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Word Play

Lauri Karttunen

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This article is a perspective on some important developments in semantics and in computational linguistics over the past forty years. It reviews two lines of research that lie at opposite ends of the field: semantics and morphology. The semantic part deals with issues from the 1970s such as discourse referents, implicative verbs, presuppositions, and questions. The second part presents a brief history of the application of finite-state transducers to linguistic analysis starting with the advent of two-level morphology in the early 1980s and culminating in successful commercial applications in the 1990s. It offers some commentary on the relationship, or the lack thereof, between computational and paper-and-pencil linguistics. The final section returns to the

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semantic issues and their application to currently popular tasks such as textual inference and question answering.

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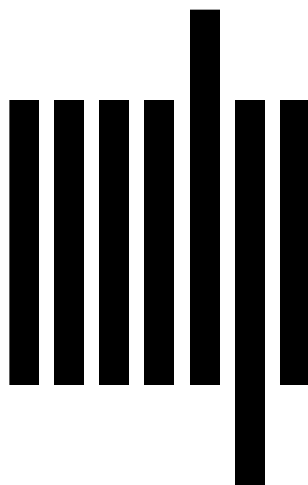
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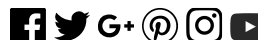
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