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The first GEMS (Geometrical Models of Natural Language Semantics) Workshop has been held jointly with EACL 2009, in Athens on March 31, 2009. GEMS was a full day workshop focusing on distributional and algebraic models of lexical semantics, and covering related issues such as mathematical methods for vector space modeling of linguistic inferences, lexical disambiguation, selectional preference induction and paraphrase assessment. The workshop was a success, given that it was at its first edition with about 60 participants attending the event, mostly from U.S. and Europe. A total of 21 submissions were received, including short and long papers; of these, the program committee selected 11 papers for a full presentation, and 4 for short ones. The program, featuring all 15 oral presentations, was complemented by the invited talk “Lexical Semantics in the Prime Time: Applications to Web Search” by Patrick Pantel from Yahoo! Inc.

The papers presented at the Workshop are representative of the current state of the art in the area of semantic spaces and distributional semantics: (1) cutting edge research on geometric methods and machine learning, such as tensor factorization, kernel methods and Dirichlet process mixture models; (2) applications of semantic space models to NLP tasks, such as Textual Entailment Recognition, Ontology Learning, Induction of Selectional Preferences, Verb Classification and Machine Translation; (3) novel uses of distributional methods for advanced linguistic studies, such as lexical variation and evolution.

The workshop was closed by a lively panel discussion: the nice atmosphere created by the attitude of all participants made the panel particularly enjoyable, animated by Sebastian Pado, Patrick Pantel and Alessandro Lenci. Several interesting cutting-edge issues were raised, such as the need of comparative analysis across different types of semantic spaces, and the study of the large number of variants of the notion of geometric modeling that have been presented at the workshop. Besides their inherent cognitive appealing, these exhibit impressive potentials in terms of scale and accuracy reachable for applications to different semantic problems.

For those who weren’t there: all papers of EACL-GEMS 2009 can be downloaded in PDF format from the ACL anthology website. The significant interest raised by the workshop has also pushed the organizers to propose a special issue to the Cambridge University Press Journal of Natural Language Engineering on ”Distributional Models of Lexical Semantics”. The proposal has been accepted and the call for papers will close on June 30, 2009 while the publication of the Special Issues is expected for May-July 2010.

Roberto Basili, Marco Pennacchiotti

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**Shared Task: GIVE–2**

Following up on the success of the GIVE-1 shared task last year, the Second Challenge on Generating Instructions in Virtual Environments, GIVE-2, has now started. The GIVE Challenges are shared tasks for NLG systems which generate real-time natural-language instructions in virtual 3D environments, and are evaluated with human users over the Internet. This makes them a great testbed for experimenting with computational semantics and pragmatics in a situated setting.

The main novelty in GIVE-2 is that users can move and turn freely in the virtual world, rather than in discrete steps as in GIVE-1. This makes the instruction-giving task harder: For instance, what does “turn left” mean now? The challenge has started in August, but new participants are still welcome to join. The systems will be evaluated starting in February 2010, and the results presented at the INLG workshop in July 2010.

If you are interested, please visit the homepage of GIVE-2 and sign up! (Alexander Koller)
A new association, IAOA

The International Association for Ontology and its Applications (IAOA), was founded in April 2009, and is a non-profit, open association. Its purpose is promoting interdisciplinary research and international collaboration at the intersection of philosophical ontology, linguistics, logic, cognitive science, and computer science, as well as in the applications of ontological analysis to conceptual modeling, knowledge engineering, knowledge management, information-systems development, library and information science, scientific research and semantic technologies in general. IAOA is open to all individuals and institutions who share its goals. For the statute, list of activities, membership, mailing list and other information, please visit http://www.iaoa.org. (Paul Buitelaar)

Shared Task: VP Ellipsis Processing

SemEval-2010 will feature a shared task on VP ellipsis processing, consisting of two subtasks: (1) automatically detecting VPE in free text; and (2) selecting the textual antecedent of each found VPE. The development data for this task has just been released and comprises nearly 500 occurrences of manually annotated VPE in the Wall Street Journal part (all 25 sections) of the Penn Treebank. More information on the task can be found at the SIGSEM webpage. (Johan Bos, Jennifer Spenader)

New Journal: D&D

We are happy to announce the launch of a new international journal, Dialogue and Discourse, reflecting the surge of interest in the analysis of language ‘beyond the single sentence’, in discourse (i.e., text, monologue) and dialogue, from a formal, computational, or experimental perspective, as reflected in the wide range of work presented at the SEMDIAL and SIGDIAL conferences and various other forums. Dialogue and Discourse will be the first journal devoted to a wide dissemination of such work. Our aim is to publish the best research in the area of dialogue and discourse in a timely fashion (we are committed to achieving a mean time between submission and decision of 3 months) open to interested readers everywhere (open access, online). We are part of the ejournal initiative of the Linguistic Society of America. Articles will be published online as soon as they have been accepted. Each year, a (hardcopy) volume, collecting all articles of the year will be published by CSLI Publications.

As with any journal, the two most important resources are its contributors and its readers. The journal is open for submissions and we urge you to consider submitting your work on any topic relevant to Dialogue and Discourse. Our first articles should start appearing within the next two months. (Raquel Fernandez)

ISA-5, Interoperable Semantic Annotation

The fifth joint ISO-ACL/SIGSEM Workshop on Interoperable Semantic Annotation ISA-5 will be held in Hong Kong in January 15–17, 2010. This workshop aims to bring together experts from ongoing and recent projects concerned with the annotation or representation of linguistic and multimodal semantic information, as well as its relation to the analysis, interpretation and generation of text, speech, and multimodal communicative behaviour. The main focus of the workshop will be on approaches, experiences, experiments, problems, and proposals concerning the construction or application of interoperable semantically annotated linguistic resources. Two types of papers can be submitted: long papers (max 8 pages, submission deadline Nov 5) and short papers (max 4 pages, submission by Nov 15). All submissions should be in the ACL format and should be submitted via the ICGL 2010 website. (Harry Bunt)