TillTal

Accessible Cultural Heritage for Speech Research

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TillTal

• New project (proposed and funded 2016; starts 2017)
• Funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond
  • One of Sweden’s largest funding agencies for the humanities
  • ~ 1 MEUR over 3 years
• Involves researchers from several disciplines, e.g. spoken language & conversation; linguistics & phonetics; human-machine interaction; anthropology; speech technology...
• Collaboration between 3 SWE-CLARIN members
The SWE-CLARIN working group for speech

- Informal special interest group for speech
  - Currently 3 members

- KTH Speech, Music & Hearing (KTH; CLARIN-SPEECH K-centre):
  - Research: Spoken language; spoken human(-human/machine) interaction
  - Research: Speech technology

- The Institute for Language and Folklore (ISOF)
  - Research: anthropology; linguistics
  - Research: archives, methodology
  - Archives: e.g. 13000 h of speech

- The Swedish National Archives (DIGISAM)
  - Digitalization, information, collaboration
  - (Huge) archive
Background I: “found speech”

• 2015 survey (by KTH, on behalf of the the government and the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority):
  • Vast quantities of speech data, but
  • intellectual property ownership,
  • privacy and integrity, and
  • legal issues relating to the (often unknown) content of the recordings, so:
    • virtually none of it is used in research (of any kind).

• Interspeech
  • 2015: few papers on “found speech”
  • 2016: about a dozen papers
Background: CLARIN, speech and SSH

- Active effort to find and start new speech technology+SSH projects
- Swe-Clarins and the spoken language I – Research collaborations between resource holders, speech technologists, and researchers within the human and social sciences (2015)
- Triplet brain storming
  - Through a SSH researcher, a data holder and a speech technologist together
  - Task: come up with project focussing on the SSH researcher’s research, using the data holder’s data and the speech technologist’s skills
- Successful: TillTal first to materialize.
Opportunity calls!

• Riksbankens jubileumsfond
  • Funds humanities research
  • Early 2016: a second call over “Research and the collections”
  • Claims of low quality in the first call 😊

• Speech research + speech collections:
  • A perfect fit!

• Just add SSH research.
Project outline

• Top-level objective: evaluate the use of modern speech technology methods to access large “found” speech data
  • Quantify errors
  • Develop tweaks (and possibly some new methods)
• Test cases: 3 full-scale, research projects from different SSH disciplines
  • Avoid home-grown potential usage and go for real research projects!
  • Sacrifice generic solutions to avoid “nail syndrome” (thank’s Sally!)
  • Spend out on custom-designed solutions that can be evaluated, quantified and verified on their specific task: gain validity.
(1) From stories to cultural heritage

- Investigates a collection created by Karl Gösta Gilstring (1915-1986),
  - consisting of 8000 original letters,
  - and 250 hours of recorded speech (mainly interviews made by Gillstring).
  - (Largest Nordic collection by a single researcher in modern time.)
- Original SSH research.
- Also: will act as a use case for speech technology methods that provide new entry points to the speech data and relate these to the texts.
(2) Linguistic variation in time and space

• Investigates linguistic variation and change in speech materials.
• Currently often captured by painstaking annotation, e.g.
  • all occurrences of a specific vowel.
• Will test and evaluate different methods of finding these occurrences automatically.
  • Allows for larger data sets by orders of magnitude.
  • Frees up the researchers’ labelling time for other, more challenging pursuits.
(3) Interaction patterns over time and type of conversation

• Relation between different contributions to the flow of conversation:
  • Who speaks when?
  • How are the speaker changes managed?
  • How is common ground achieved?
  • How are attitudes towards the spoken signalled?

• Interaction models based on chronograms – simple diagrams showing segments of speech and silence over time – have proven a successful approach to study these kind of questions.

• Generally, these models are built automatically, but how well the methods used work on archive data is unknown.
Thank you!

Questions? (Several of us are here!)