# **ConvoKit-Transformers: An applied study on Conversational Classification**

Project Proposal

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**Abstract**

*Studies on conversational classification have yielded nontrivial results in recent years. Significant milestones include the creation of DialogRE, conversation toolkits and increased adaptation of conversational knowledge. Such research would see a wide variety of applications to social media algorithms and psychology, among other fields. However, the current support for large scale application of such recent research is minimal at best. In addition, conversational classification has seen little adoption into widely used development toolkits. Implementation of research is typically for demonstration ability and not scalable for engineering purposes. We hence propose an applied study of recent methods used in the field, and compilation of work in a toolkit, ConvoKit-Transformers. We hold that our work will not only streamline research in the field, but also provide a practical evaluation of the current methods employed.*

# **Introduction**

Conversational classification is a subfield of Natural Language Processing that aims to extract classification labels from text in multi-speaker dialogue. This field has seen proposals for applications in social media algorithms and psychological evaluation, among many other current issues.

However, current resources for building models capable of comprehending conversations lack many critical components for efficient full stack development. Clear documentation is not available for many proposed models, greatly inconveniencing a developer’s workflow. Little work exists to demonstrate technical applications of conversational models to real world problems. We also find that many implementations of conversational models lack sufficient testing, and are highly self-contained, limiting robustness in a development setting.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In this work, we intend to make conversational classification research more accessible for general application. We first reimplement TUCORE-GCN, a significant milestone of research in the field that has spawned several variants. We refactor the work of the official implementation to include critical infrastructure necessary to engineering work. Next, we investigate the core necessities of a Machine Learning developer in the work of implementing a conversational model, delving into the needs of differing real-life scenarios and technical requirements among other aspects. Lastly, we package our work with TUCORE-GCN in a developer toolkit curated for conversational model creation, testing and deployment. We name this toolkit ConvoKit-Transformers, which extends the capabilities of ConvoKit, a previous conversation analysis toolkit.

Our main contributions can be summarized as follows:

1. We adapt the TUCORE-GCN branch of models for developer use.
2. We investigate the necessities of an ML developer for utilizing conversational models in solving conversational problems.
3. Our research is unified into an accessible and extendable toolkit, ConvoKit-Transformers

# **Previous Works**

We have seen recent progress in LLMs been applied to the field by performing retrievals from recent generative LLMs such as LLAMA, reformatting emotional classification in conversation as a generative task. Tools to facilitate research in the field have been proposed. a dataset for Dialog Relation Extraction, a framework for formatting dialog relation inputs, a compilation of research implementations for emotional classification in conversation, and a toolkit for analysis of conversation datasets. Modelling of speaker information and turn attention approaches have shown improvements in classification tasks. Trigger Word detection was proposed as a possible heuristic for identifying emotions in speaker text.

# **Proposed Methodology**

We want to produce something that can encourage people to use conversation classification models more.

Firstly, we adapt the TUCORE-GCN branch of models for developer use. TUCORE-GCN leveraged graph convolutional networks (GCN) for better understanding of entity-speaker-turn relations. A turn attention mechanism was also proposed. We consider TUCORE-GCN due to its relevance in the field and proven effectiveness. To accomplish this, we reimplement TUCORE-GCN using the widely used HuggingFace transformers library. This awards developers the additional functionality offered by base classes of this library, and promotes modularity, allowing for easier reconfiguration of the model for downstream tasks. We additionally redesign the data processing pipeline to function as an input processor for inference. We also propose a test suite in the transformers library style. This ensures that the work the code performs is accurate to research, and furthermore ensures sustainability of code. We document all functionality in the transformers library docstring formatting style, increasing ease of understanding for developers. To summarize the above improvements, we will produce a technical report on our implementation of TUCORE-GCN, covering any parity concerns and detailing how the work was achieved for future studies. We will additionally train TUCORE-GCN on models besides BERT and RoBERTa, and provide training details similarly to the TUCORE-GCN paper’s ablation studies. We will additionally publish code to generate such training details. Taking into light recent developments in research, we extend our implementation of TUCORE-GCN to Hi-Dialog, a derivative of TUCORE-GCN that replaces turn self-attention with hierarchical turn-based attention, among other improvements.

Secondly, we investigate the necessities of a Machine Learning developer when utilizing conversational models in solving conversational problems. We first perform an empirical study on current best practices in ML development. Specifically, we evaluate the design philosophy of current toolkits such as nltk or conv-emotion, and determine if they are applicable towards a toolkit for conversational classification. In addition. we investigate the needs of target users of our toolkit, and translate those needs into proposed functionality. Next, to demonstrate the capacity of conversational classification to solve real-world problems, we then prototype Machine Learning-based solutions to solve real world engineering problems. The scope of these prototypes is subject to change depending on the success of our TUCORE-GCN adaptation, although its main purpose is only to demonstrate applicability. These problems heavily differ in domain, to address a wide scope of issues that can be addressed by conversational classification.

Lastly, we package the results of our research into an accessible and extendable toolkit, ConvoKit-Transformers, taking into consideration the studies of other tookits we have performed. The proposed toolkit will include generalized base functionality, allowing for extensions to other models, and will follow current standards in library design for ease of use. The toolkit will maintain parity between its model implementations and official implementations, or include an option to enable parity if it cannot be achieved. We build this toolkit around the base functionality of ConvoKit, a previously introduced toolkit for conversation analysis, that constructs a framework for conversation analysis. Convokit itself offers many datasets and utilities for analysing conversational data, but is not well equipped for model creation, testing and deployment. We hence implement functionality to handle the additional workflow on top of Convokit’s abilities. The toolkit will be released on Github and PyPI, and will be free for non-commercial use.

# **Expected Outcomes**

The proposed toolkit will accelerate application of conversational classification models to real-world issues. Additionally, the toolkit will greatly facilitate research in the field, and increase understanding on conversational related fields in general.

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1. Equal contribution [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://github.com/XiaoxinHe/Awesome-Graph-LLM> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)