Linguistic Support for Revising and Editing

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Abstract. Revising and editing are important parts of the writing process. In fact, multiple revision and editing cycles are crucial for the production of high-quality texts. However, revising and editing are also tedious and error-prone, since changes may introduce new errors.

Grammar checkers, as offered by some word processors, are not a solution. Besides the fact that they are only available for few languages, and regardless of the questionable quality, their conceptual approach is not suitable for experienced writers, who actively create their texts. Word processors offer few, if any, functions for handling text on the same cognitive level as the author: While the author is thinking in high-level linguistic terms, editors and word processors mostly provide low-level character oriented functions. Mapping the intended outcome to these low-level operations is distracting for the author, who now has to focus for a long time on small parts of the text. This results in a loss of global overview of the text and in typical revision errors (duplicate verbs, extraneous conjunctions, etc.).

We therefore propose functions for text processors that work on the conceptual level of writers. These functions operate on linguistic elements, not on lines and characters. We describe how these functions can be implemented by making use of NLP methods and linguistic resources.

1 Introduction

Writing a text involves several steps and various tasks, starting from planning activities to writing a first draft and then revising and editing[1] to get to the final version. Revising and editing are typically recursive processes, continuing until an acceptable state is achieved.

Writing means creating a coherent text from linguistic elements, such as words, phrases, clauses and sentences. When revising and editing texts, authors are working with these elements, arranging and rearranging them, exchanging them for others, maybe even "playing" with them.

In this paper we will try to develop the idea of tools based on linguistics to support writers in the writing process, especially during revising and editing.

First, to get an idea of the abstraction level on which writers are thinking about their texts, we will have a look at recommendations for writers and editors: What are the

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[1] In composition research, a distinction is typically made between *revising*, which takes place on the discourse level, and *editing*, which takes place at the sentence and word level (see [1] for a discussion).