SNAPSHOT at Seminar on Adapting Communications Tools for People with Special Need

The Seminar on Adapting Communications Tools for People with Special Needs took place at Zaragoza, Spain, in February 2015, with around 200 participants. From the feedback received from the participants, the adhesion to the event was justified by their need to access discussion (cont. on page 2)

IRIS team from Microsoft welcomed the Academia ISCTE (Lisbon University Institute) on the 1st of April. Thirty students from High Schools in Lisbon, Portugal were at Microsoft in order to be introduced to the development of various technological devices, including the human-computer interaction platform developed in the scope of IRIS.

For further information about the project visit the new webpage: http://www.iris-interaction.eu/
The Keynote speakers were Eduardo Lleida, from University of Zaragoza, Spain, Sara Candeias, from Microsoft, Portugal, Marc Coronas Puig-Pallarols, from University of Barcelona, Spain, Manuel Gi-meno García, from Fundación Orange, Clara Delgado Santos, from Centro de Referencia Estatal de Autonomía Personal y Ajudas Técnicas, and José Manuel Marcos Rodrigo and David Romero Cabral, from CPEE Alborada, Zaragoza-Spain, covering the topics of augmentative communication, technology and techniques to improve the communication. Presentations also covered real experiences, challenges and visions for new projects. One of the talks presented the IRIS project, its goals, scientific competencies and work status.

The event was sponsored by IRIS.

ON THE LIGHT WORK SESSIONS

On 15 January, new work presentations have been performed at Microsoft in Lisbon providing a sample of the work developed at IRIS in the fields of Permanent Magnetic Articulography based Assistive Speech Technology and Eye tracking: State of the art and future prospects.

(continued on next page)
These presentations reported the investigation performed by Prof James Gilbert (from the University of Hull, England) and Prof Cengiz Acarturk (Middle East Technical University, Turkey), respectively.

In the same month of January, a new solution for the Automatic Assessment of the Children Reading Performance was presented by Jorge Proença. Jorge Proença is a PhD student of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the University of Coimbra, Portugal a FCT fellow and he is supervised by Sara Candeias, from MLDC team.

Language is a way of natural communication, even it is written or has the form of speech. In the scope of IRIS, language processing is on the focus of the team work either to generate sentences automatically from pictograms, adapting communication to users with special needs, or simple to extract pertinent data from text in information accessing e-services. We took the chance of having Prof Luísa Coheur, from Instituto Superior Técnico (IST)/University of Lisbon, Portugal visiting MLDC during April and we had A taste of Natural Language Processing. The key-features of those work sessions was their practical components: experts and participants shared research experiences and new ideas to implement.

Best Paper Award

The papers "Improving Speech Recognition through Automatic Selection of Age Group Specific Acoustic Models" and "Automatically Recognising European Portuguese Children's Speech: Pronunciation Patterns Revealed by an Analysis of ASR Errors" by A.Hamalainen, H.Meinedo, M.Tjalve, T.Pellegrini, I.Trancoso, M.S. Dias and A.Hamalainen, H.Cho, S.Candeias, T.Pellegrini, A.Abad, M.Tjalve, I.Trancoso, M.S.Dias, respectively, have been awarded the Best Paper Award at the 11th International Conference on Computational Processing of Portuguese will be held on October 6-8, 2014 in São Carlos, São Paulo region, Brazil.

PhD in the scope of IRIS

JOÃO FREITAS
ARTICULATION IN MULTIMODAL SILENT SPEECH INTERFACE FOR EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE

PhD degree in Electrical and Telematics Engineering by the University of Aveiro, January 2015, supervised by António Teixeira (University of Aveiro/IEETA) and Miguel Sales Dias (University Institute of Lisbon/ISTAR). The thesis focused on silent speech interfaces language expansion to support European Portuguese with special attention on developing develop a Multimodal HCI approach based on non-invasive modalities. It was approved with praise and distinction by unanimity.

João is currently a software engineer at Microsoft, in Lisbon, Portugal.
SYMPOSIUM @METU

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON BRAIN AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE

Within the framework of IRIS, this event brought together researchers in cognitive science and relevant fields, including Artificial Intelligence, Linguistics, Computer Science, Anthropology, Psychology, Neuroscience, Philosophy, and Education. This year's symposium had two keynote speakers: Margaret Boden (University of Sussex), Mark Steedman (University of Edinburgh) and four invited speakers: Aylin Küntay (Koc University), Daniela Schulz (Yeditepe University), Seyhun Topbas (Anadolu University), Bonnie Webber (University of Edinburgh). The symposium was held in Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey on the past 19 April.

RESEARCHERS AND VISITING PROFESSORS @Microsoft

In the first quartile of 2015, Microsoft welcomed Prof Cengiz Acarturk and MSc student Ece Kamer Takmaz, from the Middle East Technical University, Turkey) and PhD student Julia Olcoz from the University of Zaragoza, Spain to work on the IRIS project. As usual the secondments became an international forum for the exchange of knowledge among academia and industry on recent technical issues in the field of speech recognition and eye tracking. Various hands-on sessions covered a range of HCI concepts and experiments that have been already important for creating synergies and multidisciplinary research proposals.

IRIS IN THE MEDIA

- Newspaper article in Heraldo de Aragón: "Proyecto Iris, una plataforma europea que abre ventanas para facilitar la comunicación" (Iris Project, an European platform that open doors to facilitate the communication), Feb 20, 2015
- News in AB Bilgi, EU in Turkey - Approaching the EU to citizens through journalists
- Newspaper article in Zaragoza, Buenas Noticias, Feb 27, 2015

This newsletter intends to disseminate all the activities within the framework of the project IRIS: Towards Natural and Interactive Communication, with a 6-month regularity.