

# Guidelines for Annotating Political Interviews

## Second Stage

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### 1 Introduction

The procedure for annotating a political interview is divided in two stages:

- In the first stage, certain parts in the dialogue turns are identified as *segments*. Each segment is annotated with a *dialogue act function* and, when applicable, with the *segment it responds to*.
- In the second stage, segmented turns are annotated with *content features*. These are qualitative judgements on the content of the segment.

Below we describe the annotation workflow, define the concepts relevant to the second stage and provide detailed guidelines to carry out the annotations.

### 2 Annotation Workflow

For both stage, the annotation of a dataset follows the steps below:

1. Launch the annotation tool.
2. Complete the *annotator profile* form.
3. For each dialogue in the dataset:
  - (a) Complete the *annotator familiarity* form.
  - (b) Annotate every turn following the guidelines for the stage.
  - (c) Save the annotated dialogue.
  - (d) Open the next dialogue in the dataset.
4. Submit the annotated data.

The annotation tool supports this workflow by<sup>1</sup>:

- presenting the annotator forms at appropriate points,
- enabling only the annotation options for the current stage,
- suggesting adequate names for the annotated files,
- keeping track of the current dialogue file across annotation sessions,
- automatically saving the current file and opening the next dialogue in the dataset, and
- offering an option to submit the annotated data once the last dialogue in the dataset has been processed.

## 3 Second Stage: Annotating Content Features

### 3.1 Definitions

**Turn:** a speaker’s continued contribution before the other dialogue participant takes over. In the transcript, this is the fragment of text next to a speaker label – i.e. **IR** (interviewer) or **IE** (interviewee).

**Segment:** a stretch of a turn that can be labelled with a single dialogue act function (see below). Stretches of a turn can belong to only one segment – i.e. segments do not overlap – and some stretches can remain unannotated.

**Dialogue Act Function:** the conversational action performed by a segment. Dialogue act functions can be *responsive* or *initiating*<sup>2</sup>, depending on whether they initiate an exchange pair or respond to an initiation. Typical examples are questions (initiating) and their replies (responsive).

**Referent Segment:** a segment in a previous turn of the other speaker to which the current segment responds. By definition, every segment with a responsive dialogue act function must have an associated referent segment. Conversely, segments with an initiating dialogue act function do not have a referent segment.

**Content Features:** a set of qualitative judgements on the content of a segment. These will be specified further in the next section.

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<sup>1</sup>Refer to the Annotation Tool User Guide ([user-guide.pdf](#)) for details on how to access these features.

<sup>2</sup>The distinction between responsive and initiating dialogue act functions is analogous to that between *backward-looking* and *forward-looking* functions in DAMSL (Allen and Core, 1997), or to the distinction between dialogue acts with and without a *functional dependence* link in the ISO standard proposed by Bunt et al. (2012).

### 3.2 Annotation Procedure Overview

In the second stage of the annotation, you will receive a set of dialogues in which the turns have been segmented and annotated with dialogue act functions from the typology described below and, when applicable, with referent segments<sup>3</sup>. The procedure for annotating the content features in these dialogues is summarised as follows:

1. Read the context of the interview.
2. For each turn:
  - (a) Judge the content of each annotated segment in the dimensions given for the associated dialogue act function following the guidelines below. In doing so, identify e.g. objective quotations, neutral and relevant questions, complete answers, controversial statements, misquotations, ill-formed or loaded questions, incomplete answers, irrelevant comments.
3. Once you have finished annotating the whole interview, review each segment and check that your judgement on the content features has not changed while annotating further turns. If it has changed, please adjust the values accordingly.

### 3.3 Dialogue Act Taxonomy

As said, dialogue acts are the actions speakers perform in a conversation. Political interviews are a subtype of information-seeking dialogues. These are usually structured as a sequence of question-answer pairs, in which one of the participants asks the questions and the other provides the answers. Questions are sometimes preceded by a few statements setting up the context or with an observation on the previous answer. Similarly, answers can be preceded or replaced by remarks on the previous question.

These actions are classified by focusing on the *function* they play in the dialogue, rather than, for instance, on their syntactic form. So, for example, a question needs not necessarily be in interrogative form to function as a request for information. Similarly, a rhetorical question can be conveying information rather than asking for a reply.

There are two main classes of functions for dialogue acts: *initiating* and *responsive*. Initiating dialogue acts are primarily meant to provoke a response by the other speaker – as opposed to being themselves responses to previous dialogue acts. Responsive dialogue acts are mainly reactions of the speaker to a previous (initiating or responsive) action of the other party.

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<sup>3</sup>If you have taken part in the first stage as well, note that these annotations might differ slightly from those that you had made.

- **Initiating** dialogue acts are further divided into *information giving* and *information requesting* dialogue acts. In the annotation, we refer to these as **Init-Inform** and **Init-InfoReq**, respectively:
  - **Init-Inform** dialogue acts have as main function to make a piece of information (e.g. a fact, an opinion) available to the hearer.
  - **Init-InfoReq** dialogue acts are aimed at requesting a piece of information from the hearer.
- **Responsive** dialogue acts are further divided into *information giving*, *accepting* and *rejecting* dialogue acts. For the annotation, we refer to these as **Resp-Inform**, **Resp-Accept**, **Resp-Reject**, respectively:
  - **Resp-Inform** dialogue acts have as main function to make a piece of information (e.g. a fact, an opinion) available to the hearer in response to a previous contribution.
  - **Resp-Accept** dialogue acts are mainly aimed at indicating that the speaker is satisfied with a previous contribution of the other party (positive feedback).
  - **Resp-Reject** dialogue acts have as principal role indicating that the speaker objects to the contribution of the other party (negative feedback).

### 3.4 Content Feature Taxonomy

The content features of a segment are a set of (binary) qualitative judgments on its content with respect to the context of the interview and to other aspects that will be explained below. The number of judgements corresponds to a set of dimensions (e.g. topicality, relevance, accuracy) associated with each dialogue act function in the taxonomy above.

In the rest of this section, we will describe the content features for each dialogue act function, except for **Resp-Accept** and **Resp-Reject** that have no associated content features. The content feature taxonomy is shown in Figure 1.

#### 3.4.1 Content Features for Init-Inform Segments

For segments annotated with an **Init-Inform** dialogue act function we consider the following binary judgements:

**On-Topic | Off-Topic:** whether or not the information provided in the segment is related to the topic of the interview.

**Objective | Subjective:** whether the information provided is objective or conveys the opinion or point of view of the speaker.

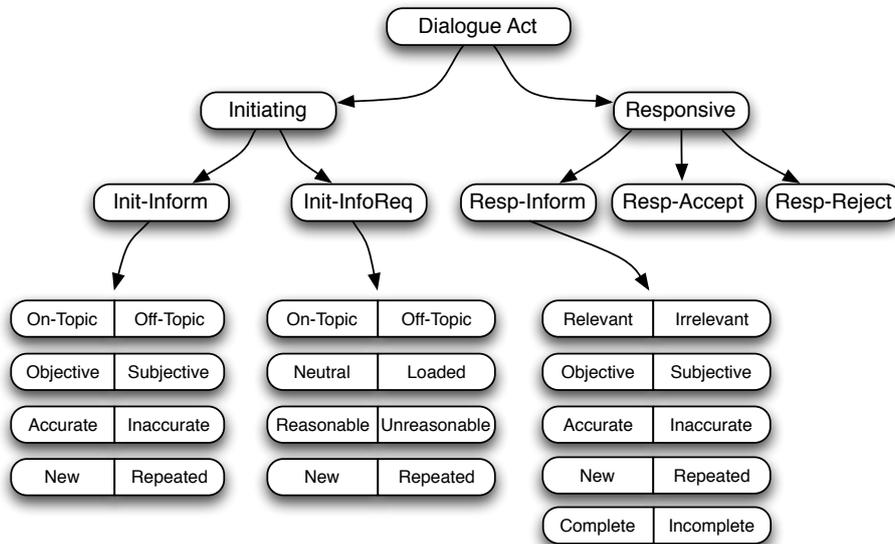


Figure 1: Content Feature Taxonomy

**Accurate | Inaccurate:** whether the information provided is accurate and correct or presents imprecisions, errors or false statements.

**New | Repeated:** whether the information provided is new or has been mentioned before by the same speaker.

### 3.4.2 Content Features for Init-InfoReq Segments

For segments annotated with an **Init-InfoReq** dialogue act function we consider the following binary judgements:

**On-Topic | Off-Topic:** whether or not the information requested in the segment is related to the topic of the interview.

**Neutral | Loaded:** whether the request for information is posed in a neutral way or contains controversial assumptions, criticisms or accusations.

**Reasonable | Unreasonable:** whether the information requested is available to the hearer (bearing in mind his public role, common sense, etc.) or it is not expected that he or she would be able to provide it.

**New | Repeated:** whether the information requested is new or has been mentioned before by the same speaker.

### 3.4.3 Content Features for Resp-Inform Segments

For segments annotated with an **Resp-Inform** dialogue act function we consider the following binary judgements:

**Relevant | Irrelevant:** whether or not the information provided in the current segment is relevant to the segment to which it responds.

**Objective | Subjective:** whether the information provided is objective or conveys the opinion or point of view of the speaker.

**Accurate | Inaccurate:** whether the information provided is accurate and correct or presents imprecisions, errors or false statements.

**New | Repeated:** whether the information provided is new or has been mentioned before by the same speaker.

**Complete | Incomplete:** whether the information given in this segment completes the information requested in the segment to which it responds or there is still requested information that has yet to be provided.

## 3.5 Selecting Content Features

When judging the content of a segment you should consider, to the best of your knowledge, several elements of the context of the conversation (e.g. topical, political, historical), as well as common sense, world knowledge, etc. You should also take into account previous contributions of both participants, and in some cases things they say later on in the dialogue. Every time you make a judgement, ask yourself the following question:

- *Do I have any evidence to make this choice?*

If the answer is ‘Yes’, then go ahead. Otherwise, *be charitable*. This means that, for instance, if you can not determine whether the information provided in a segment is accurate or not, then choose the first option. Similarly, if you can not decide whether a question is reasonable or not, then choose the first option.

Below we provide a few examples and indicate how their content features are annotated.

### 3.5.1 Selecting Init-Inform Content Features

Consider the following interview context:

*“BBC presenter Jeremy Paxman questions former UK Home Secretary Michael Howard with respect to a meeting in 1995 between Howard and the head of the Prison Service, Derek Lewis, about the dismissal of the*

*governor of Parkhurst Prison, John Marriott, due to repeated security failures. The case was given considerable attention in the media, as a result of accusations by Lewis that Howard had instructed him, thus exceeding the powers of his office.”*

Now, consider the following annotated segments in the first turn of the interview:

- |    |      |  |                    |
|----|------|--|--------------------|
| IR | 1.1: | You stated in your statement that the Leader of the Opposition had said that I (that is, you) personally told Mr Lewis that the governor of Parkhurst should be suspended immediately, and that when Mr Lewis objected as it was an operational matter, I threatened to instruct him to do it. | <b>Init-Inform</b> |
|    | 1.2: | Derek Lewis says Howard had certainly told me that the Governor of Parkhurst should be suspended, and had threatened to overrule me.   | <b>Init-Inform</b> |

The speaker is presenting two literal quotations setting the context for an upcoming question. We have no evidence that the quotations are false or erroneous and they have not been mentioned before. For both segments we then select the following (underlined) content features:

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| <u>On-Topic</u>  | Off-Topic       |
| <u>Objective</u> | Subjective      |
| <u>Accurate</u>  | Inaccurate      |
| <u>New</u>       | <u>Repeated</u> |

If later on the interviewee noted, for instance, that the quotations are inaccurate and we have reasons to trust his argument, then the third judgement would have to be reviewed.

Now, consider the following segment, a few turns later in the same interview:

- |    |      |   |                    |
|----|------|---|--------------------|
| IR | 5.3: | Mr Lewis says, If I did not change my mind and suspend Marriot he would have to consider overruling me. | <b>Init-Inform</b> |
|----|------|---|--------------------|

This is another quote with essentially the same information conveyed by segment 1.2 above. The selection of features in this case is as follows:

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| <u>On-Topic</u>  | Off-Topic       |
| <u>Objective</u> | Subjective      |
| <u>Accurate</u>  | Inaccurate      |
| New              | <u>Repeated</u> |

As a further example, in an interview with the following context:

*“On 25 January 1988, CBS Evening News anchor Dan Rather interviews vice-president George H. W. Bush, as part of the coverage of the 1988 presidential election. Before the interview, a video on the Iran-Contra affair was shown to the audience.”*

the annotated segment:

IR 2.1: But you made us hypocrites in the face **Init-Inform**  
of the world.

conveys a subjective opinion. Assuming that the rest of the dialogue indicates that it is relevant to the topic of the interview and that it has not been mentioned before, we select the following content features for this segment:

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| <u>On-Topic</u>  | <u>Off-Topic</u>  |
| <u>Objective</u> | <u>Subjective</u> |
| <u>Accurate</u>  | <u>Inaccurate</u> |
| <u>New</u>       | <u>Repeated</u>   |

Note that accuracy of the statement could not be checked in this case, so we apply the charity criterion and judge it as accurate.

Subjective information-giving segments usually contain expressions like “I think”, “in my opinion”, etc. which can help you decide on this feature.

### 3.5.2 Selecting Init-InfoReq Content Features

Back to the first example, consider the following question posed a few turns after the quotations in segments 1.1 and 1.2:

IR 7.1: Did you threaten to overrule him? **Init-InfoReq**

This question is requesting information related to the topic of the interview. It is also neutral (yet sensitive) and reasonable, as it is in the power of the interviewee to provide a reply. Assuming that this is the first time the question is asked, the following content features are selected:

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>On-Topic</u>   | <u>Off-Topic</u>    |
| <u>Neutral</u>    | <u>Loaded</u>       |
| <u>Reasonable</u> | <u>Unreasonable</u> |
| <u>New</u>        | <u>Repeated</u>     |

Now, consider the interview context below:

*“BBC presenter Jeremy Paxman interviews Conservative MP George Galloway shortly after his parliamentary victory over Labour’s Oona King in the UK 2005 General Election.”*

and the annotated segment that initiates the dialogue:

IR 1.1: Mr Galloway, are you proud of having got rid of one of the very few black women in Parliament?" **Init-InfoReq**

This question is clearly conveying controversial assumptions and is even accusatory. The topic, however, is related to the context of the interview and we therefore select the following content features:

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>On-Topic</u>   | <u>Off-Topic</u>    |
| <u>Neutral</u>    | <u>Loaded</u>       |
| <u>Reasonable</u> | <u>Unreasonable</u> |
| <u>New</u>        | <u>Repeated</u>     |

It must be noted that, although the question is loaded, we consider it reasonable, as it would be possible for the interviewee to provide a satisfactory answer.

For an example of an unreasonable question, consider the following context:

*“In February 2012, BBC Sunday Politics presenter Andrew Neil interviews UK Cabinet Minister Eric Pickles on the Coalition Government’s plans for reforms to the National Health Service.”*

and the following annotated exchange:

IR 19.1: Do you deny that three cabinet ministers urged this Conservative Home blog to call for the bill to be junked or emasculated?" **Init-InfoReq**

IE 20.1: Er, I have no knowledge of the internal workings of, of Conservative Home" **Resp-Reject @ 19.1**

As the interviewee notes, it is not in his power to answer the question, so the following content features are selected for segment 19.1:

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>On-Topic</u>   | <u>Off-Topic</u>    |
| <u>Neutral</u>    | <u>Loaded</u>       |
| <u>Reasonable</u> | <u>Unreasonable</u> |
| <u>New</u>        | <u>Repeated</u>     |

### 3.5.3 Selecting Resp-Inform Content Features

Information-giving responsive segments are judged in a way similar to initiating ones, but here the relevance of the topic is judged against the segment to which they respond and not only to the topical context of the interview. The aim is to judge whether the information provided by the segment is relevant to the request that motivated it.

Going back to the first example, consider the following fragment:

|    |      |                                   |                         |
|----|------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| IR | 7.1: | Did you threaten to overrule him? | <b>Init-InfoReq</b>     |
| IE | 8.1: | I did not overrule Derek Lewis.   | <b>Resp-Inform @7.1</b> |

Although the distinction is subtle, the information given in the response is not relevant to the question and the content features below are selected for segment 8.1 (assuming that the interviewee has not said this before):

|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Relevant</b>        | <b><u>Irrelevant</u></b> |
| <b>Objective</b>       | <b>Subjective</b>        |
| <b><u>Accurate</u></b> | <b>Inaccurate</b>        |
| <b><u>New</u></b>      | <b>Repeated</b>          |
| <b>Complete</b>        | <b><u>Incomplete</u></b> |

A second difference relates to the amount of information provided. Questions usually ask for clearly identifiable pieces of information. *Yes/No*-questions, for instance, can be answered with an affirmative or negative statement (e.g. “*Yes*” or “*No*”), but many times an elaboration is expected. *Wh*-questions ask for one or more objects, individuals, places, and so forth to be identified. Open questions request for positions or opinions on a certain issue. In each case, if you are able to determine the amount of information that has been asked for in the segment to which a **Resp-Inform** refers in the annotation, you should be able to decide whether it satisfies the request or not. If it does, then the **Complete** content feature is selected. Otherwise, **Incomplete** is the correct choice.

On occasion, the information can be spread across several segments, none of which on its own contains the totality of the information requested. In these cases, you should select the **Incomplete** content feature for all the segments but the last one in the sequence, for which the **Complete** content is be chosen.

In the following context:

*“In February 2011, Channel 4 News presenter Krishnan Guru-Murthy interviews George Osborne, as he attends a G20 meeting of finance ministers in Paris, on the state of the outcomes of the meeting and the state of the British economy.”*

consider the fragment below:

|    |      |  |                         |
|----|------|--|-------------------------|
| IR | 1.1: | So, George Osborne, there you are in Paris with the finest economic minds of the G20.  | <b>Init-Inform</b>      |
|    | 1.2: | Have you solved the problem of rising food prices?   | <b>Init-InfoReq</b>     |
| IE | 2.1: | Well, we did talk about the problem of rising food prices and we came up with some of the solutions.   | <b>Resp-Inform @1.2</b> |
|    | 2.2: | Obviously, you can't solve a problem like that overnight, but by giving more information out there about the real cost of things, by trying to promote freer trade, by making sure that some of the poorest producers in the world, in Africa and Asia, get help, financial help to improve their agriculture, what we are trying to do is create more food supply in the world, | <b>Resp-Inform @1.2</b> |
|    | 2.3: | and that has a real impact on the families in Britain, because, like many other families around the world, we've seen food prices go up.   | <b>Resp-Inform @1.2</b> |

Segments 2.1–2.3 have all responsive information-giving functions and they are annotated as responding to segment 1.2. Let us see how we annotate each segment bearing in mind the instructions above.

Although segment 2.1 is relevant to question 1.2, it does not provide all the information requested. For this reason, we select the following content features for segment 2.1:

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Relevant</u>  | Irrelevant        |
| <u>Objective</u> | Subjective        |
| <u>Accurate</u>  | Inaccurate        |
| <u>New</u>       | Repeated          |
| <u>Complete</u>  | <u>Incomplete</u> |

The answer seems to be complete by segment 2.2, where the interviewer admits they have not found a solution, but are working towards it. The content features selected for segment 2.2 are as follows:

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Relevant</u>  | Irrelevant        |
| <u>Objective</u> | Subjective        |
| <u>Accurate</u>  | Inaccurate        |
| <u>New</u>       | Repeated          |
| <u>Complete</u>  | <u>Incomplete</u> |

Now, segment 2.3, although on a topic related to the context of the interview, is not relevant to the question as the information it conveys has not been requested in segment 1.2. The following content features are selected for segment 2.3:

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Relevant</u>  | <u>Irrelevant</u> |
| <u>Objective</u> | <u>Subjective</u> |
| <u>Accurate</u>  | <u>Inaccurate</u> |
| <u>New</u>       | <u>Repeated</u>   |
| <u>Complete</u>  | <u>Incomplete</u> |

## References

- James Allen and Mark Core. 1997. Draft of DAMSL: Dialog Act Markup in Several Layers. Technical report, University of Rochester.
- Harry Bunt, Jan Alexandersson, Jae-Woong Choe, Alex Chengyu Fang, Koiti Hasida, Volha Petukhova, Andrei Belis-Popescu, and David Traum. 2012. ISO 24617-2: A semantically-based standard for dialogue annotation. In *LREC 2012*, Istanbul, Turkey.