Coding and Tagging Your Corpus for Discourse Features

Start coding and tagging your corpus by referring to the ***stance and engagement markers*** (discourse features) discussed in Hyland (2011).

I would like to suggest that you begin as follows:

(1) **Authorial Self-Mention**

Look for single-authored research articles (RAs) within your corpus & then search those particular RAs for instances of the 1st person singular pronoun 'I'.

You can search, and code and tag either manually or electronically. ☺

Create a key which keeps track of the discourse feature and the colour you have used to tag that particular feature — so, for example, you may have highlighted each instance of the 1st person pronoun 'I' in yellow.

Notice that authors may refer to themselves using other forms of the 1st person pronoun, and so, you will also need to search for instances of 'me, my, mine':

> *(a)   My approach to…*
> *(b)   My initial hypothesis entails…*
> *(c)   Several alternatives have occurred to me…*
> *(d)   An informant of mine has admitted that…*

Once you have coded and tagged each instance, it will be necessary to look at and read the context in which this pronoun occurs in order to verify whether or not it is actually an instance of **authorial self-mention**. Check Hyland's (2011) definition as well.

Recall that discourse analysts who are focusing on qualitative analysis, just like what we are doing in this course, are interested in particular discourse features in context.

You will be examining specific instances, each one individually, in order to ascertain what the function of a particular discourse feature is in a particular context. We cannot determine this in advance — we must look at and consider each example in context. You are, of course, focusing on the ***rhetorical situation*** at a particular moment in the development of the text that you are looking at.

Q: Why has a particular author from discipline X (Math, Physics, Engineering, CS, …) used that particular discourse feature in this particular context?

         What is the rhetorical effect of using that particular feature?

Recall: RGT claims that "all language use is rhetorical" and that we want to continue to ask the question: "who is persuading whom of what by what means?"

Systematicity:

Make sure that you code and tag the entire corpus systematically. You may report some general trends regarding how many instances of the 1st person pronoun 'I' occur in your working corpus, but we are focused on qualitative analyses and NOT quantitative methods.

You are going to code and tag your entire corpus (all 12 RAs) for each discourse feature. I would like to suggest that you continue as follows:

(2)   **Authorial Self Mention   with dual or multiple authored RAs**

Now look for dual/multi-authored research articles (RAs) within your corpus & search those particular RAs for instances of the 1st person plural pronoun 'we'.

You can search either manually or electronically. ☺

Create a key which keeps track of this discourse feature and the colour you have used to tag that particular feature — so, for example, you may have highlighted each instance of the 1st person plural pronoun 'we' in green [you can choose any colour scheme you like ☺].

Added Complexity:

Notice that this case is somewhat more complex since you also need to be aware that the 1st person plural pronoun 'we' could also be an instance of a **reader pronoun** (cf. Hyland 2011, p. 200) — the so-called **inclusive 'we'**.

You will need to tease these 2 examples of 'we' apart — are there cases where you can assert that 'we' is in fact being used as a case of **authorial self mention**? Are there other clear-cut cases where 'we' is being used as an instance of a **reader pronoun**, the **inclusive 'we'**? Are there cases where you are unsure or it is difficult to decide?

I would recommend that you code all instances of 'we' with the same colour to start with. If you ultimately decide that you are going to focus on the distribution of 'we' in your corpus, then you could go back and do a more fine-grained coding and tagging that differentiates authorial self mention from the reader pronoun/inclusive 'we'.

Again, notice that the 1st person plural pronoun has different forms, and so, you will also need to search for instances of 'us, our, ours':

(a)   *Our approach to…*
(b)   *Our initial hypothesis entails…*
(c)   *Several alternatives have occurred to us…*
(d)   *An informant of ours has admitted that…*

(e)   *Let us assume that … Let's assume that …*
(f)   *If we allow that …*
(g)   *So, our current position enables us to argue that …*

Please continue to refer to Hyland (2011) for definitions and examples of each of the stance and engagement markers that he discusses, and code and tag your corpus appropriately.

(3)   Hedges

(4)   Boosters

(5)   Directives

(6)   Personal Asides

(7)   Shared Knowledge References — Constructions of Solidarity

(8)   Questions

(9)   Attitude Markers

Ultimately, you are looking for reoccurring patterns and things that "leap" off the page at you once you have completed your coding and tagging.

Your single focused research question for this project will emerge from your careful coding and tagging of your data, and the observations that you make about their function and distribution.

Sometimes, the absence of a particular discourse feature is also relevant — so, you will want to keep track of the stance and engagement markers which are absent from your corpus or absent from various sections of the corpus RAs.

Have fun coding and tagging! ☺

Please let me know what other questions you might have:

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