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The Syntax and Semantics of Prepositions in the Task of Automatic Interpretation of Nominal Phrases and Compounds: A Cross-Linguistic Study

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In this article we explore the syntactic and semantic properties of prepositions in the context of the semantic interpretation of nominal phrases and compounds. We investigate the problem based on cross-linguistic evidence from a set of six languages: English, Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, and Romanian. The focus on English and Romance languages is well motivated. Most of the time, English nominal phrases and compounds translate into constructions of the form N P N in Romance languages, where the P (preposition) may vary in ways that correlate with the semantics. Thus, we present empirical observations on the distribution of nominal phrases and compounds and the distribution of their meanings on two different corpora, based on two state-of-the-art classification tag sets: Lauer's set of eight prepositions and our list of 22 semantic relations. A mapping between the two tag sets is also provided. Furthermore, given a training set of English nominal phrases and compounds along with their translations in the five Romance languages, our algorithm automatically learns classification rules and applies them to unseen test instances for semantic interpretation. Experimental results are compared against two state-of-the-art models reported in the literature.


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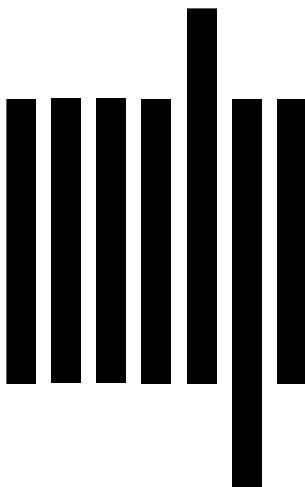
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