

Fundamentals of Linguistic Interaction

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NASSLLI 2016

- timing coordination – turn taking
- meaning coordination – dialogue acts
- meaning coordination – grounding
- *style* coordination - alignment and adaptation
- language *acquisition* in interaction

Linguistic coordination

Speakers in dialogue tend to *adapt to each other* at different levels:

- phonetic production (Babel 2012, Kim et al., 2011)
- lexical choice (Brennan and Clark, 1996)
- syntactic constructions (Pickering and Ferreira, 2008)
- gestures (Furuyama et al., 2005) postural sway (Shockley et al., 2007)

[Terminology: alignment, entrainment, coordination, convergence, adaptation]

Our interest here is in *linguistic alignment*: adaptation to aspects of our conversational partner's language

- Alteration in likelihood of particular language behaviour
- May be dynamic adjustment to partner's most recent contribution
- or gradual alignment during (and beyond) interaction
- Found in both experimental and natural interactions of many kinds, in many languages

Linguistic coordination

- Empirical *evidence* of alignment / coordination
- What *causes* this adaptation is a matter of debate:
 - ▶ the need for mutual understanding (Clark, 1996)
 - ▶ priming (Pickering & Garrod, 2004)
 - ▶ negotiating social distance (Giles, 2008)

Alignment at different linguistic levels

Phonology/phonetics: speech rate, response latencies, vocal intensity, pronunciation, pausing patterns

Lexicon (word choice): shoe vs. pennyloafer



Syntax: If your partner uses a syntactic structure, you are more likely to use it too.

The nun is giving a book to the clown (V NP PP) vs.

The nun is giving the clown a book (V NP NP)

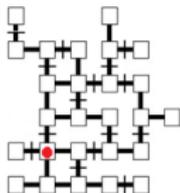


The cowboy is giving the banana to the burglar vs.

The cowboy is giving the burglar the banana

Alignment at different linguistic levels

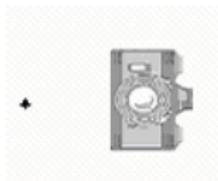
Semantics: dialogue partners converge on semantic conceptualisations



Description schemas:

I'm at B5 vs.

I'm at second column, second row from the bottom



Reference frames:

The dot is below the camera vs.

The dot is to the left of the camera

Alignment in human-computer interaction

Humans also align with artificial dialogue partners.

- Alignment of lexical choice in route-finding task (Koulouri et al, 2014)

Robot: I am at the junction by the bridge,
facing the **bendy road**.

User: Go into the **bendy road**.

- Children modify their speech in response to animated characters (Coulston et al. 2002)
 - ▶ greater amplitude with louder 'extrovert' character
 - ▶ smaller with quieter 'introvert' character

Exploiting alignment in HCI

User's alignment with the system: Alignment reduces the space of possible user behaviours. This can help HCI by:

- implicitly shaping the user's input in a way that the system can understand: eliciting specific behaviour (word choice, grammatical structures, speech rate, amplitude. . .)
- predicting user input

System's alignment with the user: generating more naturalistic output

- Users expect that the conversational partner will align
- Increasing user satisfaction

Why do people align language?

So, there is evidence of alignment, but... what triggers this type of coordination?

Three different approaches to explaining alignment:

- driven by *communicative* goals and the need for mutual understanding
- consequence of our *cognitive* architecture, triggered by priming mechanisms
- driven by *social* goals, to negotiate social distance

Alignment is driven by communicative goals

Speakers align to maximise *mutual understanding*.

- Appeal to common ground (joint action model by Clark et al.)
- Audience design: *what is my interlocutor likely to understand?*
 - ▶ driven by the desire to be understood, to reach mutual understanding
 - ▶ leads to more successful communication

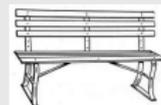
Alignment is goal-directed. Goal: *communicative success*

- it requires a model of the dialogue partner as communicative agent

Evidence

- Partner-specific conceptual pacts
- Referential task (lexical choice)

< 15% chance to use 'seat' in null context



If partner uses 'seat':

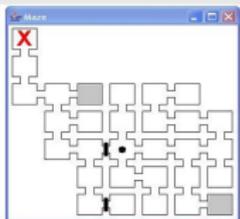
- 83% alignment when thinking partner is a computer
- 44% alignment when thinking partner is a human
- 80% alignment when thinking partner is an basic computer
- 42% alignment when thinking partner is an advanced computer

More lexical alignment with 'less capable' partner

(Branigan et al. 2011)

Communicative beliefs affect lexical alignment.

Grounding problems affect alignment.



Pattern of semantic shift:

- 0 mins: The piece of the maze sticking out
- 2 mins: The left hand corner of the maze
- 5 mins: The northernmost box
- 10 mins: Leftmost square of the row on top
- 15 mins: 3rd column middle square
- 20 mins: 3rd column first square
- 25 mins: 6th row longest column
- 30 mins: 6th row 1st column
- 40 mins: 6 r, 1 c
- 45 mins: 6, 1

Reversion to figurative model after clarification:

- A: I'm in the 4th row 5th square.
- B: Where's that?
- A: The end bit.
- B: I'm on the end bit right at the top.

Participants systematically favour Figural and Path descriptions when encountering problematic dialogue

Garrod and Doherty (1994) Conversation, co-ordination and convention: an empirical investigation of how groups establish linguistic conventions. *Cognition*, 53:181-215.

Mills and Healey (2008) Semantic negotiation in dialogue: mechanisms of alignment, in *Proceedings of SIGdial*.

Alignment is due to our cognitive architecture

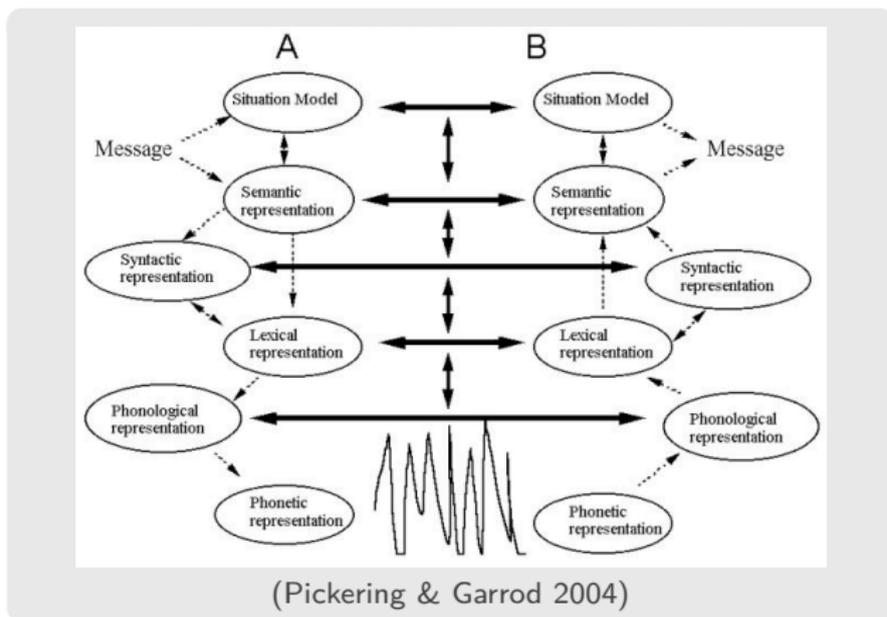
Alignment is a natural consequence of the architecture of *our cognitive system*.

- Interactive alignment model (Pickering & Garrod 2004)
 - ▶ alignment driven by activated linguistic representations – priming (stimulus, response)
 - ▶ leads to reduction of cognitive load, and indirectly to successful communication

Pickering & Garrod, Toward a mechanistic psychology of dialogue, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 27(2):169–190, 2004.

Pickering & Garrod, The interactive-alignment model: Developments and refinements, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 27(2):212–225, 2004.

Interactive alignment model



- Priming operates on representations at every level
- Alignment at one level enhances alignment at other levels
e.g., syntactic alignment is enhanced by lexical / semantic overlap
- Alignment of situation models leads to successful communication

Alignment is due to our cognitive architecture

Alignment is a natural consequence of the architecture of *our cognitive system*.

- Interactive alignment model (Pickering & Garrod 2004)
 - ▶ alignment driven by activated linguistic representations – priming (stimulus, response)
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Alignment is *not goal directed*.

- implicit and automatic (triggered by linguistic features)
- no representation of partner required

Evidence

- Syntactic alignment
- Syntactic alignment with lexical boost

nun **giving** a book to a clown (V NP PP rather than “nun giving a clown a book”)
→ “sailor **showing** a hat to a girl”; more priming with “sailor **giving** a hat to the girl”
the **sheep** that’s red (Relative Clause rather than “the red sheep”)
→ “the **book** that’s red”; more priming with “the **goat** that’s red”

- Same level of syntactic alignment under differing beliefs – believing partner is human (66%) vs computer (64%)

Bergmann, K., Branigan, H., & Kopp, S. (2015). Exploring the alignment space: lexical and gestural alignment with real and virtual humans. *Frontiers in ICT*, 2(7), 1–11

Mirror Neurons

So called *mirror neurons* fire during both action and perceiving an action (Di Pellegrino et al. 1992).

New Pickering & Garrod model:

- Production and comprehension are tightly interwoven – this underlies people's ability to predict themselves and each other.
- Based on *covert imitation* and *forward modelling*: recreating behaviour and predicting the perceptual outcomes of an action

M. Pickering & S. Garrod (2013) An integrated theory of language production and comprehension. *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*.

Audience design vs. priming

- A lot of evidence is consistent with the two models.
- No single account explains the full range of evidence.
 - ▶ different linguistic levels sensible to different mechanisms?
- Most research does not seek to contrast accounts: different tasks, different contexts, different partner behaviour.

Some evidence that speakers fail to adapt to partners in the early moments of processing (Keysar, Barr, and Horton, 1998)

- early processing is *egocentric*
- maintaining and updating a model of the partner is computationally expensive, so is done only when necessary (Pickering & Garrod, 2004)

But this has been countered by Brennan & Hanna (2009):

“early moments of language processing can be flexible, nimble, and responsive to such attributions, rather than reflexive, egocentric, and ‘dumb.’”

Brennan, S. E. & Hanna, J. E. (2009). Partner-specific adaptation in dialogue. *Topics in Cognitive Science*.

Alignment is driven by social goals

Speakers align to socially index and achieve rapport with conversational partners.

- Communication accommodation theory (Giles et al.)

Alignment:

- driven by affiliation, desired to be liked, need for social approval
- leads to more likeable perception, more acceptance/compliance

Goal: *enhancement of social relations*

- it requires a model of the dialogue partner as social agent

- Speech rate alignment implicitly increases compliance with requests (Buller & Aune 1992)
- Repetition increases waiters' tips (Van Baaren et al. 2003)
- Matching of functions words predicts relationship initiation and stability in speed dating conversations (Ireland et al., 2011)
- More alignment towards high-powered partners

C. Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, L. Lee, B. Pang and J. Kleinberg (2012). Echoes of power: Language effects and power differences in social interaction, *Proceedings of WWW*.

What kind of data?

We need a reasonably *large corpus* with *social asymmetries* amongst interacting agents

↪ Turn to *online communities*

- community of Wikipedia editors
- some of them are *administrators*
- they interact via “talk pages”



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

User talk:Mackensen

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Canadian folk singer talk pages [\[edit\]](#)

....are being recreated. Would you mind deleting them again and salting them? Thank you, [JNW \(talk\)](#) 01:00, 14 June 2014 (UTC)

- Done. I've left the IP a friendly note. [Mackensen \(talk\)](#) 01:13, 14 June 2014 (UTC)
- Much appreciated. I noticed some of those talk pages had been deleted a half dozen times since 2012. Maybe a sneaky way of reintroducing deleted articles? [JNW \(talk\)](#) 01:16, 14 June 2014 (UTC)

Style Coordination

How things are said as opposed to *what* is said

↔ *function words* are topic-independent (Pennebaker et al, 2007)
pronouns, articles, quantifiers, prepositions, conjunctions, ...

Editor_a: Corrected. Please check. **Any** more outstanding problems?

Editor_b: **Everything** is fine. Thanks a lot.

Coordination of b towards a for a class of function words m ,
for all pairs of utterances (u_a, u_b) where b directly replies to a :

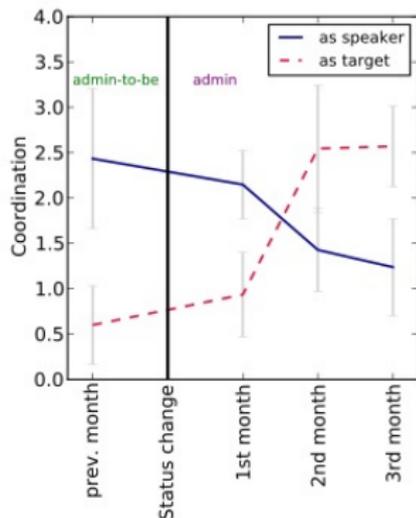
$$C^m(b, a) = P(u_b \text{ uses } m \mid u_a \text{ used } m) - P(u_b \text{ uses } m)$$

Overall *coordination towards* a : average across all editors b who
address a (adapted from Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al. 2012)

Power-Driven Style Coordination

Status-based power : Wikipedia editors coordinate more towards admins (Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2012. *Echoes of Power.*) [▶ website](#)

Status change has an effect on the level of linguistic style coordination:



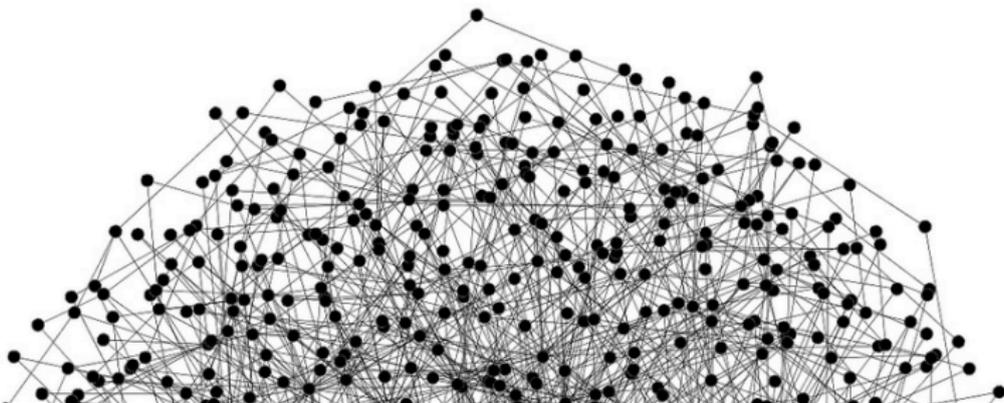
Coordination of the user (as speaker) and, respectively, towards the user (as target) in the months before and after status change occurs.

Power-Driven Style Coordination

Status-based power : Wikipedia editors coordinate more towards admins (Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2012. *Echoes of Power.*)

What about other more implicit forms of social power, such as how *'central'* you are within the *social network* – do they impact linguistic style matching?

B. Noble and R. Fernández (2015). Centre Stage: How Social Network Position Shapes Linguistic Coordination. *Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics, NAACL 2015.*

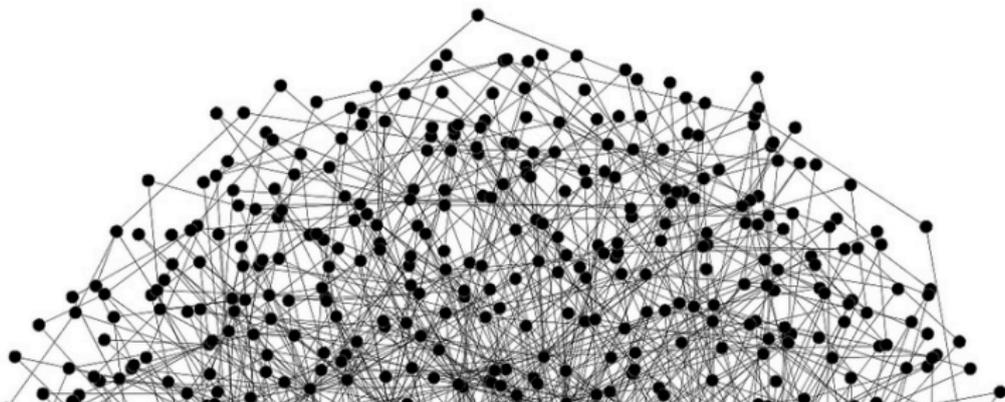


The Wikipedia Social Network

We want to construct a *social network* that reflects the *linguistic interactions* between the Wikipedia editors:

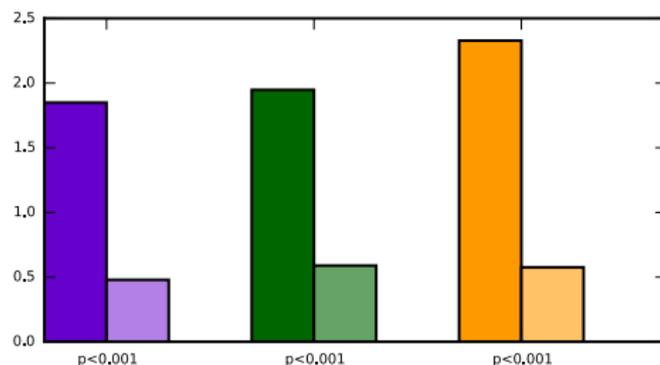
- nodes represent individuals in a community – Wikipedia editors
- edges give some measure of social connectivity between individuals – weighted according to the number of direct replies

Corpus: 342,800 posts, 26,397 editors (1,825 of whom are admins)



Results

- More style coordination towards administrators.
- More style coordination towards editors in central social positions.

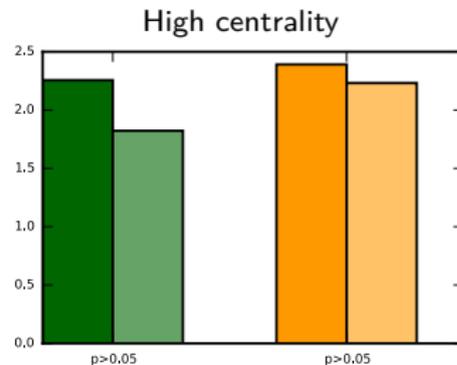
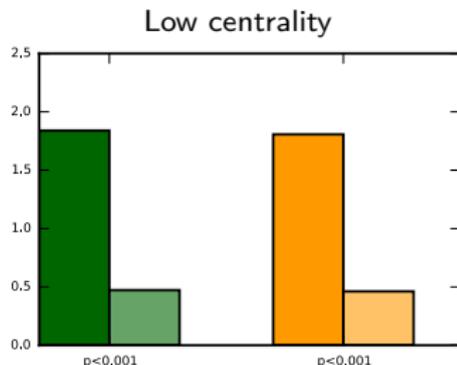


- Admins
- Non-Admins
- High Eigenvector
- Low Eigenvector
- High Betweenness
- Low Betweenness

- On average, admins occupy more central positions, but the impact of adminship and centrality turn out to be largely independent ...

Results

- Low-centrality editors receive more coordination if they are admins.
- But adminship is less important for high-centrality users.



- Eigenvector Admins
- Eigenvector Non-Admins

- Betweenness Admins
- Betweenness Non-Admins

↪ *social network centrality* sometimes eclipses status-based power in triggering linguistic style adaptation.

Is adaptation to central users (rather than admins) more important for *social acceptance*?

- how does this happen even though centrality is more *implicit*?
- do highly central users exhibit speech *more typical* of the community?

Several *practical applications* within computational social science:

- automatic discovery of social relations,
- tracking evolution of relations over time, . . .

Alignment / adaptation of style (broadly understood) in dialogue.

Three perspectives:

- driven by communicative, partner-specific goals
- mechanistic consequence of our cognitive architecture
- driven by social goals

Tomorrow: language acquisition in interaction