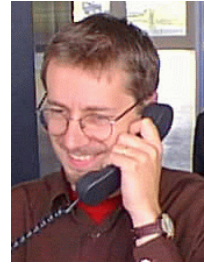# eNTERFACE Workshops
Motivations – Reflexions

Prof. T. Dutoit
Initiator of the eNTERFACE concept and organizer of eNTERFACE'05

I take this opportunity to mention how the idea of eNTERFACE came to life in mid 2003, when the core committee of SIMILAR (the European Network of Excellence on Multimodal Interfaces), was busy establishing its list of workpackages. It is basically a three acts play.

Act 1. I have been a researcher since 1987. It is therefore becoming hard to navigate in the "conferences" directory of my laptop. Small to big, short to long, close to far away, I think I have tried them all. One of them, however, will last forever in my memory as the most productive meeting I have ever attended. It was a summer school on Prosody, in July 1993, organized by the ELSNET (already a scientific network). I spent two weeks there, at UCL London, attending lectures and, more importantly, taking labs with my fellow PhD students from all over the world. I must say this is simply the place where I met most of my friends for life!
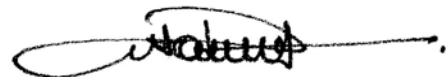
Act 2. In 1996, I had the opportunity to work for AT&T at Bell Labs for 1.5 years, in the TTS group. This was set about 2 years after I finished my PhD (i.e., 2 years after I had signed with Kluwer for writing the "3-months-of-work" book in TTS I took 3 years to complete; I finished it at AT&T…). It was clear to me that I was then about to meet the greatest gurus in speech processing (yet I had underestimated the number of famous people who were working in this lab), and that I would work with the best maintained software archive in the world (you snap your finger, and you get what you were looking for; this, I had overestimated..). I did meet all these people, and the atmosphere was such that meeting each other was really easy, but I also realized something I had never imagined: research in the US is a huge network thing. "Network" in terms of "you seldom work on your own on a problem", but also in terms of "Be with the network; the network will take care of you". In other words, research is very much advertised and supported by your employer, by all sorts of professional organizations, and even among the general public. Hence its dynamics.

Act 3. I was aware of the successful DARPA workshops on speech recognition organized yearly by Prof. Fred Jelinek at Johns Hopkins University. Funded by the Defence Agency (which implies a strong financial support), these workshops have progressively become a "must" for researchers in the field, who come from all around the world to participate. One of our researchers took part to it, and my ex-colleague Hervé Bourlard, now the Director of IDIAP in Switzerland, was an active member of it. I have always envied this event, and dreamt of finding money to organize something SIMILAR.

Thanks to EU financing, and with special care from SIMILAR, this dream has come true.

With its 55 researchers from 15 countries all around the world working together for four weeks on seven pre-selected projects, eNTERFACE'05 in Mons, Belgium, has been a great success. Enterface'06 in Dubrovnik, Croatia, gathering 63 researchers from 12 countries organized in 9 teams, has been even more successful.

Long life to eNTERFACE workshops!
See you next year in Istambul for eNTERFACE'07!

T. Dutoit