

# Coding system and annotation guidelines for conversational actions

Paakki et al., 2024

Specific actions function differently within conversation: they have different purposes and by using them the speakers take different positions within the conversation. Some actions expect an answer and not answering might break social norms (e.g., Stivers and Rossano, 2010). Also, some actions (e.g. accusations and challenges) are more face-threatening than other actions. Actions represent what the main functions of a post are within the conversation, i.e. what it does and how it relates to other actions taken in previous posts.

Overview of coding-scheme:

<b>First actions</b>	question
	(epistemic) challenge
	accusation
	request (request for action or proposal)
	Statement (includes statement (informings or claims), announcement, answer to question (the latter is a responding action), evaluative statements (evaluation))
	appreciation
<b>Responding actions</b>	Acceptance (acceptance or admission)
	Denial (rejection or denial)
	Apology

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## Action descriptions:

### *First actions i.e. actions that function to start a new social action*

#### **Question**

requests information, and makes relevant an answer which either provides or confirms the information, or expresses inability or unwillingness to do so (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018: 217–248.). Questions can be of several types: yes-no-question (syntactic markings of a yes-no-question: subject-inversion or sentence-final tags), or declarative questions. Declarative questions are utterances that function pragmatically as questions but do not have “question form.” By this we mean that declarative questions normally have no wh-word as the argument of the verb (except in “echo-question” format), and have “declarative” word order in which the subject precedes the verb (see Weber, 1993; Stolcke et al., 2000). NB. sometimes comments may seem like questions (rhetorical questions), but don’t really want to get information – so when a question doesn’t expect information or an answer, it is very likely not a question (“why are you taking time to post a reddit comment? get back to work, lazy, entitled, slacking snowflake”). Example Utterances of questions:

- Do you have to have any special training?
- But that doesn’t eliminate it, does it?
- Uh, I guess a year ago you’re probably watching C N N a lot, right?
- So you’re taking a government course?
- Well, how old are you?

#### **Request**

*Request:* is used to proffer a service for the speaker (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Clayman and Heritage, 2014), expecting an acceptance or rejection (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014: 259–266). We consider them similar to proposals, as both are directives. Thus, both are included in the same class. They can often be recognized from imperative verb form (like “go away, “ give me the bottle”), Examples:

- “Stop bothering me!”, or
- “(Please) Tell me how to find the HR office.”
- “Please go to Kitaooji station by subway”

*Proposal:* similar to requests, but instead of directly requesting for some other person to act, they offer a more indirect suggestion. These are more often more polite than requests, being indirect, but can be less polite as well. The main idea is that proposals do not contain direct imperative forms, but are more insect suggestion on how a person or a group could/should act. e.g.

- “Maybe you could try drinking more tea instead of coffee.”
- “The government should buy more masks for the public.”

Note that indirect directives can also have the main agenda of being requests or proposals, e.g. “Why don’t you go first”. This has the word “why” which is usually found in questions, but is really a proposal more than a question.

### **Accusation**

*Accusation (moral conflict)*: convey a negative stance or complaint, ascribing the responsibility for an unsatisfactory event to a person or a group, thus demanding for accountability (Turowetz & Maynard, 2010). The accused is expected to deny or contest the accusation (Pomerantz, 1978; Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Buttny, 1993), acknowledge it and explain themselves (Dersley & Wootton, 2000) or perhaps apologize. For example, an accusation can express a complaint about something another person did wrong, something that goes against generally accepted social rules. So, accusations often describe some action taken by another person, something that is commonly considered to be wrong or impolite, and then they assign blame for this action to another person or group. Often very direct explicit forms like “you lied”/“You are trolling.” E.g.

- “You just called Helen an idiot, basically, that’s what you implied. That’s so impolite.”
- “You are obviously trolling, and not even seriously taking part in the discussion.”
- “You are being extremely petty.”

### **Epistemic challenge**

*Challenge (epistemic conflict)*: conveys a negative stance towards another party (individual or group), denying the epistemic knowledge basis of the interlocutor's priorly expressed claims, actions, or feelings, through various forms (e.g. assertive/interrogative; Koshik, 2003). So, challenges are directed against beliefs, opinions or something that is not necessarily wrong – the challenger mainly wants to oppose that belief/opinion, because they disagree. In our definition, challenge should include explicit linguistic cues (for example, “you are wrong” or Finnish “no” ). Examples messages of the category:

- “That’s a completely ridiculous claim and, may I add, you are totally incorrect.”
- “You shouldn’t be in this discussion group, if you don’t even like cats.”
- “Seems like you can’t prove your claims.”

Manifest features of challenging: valenced (negatively) strong counter positioning through words e.g. “there are severe problems to...”, “The (negative) actions/impacts of X we have already seen”, “Well, its is widely known that...”, “It is worrying... /troublesome”. Similes or metaphors that create polarized/provokative juxtapositions are essentially characteristics of challenges: e.g. “Seems like you have no spine and can’t prove your claims”.

### **Statement**

provides information or an opinion, either without someone asking for it or as a reply to someone asking for information. This class includes statements, announcements and answers to questions:

*Statement:* asserts a fact or a claim; provides information or opinion. They do not set a high expectation for a response (Stivers & Rossano, 2010). They can be “descriptive, narrative, or personal” statements or “other-directed opinion statements” (Stolcke et al., 2000).

Example Utterances (first three from Stolcke et al., 2000):

- “Well, we have a cat, um”
- “He’s probably, oh, a good two years old”
- “He’s about five months old”
- “I believe the earth is warming. I believe this is driven primarily through human-caused CO2 emissions”.
- “I think he has autism”.

Opinion statements often include such hedges as I think, I believe, it seems, and I mean.

*Announcement:* Announcements that e.g. report a general rule or information are seen as similar to statements. However, they differ from statements somewhat in that they usually announce some new general information, e.g. piece of news in a forum discussion group:

- “Breaking news: England just left the EU!”

Or they report or announce a general rule:

- “From this day on trolling will be completely banned from this discussion group.”
- “This group uses bots as moderators, so please note that if you misbehave your comments will be deleted by our moderator bot.”

*Answer to a question:* Answers (to question) like yes-answers include yes, yeah, yep, uh-huh, and other variations on yes, when they are acting as an answer to a yes-no-question or declarative question. Answers also include no-answers. Answers are also semantically significant since they are likely to contain new information. I.e. important characteristic of an answer is that it often contains novel information that has been requested by someone else in the discussion. (Stolcke et al., 2000).

- “My name is Hannah.”
- “Yes, I’m Finnish.”

*Evaluation:* Sometimes called assessment. Evaluations (or assessments) are utterances that are positively or negatively valenced through use of specific lexically assessing terms (e.g. adjectives such as wonderful, difficult, awful). This category includes evaluations that are neutral or negative in valence (sentiment), evaluating something through e.g. often through the use of adjectives (“This is a curious issue.”, “wow”). (Couper-Kuhlen, 2015). Evaluations can be very similar to statements (or appear together with them). Evaluations often include some affect: a) positive evaluations, and b) negative evaluations, and c) neutral

- I think it would be kind of stressful.
- big, old, fat and sassy tabby.
- “That’s horrible, another virus. This year is just the worst year in the world.”
- “I must admit, when one hears it and one sees it, >uh< my ordinary reaction is ah – erh ... that’s inappropriate. I feel on the spot on her... the Italian official, Signora Bianca’s behalf.” (Antaki et al., 2008)

Focus in evaluations can also be on the speaker's personal assessment or evaluation of an item/topic:

- "the book is not very good, it has some interesting parts but it's too long", → evaluation
- "Everybody knows that cats can be difficult" → evaluation
- "I think cats are difficult". → evaluation
- "Cats are **difficult**" → evaluation (general state of affairs)
- "Politics is **difficult**" → evaluation
- "War crimes are disgraceful, not even 'following orders' is an excuse because you have a choice, you always have a choice, I'd die to protect civilians, even of the enemy"

### ***Appreciation***

*Appreciation*: includes various forms of positive evaluative reactions, evaluations and thanking (Cheng 2010), which can invite a response but do not strongly require it. Basically, these are evaluations, but we want to specifically include a category that distinguishes positive evaluations from other types of evaluative statements.

- "awfully nice little person",
- "An interesting idea".
- "it is cool, that's great"
- "oh it's gorgeous". (Couper-Kuhle, 2015)
- "That's great" (Stolcke et al., 2000)
- "great, cool, wonderful"
- "Thanks that's a really great thing you posted."

### ***Responsive actions that reply to other actions:***

### ***Acceptance***

*Acceptance*: acceptance and rejection both mark the degree to which a speaker accepts some previous proposal or invitation (e.g. to a party), plan, opinion, or statement. the most common of these are the agreement/accepts. these are very often yes or yeah, so they look a lot like answers (to question). But where answers follow questions, acceptances (/agreements) often follow opinions, requests or proposals, so distinguishing these can be important for the discourse. (Stolcke et al., 2000)

- example accept: "yeah it does, they all do" (Forsyth and Martell, 2007)
- "yes, I'd love to come. I'll swing by at 8pm."
- "Saturday sounds fine."
- "that's exactly it" (Stolcke et al., 2000)

*Admission*: This is the positively positioned counterpart of denial. As a denial contests an accusation (or challenge), an admission is to admit that the accusation is actually true and

the accused agrees they have done what they have been accused of, or a response to other first actions like challenge, to admit what has previously been contested. For example:

- “Yes, you’re right, I did call Helen an idiot. And I meant it.”
- “Yes I am trolling.”

## ***Denial***

*Rejection*: this is the negatively positioned counterpart to acceptance – rejections mark the degree to which a speaker does not accept or rejects (or resists) some previous proposal or invitation (e.g. to a party), plan, opinion, or statement.

- Example: I don’t think so. (Wu et al., 2002)
- No Friday I’m booked all day (Stolcke et al., 2000)

In a case where the message includes at least two actions, often clear features that point to the message being a responding message with a denial or rejection include e.g. starts with “No, it’s definitely not like that”, “Yes. But.... “).

2.) Denial: this is the negatively positioned counterpart to admission. Denials and admissions are essentially related to accusations or challenges, as they are the most natural responses to these action types. For instance, a person who is accused of some wrong-doing is expected to deny or contest the accusation (Pomerantz, 1978; Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Buttny, 1993), admit the wrong they have done, explain themselves (Dersley & Wootton, 2000) or perhaps apologize. Denials essentially contest the accusation (or a challenge) e.g.:

- “No I’m not trolling.”
- “You’re wrong, I did not say she is stupid, I did not mean such a thing!”

## ***Apology***

*Apology*. Excuse or apology for the speakers’ previous actions or statement. When we have very short apologies, and when our confidence for the second tag is very low, let’s tag the post with only the “apology” action.

- “I’m sorry.”
- “Oh no, I did not mean it that way, it was completely misunderstood what I was saying. Didn’t mean to offend you, sorry!”

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