Remaining Issues that Could Prevent UNL to be Accepted as a Standard

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Abstract. This paper presents practical issues when dealing with UNL (Universal Networking Language) documents. Some of these issues are at a purelly syntactical level, others are at a semantic level. Some of these issues introduce unnecessary difficulties when developing tools to handle UNL documents when others introduce unnecessary difficulties when encoding natural language utterances into UNL graphs.

1 Introduction

After several years of development, UNL (Universal Networking Language, [1, 2]) has proved its viability as a cross lingual data exchange format. Its expressive power makes it very useful for the development of multilingual information systems where it serves as a way to represent utterances in a language free manner. However, in order to be adopted as a standard, the UNL definition should be clarified or corrected in order to avoid common errors and misunderstandings.

As a UNL partner since 1998, the GETA (Groupe d'Étude pour la Traduction Automatique) group of the CLIPS (Communication Langagière et Interaction Personne-Système) lab develops and maintains a UNL deconverter for French. For this development, we are one of the few groups that decided to use our own existing tools (namely the ARIANE-G5 translator generator, [3–6]). As such, we had to develop several tools to parse and handle UNL documents and went accross some of the problems that will arise when UNL will be used by third party developers.

This paper presents some of the issues we faced and suggests some solutions. Our goal is to give UNL the opportunity to be largely adopted by third parties as a de-facto standard. After briefly presenting the UNL language and an example of an UNL document, we will begin by low level problems posed by the UNL syntax. After that, we will focus on middle level aspects involved when interpreting the UNL language at its computational level. Finally, we will present some of the higher level issues arising when we interpret UNL utterances as linguistic structures.