

SemDial 2020

WatchDial



Proceedings of the 24th Workshop
On the Semantics and Pragmatics of
Dialogue

Held virtually at Brandeis University, Waltham,
Massachusetts

July 18-19 2020

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ISSN 2308-2275

Serial title: Proceedings (SemDial)

SemDial Workshop Series

<http://www.semdial.org/>

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Preface

This year WatchDial, hosted at Brandeis University in Waltham (known as "Watch City"), marked a first as the first virtual SemDial. Despite the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop went ahead with great success and high attendance, using Zoom conference software, in addition to Slack-based conversations and SpatialChat for virtual coffee breaks.

WatchDial, in tune with the SemDial workshop series as a whole, offers a unique cross section of dialogue research including experimental studies, corpus studies, and computational and formal models.

This year we received 23 full paper submissions, 21 of which were accepted after a peer-review process, during which each submission was reviewed by a panel of three experts. We note that the review scores for the accepted papers are entirely in line with prior years. The demo/breaking news session hosts 7 additional submissions that came in response to a call for demos and research in progress. All accepted full papers and demo/breaking news abstracts are included in this volume.

The WatchDial programme features three keynote presentations by Bonnie Webber of University of Edinburgh, by Craige Roberts of Ohio State and Rutgers University, and a joint presentation by Claire Bonial, Stephanie Lukin, and Clare Voss of the U.S. Army Research Laboratory. We thank them for participating in SemDial and are honoured to have them at the workshop. Abstracts of their contributions are also included in this volume.

WatchDial has received generous financial support from Brandeis University, specifically, the Linguistics program, the Computational Linguistics program, the Philosophy department, and the department of Computer Science. We have also been given an endorsement by the ACL Special Interest Group SigDial.

We would like to thank SemDial co-Presidents, Ellen Breitholtz and Julian Hough, for their guidance and support. We are grateful to Casey Kennington for his continuing stewardship on the challenge of making SemDial proceedings more indexable and to Chris Howes for her continuing archaeology of past proceedings. We would also like to extend our thanks to our Programme Committee members for their very detailed and helpful reviews.

We would also like to thank our local organizers at Brandeis University, including: administrative support from Julie Seeger, Justin Penney, and Michael Golitsyn; student organizers Fox Baudelaire, Dominique O'Donnell, Kenneth Lai, Alex Lu, Hayley Ross; tech support team lead Dimokritos Stamatakis, and tech support team member Angus L'Herrou; and webmaster Victoria Steger. We thank student moderators Che Qu, Lizzie Liang, Vicki Ng, and Luke Parker Gopnik. Thanks to everyone who helped with all aspects of the organization.

And last, but not least, a special thank you to the authors, whose contributions to science during a global pandemic are a remarkable achievement, and to the participants who attended live sessions and viewed the recordings from all around the globe. Without you, there would be no WatchDial.

Sophia Malamud, James Pustejovsky, and Jonathan Ginzburg

Waltham, MA

July 2020

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Table of Contents

Invited Talks

What does it mean to say a discourse relation is ‘implicit’?	2
<i>Bonnie Webber</i>	
Where to next? Situated Dialogue with Robots for Search and Navigation	4
<i>Claire Bonial, Stephanie Lukin, and Clare R. Voss</i>	
Perspective and Indexicality: A NeoLocalist approach	5
<i>Craige Roberts</i>	

Paper Presentations

Discourse Coherence, Reference Grounding and Goal Oriented Dialogue	7
<i>Baber Khalid, Malihe Alikhani, Michael Fellner, Brian McMahan and Matthew Stone</i>	
Investigating the Semantic Wave in Tutorial Dialogues: An Annotation Scheme and Corpus Study on Analogy Components	19
<i>Jorge Del-Bosque-Trevino, Julian Hough and Matthew Purver</i>	
Let’s do that first! A Comparative Analysis of Instruction-Giving in Human-Human and Human- Robot Situated Dialogue	31
<i>Matthew Marge, Felix Gervits, Gordon Briggs, Matthias Scheutz and Antonio Roque</i>	
Pro-Active Systems and Influenceable Users: Simulating Pro-Activity in Task-oriented Dialogues	41
<i>Vevake Balaraman and Bernardo Magnini</i>	
On Laughter and Forgetting and Reconversing: A Neurologically-Inspired Model of Conversa- tional Context	53
<i>Jonathan Ginzburg and Andy Lücking</i>	
Different Games in Dialogue: Combining Character and Conversational Types in Strategic Choice	63
<i>Alafate Abulimiti</i>	
An Outline of a Model of Situated Discourse Representation and Processing	71
<i>David Schlangen</i>	
Semantics with Feeling: Emotions for Abstract Embedding, Affect for Concrete Grounding	81
<i>Daniele Moro, Gerardo Caracas, David McNeill and Casey Kennington</i>	
Overcoming Distances – The Usage of Calling Contours to Initiate Dialogues	91
<i>Jakob Maché</i>	
Comparing Models of Speakers’ and Listeners’ Head Nods	103
<i>Tom Gurion, Patrick Healey and Julian Hough</i>	
Commitments in German Tag Questions: An Experimental Study	112
<i>Yulia Clausen and Tatjana Scheffler</i>	
The Contribution of Dialogue Act Labels for Convergence Studies in Natural Conversations . . .	128
<i>Simone Fuscone, Benoit Favre and Laurent Prévot</i>	

Towards the Score of Communication	136
<i>Andy Lücking and Jonathan Ginzburg</i>	
Classification of Low-Agreement Pronouns Through Collaborative Dialogue: A Proof of Concept	150
<i>Janosch Haber and Massimo Poesio</i>	
Communicable Reasons: How Children Learn Topoi Through Dialogue	160
<i>Ellen Breitholtz and Christine Howes</i>	
Extensions Are Indeterminate if Intensions Are Classifiers	170
<i>Staffan Larsson</i>	
There Is As Yet Insufficient Data for a Meaningful Answer	180
<i>Maria Boritchev and Maxime Amblard</i>	
Dialogue Informing Syntax/Semantics: The Case of Afterthoughts	195
<i>Stergios Chatzikyriakidis</i>	
Affordance Competition in Dialogue: The Case of Syntactic Universals	204
<i>Eleni Gregoromichelaki, Stergios Chatzikyriakidis, Arash Eshghi, Julian Hough, Christine Howes, Ruth Kempson, Jieun Kiaer, Matthew Purver, Mehrnoosh Sadrzadeh and Graham White</i>	
A Multi-level Framework for Understanding Spoken Dialogue Using Topic Detection	220
<i>Andrew Valenti, Ravenna Thielstrom, Michael Gold, Felix Gervits and Matthias Scheutz</i>	
How to Say Things with Hand Gestures	230
<i>Sandy Ciroux</i>	
 Demo and Breaking News Presentations	
Towards Situation- and User-Adaptive Voice Output: Classifying Driver Personality in Context	242
<i>Daniela Stier, Wolfgang Minker, Ulrich Heid</i>	
A Corpus of Swedish Conversations with a Librarian	245
<i>Magdalena Sandahl, Simon Dobnik, Mehdi Ghanimifard</i>	
Detecting Urgency in Speech with Personalised Acoustic Features	248
<i>Jakob Landesberger, Ute Ehrlich</i>	
Topic Modelling for a Virtual Librarian Assistant Tool	251
<i>Linnea Strand, Robert Rhys Thomas, Simon Dobnik, Mehdi Ghanimifard</i>	
A Statistical and Machine Learning Investigation into the Effect of Demographic Context on Dialogue Phenomena	255
<i>David Hopes, Julian Hough</i>	
LDM: A Linear Dialogue Manager	258
<i>Vladislav Maraev, Jean-Philippe Bernardy, Jonathan Ginzburg</i>	
From Answer to Question: Coherence Analysis with Rezonator	261
<i>John W. Du Bois, Terry DuBois, Georgio Klironomos, Brady Moore</i>	