

## CITALA 2009 Opening ceremony speech

Dear participants

We are proud to welcome you in Rabat where we are pleased to contribute to the organisation of this third edition of the International Conference on Arabic Language Processing CITALA 2009. We are very happy to continue the organisation of such a major conference for the Arabic Human Language Technology community.

Some of you remember how things started three years ago when was organised the first edition of the conference. The main purpose was the establishment of a conference on NLP exclusively dedicated to the Arabic Language.

In holding this conference we also aim to:

- gather studies, achievements and experiences from scholars working on Arabic language processing
- encourage new initiatives for Arabic processing cooperation in the world.
- keep informed of major developments in Arabic Research

It is generally recognized that a perfect work in computational linguistics should involve a multidisciplinary team including linguists and computer scientists. In order to meet this goal, we decided from the second edition to jointly organize this third edition by an engineering school (EMI) and linguistic institute (IERA). This alliance will definitely open new horizons closely linked to applications, tools and technology.

CITALA conference, recognized at the international level, has become from this third edition an IEEE conference. Thus:

- Reviewing process by international experts from both academia and industry has been undertaken using IEEE standards
- For the first time, a best paper award will delivered using the reviewers and the oral presentation recommendations

Following the CITALA 2007 recommendations, we urge researchers and research teams to focus their discussions during this conference more on:

- developing open source tools and resources
- the creation of committees to propose standards for the representation of resources
- agreeing on reference tools and metrics to evaluate our works

The history of Citala has shown that contributions and participants from both North Africa and middle-east are always present in this event. Therefore, in holding this conference we also want to encourage individuals and organizations to put collaboration and knowledge exchange, between these southern countries, on top of there priorities.

On the occasion of this third CITALA conference, we thank the Scientific Committee, composed of colleagues from all over the world, for accepting to review the submissions and feeding the authors with their expertise on Arabic language processing.

Very special thanks to all the authors, who provide the 'substance' to CITALA, and will surely give us a broad picture of the field.

We express our big gratitude to all the sponsors that have believed in the importance of our conference, and have helped with economic support. We mention here UNESCO, ISESCO and the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research in Morocco.

Finally, we would like to take the opportunity to thank all those, especially the organizing committee and the administrative staff of both the Mohammadia School of Engineers and the Institute for Studies and Research on Arabization, who contributed so hard to making this conference possible.

*Karim Bouzoubaa*  
*CITALA 2009 co-chair*