Question Avoidance Study

Annotation Guidelines - 1

*Polina Gusenkova, Karina Hensel, Iana Palacheva*

In this study, we are focusing on the phenomenon of question avoidance. It usually happens when: 1) a person doesn’t know the answer and doesn’t want to show it; 2) a person wants to avoid direct response while being interrogated or debating; 3) a person doesn’t want to answer uncomfortable intimidating questions. You will be presented with a set of paired utterances. The task is to assess each pair in 3 levels:

* Is the first utterance (u1) a question? If yes,
  + Does the second utterance (u2) show signs of question avoidance? If yes,
    - What is the avoidance strategy (fight or flight)?

### Level 1

* u1 is an (information-seeking) question (Q) vs. u1 is a non-question (NQ)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **u1 is a question** | **u1 is a non-question** |
| ▾Closed question:  *u1: Do you want to go to the cinema this*  *evening?*  *u2: I wish I could join you, but I’m busy*  *tonight!*  u1 is a question, the person wants to invite the answerer to the cinema  ▾Open question:  *u1: Where do you want to go to this evening?*  *u2: Cinema would be great!*  u1 is a question, the person wants to know where the answerer wants to go to  ▾Indirect question:  *u1: I wonder where our children are tonight.*  *u2: They were going to go to the cinema!*  u1 is an indirect question, the person wants to know where the children are | ▿Simple statement:  *u1: I’m going to the cinema this evening.*  *u2: Cool, I wish I could join you!*  u1 is not an information-seeking utterance  ▿Rhetorical question:  *u1: What has become of me?*  *u2: Don’t you start...*  u1 is clearly a rhetorical question, it doesn’t  require any answer  ▿Makes no sense:  *u1: What?*  *u2: The roses are red.*  We can’t say for sure if u1-u2 is a  question-response pair. |

### Level 2

* u2 shows signs of avoidance vs. u2 shows no signs of avoidance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **u2 shows signs of avoidance** | **u2 shows no signs of avoidance** |
| *u1: Are you still dating that guy?*  *u2: I don’t want to talk about it.*  u2 expresses the person’s willingness to decline to answer an uncomfortable question.  *u1: Is Mary still dating this guy?*  *u2: I can’t tell you that.*  u2 expresses the person’s unwillingness to answer (in contrast to ‘I don’t know’ example from the column on the right).  (more detailed classification you can find in Level 3 section) | ▿Direct answer:  *u1: Did you attend this class?*  *u2: Yes, I did, it was great.*  u2 here is a direct answer with additional  information.  ▿Indirect answer:  *u1: Did you attend this class?*  *u2: Oh, the lecturer has an amazing sense*  *of humor!*  u2 here is an answer (though indirect), ‘yes’  is implicit: the person couldn’t say anything  about the lecturer, if he/she didn’t attend  the class  ▿Clarification request:  *u1: Did you attend this class?*  *u2: Which class exactly?*  u2 here is a clarification request, though it  could be a form of avoidance in some  situations, but we cannot detect it without  additional context.  ▿‘I don’t know’:  *u1: Is Mary still dating this guy?*  *u2: I don’t know.*  u2 here can possibly be an answer: the answerer can be not aware of Mary’s personal life and thus he/she doesn’t avoid the question (in contrast to ‘I can’t tell you that’’ example from the column on the left). |

We ask you to rate the question-response pair on a 5-point scale based on your certainty (however, we’d like to explicitly ask to not use 2 (uncertain) unless necessary):

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 - no avoidance | 1 - rather not avoidance | 2 - uncertain | 3 - rather an avoidance | 4 - avoidance |

### 

### Level 3

* u2 is ‘fight’ avoidance (FLIGHT) vs. u2 is ‘flight’ avoidance (FIGHT)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **u2 is ‘fight’ avoidance** | **u2 is ‘flight’ avoidance** |
| ▿Attacking the question:  *u1: Who you think killed Mary?*  *u2: What kind of question is that?!*  *u1: When is the wedding?*  *u2: This is an inappropriate thing to ask!*  ▿Attacking the questioner:  *u1: Tell me about your deepest fears.*  *u2: And who are you to ask such questions?*  *u1: Tell me about your deepest fears.*  *u2: We are not that close.*  ▿Respond with a vague question:  *u1: What has happened here?*  *u2: How would I know?*  It can be the case that the respondee is truly not aware of what has happened, but the form of saying that [can indicate evasion](https://legaldictionary.net/evasive-answer/)  ▿Reflecting the question:  *u1: What has happened here?*  *u2: You tell me!*  *u1: What has happened here?*  *u2: What do you think?*  *u1: Were you up late again?*  *u2: And what about you?*  ▿Respond with a confrontational question:  *u1: Are you going to marry him?*  *u2: Are you so concerned about my marital status?* | ▿Ignoring the question:  *u1: What time is it?*  *u2: Vladimir Putin is the president of Russia.*  u2 has no semantic connection to u1, so we assume that the question u1 was ignored  ▿Acknowledging the question without answering:  *u1: What shall we eat for lunch?*  *u2: Good question!*  u2 expresses that the respondee heard the  question, but it’s not an answer  ▿Circular reasoning:  *u1: Why did your boss lose?*  *u2: He lost because he didn’t get enough votes.*  u2 just defines what ‘lose’ means in this context, but doesn’t give any reasons.  ▿Declining to answer:   * Unwilling to answer:   *u1: What is your greatest fear? u2: I don’t want to talk about it.*   * Referring to another person:   *u1: Tell me how your friend is today. u2: I can’t speak for someone else.*  ▿Joking:  *u1: How much money do you make?*  *u2: Not enough!*  ▿Changing the topic:   * Bridge response   *u1: What is the capital of Great Britain?*  *u2: I can't tell you that for sure, but here's something I do know: the UK is a great country!*   * *Slight change*   *u1: When will you pay off the loan?*  *u2: I’m looking for a job day and night!*   * *Forced change*   *u1: Are you pregnant?!*  *u2: Look! Isn’t it your favorite coffeeshop?* |