

A lot to answer for: Interactivity and responses to clarification requests

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Turn construction in dialogue is a fundamentally incremental and interactive process and the coordination of common ground is crucial to understanding. However, although the establishment of common ground is known to be influenced by a number of factors in dialogue, such as the context in which information was mentioned, many accounts assume that interaction plays only a peripheral role. Additionally, contributions to dialogue are often fragmentary or incomplete and these incomplete contributions may be grounded, clarified or subsequently completed. Despite these observations, there has been little work that experimentally tests the influence of common ground on the interactive building up of meanings in dialogue at the sub-sentential level, or to what extent we take account of shared context when we are constructing a turn.

This talk will discuss some experiments that systematically introduce spoof clarification requests (CRs) into an ongoing text dialogue. These CRs target a noun phrase (NP) that has either previously been talked about in the current dialogue (*given* information) or not (*new* information) and appear to come from either the other person in the conversation or an external source.

Results show that the response depends on whether the target of the CR should be in the common ground or not, which is affected both by whether the targeted NP is given or new and whether the apparent source has been involved in the joint action of building common ground. A formal model of dialogue needs to take into account not just what is said and how, but also who is actively involved in the process of doing so.