

## Preface

If numbers are anything to go by, then 1998 must have been a good year for Computational Linguistics in the Netherlands and Flanders, for the ninth instalment of the annual CLIN conference, which was held at the Centre for Computational Linguistics of the Leuven University (December 11, 1998), featured a record number of 40 presentations. They showed the same diversity of topics and approaches as the previous instalments, but could nonetheless be grouped quite naturally under four headings: statistical methods, syntax and semantics, applications, and a more heterogeneous class comprising phonetics, formalisms and software architecture. Topping the programme was the invited lecture by Erhard Hinrichs (Tübingen) on *ConTroll: A grammar development platform for HPSG grammars and its application to an HPSG fragment of German*.

The call for papers which was issued at the conference resulted in another CLIN record: instead of the usual twelve to fifteen papers we received no less than 24 contributions. While nice in itself, this left us with the arduous task of making a selection. For their generous help in this enterprise we would like to thank all of the reviewers: Geert Adriaens (Leuven), Rieks op den Akker (Twente), Gerrit Bloothoofd (Utrecht), Rens Bod (Amsterdam), Gosse Bouma (Groningen), Harry Bunt (Tilburg), Peter-Arno Coppen (Nijmegen), Crit Cremers (Leiden), Walter Daelemans (Antwerpen), Jan van Eijck (Amsterdam), Dafydd Gibbon (Bielefeld), Steven Gillis (Antwerpen), Hans van Halteren (Nijmegen), Franciska de Jong (Twente), Danny Kersten (Eindhoven), Jan Landsbergen (Utrecht), Jean-Pierre Martens (Gent), Paola Monachesi (Utrecht), Michael Moortgat (Utrecht), John Nerbonne (Groningen), Gertjan van Noord (Groningen), Anton Nijholt (Twente) and Jan Odijk (Ieper).

Fourteen papers survived this peer reviewing and were subsequently prepared for publication. In terms of topics they turned out to be classifiable in terms of the same tripartition as last year: statistical methods, syntax/semantics and applications.

The section on statistical methods is the largest one with six papers. Two of them concentrate on spoken language, more specifically on phonotactic properties (Kleiweg & Nerbonne and Stoianov & Nerbonne). The other four are of a general methodological nature; they concern style adaptation of statistical language models (Van Uytsel, Wambacq & Van Compernelle), memory-based word sense disambiguation (Veenstra, van den Bosch, Buchholz, Daelemans & Zavrel), instance families in memory-based language learning (Van den Bosch), and the arbitrariness of lexical categories (Durieux, Daelemans & Gillis).

The section on syntax and semantics consists of five papers. Three of them adopt the framework of Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar and employ it for formal analyses of Polish clitics (Kupść), null-headed nominals in German and English (Nerbonne & Mullen) and words-without-content or figure heads (Van Eynde); the other two report on work in connection with the Amazon grammar, more specifically the last part of the middle field in Dutch (Van Dreumel) and

parenthetical reporting clauses (Schelfhout).

The section on applications is the smallest one with three papers. One shows how NLP tools can be used for the development of a course on computational linguistics (Bouma). Another one discusses the use of NLP techniques in document processing (van der Eijk & Janssen). The last one concerns the evaluation of the NLP components of the OVIS2 spoken dialogue system (Veldhuijzen van Zanten, Bouma, Sima'an, van Noord & Bonnema); since it extensively compares the pros and cons of statistical and grammar-based methods, it provides a nice wrap-up of the volume as a whole.

Like our predecessors, who organized the previous CLIN conference in Nijmegen (December 1997), we thought it worthwhile to try to publish the resulting volume in the framework of a well-established series of a professional publisher rather than as an in-house publication. Our initial fear for the delays which this might cause soon turned out to be entirely unnecessary; on the contrary, the interaction with the series editors and the publisher's staff went so smoothly that we would like to thank them explicitly for their support and encouragement.

A special word of thanks should also go to the two sponsors of the CLIN conference in Leuven, i.e. the research network *Computational Linguistics in Flanders* (CLIF), and the Department of Linguistics of the Leuven University.

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*Information on past and future instalments of the CLIN conference can be found at <http://odur.let.rug.nl/vannoord/clin/clin.html>.*