

Subject: CogSci 2015 notification - #493
From: cogsci2015@cogsci.ucmerced.edu
Date: Wed, 1 Apr 2015 21:15:28 -0400 (EDT)
To: rxdh@stanford.edu
CC: cogsci2015@cogsci.ucmerced.edu

Dear Robert X.D. Hawkins :

We are very pleased to inform you that your paper submission

493 - Why do you ask? Good questions provoke informative answers.

has been accepted for poster presentation at CogSci 2015. We received 666 paper submissions this year, and each underwent careful peer review. While many submissions were found to be of high quality, time and space constraints allowed us to accept 187 (28%) for oral presentation and a further 288 (43%) for poster presentation. Your submission will be allocated a poster presentation space during one of the conference's poster sessions, allowing you, or another one of the paper's authors, to present this work. Details concerning resources and expectations for your presentation will be provided in the coming weeks. First, there are a few issues to address.

You are required to respond to the reviewer comments that appear at the end of this message by editing your paper. You must then submit a final draft of your paper for inclusion in the conference proceedings. If you do not take this final step of submitting a final draft, your paper will not appear in the conference proceedings, and no presentation space will be reserved for you. Thus, it is very important that you submit an updated draft of your paper before May 1, 2015 at:

<https://precisionconference.com/~cogsci15/>

Please keep in mind that papers cannot be longer than 6 pages. If your submitted final draft is longer than this limit, it will be rejected without further opportunities for revision. If the document is too long, it will not appear in the conference proceedings, and you will not be allocated space during a poster session. Please make sure that the final draft of your paper does not exceed 6 pages.

Requests to schedule your poster presentation on a specific day cannot be accommodated due to the complexities inherent in a conference of this size. By submitting your final draft, you are implicitly agreeing to have one of the authors of this paper present your poster at any time during the conference: from July 23, 2015 to July 25, 2015. A detailed conference schedule, including information about when your poster presentation is to take place, will be made available well before the conference dates.

Details about conference registration will be made available on or around May 1, 2015. They will appear at:

<http://cognitivesciencesociety.org/conference2015/registration.html>

In order for your paper to be presented, at least one of the paper's authors must be registered for the conference by June 15, 2015. If none of the authors are pre-registered for the conference by this date, your paper will not appear in the conference proceedings, and no space will be allocated for your poster. Please make sure that at least one author is pre-registered by June 15, 2015.

Thank you very much for contributing this interesting paper to CogSci 2015! The participation of cognitive scientists like yourself is what will make this an exciting, informative, and productive meeting! We look forward to seeing you in Pasadena this Summer!

With Best Regards,

Program Committee
CogSci 2015
cogsci2015@cogsci.ucmerced.edu

----- Submission 493, Review 5 -----

Title: Why do you ask? Good questions provoke informative answers.

Reviewer: primary/meta-reviewer

Type of Submission

Cognitive Science
Linguistics

The Review

This is the meta-reviewer's report.

It is interesting that the reviewers were so widely divergent in their analysis, and as a result of seeing the two early reviews, I requested two more (last minute) reviews. I feel this research is not ready (yet) for a full paper presentation, but I do feel that the preliminary results are well suited for the poster session.

I found the focus of the paper very interesting and appropriate for the Cognitive Society conference. However I felt that the experiments were not that well motivated (explained/justified) especially the second one.

If this paper is accepted as a poster presentation, the authors MUST consider the reviewers suggestions and tighten up the presentation of the experiments, as well as do a better job explaining the results of the second, including the fact that (perhaps) no clear results were obtained. It also seems appropriate to describe how future work might clarify issues, for instance research might "consider the dynamics of simple dialogues", which of course, will require some modeling of context as well as the goals of the conversation

----- Submission 493, Review 1 -----

Title: Why do you ask? Good questions provoke informative answers.

Type of Submission

Cognitive Science
Linguistics
Psychology

The Review

This well-written paper presents an important extension of the Rational Speech Act model to question and answer behavior, which is tested in two experiments. Experiment 1 convincingly shows the superiority of the 'pragmatic answerer' model over models that answer the literal or the explicit question, but cannot clearly distinguish between the explicit and the pragmatic questioner models. Experiment 2 was designed to contrast the latter models by restricting the questioner's alternatives to either the goal category ('dalmation') or a non-goal category ('cat'). The authors justify this rather odd task by referring to real-world situations where straightforward questioning may be prohibited or impossible. Such situations, however, usually involve evasiveness or

equivocation; asking impossible questions is likely to be interpreted as sarcasm (which is presumably not the behavior modeled here). The unnaturalness of the task is reflected in the fact that the first trial did not show the expected preference for 'cat' in asking for the poodle's location (apparently, no training trials were used). A cover story might have helped to motivate the unavailability of the 'poodle' question (e.g., you are not allowed to refer to the poodle or there is an overhearer who must not know that there is a poodle).

----- Submission 493, Review 2 -----

Title: Why do you ask? Good questions provoke informative answers.

Type of Submission

Cognitive Science
Psychology

The Review

This is an interesting preliminary investigation. The topic is very appropriate for CogSci and very timely.

However, it seems like it still needs some work before it's ready for presentation. The incredibly constrained guessing game has the obvious advantage in that it is easy to apply the model to it. It's far from obvious that it has much to do with question asking & answering. It was notable, for instance, that the behavior that the authors actually study (being forced by the rules of the game to use under-informative words) looks very little like the Clark-style speech acts that the authors used to motivate the study. Moreover, if the difficult thing to explain about indirect questions was how the listener infers the correct goal out of the myriad of potential options, it is hard to see how much purchase can be made on the problem by studying situations where questioners and answerers are restricted to a tiny number of questions.

In short, while I'm impressed by the technical achievements on the part of the authors (in terms of the model, WebPPL, the Turk study itself, etc.), I was unable to figure out what I was meant to have learned about questions and answers that I didn't already know.

I recommend that, going forward, the authors identify some open questions and try to address them. The closest I could find was the authors' conclusion that "answerer behavior is best described by a pragmatic model that does reason about questioner intentions, using the question utterance as a signal." If that's the resounding conclusion, the authors need to do more work to convince us that Clark didn't already demonstrate that 35 years ago, as is commonly assumed.

In the meantime, I don't think there's enough here yet to generate useful discussion or feedback at CogSci. I look forward to seeing where this research program has gotten to next year, though.

----- Submission 493, Review 3 -----

Title: Why do you ask? Good questions provoke informative answers.

Type of Submission

The Review

The writing was very clear, but the structure of the paper was confusing. There was extensive scene-setting and relevant work cited, but it feels like the experiments presented in the paper are not as well executed or as their motivation merits. While well-motivated, I feel that there are some papers more in the AI/Dialogue systems research area that might better dove tail intentionality and turn-taking experiments. The use of a "case study" after presenting "a rational speech act model of question and answer behavior" was interesting, but the link to Experiments 1 and 2 needs to be strengthened. In addition, in the second paragraph on page 3, the probabilities associated with each prior need to be better motivated.

Experiments 1 and 2 need more attention to strengthen their role in the hypothesis presented. If they are truly Mechanical Turk projects, then those improvements could be quickly and cheaply implemented. Comments on page 3 "participants" and in the conclusion allude to the experiment participants being confused by the instructions. Running new experiments using refined experimental design would help.

The questions that the paper raises in the introduction, "What makes a question useful? What makes an answer appropriate?" are important and difficult. In addition, the reference to Potts (2012) paper on answer's levels of abstraction is also thought provoking. The submission is original, and could be significant, if the experiments were improved and the structure tightened up. The subject matter is in the area of interest to the Cognitive Science audience, and after the improved suggested here have been made, this will be a technically sound piece of research with theoretical merit.

----- Submission 493, Review 4 -----

Title: Why do you ask? Good questions provoke informative answers.

Type of Submission

Artificial Intelligence
Cognitive Science
Linguistics

The Review

This paper provides an interesting approach to modeling information gathering in dialog using Rational Speech Acts. The modeling methods are tested and data is presented for multiple questioner/answerer scenarios to explore the predictive ability of the different model combinations.

The paper is focused on RSA methods and the construction of Bayesian

inference models under that paradigm.

It would be interesting to see these models compared to Reinforcement Learning methods for completing goals in dialog. see for example S. Young, "The statistical approach to the design of spoken dialogue systems," 2002.

Overall I recommend this paper under the categories specified.