

Assessing and Fostering Teamwork: The Behaviour in Teams (BiT) system

It is increasingly recognised that good teamwork is a key to success at University and in work. The Behaviour in Teams (BiT) system is based on Neil Rackham's established Behaviour Analysis (BA) category system for categorising verbal behaviours meetings. The BiT coding system comprises 15 categories (including 'Proposing Ideas', 'Giving Task Information', 'Bringing in', 'Defending/Attacking' and 'Lightening the Mood'). Observers listen to the team meeting and code each speaker's contributions in terms of the categories. This allows data such as the overall 'air time' for each speaker to be determined, together with more detailed breakdowns in terms of who said what and how frequently. We hypothesised that giving participants explicit feedback about their own contributions would lead to desirable outcomes subsequently in terms of more even distribution of air time across the group, more satisfaction with team processes and better final grades.

In order to allow large scale implementation we developed an automatic ipad-based coding system and an explicit ipad-based observer training system incorporating embedded video, training exercises and accreditation criteria. Following the one week ipad-based training the observers attended a two day interactive training seminar, and those meeting the coding accuracy criterion were included in the project. Additional materials were provided for those observers not initially meeting the criteria. The system was utilised in January 2017 in a project with the entire first and second year Engineering undergraduates at the University of Sheffield (over 2000 students in groups of 5 or 6), together with over 70 trained observers. It generated 10,450 person-hours of data within the two weeks, and facilitated immediate individual-level and team-level feedback. Research data are currently under analysis. The approach has the dual benefit of helping the students understand and improve their own teamwork, while providing the observers with highly beneficial teamwork skills and insights.

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