NOTA DEI CURATORI

EVALITA 2007: VALUTAZIONE DI STRUMENTI DI NLP PER L'ITALIANO

EVALITA 2007: EVALUATING NATURAL LANGUAGE TOOLS FOR ITALIAN

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EVALITA is an initiative aiming at the evaluation of Natural Language Processing tools for Italian. The objective is to promote the development of language technologies for the Italian language, providing a shared framework where different systems and approaches can be evaluated in a consistent manner. At the first edition of EVALITA we invited participation, both from academic institutions and industrial organizations, in five tasks, all for Italian:

o Part of Speech Tagging (organized by Univ. of Bologna)
o Parsing (organized by Univ. of Torino)
o Word Sense Disambiguation (organized by CNR-ILC, Pisa)
o Temporal Expression Recognition and Normalization (organized by CELCT, Trento)
o Named Entity Recognition (organized by FKB-irst, Trento)

As with other international evaluation campaigns, participants have been provided with training data and had the chance to test their systems with the evaluation metrics and procedures to be used in the formal evaluation.

We received 55 expressions of interest for the five tasks. In the end, the number of participants was 30, with the following distribution: Part of Speech tagging (11), Parsing (8), Word Sense Disambiguation (1), Temporal Expressions (4), Named Entity Recognition (6). Overall, 21 different organizations participated in EVALITA 2007, out of which 8 were not Italian, and 2 were non-academic.

We believe that the diffusion of shared tasks and shared evaluation practices is a crucial step towards the development of resources and tools for Natural Language Processing. The good response obtained by EVALITA, both in the number of participants and in the quality of results, showed that it is worth pursuing such goals for the Italian language. As a side effect of the evaluation campaign, both training and test data will be made available to the scientific community as benchmarks for future improvements.

We would like to thank all the people and the institutions involved in the organization of the EVALITA tasks. In fact, all effort was fully voluntary, based on the enthusiasm and competence of the persons who organized each task. Special thanks to Manuela Speranza, who took care of most of the managing work. We are also grateful to Maria Teresa Pazienza, coordinator of the interest group of the AI*IA, who encouraged this initiative from its beginning.

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