Temporal effects of lexical alignment: Evidence from task-oriented discourse.

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Introduction
- Alignment in conversation: tendency to adopt interlocutor’s lexical items, syntactic structures etc.
- Evidence mostly from carefully controlled picture-description experiments (e.g. Pearson et al., 2004) and some corpus studies (e.g. Gries, 2005)
- Alignment is supposed to be ubiquitous and contribute to successful communication (Pickering & Garrod, 2004)

Research questions: temporal aspects of alignment
1. Do speakers align in spontaneous, written, task-oriented discourse?
2. Does alignment increase over the course of the discourse? (cf. Pickering & Garrod, 2004)
3. Does alignment contribute to successful communication; i.e. do participants who are more aligned complete the task in less time? (cf. Pickering & Garrod, 2004)

Methods

Intuition for applying the cosine distance to measure alignment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence type</th>
<th>Player / Scenario</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frequency fragment without verb</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency sentence indicative</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency sentence imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency sentence conjunctive</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

1. Do speakers align at all in spontaneous, task-oriented, written discourse?
2. Does alignment increase over the course of the discourse? (cf. Pickering & Garrod, 2004)
3. Does more alignment lead to faster task performance?

Discussion and Conclusions
- We present:
  - A novel analysis for alignment, which considers the complete discourse, not just select primes and targets
  - Evidence from task-oriented discourse.

References: