
Negate to mitigate. A corpus-based discourse-structural approach to evaluative speech acts

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In this work we propose a **discourse-structural approach** to sentiment analysis, aimed at a classification of a number of expressive speech acts used by social nets reviewers in order to mitigate the negative import of their judgements ('mitigative-compensative' speech act). Specifically, a comparative analysis is proposed between Italian and Russian Tripadvisor reviews, concentrating on:

- (a) Structures in which the negative predicate is used as a compensative strategy to 'temper' the illocutionary force of the negative part of the utterance;
- (b) Negative cleft sentences of the '*it's not that p*' type, in which the proposition following the C head is negated to exclude commitment w.r.t. a specific aspect of the relevant negative evaluation;
- (c) Structural patterns in which the concessive clause is followed by an adversative sentence;
- (d) Use of epistemic and evidential markers (e.g. raising verbs or impersonal constructions);
- (e) Use of approximators to reduce the referential force of words with a negative polarity (e.g., It. *mezzo*, lit. 'half', Rus. *tipa* 'kind of').

The combination of a corpus-based methodology with a **corpus-driven approach** is shown to be extremely advantageous, since it permits to study structures within their context and identify mixed strategies. This **discourse-structural perspective** is proposed as an **advanced method**, opening novel synergies between linguists and computational experts in the automatic extraction of deliberative contexts from corpora.

References: Collomb A. et al. (2014). A Study and Comparison of Sentiment Analysis Methods for Reputation Evaluation. *Rapport de recherche RR-LIRIS-2014*. • Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. 2005. *Le discours en interaction*. Paris, A. Colin. • Mittal N. et al. (2013). Discourse Based Sentiment Analysis for Hindi Reviews, in Maji P., Roy S., Kundu M.K. (eds.), *Pattern Recognition and Machine Intelligence*, 720-725, Springer, New York.