Proposal for an ESCA Special Interest Group on Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages

1 Aims

The Special Interest Group on Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages will have the overall aim of promoting research and development in the field of speech and language technology for the lesser-used languages of the world. To this end, it will have the following objectives:

- Promoting conferences and workshops;
- Promoting electronic discussion through the Internet (Web site, discussion list, etc);
- Maintaining a database of active researchers together with their language of interest;
- Providing a channel of communication between minority language researchers and those active in speech and language technology in general.

2 Case for support

By definition, a minority language has a smaller resource base than the major languages. For some minority languages (those that are fighting for survival), there are not sufficient resources to support research and development in speech and language technology. This means that, in time, the language will fall even further behind the major languages and will be viewed as second-class and pre-technological, since all interaction with computers will need to take place in a major language. This is a critical factor in the survival of some languages. If minority languages die, then a valuable part of the world's cultural diversity will have been lost.

Therefore support is necessary for research in speech and language technology for minority languages. It is probable that advances can be made by acting together that could not be made by any one language acting alone. In the case of certain minority languages, the state Government is not particularly sympathetic to their existence, and support must be found from outside or private agencies.

To begin with, all that can be achieved is the sharing of information and the forming of a network of researchers. But it is hoped that this networking will form the seed-bed out of which will grow more substantial projects. The adoption of common standards and procedures (as proposed by the EAGLES project) will help to minimise costs and workload in research, and this can be promoted through a SIG network of the kind proposed.

3 Programme for the first year

During its first year of existence, the first priority of the SIG will be to disseminate information of its existence, and thereby to gain new members. At the moment, the majority of "interested parties" are from Spain, the UK and other European countries. This is due to the fact that the initiative for this SIG was taken at a satellite workshop of the LREC conference at Granada, Spain. The aim will be to expand the membership to cover the remainder of the world, and to prepare and disseminate appropriate publicity materials. This will include a website and an Internet mailing list, but also paper-based publicity. In addition, it is hoped to lay the foundations for a second workshop to be held in the near future.

4 Provisional Committee

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5 Interested persons

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Constitution of the ESCA Special Interest Group on Speech and language Technology for Minority Languages

1 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the European Speech Communication Association (ESCA) Special Interest Group on Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages (the SIG) shall be:

- To promote interest in Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages;
- To provide members of ESCA with a special interest in Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages with a means of exchanging news of recent research developments and other matters of interest in Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages;
- To sponsor meetings and workshops in Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages that appear to be timely and worthwile, operating within the framework of ESCA's by-laws for SIGs;
- To provide and make available resources relevant to Speech and Language Technology for Minority Languages, including text and speech corpora, analysis tools, analysis and generation software, research papers and generated data.

2 Elected Officers

The elected officers of the SIG shall consist of a Chairperson, Secretary, and Publicity Officer. The Chairperson, Secretary, and Publicity Officer shall be members in good standing of ESCA.

The term of all elected officers of the SIG shall be two years. They can be re-elected but consecutive appointments are limited to four successive terms.

The duties of the **Chairperson** shall be:

- to have primary executive authority over actions and activities of the SIG;
- to prepare an annual written report on the activities of the SIG for the ESCA Board before July 1st of each year;
- to designate a Liaison Representative for the SIG (which may be himself/herself).

The duties of the **Secretary** shall be:

- to maintain a membership list of the SIG;
- to be responsible for any funds awarded to the SIG by the ESCA Board;
- to collect and manage any dues that may be required by the organization;
- to present a written annual report on the SIG finances to the ESCA Board.

The duties of the **Publicity Officer** shall be:

- to disseminate information about the activities of the SIG (including conference announcements, etc) in both electronic and paper channels,
- to maintain a Web site.

The duties of the **Liaison Representative** shall be:

- to take primary responsibility for communication with members of the SIG,
- to answer enquiries about the SIG,
- to communicate with the ESCA Board.

3 Election of Officers

All officers of the SIG shall be elected by a vote of the membership. The vote shall take place at least 2 months before the expiration of the terms of the officers to be elected, with at least 4 weeks notice of nominations to SIG members.

In the event of a casual vacancy, an extraordinary election shall be held for an officer to complete the current term of office. Candidates must be nominated by two members, must accept nomination, and must be members in good standing of ESCA. Votes may be entered by electronic or physical mail, and votes arriving by the notified closing date will be counted by a returning officer appointed by the Chairperson and agreed to by all candidates. Nominations shall be called at least three months prior to the election, and shall close two months prior to the election. All members shall be notified of the election date and the nominations at least four weeks prior to the close of voting, and results shall be notified to the members within four weeks of the close of voting.

Notification shall signify dispatch of mail by the medium and to the address last notified to the secretary.

4 Dues

Subject to the approval of the ESCA Board the SIG may levy annual membership dues, where the rate is determined by the Chairperson and Secretary.

5 Referenda

A change to this constitution, or a motion on any other matter, may be initiated by five members (petitioners) in writing or by agreement of the Chairperson, and Secretary (on the suggestion of a member or otherwise). The motions will be put to the members within six months of receipt of a petition, if the petitioners so request. Otherwise, constitutional amendments and other motions will be put to the vote in conjunction with the regular elections.

Members will be given notification at least three months in advance of any referendum, and further motions or amendments proposed by two members shall be accepted up to two months before the close of voting. Votes may be entered by electronic or physical mail, and votes arriving by the notified closing date will be counted by a returning officer appointed by the Chairperson and agreed to by all petitioners. All members shall be notified of the date of the referendum and the proposed motions and amendments at least four weeks prior to the close of voting, and results shall be notified to the members within four weeks of the close of voting.

Any change to this constitution requires a two-thirds majority of those eligible to vote and is subject to approval by the ESCA Board. Any other matter requires a simple majority of those actually voting.

Notification shall signify dispatch of mail by the medium and to the address last notified to the secretary.

6 Resource Management

In providing and making available any resources as defined in Clause I, and especially any held and distributed electronically, the SIG shall follow proper procedures with respect to matters like copyright, registration and data protection as is appropriate to each case. Furthermore, where the SIG may be deemed the proprietor of a resource, as the SIG is a subordinate body of ESCA it is understood that ESCA is ultimate proprietor and therefore other members of ESCA who are not members of the SIG may have access to the SIG's resources and the ESCA Board may itself make available such resources even to non-members. The SIG shall not enter into any formal or potentially legally binding contracts without the approval of the ESCA Board (or the ESCA Treasurer acting under delegated powers). The SIG shall not enter into any financial commitments for such resources without ensuring that the monies required are available.