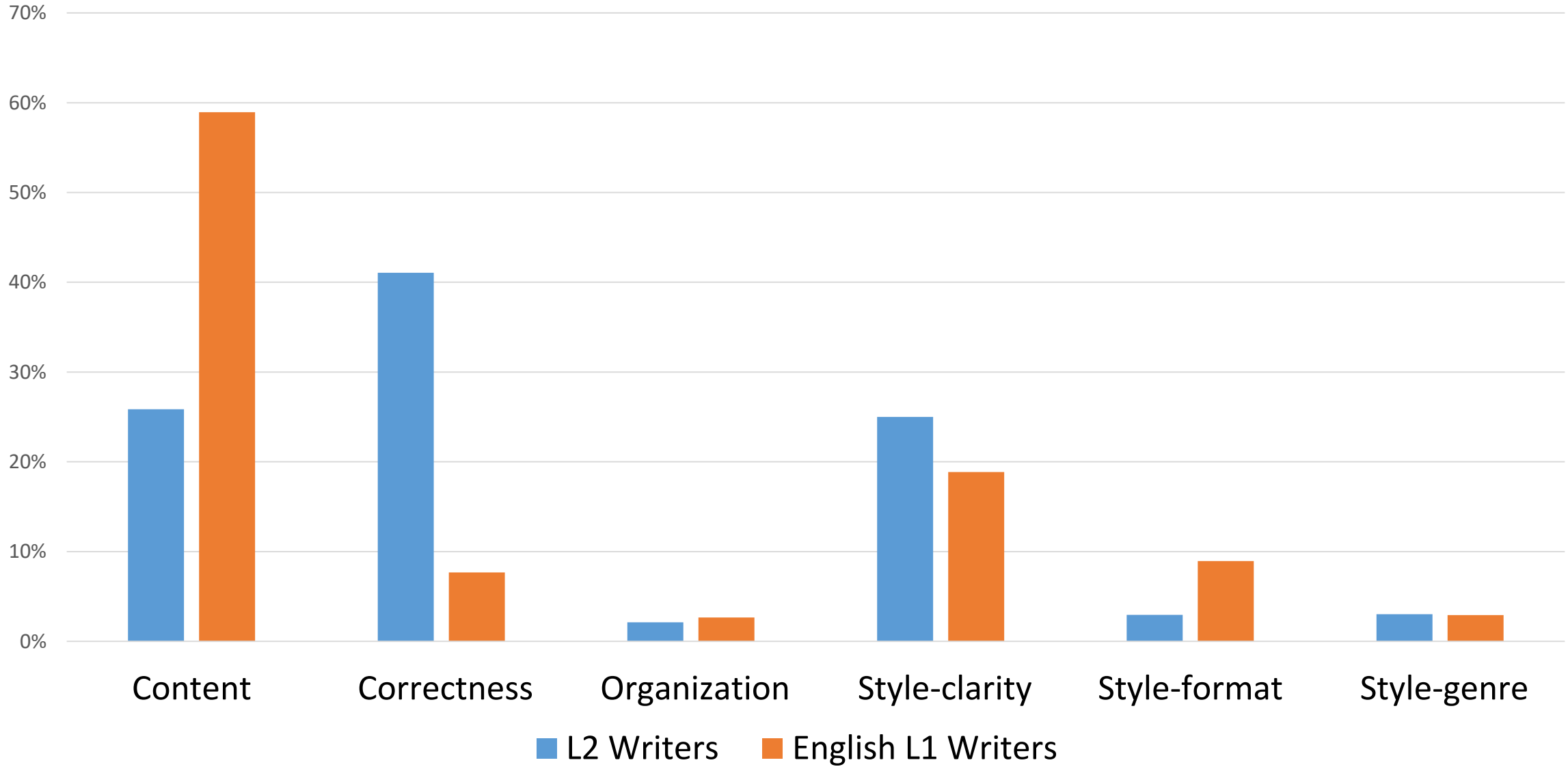
Three Applications

- Comparing comments written to L1 and L2 English writers
- Comparing summative and ‘side’ comments
- Observing change over time

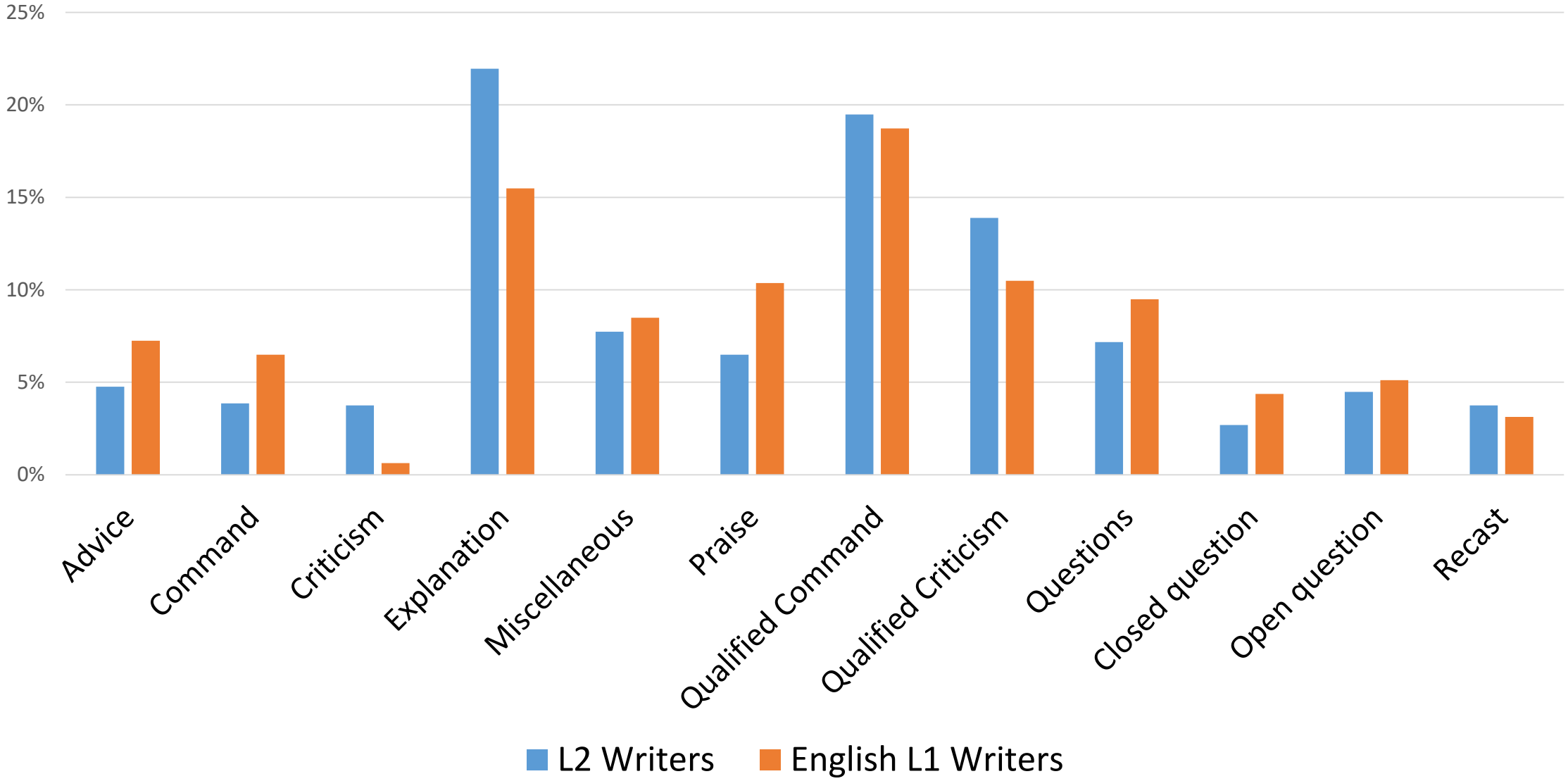
Proportion of Type, L2 & L1 Writers



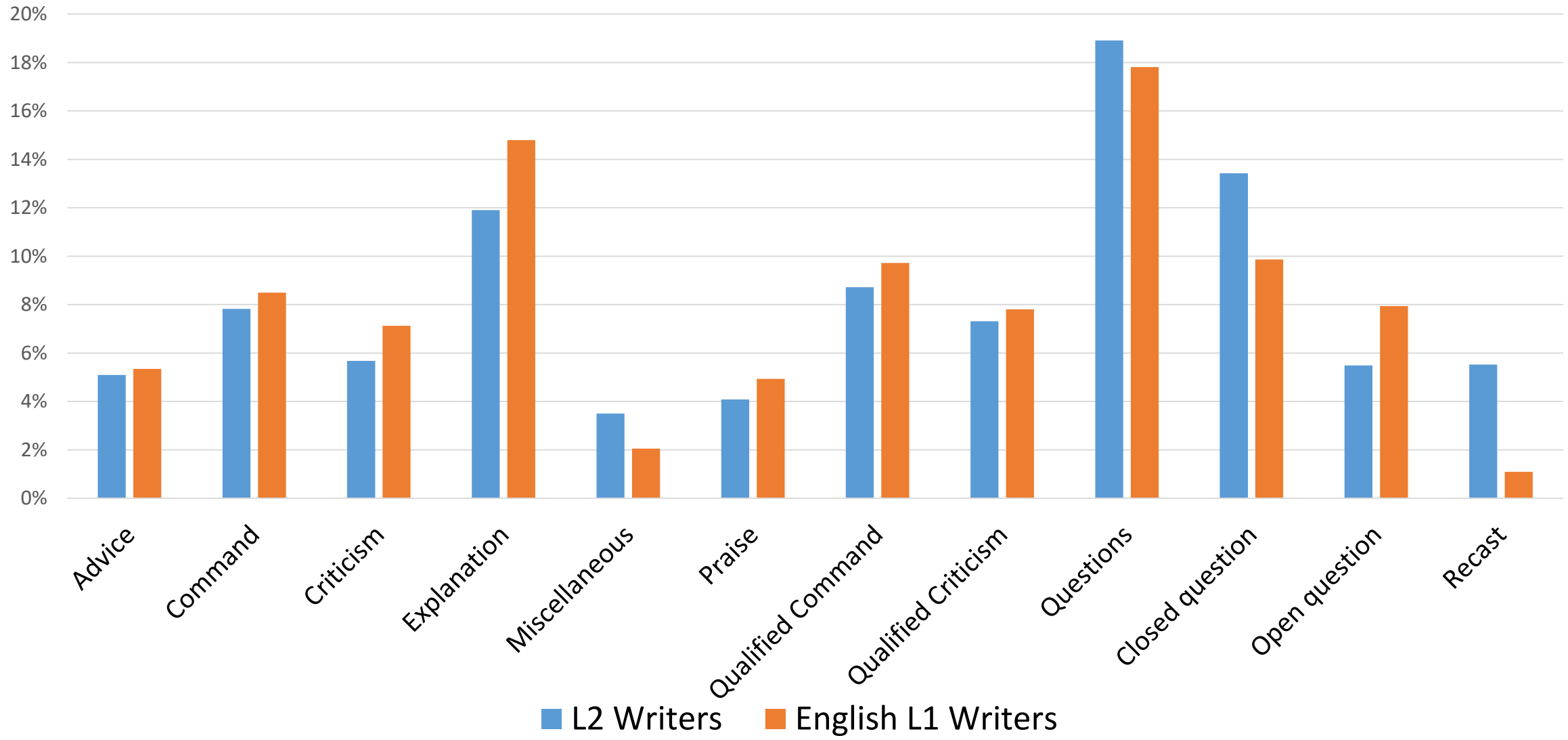
Proportion of Focus, L2 & L1 Writers– Ellen



Proportion of Mode, L2 & L1 Writers– Ellen



Proportion of Mode, L2 & L1 Writers– Christen

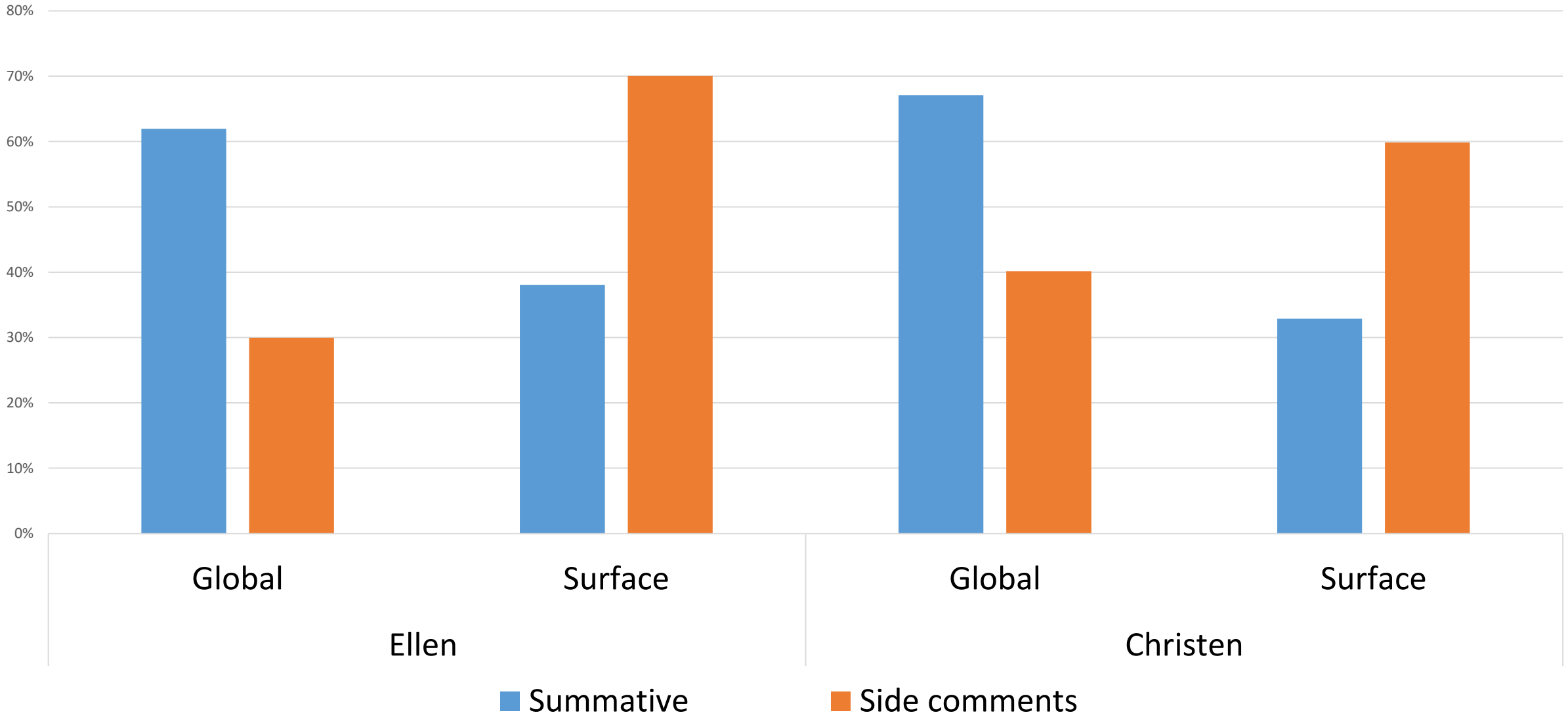


Interviews: L1 and L2 English Writers

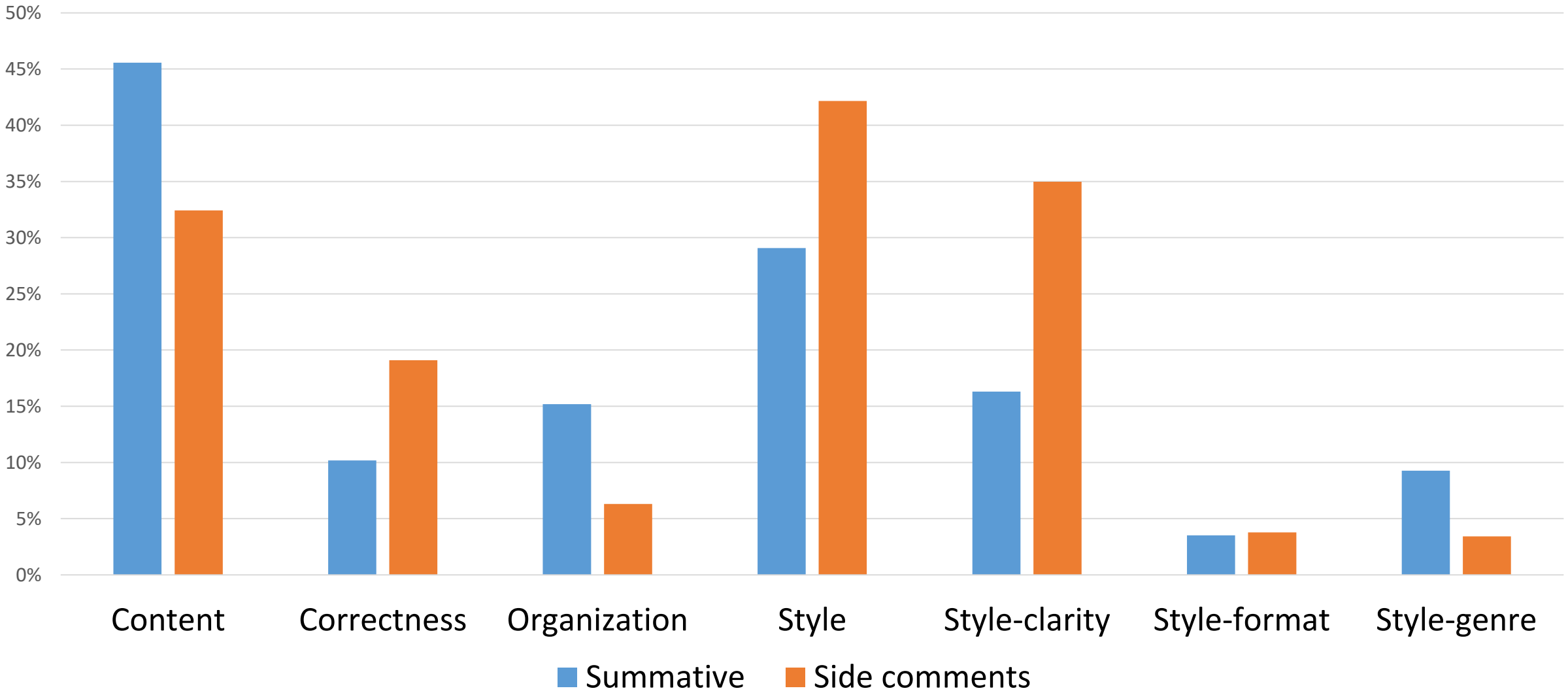
What would you say are the most common issues that you address in online submissions?

- **Ellen:** A lot of sessions in the summer I feel like I've been getting a lot more online sessions with a lot of international students, and a lot of international students want help with grammar.

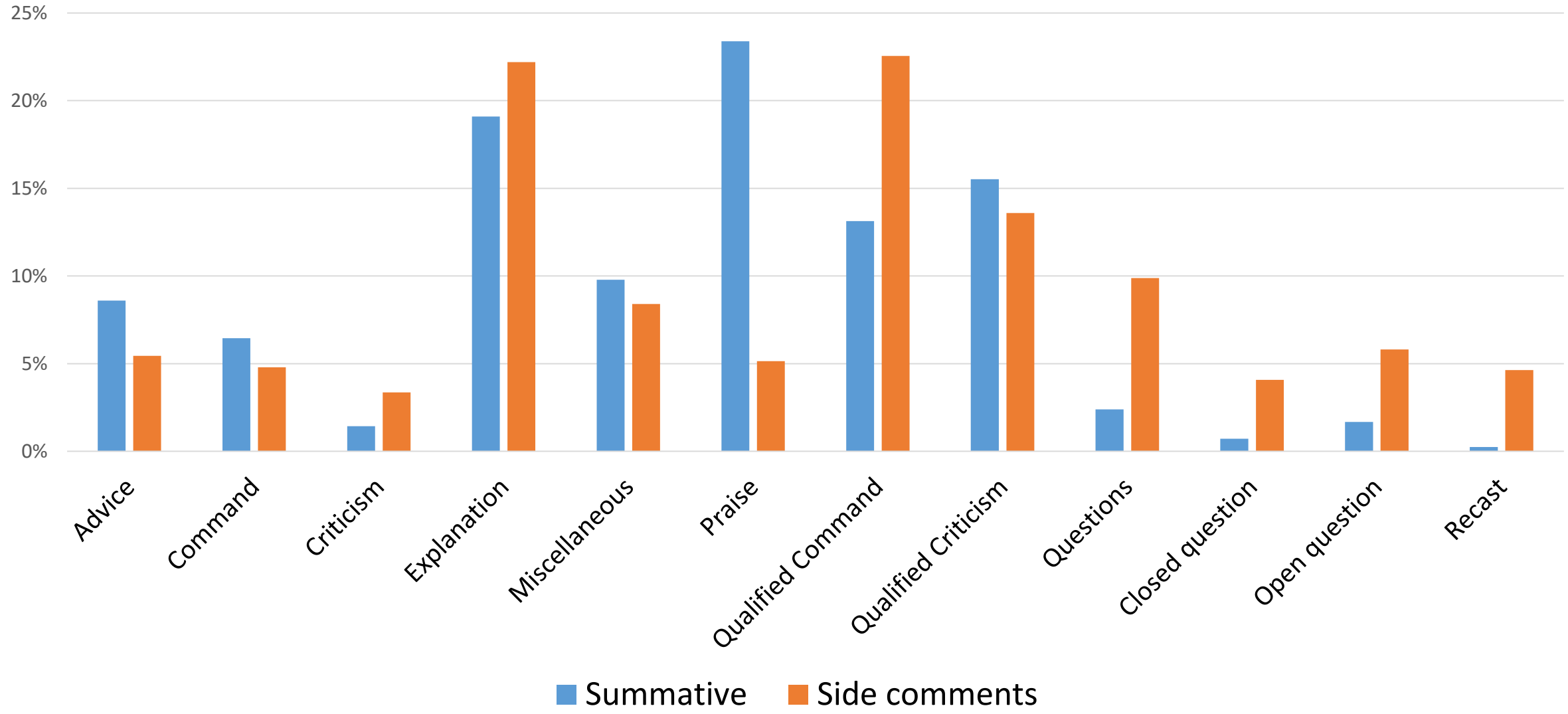
Proportion of Type, Summative and Side



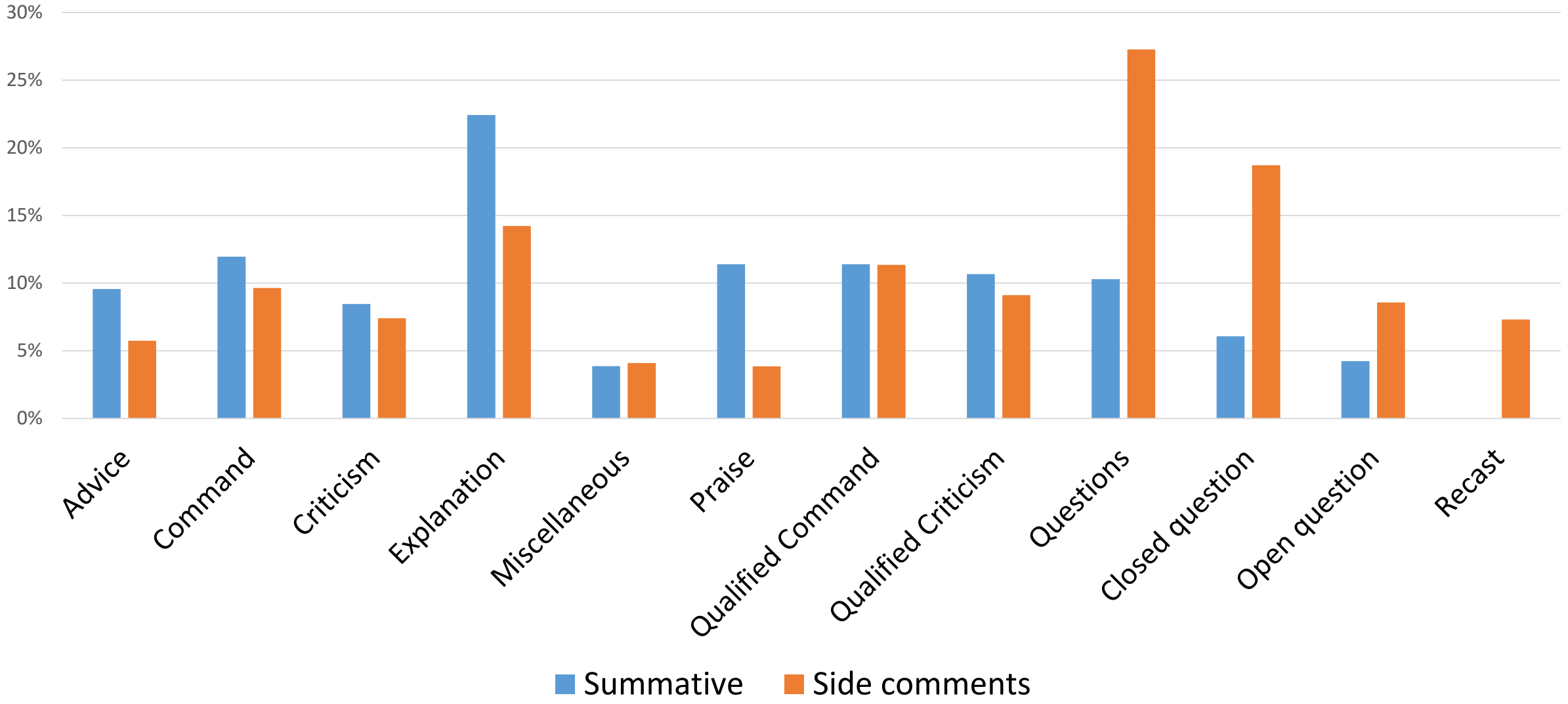
Proportion of Focus, Summative and Side – Christen



Proportion of Mode, Summative and Side – Ellen



Proportion of Mode, Summative and Side – Christen

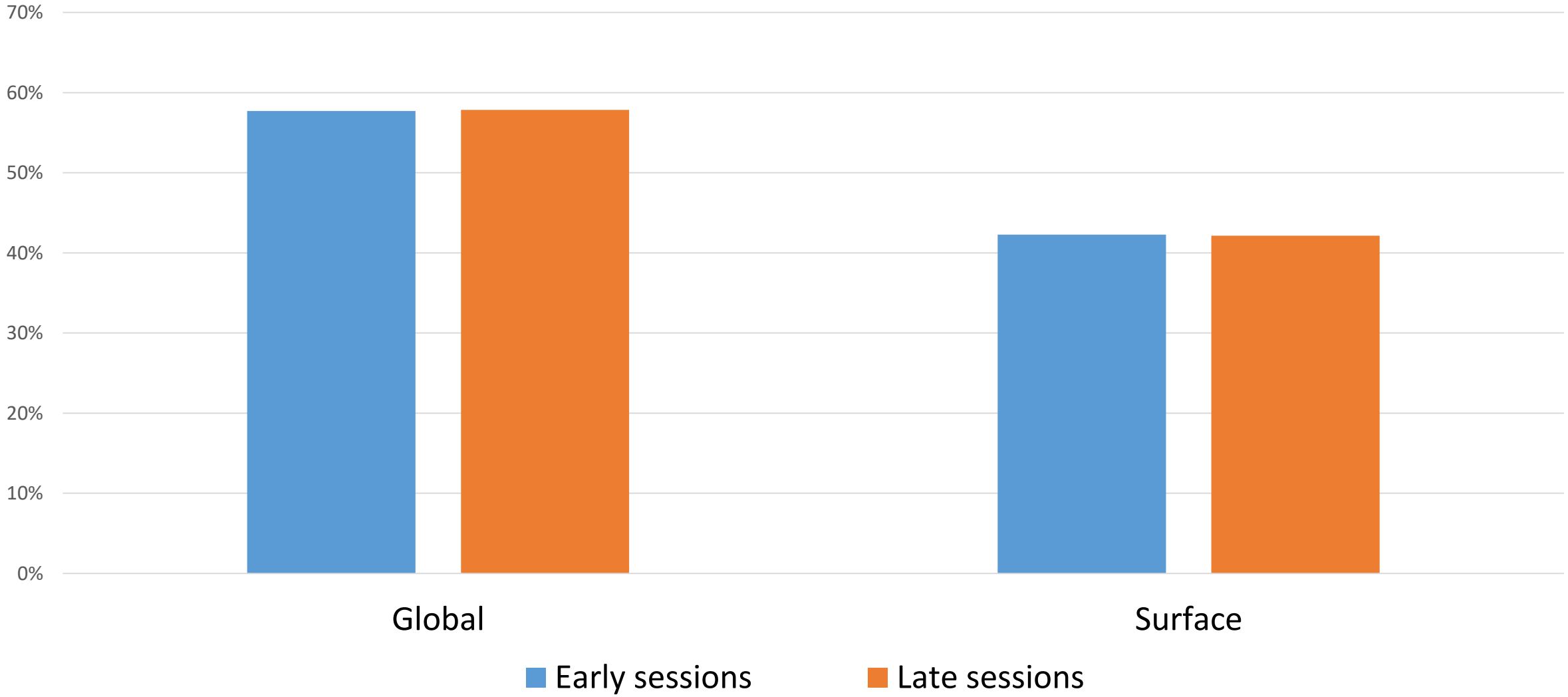


Interviews: Summative comments

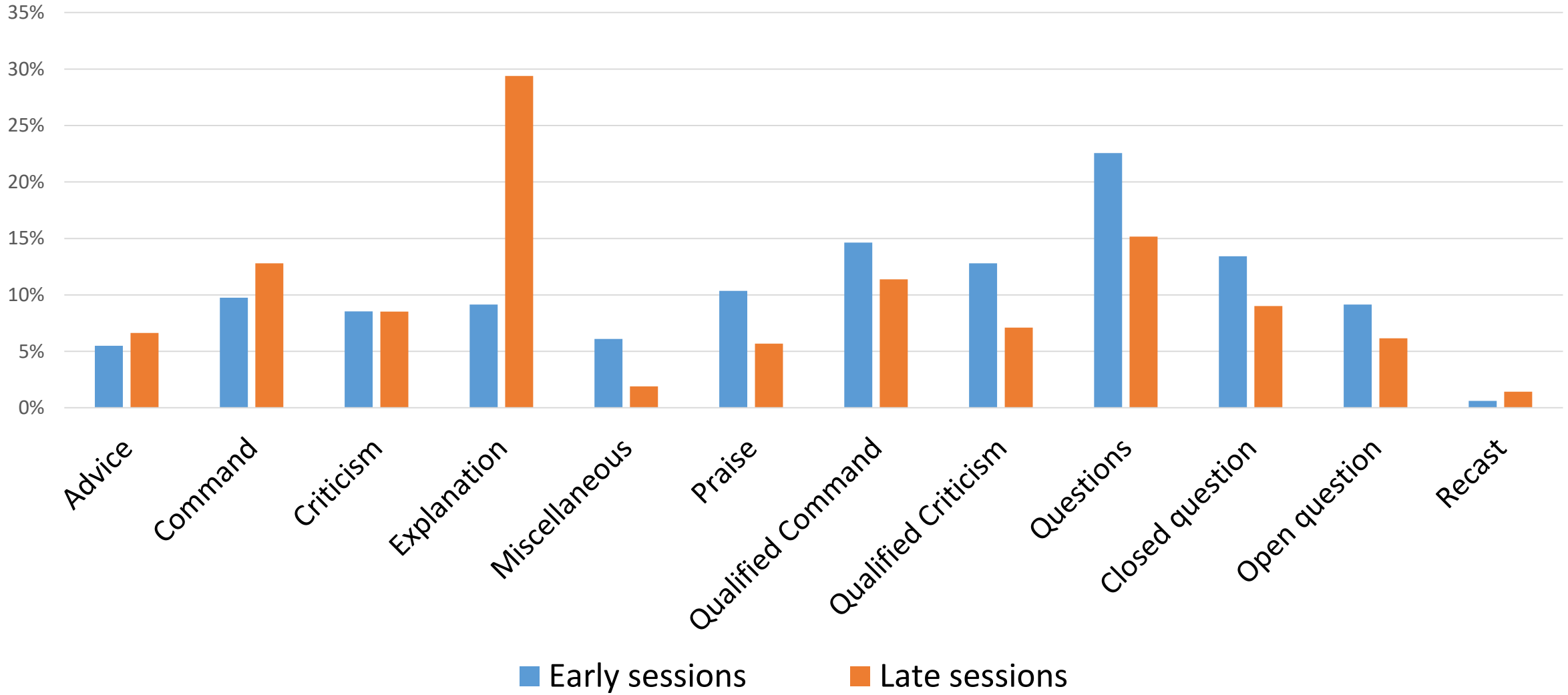
When you've identified something that you need to comment on, how do you decide what to say?

- **Ellen:** So, when I've identified something, it depends on what it is. If it's, like, structure, then I phrase what I want to say differently. **That's more for something I can say as a summative comment at the end**… organization, larger order concerns, that kind of stuff, that's something I feel comfortable more so saying in a summative comment.
- **Ellen:** If it's grammar, I'll usually go ahead and start [reading the document] and I'll just start working on the grammar from the beginning… as soon as I start picking up patterns.

Proportion of Type, Early and Late Sessions – Ellen



Proportion of Mode, Early and Late Sessions – Christen



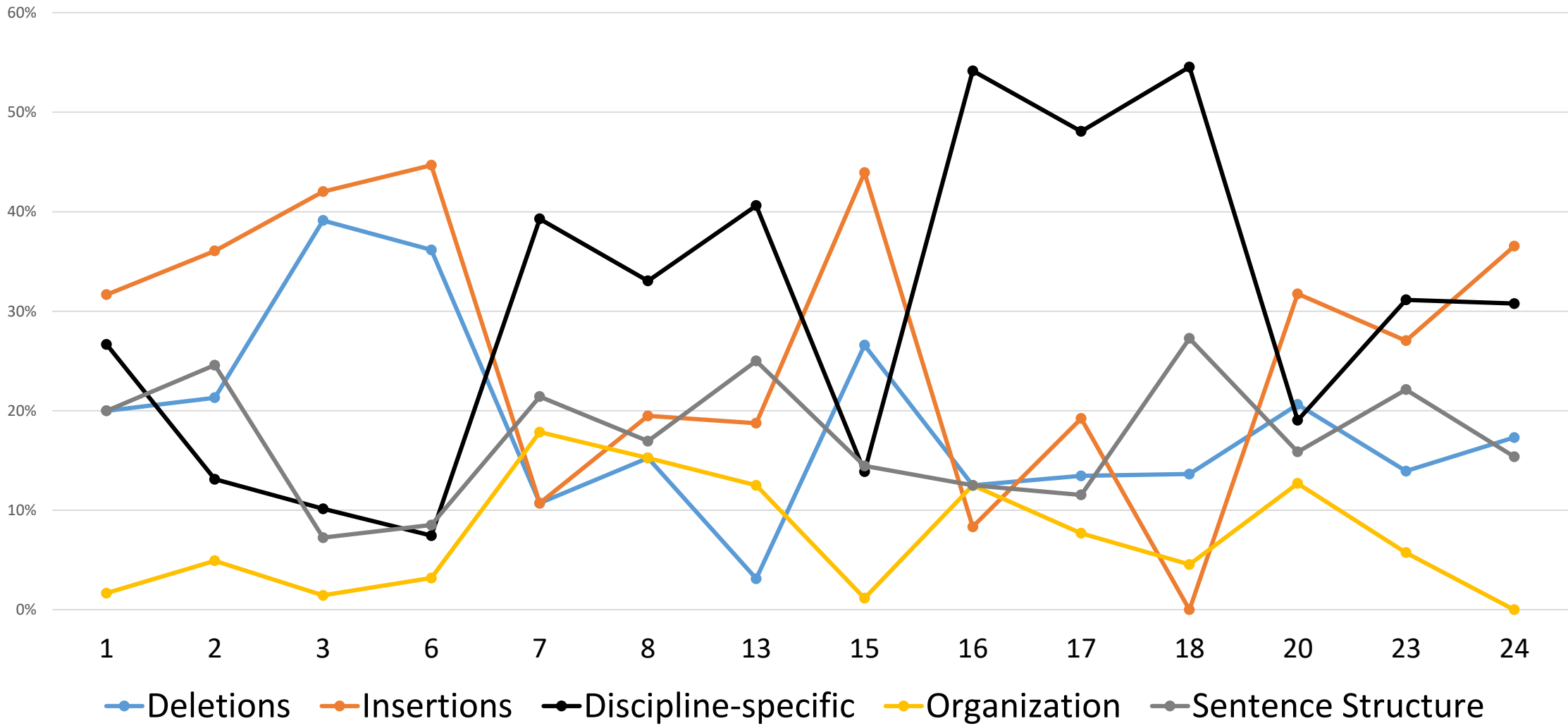
Challenges

Tutor Comments	Coding Differences
It seems to me that there should be a transition here that introduces technological field experiences.	Focus: Josh—Content Vicki—Organization
Your use of punctuation is clear and appropriate.	Focus: Josh—Correctness Vicki—Style-Clarity

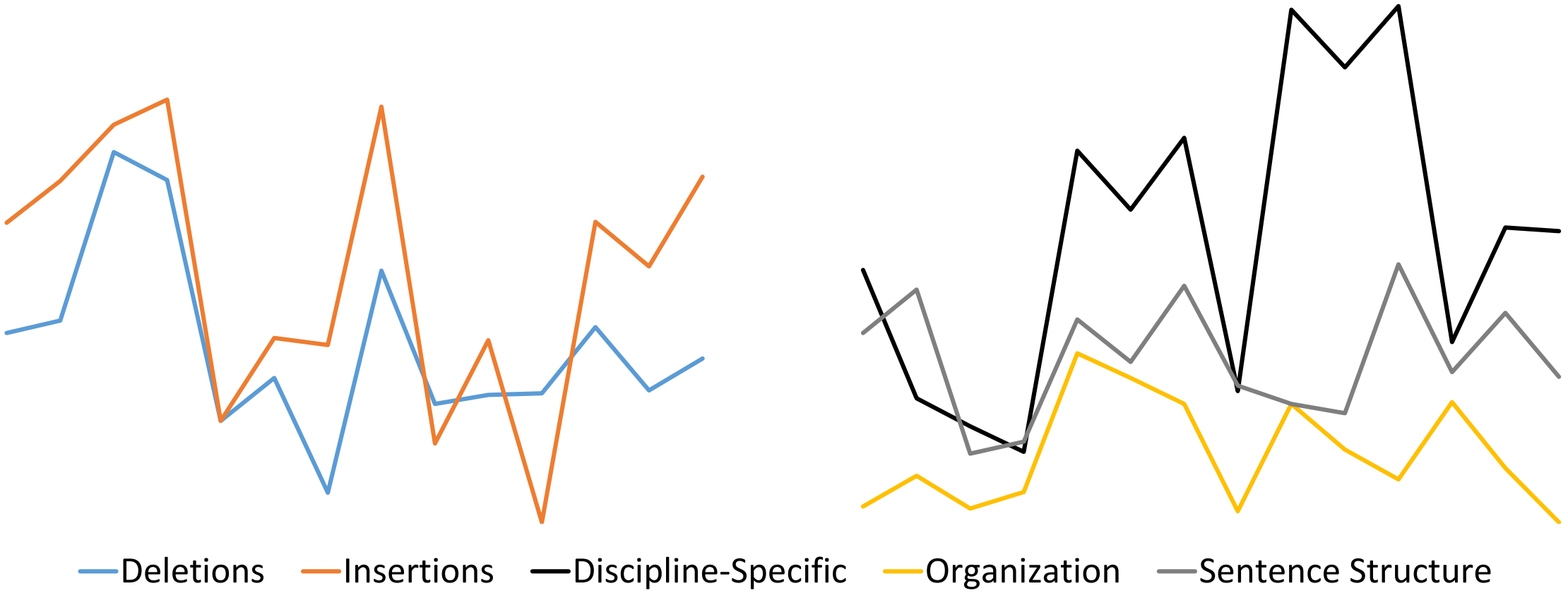
Graduate Writing Groups

Coding peer comments

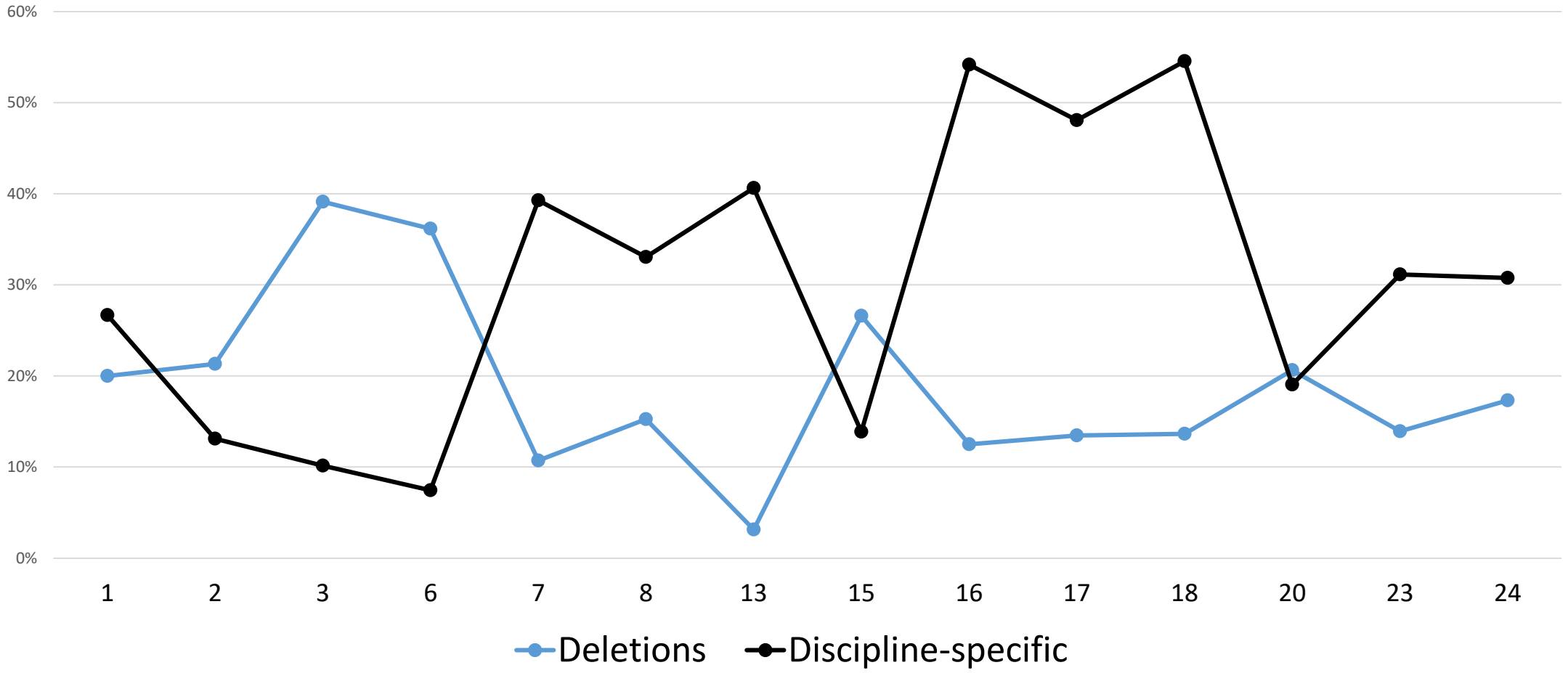
Mary, Method 2, Percents of Total Comments



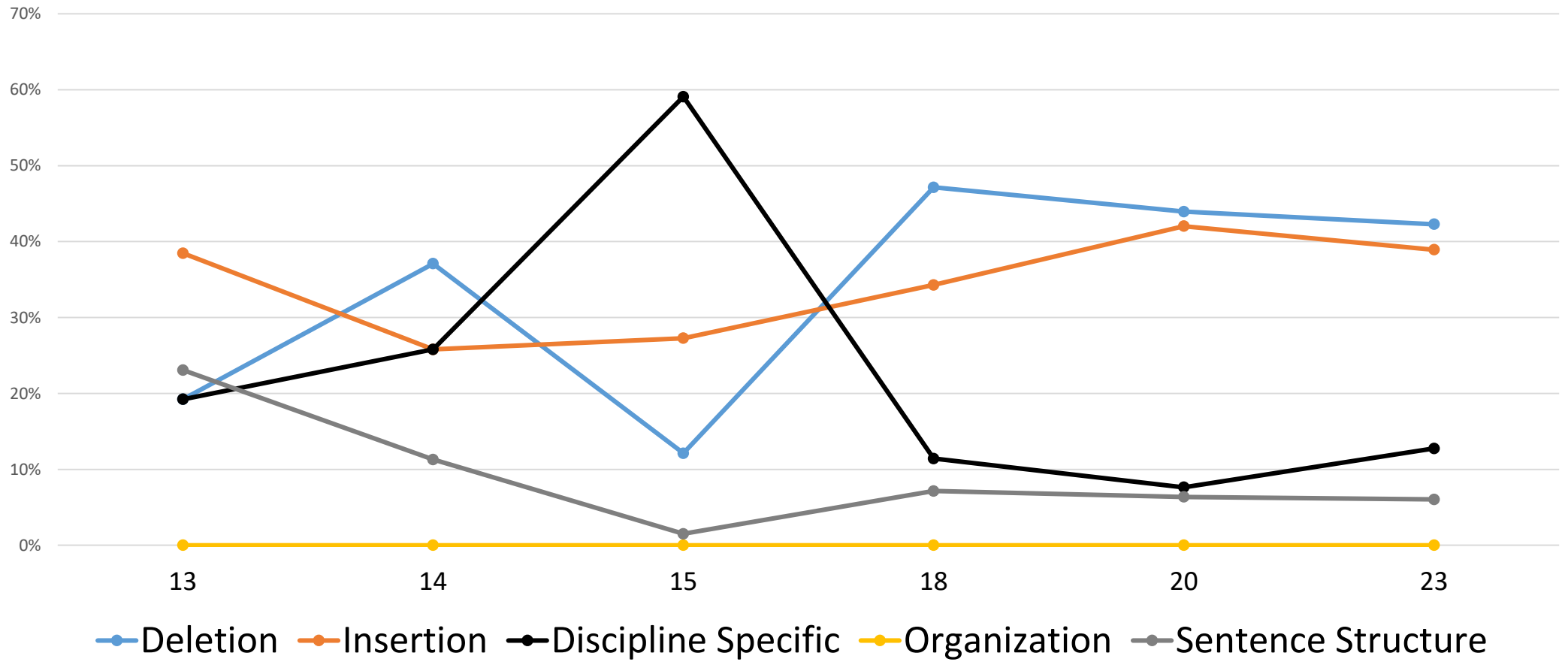
Mary, Method 2
Comparing Comments that Mirror Each Other



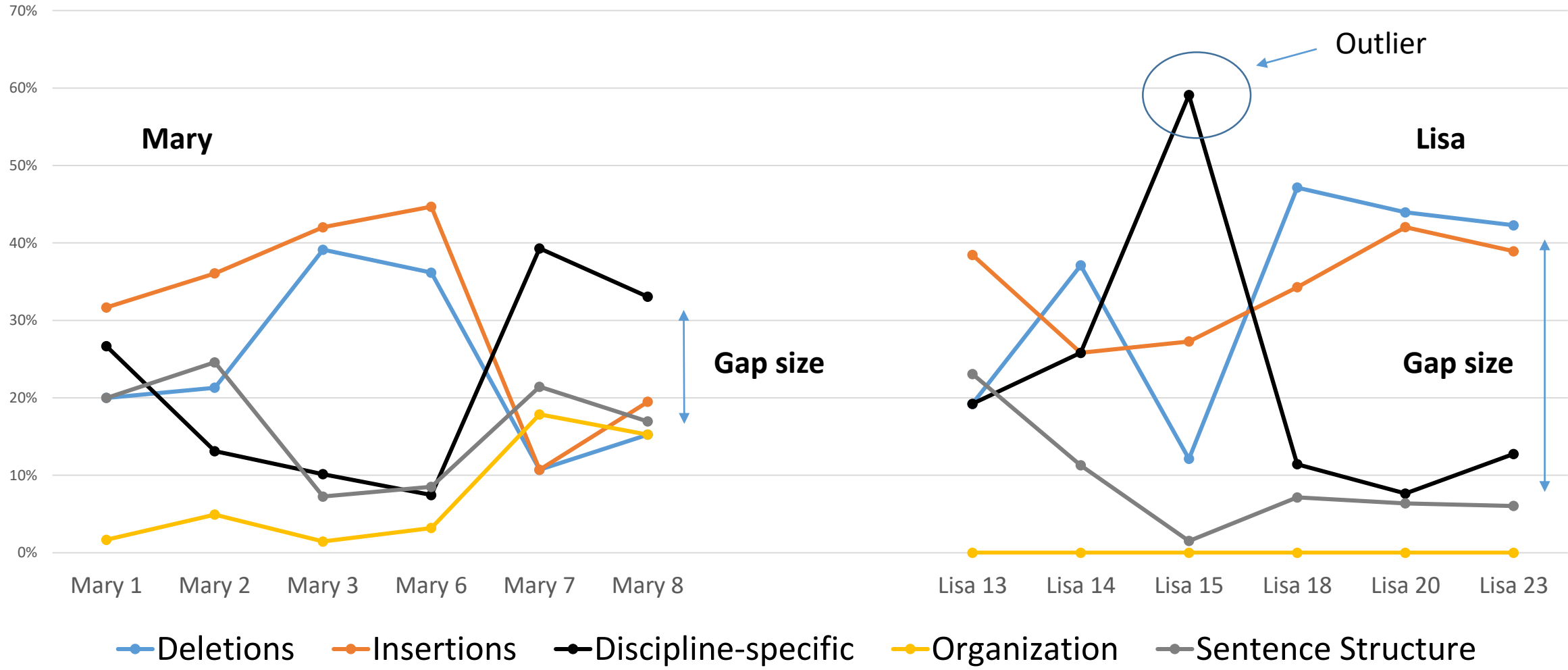
Mary, Method 2
Opposing Movement of LOC and HOC Comments



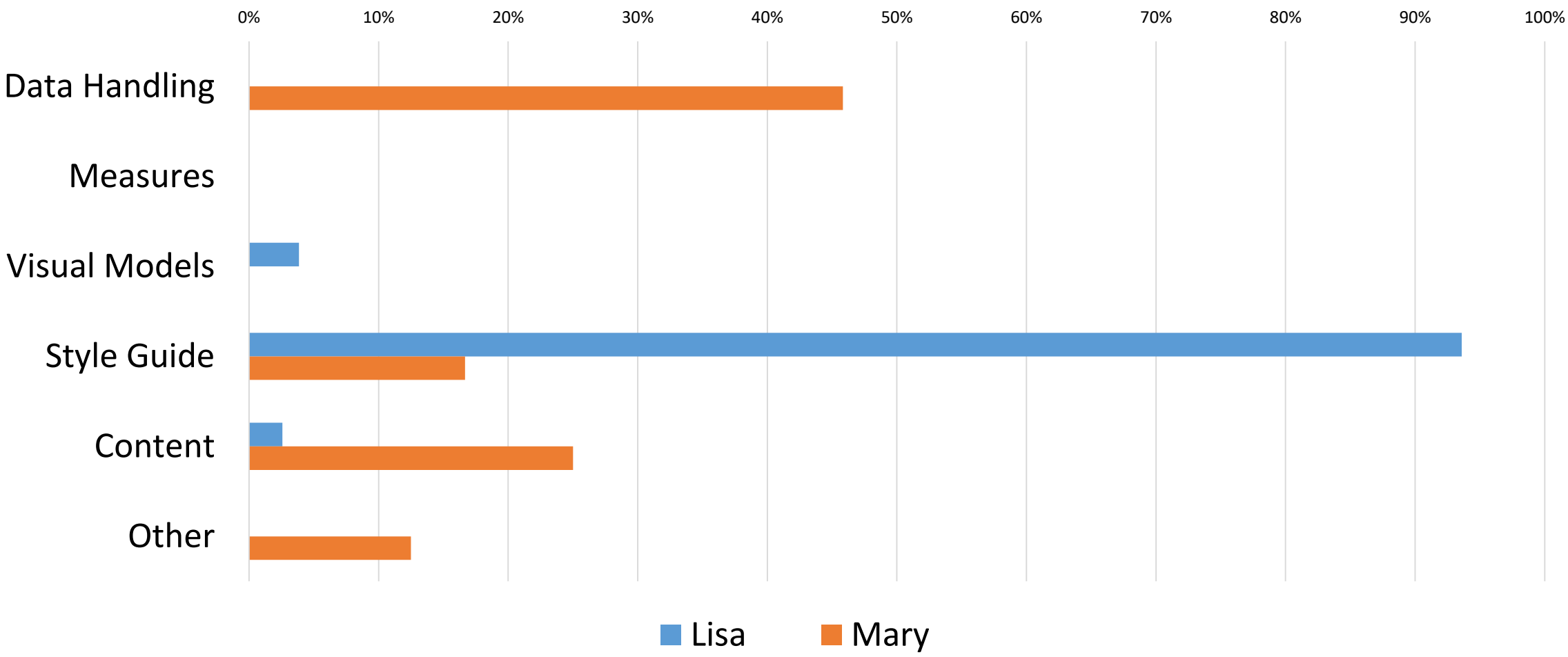
Lisa, Method 2, Percent of Total Comments



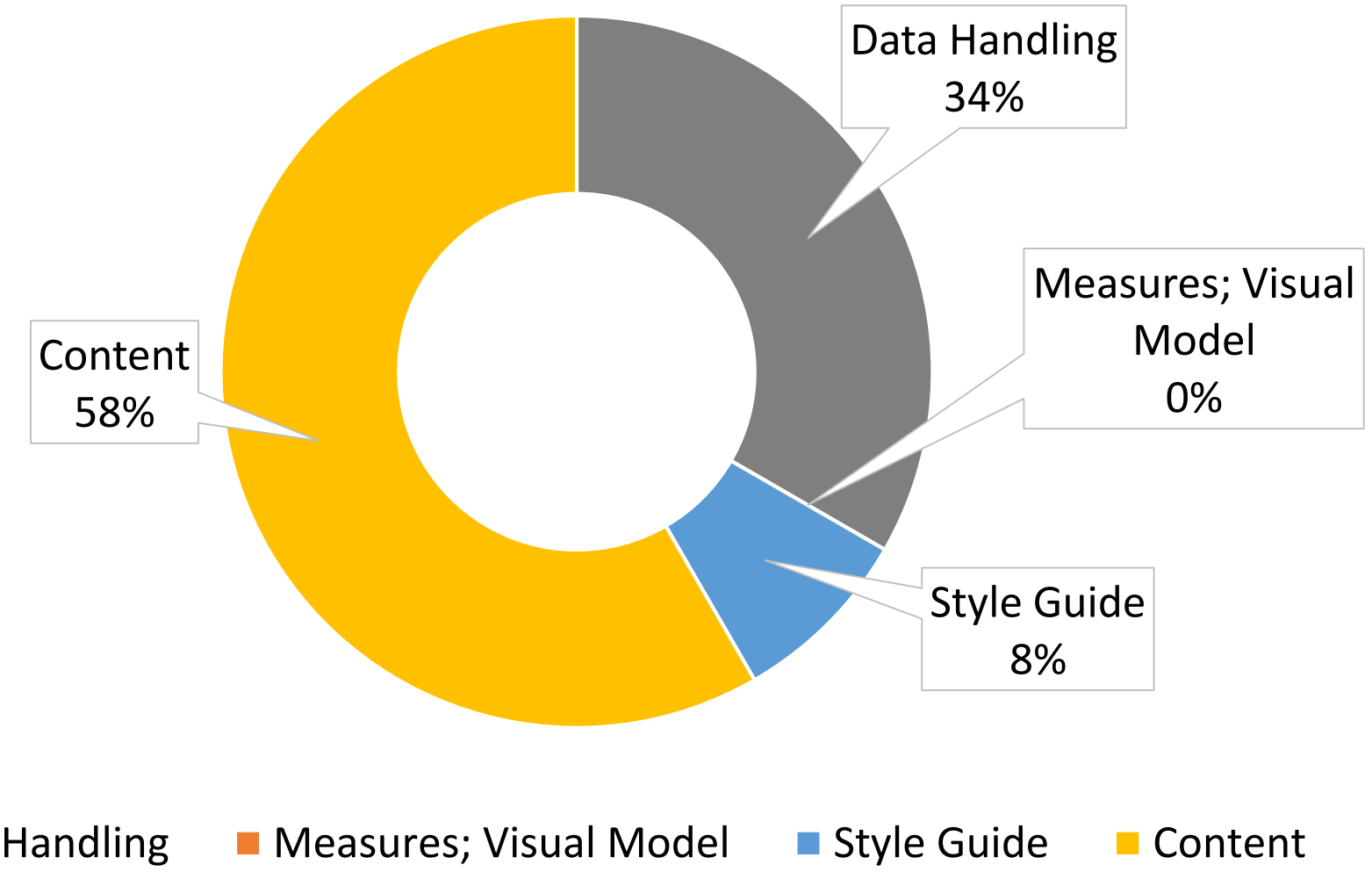
First Year in WG Comparison, Method 2
Percents of Total Comments



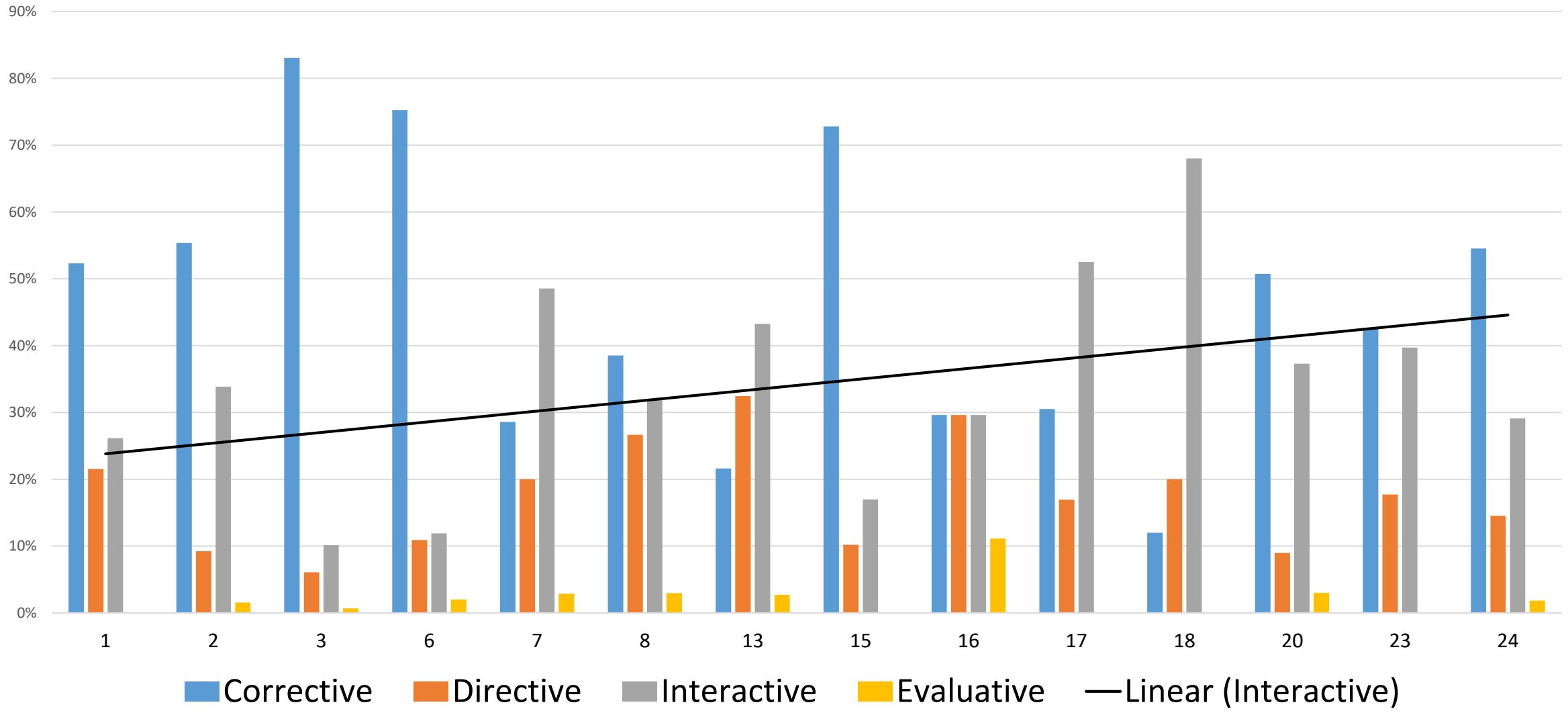
Comparison of Discipline-Specific Comments—Paper 15



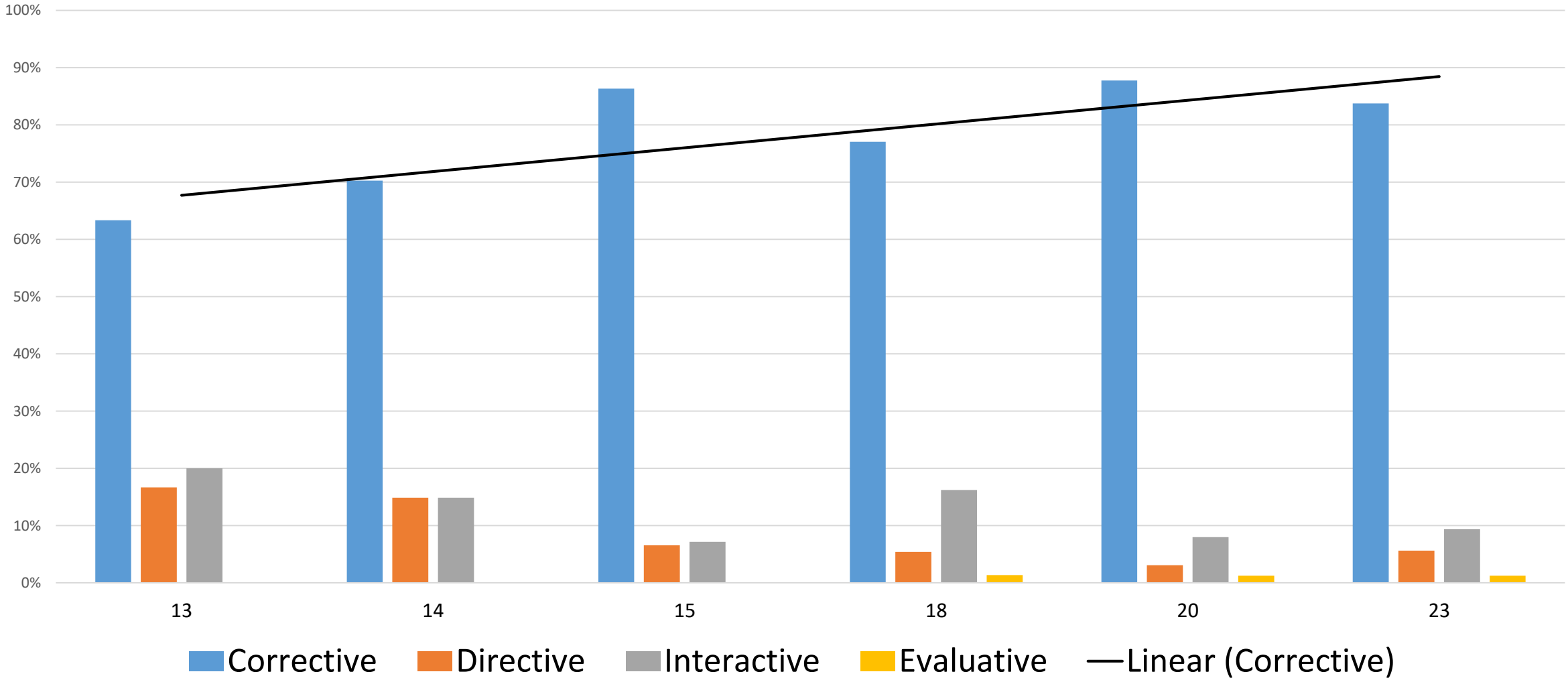
Discipline-Specific Comments for Mary, Paper 18



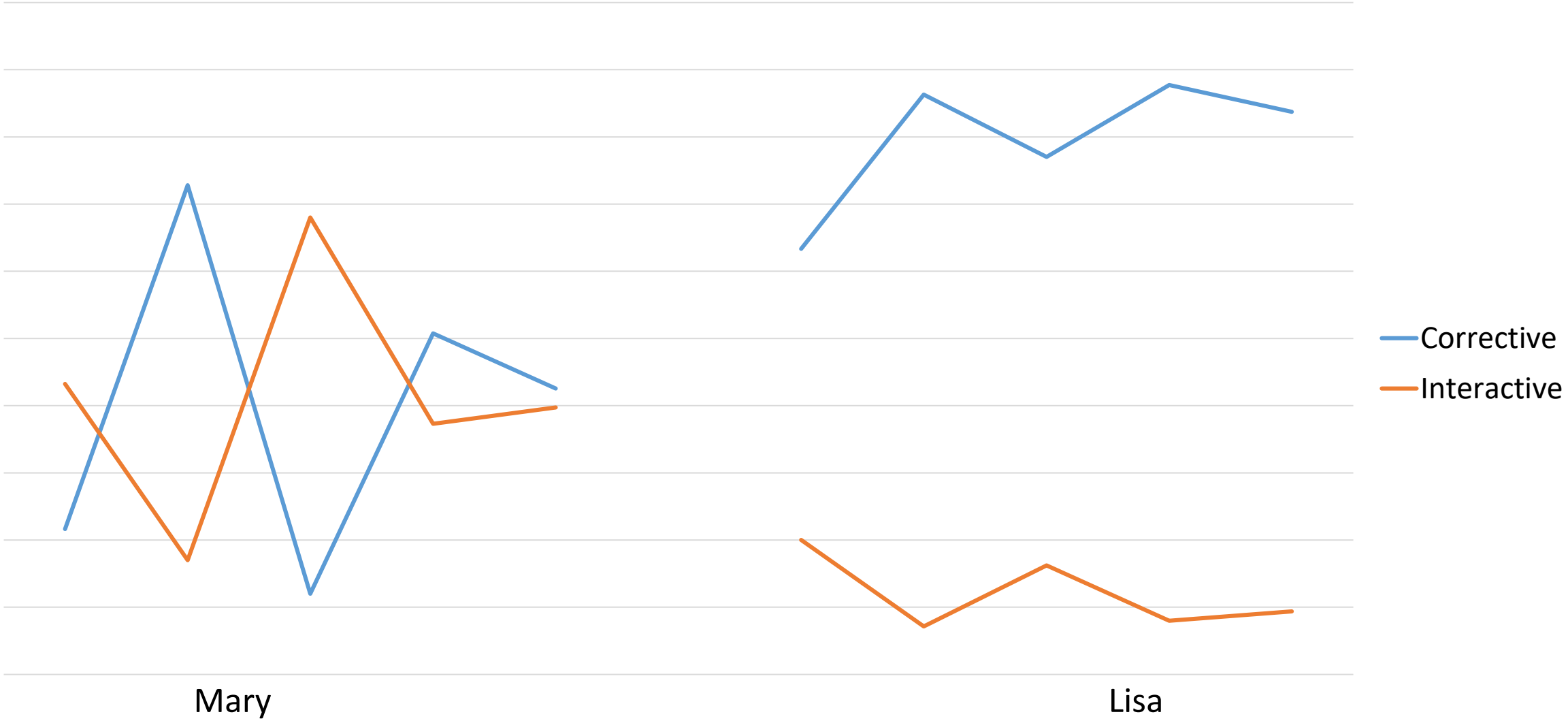
Mary, Method 1, Percents of Totals



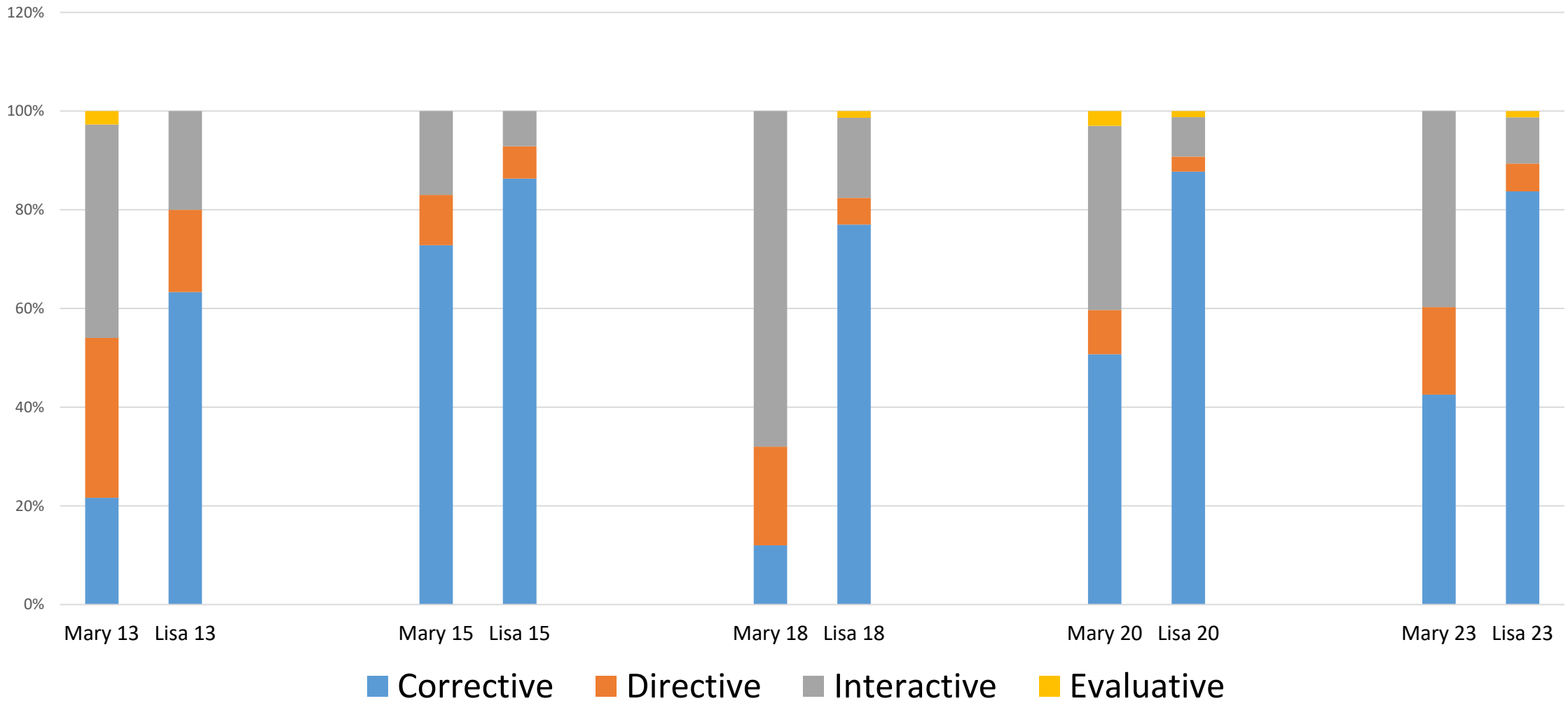
Lisa, Method 1, Percents of Total



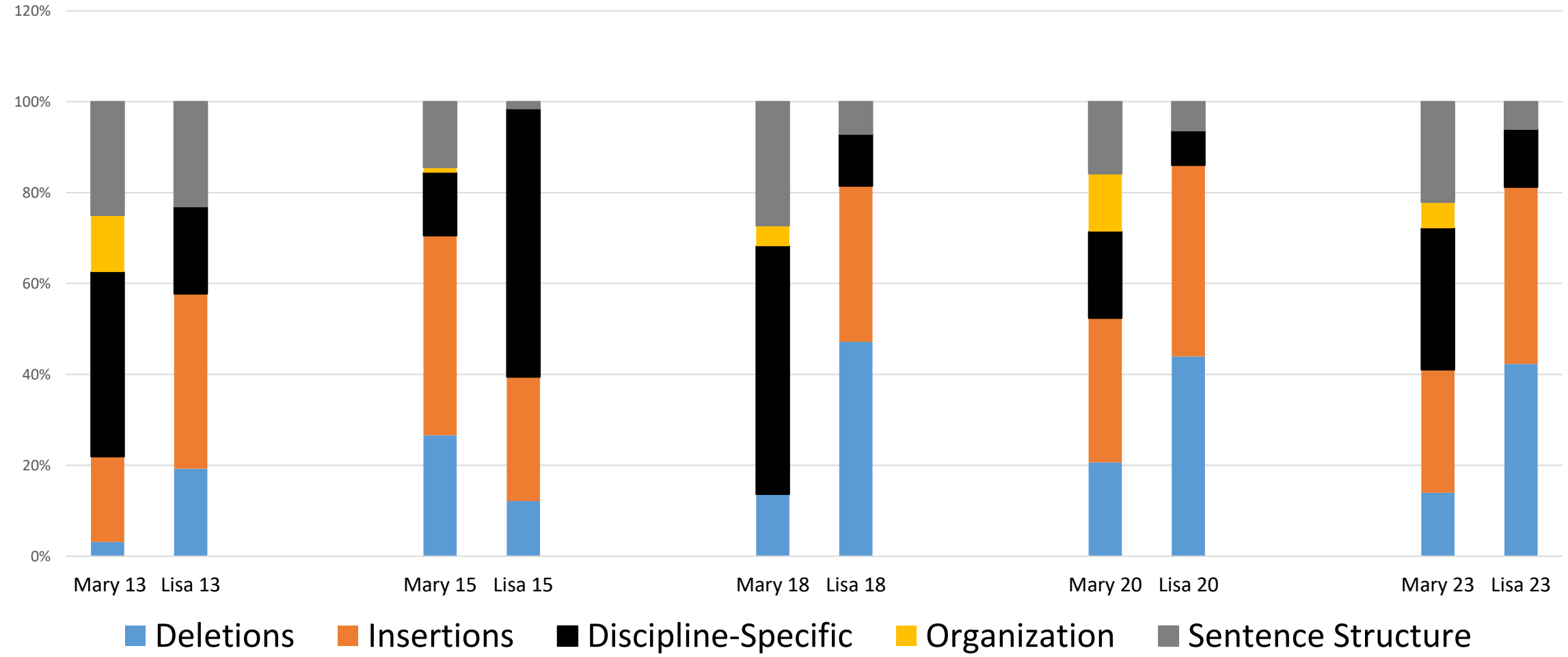
Comparison Method 1, Corrective and Interactive



Comparison, Method 1, Percents of Total Comments



Comparison, Method 2, Percents of Total Comments



Note: Lisa's large amount of discipline-specific in Paper 15 is due to a focus on APA style.

References

Grutsch McKinney, J. (2016). *Strategies for Writing Center Research.* Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Weirick, J., Davis, T., & Lawson, D. (2017). Writer L1/L2 Status and Asynchronous Online Writing Center Feedback: Consultant Response Patterns. Learning Assistance Review (TLAR), 22(2), 9-38.

Questions?

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