The Blizzard Challenge 2015

Evaluating corpus-based speech synthesis on common databases

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In order to better understand and compare research techniques in building corpus-based speech synthesizers on the same data, the annual Blizzard Challenges 2005-2014 were held. We are now pleased to call for participation in the eleventh challenge: Blizzard Challenge 2015. The basic challenge is to take the released speech data, build synthetic voices, and synthesize a prescribed set of test sentences. The output from each synthesizer is then evaluated through extensive listening tests. The following is an outline description of the challenge – for full details and the rules of participation, please see the web pages.

- **Main tasks: Indian Languages** - About 4 hours of speech data in each of three Indian languages (Hindi, Tamil and Telugu), and about 2 hours of speech data in each of other three Indian languages (Marathi, Bengali and Malayalam) recorded by native professional speakers in high quality studio environments. Text is provided in UTF-8 format. No other information, such as segment labels, is provided. These speech databases are provided by the group of institutions: IIT-Madras, IIIT-Hyderabad, SSNCE, CDAC Trivandrum, CDAC Mumbai, CDAC Kolkata.
  - *Hub Task 2015-IH1* – Build one voice in each language from the provided data.
  - *Spoke Task 2015-IH2* – Synthesize multilingual sentences involving one Indian Language and English.

- **Pilot task: English** – Around 2 hours of speech data from professionally-produced children's audiobooks will be released. This is the pilot data for the main Blizzard Challenge tasks of 2016 and 2017. There is only one task in this pilot phase, and no formal evaluation will be conducted. Participants will simply demonstrate their systems at the 2015 workshop.
  - *Pilot Task 2015-EH1* – Build a voice from the provided data.

Blizzard Workshop: The systems will be presented by the participants at the Blizzard Challenge 2015 workshop, which will be held in Germany as a satellite of Interspeech 2015.

Website: http://www.synsig.org/index.php/Blizzard_Challenge_2015

Registration: Interested parties should register as soon as possible, by mailing blizzard@festvox.org. They should identify a contact person in their team, and provide email and postal addresses. They should indicate which task(s) they expect to participate in. A registration fee is payable for each system submitted for evaluation – details can be found on the website.

Licenses: The license for the released data can be found via the Blizzard website. Data will be released to each participant once the appropriate license has been agreed to.

Mailing list: It is essential to join the blizzard-discuss mailing list, which is used to send important information to participants. Instructions are on the Blizzard website.

Provisional timeline:

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Feb        2015  -  databases released
Apr 21     2015  -  test sentences released to participants
Apr 28     2015  -  participants submit synthetic speech (by midnight PDT)
May        2015  -  evaluation systems go live
Jun 30     2015  -  end of evaluation period
Jul 15     2015  -  release of results
Aug  1     2015  -  deadline to submit workshop papers
Aug 7      2015  -  notification of acceptance
Sep 6      2015  -  Interspeech 2015, Germany
Sep 11     2015  -  Blizzard Challenge workshop, Germany
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Further Information: For further information please contact blizzard@festvox.org. A description of the challenge was published at Interspeech 2005: http://www.festvox.org/blizzard/bc2005/ IS051946.PDF 1