

Talk 2

Bridging the gap between culture studies and computational linguistics

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Bridging the Gap between Culture Studies & Computational Linguistics



The situation



- Research Traineeship Program
 - Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences
 - Aim: increase collaboration, give students research experience
- Proposal written, submitted, approved
 - Funding for two student assistants (Iris Cuppen & Christoph Aurnhammer)
- Collaboration between two departments
 - Culture Studies
 - Cognitive Science and Artificial Intelligence



The research problem

Bridging the gap

... between close reading and distant reading

... between Computational Linguistics and Culture Studies

How to bridge the gap between close and distant reading?

1. Many approaches possible
2. Where to start?
3. Meaning of terminology and functionality
4. Compare computational and manual annotations



The solution

- Using manual annotation to evaluate and supplement an LDA topic modeling model
 - Group texts based on similarity (topic, (discourse) function, etc)
 - Divide project into two sub-projects with clear boundaries
 - Qualitative approach: manually annotate text
 - Quantitative approach: unsupervised learning approach
- Subreddit r/politics, thread: “Should the Democrats nominate a celebrity in 2020? What would be the pros and cons?” 449 responses (461 including deleted comments)
- Result: partial overlap between qualitative and quantitative annotation
 - Unclear exactly how to define topic, (discourse) function, etc

The collaboration experience

- Different views on
 - ... research approaches (qualitative versus quantitative)
 - ... meaning of close reading and distant reading
- How to get from general research idea to concrete RQs?

Dividing project helped with

- focus on specific tasks (with known methodologies)
- explaining terminology and concepts through examples
- collaboration through alignment of tasks
- understanding other research methodologies

Conclusions & recommendations

- “Forced” collaboration across research areas is interesting and leads to
 - new research (new/combined methodologies)
 - understanding of other methodologies
- Recognized difficulties
 - terminological differences between research fields
 - combining research methodologies
- Successful when all researchers
 - are open to collaboration (across research areas)
 - are willing to learn and step across research boundaries