
The Blizzard Challenge 2010

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 2005–2009 were held. We are now pleased to make this preliminary announcement of the sixth challenge: Blizzard Challenge 2010.

The basic challenge is to take the released speech data, build synthetic voices, and synthesize a prescribed set of test sentences. The sentences from each synthesizer are then evaluated through extensive listening tests. The 2010 Challenge will use a similar a hub and spoke design to the 2009 Challenge. The tasks for 2010 are provisionally as follows:

- British English:
 - Hub task EH1: 5 hour (4000 utterance) ‘rjs’ database (male professional speaker, RP accent) kindly supplied by Phonetic Arts and available at 16kHz and 48kHz sampling rates, along with standard Festival labels produced by the University of Edinburgh
 - Hub task EH2: 1 hour (1000 utterance) subset of the ‘Roger’ database (male speaker, RP accent, ARCTIC sentences, same as in 2009) from the University of Edinburgh, with new labels kindly supplied by iFLYTEK, along with standard Festival labels produced by the University of Edinburgh
 - Spoke task ES1: 100 sentences from the ‘Roger’ ARCTIC set with standard Festival labels
 - Spoke task ES2: to be confirmed
- Mandarin Chinese
 - Hub task MH1: 9 hour database kindly supplied by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (6.5 hours as used in 2008 plus 2.5 hours of new data)
 - Hub task MH2: 1 hour subset of the new portion of the MH1 data
 - Spoke task MS1: 100 sentences from new portion of the MH1 data
 - Spoke task MS2: to be confirmed

Further details will be announced shortly in the full call for participation.

Blizzard Workshop: The results will be presented at a workshop, which will be a satellite of the Seventh ISCA Tutorial and Research Workshop on Speech Synthesis (SSW7) in Kyoto, Japan (ssw7.org). The workshop is scheduled for Sept 25th 2010. A condition of participation in the Blizzard Challenge is the submission of a paper to this workshop. Accepted papers will be presented at the workshop, and published on the Blizzard website.

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

Registration: Interested parties should register their intention to participate as soon as possible, by mailing blizzard@festvox.org. They should identify a contact person in their team, and provide email and postal addresses. A registration fee of USD 750 will be required to partially meet the costs of running the challenge and paying listeners. Payment method details will be announced later.

There is a mailing list for discussion and announcements, which all participants must join by sending a message to majordomo@festvox.org with the following line in the body of the message

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subscribe blizzard-discuss
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To post a message to the list, send it to blizzard-discuss@festvox.org

Provisional timeline

Jan/Feb	2010	Database release
Apr	2010	Test sentences released
Apr	2010	Deadline for submitting synthesized speech
Apr	2010	Evaluation system goes live
June	2010	End of evaluation
June	2010	Results distributed to teams
July	2010	Satellite workshop papers due
Aug	2010	Notification of acceptance
Sep	22-24	2010 SSW7, Kyoto, Japan
Sep	25	2010 Blizzard Challenge Workshop, Kyoto, Japan
Sep	26-30	2010 Interspeech 2010, Makuhari, Japan

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>