Concern-Alignment in Joint Inquiry for Consensus-Building

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Abstract

‘Concern Alignment in Conversations’ project aims to establish a theoretical and descriptive framework to capture both discourse structures and underlying rational and affective processes in human-human joint consensus-building interactions through empirical examinations of real-life conversations. Concern alignment model has been developed to address the problem of elucidating high-level dialogue structures manifested in human-human negotiations for consensus-building. The central idea is to conceptualize a dialogue interaction as an exchange of concerns and proposals.

1 Concern alignment

Concern align model (Katagiri et al., 2013; Katagiri et al., 2015) conceptualizes a consensus decision-making process between a group of people and its accompanying dialogue as consisting of two interaction processes: concern alignment and proposal exchange (Figure 1).

A group of people, engaging in a conversation to pursue a joint course of actions among themselves, have certain objectives (issues) to attain through agreement. Before they try to settle on the kinds of actions to be pursued jointly, they would start by expressing what they deem relevant on the properties and criteria for the actions to be settled on (concerns). When they find that sufficient level of alignment of their concerns is attained, they proceed to propose and negotiate on concrete choice of actions (proposals) for a joint action plan.

A set of dialogue acts (Bunt, 2006) are stipulated at the levels of both concern alignment and proposal exchange, in terms of its functions a discourse segment performs within the progression of consensus-building (Table 1).

2 Data

We have collected real-life dialogues exchanged in joint decision making situations in medical and business domains. Data set 1 consist of dialogues between patients and nurses in obesity counseling sessions. People diagnosed as obese (metabolic syndrome) visit a hospital for counsel from expert nurses on their daily life management. A total of 9 sessions, about 5 hours of

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 1: Discourse acts in concern alignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concern alignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-solicit solicit relevant concerns from partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-introduce introduce your concern</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-eval/positive positive evaluation to introduced concern</td>
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<td>C-eval/negative negative evaluation to introduced concern</td>
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<td>C-elaborate elaborate on the concern introduced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal exchange</td>
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<td>P-solicit provide relevant proposal from partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>P-introduce introduce your proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>P-accept provide affirmation to introduced proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>P-reject indicate rejection to introduced proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>P-elaborate modify the proposal introduced</td>
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</table>
A proposal generates new concerns

A proposal provides people with a reference point, on which they reflect on their preferences through their appraisal of it, to come up with a new set of concerns. Concerns are not only employed to support or to criticize proposals, but they can also be employed to direct the course of further developing proposals. Newly introduced concerns provide enrichment to the structures of potential space of concerns, and invite participants to jointly advance toward successful and concrete proposals.

With the notion of Concern Alignment, we aim to capture the dynamics of this open-ended inquiry in concern/proposal space taking place in consensus-building dialogues.

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References

