Preface

This volume contains the papers accepted for presentation at the EACL 2009 Workshop on Cognitive Aspects of Computational Language Acquisition, held in Athens, Greece on the 31st of March, 2009. This workshop is the second of a series which was initiated during ACL 2007, held in Prague. The first edition of the workshop was organised by Anna Korhonen, Paula Buttery and Aline Villavicencio.

The past decades have seen a massive expansion in the application of statistical and machine learning methods to natural language processing (NLP). This work has yielded impressive results in numerous speech and language processing tasks including speech recognition, morphological analysis, parsing, lexical acquisition, semantic interpretation, and dialogue management. Advances in these areas are generally viewed as engineering achievements, but recently researchers have begun to investigate the relevance of computational learning techniques to research on human language acquisition. These investigations have double significance since an improved understanding of human language acquisition will not only benefit cognitive sciences in general, but may also feed back to the NLP community, placing researchers in a better position to develop new language models and/or techniques.

Success in this type of research requires close collaboration between NLP and cognitive scientists. The aim of this workshop is thus to bring together researchers from the diverse fields of NLP, machine learning, artificial intelligence, linguistics, psycho-linguistics, etc. who are interested in the relevance of computational techniques for understanding human language learning. The workshop is intended to bridge the gap between the computational and cognitive communities, promote knowledge and resource sharing, and help initiate interdisciplinary research projects.

In the call for papers we solicited papers describing cognitive aspects of computational language acquisition. The programme committee has selected 7 papers for publication that are representative of the state-of-the-art in this interdisciplinary area. Each full-length submission was independently reviewed by three members of the program committee, who then collectively faced the difficult task of selecting a subset of papers for publication from a very strong field.

We would like to thank our two invited speakers, Massimo Poesio and Robert Berwick, all the authors who submitted papers, as well as the members of the programme committee for the time and effort they contributed in reviewing the papers. Our thanks go also to the organisers of the main conference, the publication chairs, and the conference workshop committee headed by Miriam Butt and Stephen Clark.

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