



THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Athanassios Hatzis

Athanassios Hatzis ('Nassos') read for a Ph.D. in the Speech and Hearing research group under my supervision. He joined us in October 1995 and was awarded his doctorate in January 2000.

Nassos' doctoral work involved the development of a speech training aid which provides real-time visual feedback by what has come to be known as a 'kinematic map', where different areas on the screen correspond to different speech sounds. The mapping from acoustic data to map position is achieved by a combination of neural net and statistical techniques. A very useful feature is the ability to design a map suitable for a particular speech training problem, and to customise the map to individual clients as therapy proceeds. In collaboration with speech therapists, Nassos produced good results for training children with fricative production problems.

Since then, this work has formed the basis of two funded projects here, on which Nassos has been employed as a postdoctoral researcher. The first of these, STARDUST, funded by the UK National Health Service and completed in December 2003, produced successful small-vocabulary speech recognisers for dysarthric speakers, which were used to control assistive technology. The second, OLP, funded by the EC, runs till December 2005.

For both these projects Nassos was responsible for the bulk of the implementation work at Sheffield. The Computer Science problems involved in designing and implementing this software are considerable, and Nassos has to be admired for the determination and perseverance he has shown in producing a working application. He has had to address a number of difficult issues, ranging from in-depth understanding of articulatory phonetics to the problem of how to use neural nets sensibly when the training data is unrepresentative of the test data.

Nassos is an impulsive and outgoing character. He can be somewhat overwhelming, but the experience of working within a research team, and bringing a project to fruition, has mellowed him. He scores high for initiative, for programming knowledge and as a speech scientist. I recommend him to you.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Phil Green
Speech and Hearing Research Group



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