

## [ReCOUNT] Reasons of the others: concession and counterargument in polylogues

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ReCOUNT is a collaborative corpus-based investigation of patterns of concession and counterargument (CO(u)N patterns) in argumentative polylogue, analyzing qualitatively and quantitatively a corpus of discussions of Generative AI and LLMs on social media platforms. By **counterargument** we mean, discourse moves involving the presentation of reasons against the acceptance of a target argument. By **CO(u)N patterns**, we mean tripartite patterns whose prototype can be found in dialogic interaction where a first participant presents an argument *P*, and the second follows with a ‘Yes, *P*’ but *Q*’, where *P* is a concessive representation of *P* and *Q* is a counterargument. The project bets on the hypothesis that the mapping of how polylogue participants polyphonically represent, incorporate and counter others’ reasons is key to describing, understanding and evaluating argument in polylogue and that doing so requires novel combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Challenges that the project addresses can be effectively illustrated by the following example from a **discussion of Artificial Intelligence on social media** of the kind we intend to draw our corpus from.

- (1) a. Post, Parmy Olson: *PSA about Google’s jaw-dropping video demo of Gemini - the one with the duck: It was not carried out in real time or in voice. The model was shown still images from video footage and human prompts narrated afterwards, per a spokesperson.*
- b. Comment, C1: *In time - it will happen. Once it has been shown that it works in principle, making it fast smooth effortless goes from science -> to engineering. [...] This demo shows us what’s possible. Beyond people’s wildest hopes few short years back, if I may say.*
- c. Comment, C2: *The demo may have been a little deceptive, but the barrier to pivot from text prompts to voice prompts and from still images to real-time video cannot be that high.*  
(Parmy Olson, business journalist, X.com post and comments, 7/12/2023)

In this example, business journalist Parmy Olson discusses the production of the demo of **Google’s Gemini** multi-modal AI model. While the post does not feature an explicit standpoint, its content and style suggest that it is intended to support the implicit conclusion that Gemini’s demo was deceptive. The comment by C1 provides a counterargument without explicit **concession**, which, however, presupposes that Gemini’s demo misrepresents technology’s current capabilities. The commenter build their argument through a series of dissociations (e.g. what works in principle vs. what actually runs smoothly) aimed not so much at countering the charge of deceptiveness, but rather at countering another more remote standing standpoint floating in the broader polylogue, possibly that AI capabilities are currently over-hyped and that we should lower our expectations. Commenter C2 explicitly concedes Olson’s probable immediate implicit standpoint: “the demo may have been a little deceptive”, but frames this conclusion as irrelevant with respect to the seemingly more relevant standing standpoint. Both posters make use of **prolepsis** in the quasi-narrative sense: they present future events as certain and use them as premise.

ReCOUNT’s exploration of CO(u)N patterns will be guided by three broad initial **research questions** that will be progressively refined during the course of the project: **RQ1** How do polylogue participants polyphonically represent others’ reasons that make up the Target of their Concession moves? **RQ2** How can the different inferential configurations of counterargument be reconstructed from actual discourse so that their intended and actual relevance to their Target is made clear? and **RQ3** What can the quantitative observation of the distribution of CO(u)N patterns reveal about the issues, positions, players and places in a polylogue at different levels of scale and granularity?

We bring together the Polish partner at the **Warsaw University of Technology** ([www.newethos.org](http://www.newethos.org)) with the track record in argumentation theory, philosophy of language and AI: Marcin Koszowy, Katarzyna Budzynska and Paweł Stacewicz; and the Swiss partner (lead) at the **Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano)** with the track record in linguistics, semiotics and rhetoric: Andrea Rocci. The network of our **International Cooperation** partners complements the ReCOUNT team’s expertise: Mark Aakhus (communication, Rutgers, US), Dawn Archer (linguistics, Manchester, UK), Fabrizio Macagno (philosophy, Lisbon, PT), Elena Musi (digital humanities, Liverpool, UK), Rudi Palmieri (media studies, Liverpool, UK) and Jean Wagemans (rhetoric, Amsterdam, NL).