CLST Annual Report 2007

CLST stands for “Centre for Language and Speech Technology”. CLST operates as a separate unit within the Faculty of Arts of the Radboud University Nijmegen.

The year 2007 was a positive year for CLST. CLST is active in an impressive number of projects in the Dutch-Flemish STEVIN programme with a large diversity of topics. CLST also participates in a number of valuable projects funded by the EU. For the new projects new personnel was found. CLST employs 18 active researchers and support staff members. The financial situation of CLST is stable.

Projects

The STEVIN-programme (http://taalunieversum.org/taal/technologie/stevin) is very interesting for CLST due to its inherent cooperation with industry and with Flemish partners. STEVIN-projects are attractive because they support the employment of tenure staff members and of PhD-students. CLST is involved in the following STEVIN projects: MIDAS, SPRAAK, N-BEST, Autonomata, JASMIN-CGN, D-CoI.  

CLST participates in two projects financed by the EU in FP6: ACorns (STREP) and S2S (RTN). Both projects are important for building research networks for further project acquisitions in national and international contexts.

CLST also participates in a variety of NWO projects: NORISC (an IMIX-project) and a VENI project acquired by Odette Scharenborg.

The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs funds two IOP projects: À propos en AwareShoe. In AwareShoe we collaborate with the Sint Maartenskliniek (SMK) and with the Department of Business Communication of the University.

SPEX is a subdepartment of CLST which is specialized in the validation of language resources. For Motorola two databases intended for training speech recognition engines for applications in consumer electronics are validated. In LC-STAR II pronunciation lexicons for various languages are validated for companies such as Microsoft, Nokia and Siemens. For the LILA project, SPEX validated speech databases for telephone services in languages in Asia and the Pacific area. SPEX is the speech resources validation center for ELRA.

With the OSTT (Ontwikkelcentrum Taal- en Spraaktechnologie ten behoeve van Taal- en Spraakpathologie) CLST carried out a project in cooperation with University’s Information Technology centre (UCI) and the SMK to build a demo application for E-assessment and E-training of voice quality for persons with Parkinson’s disease.

For ETSI a standard vocabulary for ICT-services in various languages is being compiled.

In 2007 the following projects ended:
- TC-STAR (EU-project, research in Speech-to-Speech conversion for three languages)
- The PhD project of Christophe Van Bael investigating the validation, automatic generation and use of broad phonetic transcriptions
- Autonomata (STEVIN-project studying specific pronunciations of Dutch/Flemish names)

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1 See for detailed information on all projects: http://www.ru.nl/CLST.
2 http://www.lc-star.org/
3 http://www.elra.info
4 http://www.ostt.eu
5 http://www.etsi.org
Acquisition

In the framework of STEVIN a number of new projects was acquired: SoNaR, Autonomata Too en DISCO. A proposal for a demo project was submitted in 2008 (and accepted).

With the Technical University Delft a project has started with the aim to detect and correct pronunciation errors of L2 learners using ASR techniques. Together with DISCO this project is a spearhead for new research into the deployment of ASR technology in CALL.

In 2007 CLST acquired its first project in FP7. This project (SCALE) is an ITN project. ITN projects offer excellent opportunities for cooperation between and exchange of researchers in an international European context. In 2008 CLST aims to submit at least two proposals for additional ITN projects. We also plan to submit one STREP proposal.

Funding for an ESF workshop\(^6\) was acquired. This is an important means to establish research networks as well.

In 2007 two proposals for small programmes (kleine programma's) were submitted to NWO. One was approved, dealing with language acquisition by children. In this programme CLST will collaborate with Prof. Paula Fickert of the Department of Linguistics. The other proposal about corrective feedback in CALL will be resubmitted in 2008.

With the company Logica a series of speech transcription tasks is planned for 2008.

Personnel

Four temporary staff members left CLST during 2007. Two new PhD members were employed. At the end of 2007 CLST consisted of four tenure staff members, six temporary staff members, five PhD students, and three members with a temporary part-time posting from the Department of Linguistics, summing up to 13 fte.

Annual performance interviews were held with all staff members. These interviews serve to achieve a match between personal ambitions, job contents and career opportunities of individual employees.

For training and education of its personnel CLST has a budget of 6 kEUR. Most staff members followed one or more courses, most of which were offered by the Radboud University as part of its career policy.

Promotions

Two CLST projects resulted in an academic promotion taking place in 2007. The promotions were part of the project obligations to which CLST had committed itself.


\(^6\) [http://www.esf.org/activities/exploratory-workshops.html](http://www.esf.org/activities/exploratory-workshops.html)
**Customer Satisfaction**

For most of its projects CLST is obliged to write progress reports. These progress reports follow the templates offered by the funding bodies (STEVIN, EU). Customer satisfaction in other projects (typically with companies) is monitored by e-mail or telephone. Customer responses are almost without exception very positive.

**Public Relations**

Every CLST research employee visited at least one international conference or workshop. Attendance of workshops is, as a rule, restricted to conferences to which the employee contributed with an accepted paper. This promotes the quality of the research in CLST and serves to internationally establish CLST's name.

Further PR-activities in 2007 were:
- Website updates and improvement of its position in rank orders of search engines
- Folders and brochures (Dutch, English)
- Advertisements in DIXIT
- Publicity in newspapers and periodicals

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