

FROM COHERENCE RELATIONS TO APPLICATION: THE CASE OF CONTRAST AND ARGUMENTATION

Stede, Manfred (stede@uni-potsdam.de)

University of Potsdam, Germany

While the idea of describing text coherence by means of semantic and pragmatic relations holding between text spans is widely accepted, the inventories of such relations that have been proposed over the years (e.g., RST (Rhetorical Structure Theory), PDTB (Penn Discourse Treebank), SDRT (Segmented Discourse Representation Theory)) differ quite a bit. In this talk, we take the position that a relation set should on the one hand be faithful to observations in the language data, and on the other hand be useful for a given purpose. In linguistics, the purpose can be to explain a certain phenomenon; in computational linguistics, it typically is utility for a downstream application. We here adopt the latter goal and focus specifically on the relations of the field “Contrast”. Evidence from the multi-layer Potsdam Commentary Corpus shows that RST and PDTB can inspire quite different annotations of the same data, and examining the main reasons of the mismatches leads us to propose an alternative analysis: Starting from the well-known linguistic signals—discourse connectives—we perform a corpus study to derive an inventory of functions that (contrastive) connectives can fulfill. Next, we link these to coherence relations and further to the demands of one particular downstream application, viz. argumentation mining: In order to properly identify the components of arguments in text, what knowledge about contrastive connectives and/or about coherence relations is required?

Bio

Personal academic history

Studies in Computer Science and Linguistics at TU Berlin 1985–89, interrupted by a term at Edinburgh University 1988/89. M.Sc. in Computer Science, Purdue Univ./Indiana, 1990. PhD student at Univ. of Toronto Computer Science, temporarily with a fellowship at FAW Ulm; thesis defense 1996. Research Assistant in the Verbmobil MT project, TU Berlin branch, 1995–2000. Internal project leader of DFG project KIT-Marker at TU Berlin 1998/99. Researcher at Interprice GmbH, Berlin, 2000/01. Since 2001: Professor of Applied Computational Linguistics at Potsdam University.

Professional activities

Area co-chair Discourse and Pragmatics for [ACL 2020](#) # Senior PC member for [Sigdial 2020](#) # Co-organizer of Panel [Humor and AI](#) at the 2020 Int’l Studies of Humor Conference # Co-founder of the Linguistic Annotation Workshop series ([LAW](#)), member of [ACL SIGANN](#) committee # Member of editorial board of the journals [Language Resources and Evaluation](#), [Argument and Computation](#) and [Dialogue and Discourse](#).