A Heuristic Method Based on Answer Set Program  
in Bilateral Negotiation

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**Keywords:** Answer Set Program, Bilateral Negotiation, Heuristic Approach.

**Abstract.** This paper presents a heuristic approach based on answer set program in negotiation between two agents. In this approach, demands of each side in negotiation are transformed into a logic program. The process of negotiation contains two key steps: selecting a pair of answer sets as demand in negotiation and updating trade sets of negotiators. Besides, in order to ensure the astringency of approach, we apply some heuristic tips in our process. Also, a number of experiments have been done to assess the performance of this method. Results of experiments in general show that this approach could get reasonable results as soon as possible. This paper also describe the development trend of the approach in relevant fields, such as e-commerce.

Introduction

Negotiation plays a more and more important role in today's social activities. It can take a wide variety of forms, from a trained negotiator acting on behalf of a particular organization, to an informal negotiation between families or friends. Negotiation between two agents is a process of multiple rounds, where some trades are done in each round until a final agreement is reached in general [1]. The last few years have seen a large amount of research which have been done in the field of negotiation. Besides, some researchers are engaged in the optimization in complex negotiations. For example, Colin R.W. at el used Gaussian processes to optimise concession in complex negotiations [2] and Siqi C. at el presented two novel opponent modeling techniques based on deep learning methods [3]. And others also do some research on negotiation method for international business [4]. Furthermore, quite a few research combined with possibilistic logic have been done in the field of multilateral negotiation with incomplete information [5].

In multi-agent system, an in-depth analysis has been done from different perspective in issues of negotiation between agents, such as the mechanism, rules and strategies of negotiation. In the last two decades, another formal method of negotiation has been proposed from the perspective of belief revision. The design of negotiation mechanisms, the design of negotiation rules, the use of negotiation strategy and the flag of successful negotiation are determined by the belief of each intelligent agent [6]. Krister Segerberg proposed irrevocable belief revision, to be contrasted with standard belief revision [7]. A new general framework for default reasoning, which is based on the non-monotonic reasoning framework in the classical first-order language, has been presented by Dongmo Z at el (2000) [8]. Moreover, there are some different belief revision system under negotiation circumstances for agents raised by other researchers [9].

In recent years, researchers use answer set programming (ASP for short) to present the background knowledge of each agent. A series of studies on mechanisms and methods of both sides in consultation could be conducted by means of logical reasoning. ASP is a form of declarative programming oriented towards difficult (primarily NP-hard) search problems. It is based on the stable model (answer set) semantics of logic programming. In a more general sense, ASP includes all applications of answer sets to knowledge representation [10][11] and the use of Prolog-style query evaluation for solving problems arising in these applications. ASP works out results automatically according to the knowledge base and expected results, and it gives feedback of results to users, which reflects the ability of automated reasoning in artificial intelligence area [12]. An answer set is a demand of agents, also a collection of literals essentially. For the feature that ASP has a strong ability in knowledge representation, this paper also presents requirement knowledge of each side in consultations by ASP.

However, these studies does exist imperfections. The biggest flaw in these methods or frameworks is that the balance between optimal results and procedure complexity in negotiation does not been taken into consider. Many researchers find that heuristic method is a useful approach to fix this problem and generate the good enough solutions. At the same time, some studies on heuristic method have been done [13][14].Therefore, profiting from this thought, this paper combines the heuristic method with the belief revision method based on ASP to optimize the process of negotiation and get the better result. This paper present a heuristic method in bilateral negotiation. The method is aimed at the logic-program-based bilateral negotiation and it has its own heuristic tips in process of negotiations, which is the main difference compared to others.

Preliminaries

In this section, each logical program is seen as an agent, and negotiation between the two agents is a procedures of updating demands of each other. Therefore, in this chapter, we will introduce the basic concepts of logic answer set and some results, including its semantics, syntax, and other aspects related to the property [12].

**Answer set program.** The logic program as the most common and the most important way to state knowledge representation plays an indispensable role in knowledge engineering. Most common sense knowledge of human knowledge, its main feature is a non-monotonic reasoning, which happens to be the classic logic insurmountable obstacles. Answer set logic program as an inevitable expansion of classical logic programs, the key idea is to import the default deny "*not*" to accept "*negation as failure*" semantics. In this section, we mainly describe the logic program which is related to negotiation closely: Extended Logic Program (*ELP*).

Traditional logic program has a great weakness is that you are not allowed to process directly with incomplete information. The requests in traditional logic program miss corresponding results to undecidable words, and these words express the incompleteness of the information non classical logic theory. To overcome these shortcomings, the literature [15] proposed extended logic programs, in addition to "*negation as failure* (*not*)", it also introduced the "*classical negation* (*neg*)". Therefore, ELP not only gets hidden negative information through the "closed world assumption", but also includes clear negative information. The following context describes the simple grammar of *ELP*.

Let represent *ELP*’s language. The Herband domain of language is a collection of all the basic atoms. And basic atoms are composed of the constants and functions appeared in the language L. We use to express them. Basic atoms of Herband domain in language are formed by predicate symbols. Predicated symbols are appeared in and set of all the basic atoms are generated by the atoms of Herband domain, and we use to express them. A normal rule usually has the form of the following.

(1)

We use to represent the answer set of basic program *P*. To calculate the *ELP*’s answer set, we need to guess a set of literals in the *ELP* firstly. Then we should analysis if this program could be converted into a Classical Logic Program (*GL Statute*) or not. Next, we should calculate the answer set of the basic logical program. At last, we must detect the consistency of generated answer set with the original literals set. For more information about the answer set program, readers can refer to the literature [12].

**Belief Revision.** Multi-round negotiation is a process of mutual modification of two *ELPs*’ negotiation needs (answer sets). We divide the process into two parts: contraction and expansion, which is similar to the original description of the belief revision in the literature [Gardenfors 1988]. Contraction of answer set refers to the answer set to give up their own part of the literals. Expansion of answer set means that the one negotiator accepts some literals of another negotiator’s answer set. Expansion is achieved by taking some literals from another negotiator’s answer set as new facts into its own program.

The literals which negotiators choose to give up are represented as . The literals which negotiators choose to retain are represented as R\_i. For an ELP Π, we could define as its preference. For *ELP* and *ELP* , we use to express the trade set of negotiation.

Heuristic Method in Bilateral Negotiation

We mainly describe basic concepts and the process of answer set solving in previous sections. As what we say, we propose a heuristic method in bilateral negotiation. And this method mainly consists of two key steps, selecting a pair of answer sets as demand in negotiation and updating trade sets of negotiators.

**Selecting Initial Demand**. This step contains following five items.

1. Transform the each agent’s demands, which are described by natural language, into *ELP*,
2. Use *GL Statute* to convert *ELP* into Classical Logic Programs.
3. Calculate answer sets of each Classical Logic Program. If there is no answer sets for any negotiator, the negotiation failed. Or, we take the next step.
4. Create an iterator to check all the possible pair of each negotiator’s answer sets is acceptable\cite{chenwu, 2008} or not. If we find one pair of answer sets is acceptable, we stop the loop and call current pair of answer sets as a feasible solution of negotiation. Moreover, negotiation is terminated. Otherwise, we proceed to the next step.
5. Sort the answer sets of each negotiators in descending order. The rules of sorting is as below.
6. An rational agent should accept as much demands as possible. So we compare the number of literals in one answer set to another answer set. The bigger the number, the better the answer set.
7. If the number of one answer set is equal with the number of another answer set, we calculate the sum of importance of all the extended literals(excluding the facts in answer sets) by following formula:

(2)

Where *D*(*v*) represents the important values (betweenness) of node (literal), is the number of shortest paths between node i and node j. In this part, we use graph theory to express rules in original demands. Agent choose demands with larger betweenness to negotiate and give up demand with smaller betweenness in order to make a deal. Owning the bigger sum means the answer set has a higher priority.

With the sorting is finished, we choose first answer sets from each descending order separately. And we regard these two answer sets as the initial answer sets of negotiation. After all the above steps, we could get the initial answer sets of two negotiators, (). Then we continue to take next step of updating trade sets.

**Updating Trade Sets**. For each negotiator, trade set consists of two parts. One is a set of accepted literals. Another is a set of abandoned literals. The liberals which are in initial answer set of both sides are added to the accepted literals. Besides, the accepted set should include literals as important as possible. To achieve this goal, we should rank literals by their importance. The method of ranking is shown as formula 2. As for abandoned literals, they must be inconsistent literals of two initial answer sets. Maybe one of negotiators choose to give up the inconsistent literal or literals.

By the process of step one, we could get the initial answer sets () as usual. If negotiators can not reach an agreement with initial answer sets, we should update trade set. The process is as follows.

1. If there is no agreement reached in condition that one of negotiators gives up inconsistent literals, both of negotiators drop inconsistent literals.
2. Update the accepted literals by their rankings. If the most important literal can not generate accepted result, we use less important literal to replace it. The rest can be deduced by analogy.
3. If above processes do not work, we have to choose another initial answer sets and repeat step two(updating trade set). If there is no another initial answer sets can be chosen, negotiation failed.

Experiments and Results

In this section, we use an example to explain how this approach works. Here is the description of negotiation between trade union and capital, which is in natural language.

**Example 1**.Trade union and employer would like to negotiate the new labor contract. Trade union is inclined to increase the workers’ salary and welfare. But employer intends to quit some workers, and to adopt new production technology. The following is the basis of the negotiation.

If employer quits workers, trade union will strikes; but trade union thinks that employer don’t want to strike. If employer don’t want to strike, they will agree to increase the workers’ salary and welfare. In order to increase the profit, employer would like to use new technology and quit some workers. Because increasing investment and higher wages will lead to cost increased. Trade union knows that if employer to adopt new technology, some workers will be unemployed. So trade union hopes that employer increases the investment to provide enough jobs, so that workers do not be fired. If employer quits workers, trade union will strike. Employer knows that increasing investment will bring more profits in the future. On the other hand, employer knows that increasing the current profit only if workers don’t strike and don’t increase wages.

We transforms natural description into *ELP,* which is shown as Table 1.

Table 1. ELP of trade union and capital

| Negotiator | trade union() | capital() |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *ELP*s | .  .  .  .  .  . | .  .  .  .  .  . |

In this approach, we can get following agreement of negotiation with a little time cost. When negotiators choose) as their trade set, the example can get the following agreement . Through this method, negotiators can save much more times than using traditional approaches in general. In worst case, it spends as same time as traditional approaches. The experiments show that the heuristic method has an outstanding performance in general.

Summary

This paper proposes a heuristic method of bilateral negotiation based on answer set programming. And the astringency of this method is ensured by selecting only one pair of initial answer set to negotiate in first step and accepting literals as important as possible. This paper also defines its own ranking criteria in answer set sorting. It’s clear that we could get a reasonable result of negotiations by accepting literals which is more important to negotiators. Moreover, we could take less time to finish the negotiation than traditional approaches. Especially, this method could be used in the negotiation of buyers and sellers in e-commerce.

Currently we only consider the primary bilateral negotiations, and we do not take the time constraint and other constraints of negotiation [22] and multilateral negotiations into consideration. As for our future work, we plan to extend this method to the multilateral negotiations and add time constraint. Besides, we plan to take the external influence into consideration[23]. In addition, we are projected to do the work about optimization of benefits criteria.

Acknowledgement

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