PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF PAPER 33

PRESENTATION BY PROF. MEILE

PROF. MEILE proposes that it would be very economical and quite fitting for the computer to deal with addresses of dictionary entries, which would be arranged as follows: the mechanical address would consist of a description of a word by its first and last letters, together with the indication of the total number of letters in the words. Thus, the important morphological characteristics of the word are retained, as well as economy in storage is achieved. Only long words, over eight letters in length for French, for instance, would be subjected to this scheme. Other languages, quite obviously, would require different schemes. In French, Meile finds that the first and third letters of the word carry the necessary alphabetical information, with the end of the word carrying the morphological information. As illustrations, he carried out the necessary calculations with the French words recourbant and surplombant.

DISCUSSION

DR. BOOTH asked whether linguistic statistics should be used in formulating the programme.

PROF. MEILE replied affirmatively.

DR. BROWN stated that the dictionary look-up time is so short comparatively that Meile's scheme is not of too great importance; however, it could be used in other linguistic computer applications, like text examinations to pull out needed items.

PROF. MEILE thought that the saving in storage (reduction in the size of memory) is worth-while.

DR. SHERRY (Adams Associates, U.S.A.) opined that every dictionary compression scheme faces the problem of subsequent expansion.

M. CORBE stated that the French words aspirateur and asphalteur would be identified according to this scheme in the same manner.

PROF. MEILE replied that this was the first time he had heard the word asphalteur.

DR. EDMUNDSON said that most language models are deterministic, i.e. non-probabilistic. Language statistics can be used successfully in language discovery.

DR. BOOTH then interposed that we should get text to do something with it.

DR. EDMUNDSON deplored the fact that linguistic statistical investigations give only means, but no standard deviations. That's why larger text samples are helpful.

PROF. MEILE suggested that typewriters be equipped with counters that would tabulate the number of words used and their lengths.

DR. PARKER-RHODES declared that statistics had very little to do with meaning determination.

PROF. MEILE cautioned against confusing statistics with probability.

DR. WEXLER declared that running newspaper texts could be introduced into the computer.

PROF. STREVENS agreed that statistics should be used and are very helpful.

H. JOSSELSON