Thomas Herron

**Feature requests to analyze – Ambiguity Detection in Feature Requests**

**Task Description and Tips:**

Below you will see 5 different feature requests that are pulled from Mastodon’s GitHub issues section. A feature request consists of a request number, title of the request, and a description of the feature request. Your task is to analyze the feature requests and give your critique to your understanding of whether the feature requests are ambiguous or not. If they are ambiguous, please state what type of ambiguity exists in the text. You do not need to suggest recommendation for the ambiguity (only detect and classify the ambiguity). When completed please save the file with featureRequests\_[Your Name] and send it to discord. For reference 2 links are attached in this document too (See details in **Reference Links**).

**Reference Links:**

**Dan Berry Handbook about ambiguity (Also check GitHub pinned message)**   
- You can find the definitions for ambiguity and the types of ambiguity in this handbook. We will be following this book for discussions.

<https://cs.uwaterloo.ca/~dberry/handbook/ambiguityHandbook.pdf>

**A sample format from ChatGPT (\*This is only a reference on how the format can look like\*)**- This is only a sample of how the critique can look like. Please feel free to change the format and write in your own way. Make sure to capture as much of the ambiguity there exists in the request.

<https://chat.openai.com/share/2f7629ca-556e-4ff0-bde4-c81869114efe>

Thomas Herron

**Feature requests to analyze:**

1. **Request No: 70  
   Title**: Reloading gets you to latest toot, losing hability to read oldest unread first  
   **Description**: Maybe this is a feature, not a bug of the app, but certainly it is what keeps me using Fedilab for now. With Fedilab, the loading of new toots keeps my current position on the timeline, so I can read things in their natural order. In official Mastodon app, as it takes you to the top, final toot, it forces you to scroll back down to whatever was the last toot you saw.

Title:

* **Syntactic - Elliptical**: "Reloading (…) gets". Ellipsis omission could clarify whether referring to closing and relaunching the app, refreshing the screen, using a "reload" command, returning to a view from another view, or a number of other possible meanings. Depending on the intended meaning, this could also qualify as **Language Error - Diction** (reload vs refresh vs relaunch) or **Lexical - Polysemy** in that reloading can potentially mean any of the aforementioned actions.
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: "gets you to latest toot" can mean "provides access to latest toot", "achieves the state of latest toot", or "brings you to the location of latest toot". Using context provided by the description, the intention appears to be "brings you to the location of".
* **Syntactic - Attachment**: "losing ability to read oldest unread first " can have multiple meanings based on whether 'first' attaches to 'read' or 'unread'. This could mean that the opportunity to immediately read oldest unread is lost, or it could mean that the entire capability to sort by priority of "oldest unread" is lost.
* **Syntactic - Analytical**: "read oldest unread first" can be parsed into multiple possible meanings:
  + "first read the oldest unread (toot)" in which the focus is on the act of reading being the first act taken after reloading (as in the previous note)
  + "read the oldest unread first" in which 'first' is a noun referring to a toot, reply, or other object, such as the first reply in a chain or the first item in a group or list (in which case this includes **Lexical - Polysemy** and/or **Syntactic - Elliptical**)
  + "read the oldest (toots), unread first" in which only the oldest toots are read, starting with the unread ones
  + "read first the oldest unread (toots)" in which toots that are oldest and unread are read before other toots
  + "read first (only) unread (toots) (in priority order of) oldest", the likely intended meaning to a human reader

Description:

* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "current position on the timeline", 'timeline' could be the name of an app view, in which case 'current position' refers to the cursor location on the view, or 'timeline' could refer to a date-time group (DTG) for which all older toots have been read or the DTG for the toot last viewed
* **Vagueness**: in "natural order", 'natural' cannot be empirically evaluated or defined in this sense.
* **Pragmatic - Referential**: in "as it takes you to the top", 'it' can refer to 'official Mastodon app', implying this is something the app does on its own or as part of another function, or 'it' can refer to the act of 'loading of new toots' (which is the likely meaning in context, but grammatically less sound)
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "the top, final toot", 'final' is typically used to mean "in the last position" rather than "newest" or "in the first position", which can cause ambiguity here when discussing a newest-first ordered list.
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "forces you to scroll back down", this same phrasing could be used to describe requiring you (the user) to move the view themselves (the intended meaning) or forcibly scrolling you (the current view position) without user consent (the opposite of the intended meaning)
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "last toot you saw", 'saw' can mean 'read/accessed' or 'shown on screen'. While these may often be the same thing, in the instance where a user reads a toot, scrolls away, then reloads, the last toot read and the last toot on the screen prior to reloading may be different.

1. **Request No: 160  
   Title**: Feature: Group notifications by toot  
   **Description**: In the notifications tab, the app tells you that “@realpixelcodeboosted your post” and displays a preview of the toot beneath. Now, when a toot becomes popular and gets quite a few favourites and boosts, it quickly becomes a mess.Instead, my proposal is to group favourite and boost notifications by the respective toot, so the notification would instead look like this:Your post has received 14 boosts from:user1user2user3...[toot preview]

Title:

* **Lexical - Polysemy**: "Feature:" can be a verbal imperative ("I am instructing you to feature this") or a noun ("The following is a feature")
* **Syntactic - Elliptical**: Assuming "Feature:" is a noun, it is ambiguous as to whether it is describing an issue with an existing feature or if an omitted ellipsis identifies this as a new potential feature, such as "(Please implement this) Feature:" or "Feature (request):"
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: "Group notifications" Group can serve as a verb or an adjectival noun here, either instructing notifications to be grouped, or referring to notifications belonging to a group or sent to a group. This may also lead to a **Syntactic - Attachment** ambiguity, in which "by toot" either indicates the grouping action is grouped according to toot, or the notifications for a group are performed by a toot or in relation to a toot.

Description:

* **Syntactic - Attachment**: in "displays a preview of the toot beneath", 'beneath' can be attached to 'displays' ("the preview is displayed beneath") or 'toot' ("the displayed preview is of the toot located below the preview")
* **Pragmatic - Referential**: in "displays a preview of the toot beneath", assuming the above case where 'beneath' attaches to 'displays', the ellipsis containing the target of 'beneath' could refer to the notifications tab, the app itself, or the example message.
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "gets quite a few favourites and boosts", 'boosts' could be a technical term in the app similar to a favorite, or 'boosts' could mean a surge in popularity or viewership.
* **Semantic - Referential**: in "it quickly becomes a mess", 'it' can potentially refer to the toot, the notifications tab, the app, the preview, or a different unmentioned thing (in which case it would be Deictic ambiguity)
* **Vagueness**: in "quickly becomes a mess", both 'quickly' and 'mess' are vague terms that cannot be empirically assessed.
* **Syntactic - Coordination**: in "group favourite and boost notifications by the respective toot", it is ambiguous as to whether there should be a single grouping for favorite and boost notifications combined, or a grouping each for favorites and another grouping for boosts. The later example given does not appear to answer this, either, since it does not mention favorites.

1. **Request No: 72  
   Title**: Unable to access hashtags with talkback  
   **Description**: When using talkback there is no way to access the hashtag links in a post Edit 1: i stand corrected. In a post with only one hashtag it appears possible to access it by long pressing the post, however this is unintuitive. In posts with more than one hashtag that trick doesnt work either Edit 2: i feel tusky has a good way of fixing this by adding links and hashtags to the talkback local context menu

Title:

* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "hashtags with talkback", 'with' can mean 'using' (implying 'talkback' is a tool or feature) or it can mean 'containing' (implying including the text "talkback" in a hashtag somehow disrupts access)

Description

* **Syntactic - Attachment**: in "hashtags links in a post", the phrase 'in a post' could be attached to 'access' ("There is no way to access the links while inside a post's view") or 'links' ("There is no way to access the links embedded in a post")
* **Pragmatic - Referential**: in "appears possible to access it by long pressing the post", the 'it' in "access it" could refer to the post or to the hashtag link.
* **Vagueness**: "unintuitive" is a vague term that cannot be empirically assessed.
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "that trick doesn't work either", trick can mean 'solution', 'peculiarity', 'illusion', or 'deceit'. Without the context of the previous sentence, "trick" typically has a negative connotation rather than a positive one, and could be misinterpreted as referring to the issue and not the solution.
* With effort one could probably note an ambiguity in the last sentence, like a referential ambiguity for 'this', but I think it would be a bit of a stretch.

1. **Request No: 115  
   Title**: Feature: Optional indicator for bots  
   **Description**: An optional setting to show who is marked as a bot on Mastodon

Title:

* **Lexical - Polysemy**: "Feature:" can be a verbal imperative ("I am instructing you to feature this") or a noun ("The following is a feature")
* **Syntactic - Elliptical**: Assuming "Feature:" is a noun, it is ambiguous as to whether it is describing an issue with an existing feature or if an omitted ellipsis identifies this as a new potential feature, such as "(Please implement this) Feature:" or "Feature (request):"
* **Lexical - Polysemy**: in "indicator for bots", 'for' can mean "to deal with (bots)", "in regards to (bots)", or "provided to (bots)"

Description

* **Syntactic - Elliptical**: The omission at the beginning of the description can create ambiguity, such as whether the requestor is drawing attention to an existing setting that perhaps is not working, the fact that an existing setting is or is not optional, or requesting a new setting be created.
* While I don't see any other immediate ambiguities, a developer might want more information, such as "marked by who?" and where/how to display this information when enabled

1. **Request No:** 50 **Title**: Feature: Display profile notes  
   **Description**: In the Web UI one can add notes to other profiles. It should be possible to view and edit them in the app too.

Title:

* **Lexical - Polysemy**: "Feature:" can be a verbal imperative ("I am instructing you to feature this") or a noun ("The following is a feature")
* **Syntactic - Elliptical**: Assuming "Feature:" is a noun, it is ambiguous as to whether it is describing an issue with an existing feature or if an omitted ellipsis identifies this as a new potential feature, such as "(Please implement this) Feature:" or "Feature (request):"
* **Syntactic - Analytical**: "Display profile notes" could be parsed as "display (profile notes)" as in displaying notes about a profile or notes from within a profile, or "(display profile) notes" as in notes about displaying profiles or notes about a profile's display device or display settings, or notes about a profile for a display.

Description

* **Syntactic - Elliptical**: in "add notes to other profiles", this can be interpreted to mean adding notes to the publicly displayed profile that can be seen by everyone, or adding notes to (a private view of) other profiles which only the original user can see.
* **Semantic - Scope**: in "add notes to other profiles", it can be ambiguous whether the intent is to add one unique note to each other profile, one identical note to all other profiles, multiple unique notes to each profile, adding multiple identical notes to all other profiles, etc. (I've heard this type of Semantic ambiguity, where a plural subject is acting on another plural, referred to as **Plural Ambiguity**, **Predicate Ambiguity**, or more commonly **Distributive/Collective Ambiguity** which is not listed in the handbook but is exemplified in the light switch example on page 14. If we want to remain within the handbook terminology, I'm guessing Scope is the closest fit but I'm open to other opinions on that.)
* **Pragmatic - Referential**: in "view and edit them in the app too", 'them' can refer to "notes" or "other profiles".