

Large Stance Annotation Manual, version 3, March 2, 2016

Overview

In order to develop stance detectors for multiple languages, we need annotated data, namely a set of news stories, each annotated with all the elements of stance present.

Your job is to create these annotations, that is for each segment, to identify all the elements of stance present.

Background

In news reports, blogs, tweets etc., in addition to the content conveyed, there is typically some element of stance, such as how the newsreader or blogger feels about the information he or she is presenting. Such information is potentially very useful for planning disaster relief, for example as addressed by the Darpa Lorelei program, as discussed at <http://www.darpa.mil/news-events/2015-10-08> . Below are four examples illustrating how stance information can helpfully supplement the information content of a news report or tweet.

1. After an earthquake, the Lorelei heatmap shows two dense clusters of talk about the topic, one in Province A and one in Suburb B. The analyst applies the “locally relevant” filter to cull out talk that has a second-hand/non-local stance, and discovers that Province A is the important location. Later he finds out that the suburb was populated by an ethnic group originally from Province A, and the talk there was mostly about concern for relatives in the province.

2. After a storm hits power lines around cities E and F, there is lots of messaging from both relating to electricity. Attempting to determine where the situation is most severe, the analyst finds that E almost disappears from the heat map after applying the “typical rather than unusual” filter, and also after applying the “large-group versus individual” filters. He gives priority to translating messages from F. Later he finds that most of the messaging from city E was about a bizarre event involving a little girl, a downed power line, and the family pet, with a heartwarming outcome.

3. Trying to assess the scale of a marketplace bombing in City G, the analyst also finds a lot of messaging on the topic of violence in nearby City H. Applying the “immediate-action-needed versus background” filter and the “factual-information versus opinion” filters, he decides that the talk in H is less relevant and decides to focus on G. Later he finds that the messaging in H was about a bombing they had experienced years ago, and opinions about the way the authorities, including some politicians now up for re-election, had handled it.

Procedure

For each annotation, first familiarize yourself with the content: read the transcript if available, otherwise listen to the broadcast once. Then listen to each segment individually again and decide which stance aspects are present.

You will have a spreadsheet listing the segments and with spaces for each of the 14 stance aspects. Depending on whether that stance is absent, barely present, present, or strongly present, the appropriate cell will contain 0, 1, 2, or 3. Please use labels 0 and 2 most of the time, using 1 and 3 when clearly appropriate. Do not agonize about whether to use a 1 or a 2, for example: such small differences matter little.

Before you start on the main data, please listen to segments 1–4 and see how they were labeled in the spreadsheet. Note down any of these labels that seem strange or difficult, and discuss them with your supervisor.

Then listen to segments 5–8 and label them yourself. Show your supervisor; he or she will then compare your labels to ours, and discuss any differences. Then you're ready to start work.

For some of the segments and some stances there may not be a clear correct answer, so please use your best judgment. On the other hand, some elements of stance are clearly present in some segments. For example, if the segment is “snowstorm coming in, roads will be affected, drive carefully,” then this clearly needs to be marked as “bad implications” and “locally relevant to the listening audience.” Other aspects clearly not present would be “controversial” or “praiseworthy.” When we check the quality of your work, we will focus on such clear cases. There are other aspects, however, which are more subjective. For example, you may be able to tell from the newsreader's tone of voice that the snowstorm a “typical situation” or an “unusual one.” Although some of these will be subtle, they are still important, so please listen carefully and note down whatever you think is present.

Please focus on the presenter's view, not an objective view or your own. When judging whether something is “local” or “immediately relevant” please take the perspective of the listening audience on the day when they heard the broadcast. If the presenter's tone seems to convey a different feeling than the words, rely more on the tone.

Most segments will have multiple stance labels. There is no need to be completely exhaustive, rather please focus on the stance aspects most strongly present in a segment. For example, if a segment presents a lot of bad news but one piece of good news, focus on on the dominant theme. However in such a case it would also be appropriate to mark a 1 in the good news column, to indicate something there. In general, each segment should probably be tagged with 3–8 stance items.