Editorial

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Editorial

I am delighted to introduce the **17th edition of the ITB Journal**, the academic journal of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown.

The first paper by Gudhy **Thorvaldsdottir**, entitles *Mental Space Theory and Icelandic Sign Language* looks at how signed languages are articulated in space and why the use of space is one of their most important features. Her paper shows clearly that they make use of 3-dimesional space and the way the space is organised during discourse is grammatically and semantically significant. The Theory of Mental Spaces (Fauconnier 1985) has been applied to signed languages and has proven to be an especially good method for assisting with the conceptual understanding of various aspects of signed languages. This paper in particular discusses how Mental Space Theory may be applied to Icelandic Sign Language (ÍTM). It also introduces Mental Space Theory and discuses how it has been applied to American Sign Language (ASL). This discussion ranges over metaphors, blending and body partitioning during blending within sighed languages.

The second paper by **Salem, Hensman and Nolan** examines facets of *Arabic to English machine translation*. Specifically, it explores how the characteristics of the (Modern Standard) Arabic language will effect the development of a machine translation (MT) tool from Arabic to English. Several distinguishing features of Arabic pertinent to MT are explored in detail with reference to some of the potential difficulties that they might present. The paper concludes with a proposed machine translation model based upon the Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) linguistic paradigm.

In the third paper, *Current Perspectives on the Role of Gender in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Research*, **Karen Feery** outlines current perspectives on the role of gender in second language acquisition (SLA) research. She finds that neither a singular field of research relating specifically to gender and SLA nor a theory of gender and SLA exist as yet. Feery argues that the distinct and well-established fields of language and gender studies, and the field of SLA strongly underpin this topic area and a gradual emergence of research relating specifically to the role of gender in SLA is evident.

Paul **King**, from the Dublin Software Lab at the IBM Technology Campus, with **Smyth and Keane** from ITB rhetorically ask: *Is Your Wireless Network Being Hacked*? Worryingly, they find that wireless networks provide vulnerable gateways for unauthorised entry to networks or even a standalone wireless computer. That is, the independent radio signals that constitute wireless communications have no physical boundary to keep them in check. This allows a third party to easily eavesdrop on communications sessions. By capturing the data packets, they can break the encryption keys and access the data within the network. King et al. find that the public awareness of the insecurity of wireless networks is surprisingly poor despite frequent news media reports of the vulnerabilities of the equipment and the activities of the criminals prepare to exploit it. In this paper they review the security protocols commonly used on wireless networks and investigate their weaknesses by showing how easy it is to crack the codes using tools freely available on the Internet.

In her paper on *Home and Exile*, **Jennifer Ann Fawcett**, explores some general themes concerning the creative potential of liminality. She develops the central idea through a discussion of the experience of the liminal position of the exiled individual and an examination of some personalities whose lives have been shaped by exile. These encompass the dislocation of the individual from a 'home' space into a situation of homelessness, the reworking of the individual's identity in the unfamiliar environment and the resulting consequences of this shift. Fawcett argues that the exilic position is characterised by almost permanent liminality, as many situations will not result in a return to normality, i.e. return to the home. She also argues that the particular experience of dislocation/exile affords a perspective, which could not have been gained from remaining at home, and that homelessness therefore breeds innovation and creativity.

The sixth and final paper, entitled *Expanding Our Understanding of Culture*, **Corbin** argues that a consequence of human evolution with the most profound impact on human nature and human society was the emergence of culture. While the term is credited uniquely to humans, the 20th century saw new developments in animal behaviour that may indicate that our understanding of culture is too limited. This paper examines the concept of culture from a human perspective, including a detailed analysis of the role which language plays in maintaining culture. It could be argued that if animals were attributed with the ability to sustain culture, the very notion alone would bring into question whether as a species we humans are more than an animal. According to Corbin, the debate over whether or not culture solely exists amongst humanity is in itself arguable as it is through various forms of culture, albeit some more complex than others, that all species can adapt and survive in any given eco-system and or environment.

We hope that you enjoy the papers in this issue of the ITB Journal.

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