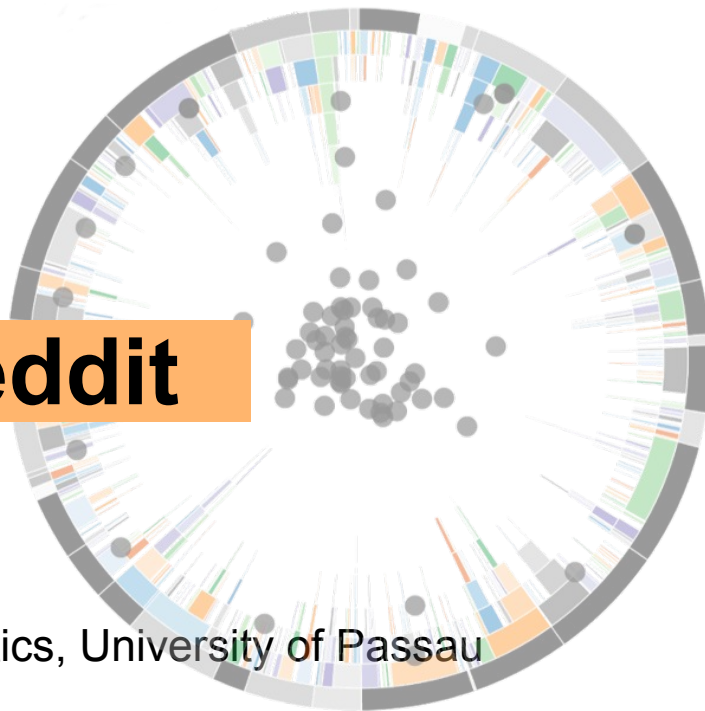



# Strategies for disagreeing on Reddit

**Zlata Kikteva & Annette Hautli-Janisz**

Department of Computer Science and Mathematics, University of Passau  
ECA 2022, Rome




# How do people express their disagreement?

 Proud\_End3085 · 7 days ago


This man was having a work load way before his mon died. I know many people would not be able to achieve that much. But of course he never had money problems personally.

 6   Reply  Share  Report  Save  Follow

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It's pretty weird to consider ribbon-cutting work.

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I don't particularly care for the dude, but he does have a ton of personal projects and causes and charities that he is actively involved in.


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Putting your face on something doesn't mean you're the one shovelling coal to keep it running.



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← metaphor



- A collaboration between the research groups of the University of Passau, University of Dundee, Maastricht University, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen and Warsaw University of Technology.
- **Aim of the project:** build an AI-powered virtual moderator which can identify emerging conflicts in the discussions online and intervene in the conversations to prevent further escalation.

# Research questions

RQ1: How is disagreement signalled on the linguistic surface?

RQ2: What are different strategies for disagreement?

RQ3: What challenges do these strategies present for a computational model of disagreement?



# Dataset

- US2016D1reddit corpus (Visser et al., 2019; <http://corpora.aifdb.org/US2016tv>): Reddit conversations on the Democratic debate for the 2016 US President election
- Disagreements: 2 turns at a time
- Turn 1 - initial statement; Turn 2 - disagreement statement
- 89 cases of disagreement



# Different strategies of disagreement

- Rhetorical and/or assertive questions
- Rephrases
- “Yes, but...”
- Use of sarcasm
- Ethotic attacks
- ...





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# Role of questions in disagreeing

- Questions are among the most common strategies for disagreeing: 23% of disagreement comments included questions
- Questions can be tricky for annotation of disagreement types
- Can be used to either mitigate or escalate disagreement

Annette Hautli-Janisz, Katarzyna Budzynska, Conor McKillop, Brian Plüss, Valentin Gold, Chris Reed. 2022. Questions in argumentative dialogue. *Journal of Pragmatics*, Volume 188, pp. 56-79.

Annette Hautli-Janisz, Zlata Kikteva, Wassiliki Siskou, Kamila Gorska, Ray Becker and Chris Reed. 2022. QT30: A Corpus of Argument and Conflict in Broadcast Debate. In *Proceedings of LREC 2022*, pp. 3291-3300.



# Disagreement via rephrasing

Observed as an element of disagreeing strategy in literature:

- Verbal shadowing (Rees-Miller, 2000)
- Format tying (Bolander, 2012; Leung, 2002; Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998)
- Opposition format (Kotthoff, 1993)



## Disagreement via rephrasing

1a. Kagawaful : ....*We get it, **you don't like him [Bernie Sanders] because he is popular on reddit...***

1b. Velshtein: ***We don't like him [Bernie Sanders] because he's a shitty candidate** who can't substantiate any of the bullshit he spouts.*



## Disagreement with ‘Yes, but...’

- Common disagreeing strategy – 27% of disagreements expressed via “yes, but...” strategy
- Expressed in a number of ways



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  - ‘Yes’ and ‘but’ are stated explicitly
  - ‘Yes’ expressed via rephrase or premise of/to the claim of the previous speaker
  - ‘Yes’ is not explicit
  - Alternative claim - ‘but’ is implied

Explicit ‘yes’

Explicit ‘but’



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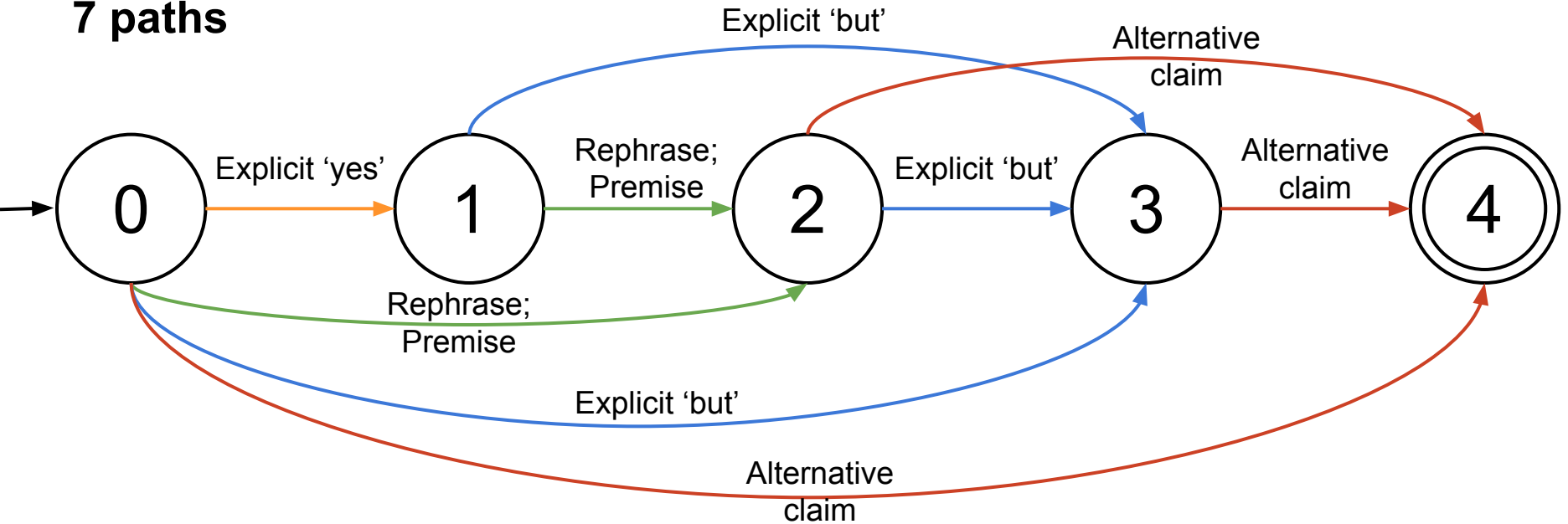
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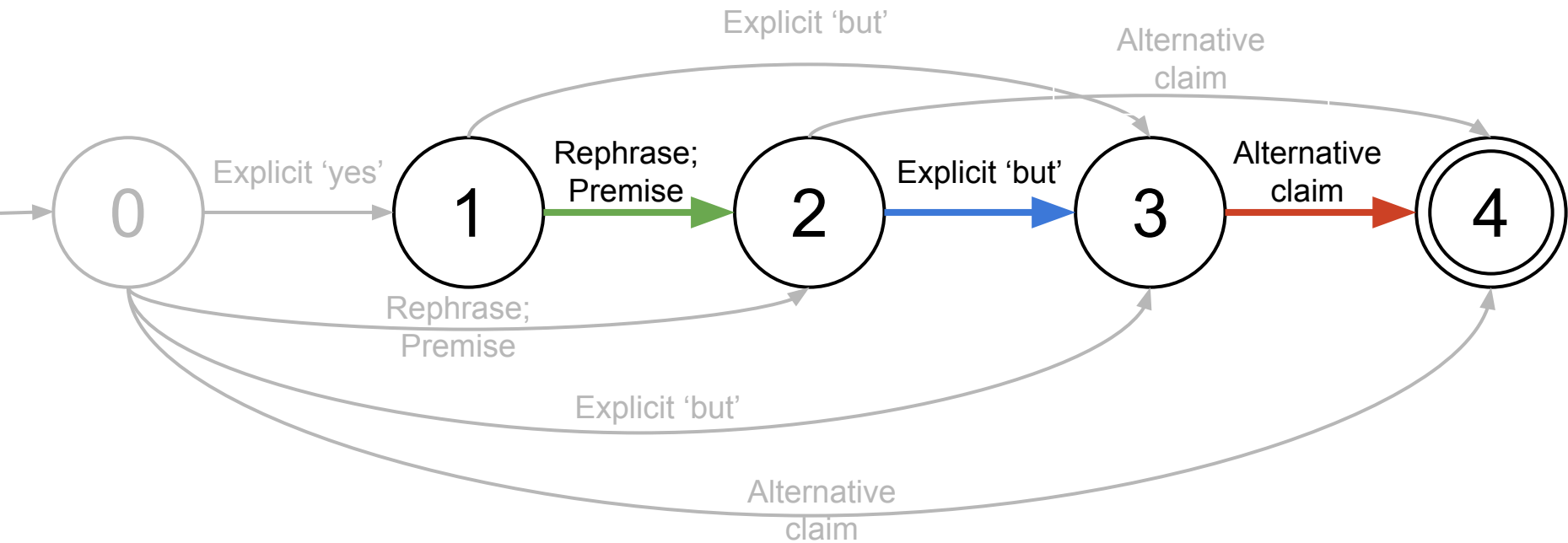
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# Finite State Automaton

7 paths

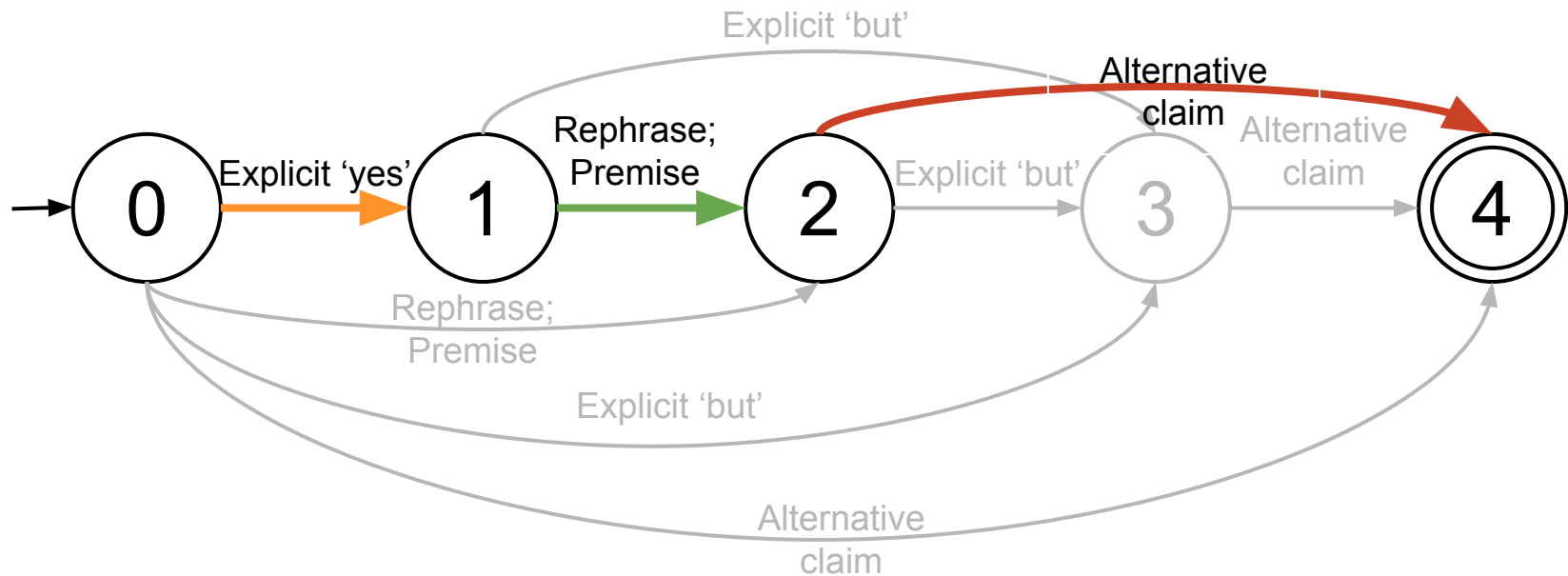




2a. LordMacDonald: *sure seems like it [Hillary Clinton is winning the debate]*

2b. fortfive: ***The camera focuses on smiling faces for Clinton, but the applause sounds louder to me for Sanders.***

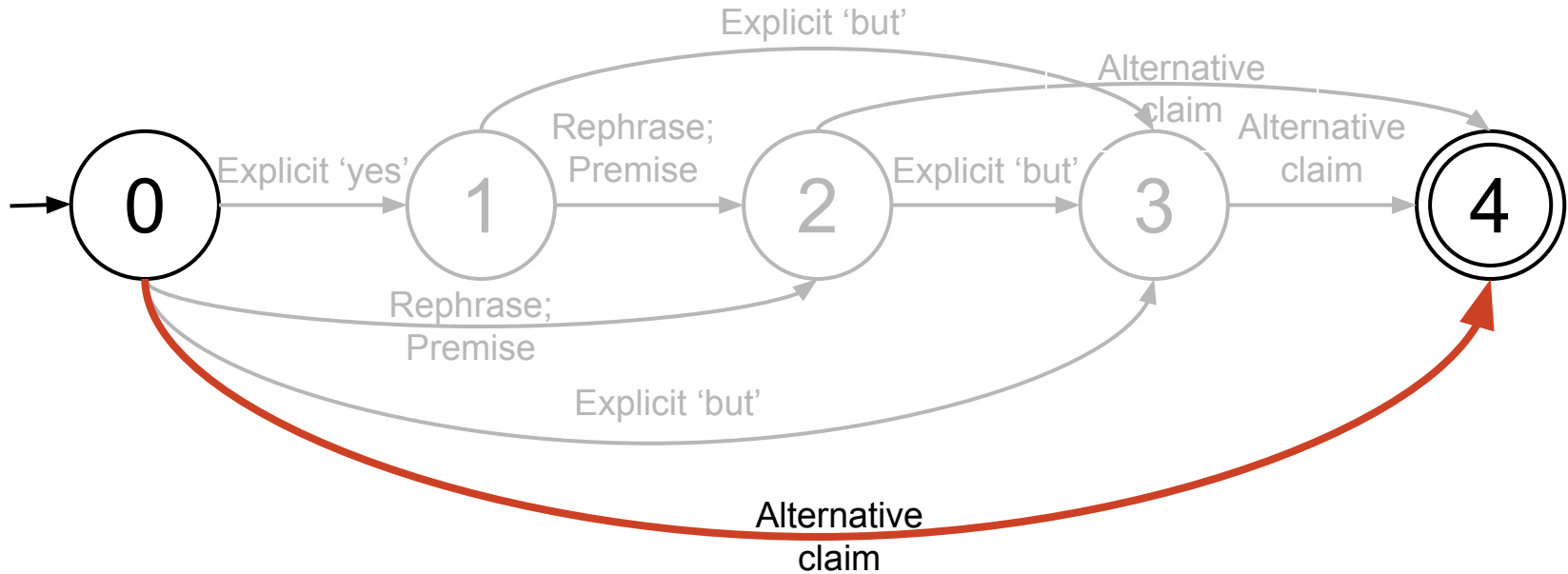




3a. antihexe: *I'd argue that he's president material, he's just not figurehead material. If elections weren't just popularity contests he'd probably do just fine.*

3b. beach-bum: ***I get your point**, **he does have good positions**, **I was speaking more of his presentation.***





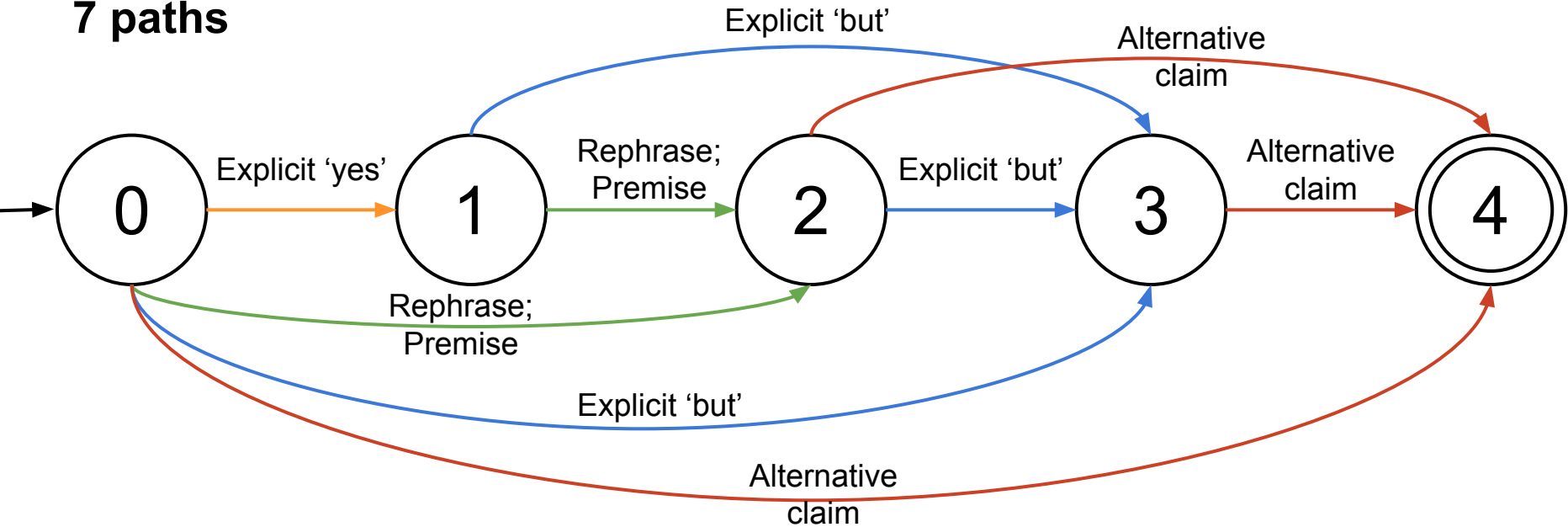
4a. Soylen\_t\_Orange: *True but he agreed to the format of the debate as they all did.*

4b. SinisterPaige: ***The major media outlets should not be the ones dictating who wins the primaries.***



# Finite State Automaton

7 paths



## Summary

- Different strategies of disagreeing online: questions, rephrases, 'yes, but...' structures
- Implicit structures are particularly challenging for identifying and reconstructing automatically

*Next step: How can we detect those strategies with computational means?*



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# Thank you for your attention!

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