

ArabicNLP 2026

The Fourth Arabic Natural Language Processing Conference

Volume 1. Proceedings of the ArabicNLP 2026 Conference

October 28-29, 2026

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Introduction

Welcome to The **Fourth Arabic Natural Language Processing Conference (ArabicNLP 2026)**, co-located with **EMNLP 2026** in Budapest, Hungary. This year's edition is held under the theme Towards Inclusive Arabic NLP, a call for language technologies that serve the full range of Arabic varieties and the full range of their speakers. ArabicNLP 2026 is the eleventh edition of the WANLP/ArabicNLP series, which has developed a growing reputation as a high quality venue for researchers and engineers working on Arabic NLP, where they share and discuss their ongoing work. The first in the WANLP series was held in Doha, Qatar (EMNLP 2014), followed by Beijing, China (ACL 2015), Valencia, Spain (EACL 2017), Florence, Italy (ACL 2019), online with COLING 2020, online with EACL 2021, a hybrid event in Abu Dhabi, UAE (EMNLP 2022), and then in-person events in Singapore with EMNLP 2023, Bangkok, Thailand with ACL 2024, and Suzhou, China with EMNLP 2025. For this year's edition of ArabicNLP, we received a record 193 valid main conference submissions, more than double the 95 received last year. Of these, 164 received at least one review, the remainder having been desk rejected before review for anonymity, formatting or completeness violations, and 139 went through the full review process, in which each paper was read by at least three reviewers and then by one Area Chair, a role newly added to ArabicNLP this year. We accepted 37 papers, for an overall acceptance rate of 22.56% across all submissions that received at least one review. This is the most selective edition to date in the ArabicNLP series.

The accepted papers are presented over the two days of the conference in five oral sessions and two poster sessions: 20 papers as oral presentations and 17 as posters. The oral sessions are organized around the themes that emerged most strongly from the accepted set: Arabic speech, resources and benchmarks; dialects, machine translation and content moderation; Arabic for education and Islamic knowledge; Arabic resources, morphology and syntax; and LLM evaluation, safety and detoxification. Alongside the main conference papers, ArabicNLP 2026 hosts fifteen shared tasks with 212 papers (15 overview papers and 197 system description papers), which appear in Volume 2 of these proceedings.

ArabicNLP 2026 includes an invited talk by **Mona Diab** (Carnegie Mellon University), entitled "**From NLP for Arabic to NLP Through Arabic: What Must AI Understand Before We Trust It to Act?**", a fireside chat, and two panel discussions. We also recognize the strongest contributions through a Best Paper Award and a Best Resource Award, and the review effort behind them through Outstanding Reviewer and Outstanding Area Chair awards, all announced during the conference.

We were able to secure sponsorship funding from different institutions: Google Research, Qatar Debate Center (Qatar), Aram Lab (MBZUAI), CAMEL Lab (NYU Abu Dhabi), Tuwaiq Academy (Saudi Arabia), and Resemble AI. We used the sponsorship funds to support student registrations. We thank all our sponsors for their generous support and their help in building up the Arabic NLP community. Finally, we extend our gratitude to everyone who submitted a paper to the conference, and to the Area Chairs and Program Committee members for their diligent efforts in providing reviews within a very tight time frame.

Muhammad Abdul-Mageed

General Chair, on behalf of the conference organizers.

Website of the conference: <https://arabiclelp2026.sigarab.org>

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Keynote Talk

From NLP for Arabic to NLP Through Arabic What Must AI Understand Before We Trust It to Act?

Dr. Mona Diab
Carnegie Mellon University

Abstract: What does it mean for an AI system to understand a request, recognize an intention, or know when it has misunderstood? These questions reach into the essence of intelligence—and acquire urgency when systems act as autonomous agents. An instruction can be followed literally while its purpose is missed. A fluent answer can conceal uncertainty. Understanding a harmful request perfectly can itself enable harm. This keynote argues that the science of language, meaning, understanding, and interaction should fundamentally reorient NLP’s research agenda and inform how we assess AI’s capabilities and risks. Arabic offers a particularly productive setting for developing that science. Rich morphology, unwritten vowels, dialect diversity, diglossia, script variation, and code-switching converge within Arabic communicative encounters shaped by social relationships and historical knowledge. I introduce the Arabic Conjunction Hypothesis to investigate how these dimensions jointly shape interpretation and communicative action. Arabic’s connections with Persian, Urdu, and Turkic traditions extend the inquiry across languages, scripts, and communities. Arabic’s scientific value lies in this productive conjunction, without requiring a claim of exceptionalism. The resulting questions connect directly to debates about alignment and control: whose intentions should a system follow, what evidence supports its interpretation, and when should it ask, defer, challenge, or revise? Understanding is necessary for many forms of trustworthy assistance, but it does not establish benevolent goals or legitimate authority. A science of meaning and interaction can help make those distinctions explicit and testable. Through this lens, annotation, evaluation, and dialogue become instruments for discovering how understanding works. The shift from NLP for Arabic to NLP through Arabic makes Arabic a source of insights that can reshape the field’s questions, methods, and foundations. What would we build—and what would we measure—if understanding in interaction became NLP’s organizing purpose? Pursuing that question also challenges how we define and evaluate intelligence in AI more broadly. If we fear what AI might do, we must examine what it understands, whose purposes it serves, and what warrants trusting it to act.

Bio: Mona T. Diab is Director of the Language Technologies Institute and a Full Professor in the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University. An ACL Fellow, she has devoted more than 13 years of her career to Arabic NLP and received the 2023 King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language prize for advancing Arabic language technologies. She is a founding member of SIGARAB, a former President of SIGDAT and SIGLEX, and a cofounder of the *SEM conference and the CADIM Arabic Dialect Group. Her career spans academia and industry, including leadership roles at Meta and Amazon AWS. Her research connects multilingual NLP, cultural and social dimensions of meaning, and responsible AI. She advocates for a science of language, meaning, and interaction, with Arabic helping shape foundational questions about intelligence, understanding, and trustworthy AI.

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Program

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

- 08:50 - 09:30 *Opening, Welcome & Sponsor Acknowledgements*
- 09:30 - 10:30 *Keynote: From NLP for Arabic to NLP Through Arabic: What Must AI Understand Before We Trust It to Act? by Dr. Mona Diab*
- 10:30 - 11:00 *Coffee Break*
- 11:00 - 12:25 *Arabic Speech, Resources and Benchmarks*
- Child ASR Adaptation with Adult Retention: An Empirical Study*
Houssam Eddine-Othman Lachemat and Shammur Absar Chowdhury
- Towards Speech ALDi: Predicting the Arabic Level of Dialectness Directly from Speech*
Wageeh Khadawardi, Amr Keleg and Walid Magdy
- MAQAM: A Richly Annotated Corpus for Quranic Arabic Morphological Analysis and Disambiguation*
Mostafa Saeed, Mohammad Amjad, Mahmoud Kassem, Rawan Bondok, Mayar Nassar, Adel Mahmoud Wizani, Salman Elgamal, Mahmoud Reda and Nizar Hashash
- KASHAF: A Hierarchical Resource and Pipeline for Arabic Interpretable Semantic Textual Similarity*
Fahad AlGhamdi, Abdelati Hawwari, Abdulrahman Alosaimy, Rawan Nasser Almatham and Asma Al Wazrah
- 12:30 - 14:00 *Lunch Break*
- 14:00 - 15:08 *Dialects, Machine Translation and Content Moderation*
- Some Dialects are More Equal than Others: Non-Prestigious Arabic Dialectal Bias in LLMs*
Mai Mohamed Eida, Ryan Dolan, Paul de Nijs and Jonathan Dunn
- SAFIR: A Sub-Dialectal Benchmark for Saudi Arabic–English Machine Translation*
Nour Qandos, Omer Nacar, Aya Hamod, Samar Ahmad, Rahaf Saeed Al Hallay and Ahmad Al Rabghi
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Wednesday, October 28, 2026 (continued)

AHA-Memes: A Fine-Grained Multimodal Benchmark for Hate Detection in Arabic Memes

Mohamed Bayan Kmainasi, Ali Ezzat Shahroor, Abul Hasnat, Md. Rafiul Biswas, Wajdi Zaghoulani and Firoj Alam

- 15:11 - 15:30 *Shared Task Highlights I: 7 shared tasks, 2 minutes each*
- 15:30 - 16:30 *Coffee Break & Poster Session 1 (main conference and shared task posters)*
- 16:30 - 17:20 *Panel 1: Inclusive Arabic NLP*
- 17:20 - 17:30 *Awards*

Thursday, October 29, 2026

08:50 - 09:00 *Opening*

09:00 - 09:30 *Fireside Chat*

09:30 - 10:21 *Arabic for Education and Islamic Knowledge*

Align-Extract-Score: Graded Relevance of Arabic Essays

Marwan Sayed, Salam Albatarni, Reem Suwaileh and Tamer Elsayed

Fine-tuning Small Language Models for Cross-Prompt Arabic Essay Scoring: A Benchmarking Study

Salam Albatarni, Fahim Dalvi, Sohaila Eltanbouly and Tamer Elsayed

What Makes a Good Fiqh Retriever? Answer Retrieval for Arabic Islamic Jurisprudence

Somaya Eltanbouly, Heba Sbahi, Samer Rashwani, Abdessalam Boucekif, Mutaz al-Khatib, Shahd Gaben and Mohammed Ghaly

10:30 - 11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:00 - 12:25 *Arabic Resources, Morphology and Syntax*

Beyond Gender, Number, and Rationality: Modeling Extended Arabic Morpho-Syntactic Agreement with Aggregation

Bielasan Zaina, Salam Khalifa and Nizar Habash

BAREC-TB: A Dependency Treebank and Parsing Benchmark for Arabic Children's Texts

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Why LLM Aggregation Falls Short: Correlated Errors and Selection Gaps in Arabic Punctuation Restoration

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SALM: Social Arabic Language Model

Saad Mankarious and Aya Zirikly

Beyond Monolithic Libyan Arabic: A Sub-Regional Speech Corpus and Dialect Identification Benchmark

Nour A. Zohdy and Mansour Essgaer

Thursday, October 29, 2026 (continued)

12:30 - 14:00 *Lunch Break*

14:00 - 15:08 *LLM Evaluation, Safety and Detoxification*

HalluTruthQA: A Fine-Grained Benchmark for Hallucination Detection, Localization, and Explanation in Arabic Question Answering

Abdessalam Boucekif, Mohammed-En-Nadhir Zighem, Salah Eddine Bekhouche, Hichem Telli, Somaya Eltanbouly, Shahd Gaben, Heba Sbahi, Samer Rashwani, Mutaz al-Khatib, Emad Soliman Ali Mohamed, Mohammed Ghaly and Abdenour Hadid

Arabic Safety Alignment as Selective Refusal: An Empirical Study of SFT, DPO, and Guard Calibration

Mohammad Zbeeb and Ammar Mohanna

Definition-Guided Learning and Root-Stratified Evaluation for Arabic Lexical Semantics

Samar Ahmad, Abdullah I. Alharbi, Omer Nacar, Shahad Altamimi and Yahya Assiri

AraDetox: A Multi-Dialect Arabic Detoxification Dataset

Mo El-Haj

15:11 - 15:30 *Shared Task Highlights II: 8 shared tasks, 2 minutes each*

15:30 - 16:30 *Coffee Break & Poster Session 2 (main conference and shared task posters)*

16:30 - 17:20 *Panel 2: ArabicNLP Growth*

17:20 - 17:30 *Closing Remarks*