

The historical roots of language technology

The linghist consortium

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Introduction

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Language technology and computational linguistics are young fields which we normally think of as dating back to perhaps the 1960's at the earliest. Yet they build on more than two thousand years of thought about the nature of language. For example, parts of speech which we use in modern taggers and notions of logical inference which are important for theorem proving both have their origins in the works of classical antiquity. Here we try to trace the development of some of these ideas and highlight their relationship to modern work. We present the ideas thematically, tracing the development of the ideas rather than, as normally seems to be the case in books on the history of linguistics, presenting linguistic ideas in terms of historical periods. Thus we will have a chapter on the development of logic and another on the development of syntactic analysis and so on.

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