

Message of the Chair of the Local Organizing Committee

Mehmed Özkan

Language; other than being a means of communicating human thoughts and feelings in an everyday life, is also a barrier separating civilizations apart and defining borders among the nations and peoples. Through out the history, clusters formed around languages have long provided fertile yet different habitats of cultural and social islands, enabling the cultivation of the human experience and knowledge in a relatively exclusive manner. In a way this natural isolation of human clusters made the concurrent exploration of the knowledge possible, leading to a synergetic conquest of understanding the individual's own existence. For the expected synergy to surface however, the proper means of interaction must also be present. In the old times and still for many cases the best channels of cross-cultural communication have been the multilingual humans and their products. If the language barrier is a one dominant reason for the existence of fertile cultural islands then we can argue these barriers must continue their presence, despite the transformation towards "globalization". On the other hand, for the humankind to benefit from own achievements and carry on to the next generations with advancements, the islands of knowledge are better served when shared.

With the electronic age and its sub-stages the storage and flow of knowledge reached to a point, possibly beyond the imagination of the inventors of the information technologies, and it is growing faster than ever. In the beginning the default language to represent this massive knowledge was English. Gradually came the others. Already, it is estimated less than 20% of the information in the cyberspace is in English and decreasing. Once again the languages are claiming the borders and once again we need translators, interpreters to benefit from this vast human knowledge. This time however, the tools we need are not only for understanding the knowledge in other languages, but also to coop with the massive size and enormous speed of the information we are faced with even in our own mother tongue. LREC is playing a noble role for achieving this goal by bringing the most important resources together to tackle the problem, that is the scientist and engineers committed to develop the much needed language tools and resources.

Istanbul, located in the crossroads of civilizations, continents and important seas have lived the benefits of exchanging knowledge and prospered by attracting the scientists, artists, architects, poets, philosophers and writers from all around the world throughout the history. Named as capitals of several empires and a sultanate, was latest the European Capital of Culture in 2010. She is indeed and has been the Capital of hearts for many. For some it was the crossing of the Silk Road, for some other the ultimate spice outpost, or the final destination of the Orient Express. However we perceive it, Istanbul has been a merger point of architectural details of three continents; a meeting point of religions and of courses the languages. She lived it all... Once again it is a pleasure to see Istanbul bringing the respectable scientific community who are committed to bring people and knowledge together with innovative language and speech technologies. I am honored for being your host during this prestigious event and welcome you.

Hoping your LREC 2012 experience in Istanbul will be memorable one that you will always remember with a smile ...

Mehmed Özkan
Chair of the Local Committee