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Resource Management Agency

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(Afrikaanse teks volg op Engels)

Giant technological leap for official South African languages

South Africa now boasts its very own Resource Management Agency (RMA) for the management and distribution of reusable digital text and speech resources for all of the country's official languages. These resources are crucial for research and development in the domain of human language technologies (HLT) for application to local languages.

Examples of HLT applications are

- automated telephone information systems,
- GPS systems,
- spelling and grammar checkers,
- machine translation systems that function in various South African languages, etc.

These types of applications are increasingly being used on mobile devices, giving South Africans unprecedented access to information and services in local languages.

The Department of Arts and Culture's National Centre for Human Language Technologies is funding this exciting initiative, which is in line with similar global initiatives. The Centre for Text Technology (CTeXT®) of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) has been appointed to establish the RMA, and to distribute reusable text and speech resources from this one central point.

Prof Justus Roux of the North-West University offers the following regarding the RMA: "South Africa and India are the only countries in the world that have a specific strategy for developing language technologies intended to facilitate communication between language groups in their respective societies. The founding of the RMA is the realisation of a long-awaited ideal of academics, language practitioners and developers alike to empower local languages for use in modern communication systems."

According to Ms Ulrike Janke, Director of Human Language Technologies at the department, "The Department of Arts and Culture has invested significantly in HLT over the last decade in an effort to stimulate activity and promote advances that may benefit our marginalised languages. Were it not for our implementation agencies, however, the return on investment would not have been so impressive. They are passionate about HLT and its potential and therefore continue to do their best to help us succeed in our strategy. We are thankful for productive partnerships such as this one with the North-West University."

Broad categories of data relevant to the RMA include text, speech, language-related video, multimodal resources (such as sign language), as well as pathological and forensic language data. Visit www.rma.nwu.ac.za for more information.

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Reuse tegnologiese sprong vir amptelike Suid-Afrikaanse tale

Suid-Afrika spog nou met sy eie Hulpbronbestuursagentskap (HBA) vir die bestuur en verspreiding van herbruikbare digitale teks- en spraakhulpbronne vir al die amptelike tale. Hierdie hulpbronne is van kardinale belang vir navorsing en ontwikkeling in die domein van taaltegnologie (TT) vir toepassing op plaaslike tale.

Voorbeelde van TT-toepassing is, o.a

- geoutomatiseerde telefooninligtingstelsels,
- GPS-stelsels,
- spel- en grammatikatoetsers, en
- masjienvertaalstelsels wat in verskeie Suid-Afrikaanse tale funksioneer.

Hierdie toepassings word toenemend in mobiele toestelle gebruik, en dit bied aan Suid-Afrikaners ongekende toegang tot inligting en dienste in plaaslike tale.

Die Departement van Kuns en Kultuur se Nasionale Sentrum vir Mensetaaltegnologie befonds hierdie opwindende inisiatief, wat in lyn is met soortgelyke inisiatiewe elders ter wêreld. Die Sentrum vir Tekstegnologie (CTexT®) van die Noordwes-Universiteit (Potchefstroomkampus) is aangewys om die HBA tot stand te bring, en om herbruikbare teks- en spraakhulpbronne vanaf één sentrale punt te versprei.

Prof Justus Roux van die Noordwes-Universiteit deel die volgende mee aangaande die HBA: “Suid-Afrika en Indië is die enigste lande in die wêreld wat ’n spesifieke strategie het vir die ontwikkeling van taaltegnologieë wat daarop gemik is om kommunikasie tussen taalgroepe in hul onderskeie samelewings te fasiliteer. Die stigting van die HBA is die verwesenliking van ’n langverwagte ideaal van akademië, taalpraktisyne en -ontwikkelaars om plaaslike tale te bemagtig vir gebruik in moderne kommunikasiestelsels.”

Me Ulrike Janke, Direkteur van Mensetaaltegnologieë by die departement: “Die Departement van Kuns en Kultuur het in die laaste dekade heelwat in MTT geïnvesteer in ’n poging om aktiviteit te stimuleer en vordering teweeg te bring wat ons gemarginaliseerde tale tot voordeel kan strek. Maar as dit nie vir ons implementeringsagentskappe was nie, sou die beleggingsopbrengt bepaald nie so indrukwekkend gewees het nie. Hulle is passievol oor MTT en doen hul uiterste bes om die sukses van ons strategie te help verseker. Ons is dankbaar vir produktiewe vennootskappe soos dié een met die Noordwes-Universiteit.”

Breë kategorieë van data m.b.t. die HBA sluit in teks, spraak, taalverwante video, multimodale hulpbronne (soos gebaretaal), sowel as patologiese en forensiese taaldata. Besoek www.rma.nwu.ac.za vir verdere inligting.

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