

## Acknowledgements

The ideal research center for Ph.D. students, in my opinion, should be a place with many bright people and providing students the freedom of working on their own interesting topics. Center for Language and Speech Processing (CLSP) at The Johns Hopkins University is no doubt one of the best labs in the world from this point of view. I thank all people in CLSP, the department of computer science and elsewhere who have helped me to accomplish my Ph.D. program. This dissertation work would not have been successfully completed without the help and support of my advisor, colleagues and family.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Sanjeev Khudanpur, who consistently gave me good advice and also the freedom to pursue what I believed to be the best way to approach the optimal solutions in the world of speech recognition and natural language processing. Sanjeev was an outstanding advisor, who was not only one of the most talent scientists in the speech recognition society but also an excellent mentor teaching me methods in scientific research and helping me improving presentation and writing skills . It was he who brought me to the beautiful world of maximum entropy and led me towards success in this area. I also thank Sanjeev for many valuable suggestions, in both personal and professional during my study in Hopkins.

I would like to thank David Yarowsky, who was my academic advisor in the department of computer science for many years, for his incredible commitment to me and my study. As one of the investigators in the NSF STIMULATE project which I worked for, David gave me many valuable advice and help. His support and help was extremely important for me to complete the program.

I would like to thank Fred Jelinek, the director of CLSP, who provided me the best research environment where I had the chance to meet and discuss with best scientists in the world. The first time I understood speech recognition was by reading his papers

when I was in China. An important reason I chose Hopkins from many universities was because of his reputation. I got many valuable suggestions and comments about my dissertation research from Fred.

I would like to thank Eric Brill, Gerald Masson, Jason Eisner and Jan Hajik for their support and help. In particular, Eric, who was my first academic advisor in Hopkins, advised me on one of my qualification projects.

I would like to thank Ciprian Chelba, Radu Florian, Peng Xu, Shankar Kumar, Woosung Kim, John Henderson, Gideon Mann, Grace Ngai, Lidia Mangu, Vlasios Doumptotis, Silviu-Petru Cucerzan, Veera Venkataramani, Murat Saraclar, Ahmad Emami, Richard Wicentowski, Charles Schafer, Noah Smith and many other students from the department of computer science and CLSP, from whom I got many valuable suggestions and feedbacks in my research.

I would like to thank Laura Graham, Nancy Scheeler, Linda Rorke, Conway Benishek, Kimberly Petropoulos and Amy Berdann for making administrative matters run efficiently, and Jacob Laderman for making our computer systems work smoothly.

I would like to thank Roberto Pieraccini, Esther Levin, Allen Gorin and other members of AT&T Research, where I worked as an intern in 1997, for their help in my Ph.D. program and career.

No research today can be accomplished without cooperating with other people. Many tools and data I used in my research were provided by many people inside and outside Hopkins. In particular, Ciprian Chelba and Fred Jelinek provided the SLM parser and Peng Xu helped me generating data for training syntactic models; Radu Florian and David Yarowsky provided the topic detection algorithms and the initial classification data for Broadcast News; Shankar Kumar, Vlasios Doumptotis, William Byrne and Dimitra Vergyri provided the Nbest lists and lattices for rescoring; Andreas Stolcke provided the SRI LM toolkits; Michael Riley provided the AT&T FSM

decoder; Adwait Ratnaparkhi provided the ME part-of-speech tagger. I owe them many thanks.

I would also like to thank Google Inc, which provided me opportunities to apply my knowledge to real applications and supported me to finish my dissertation after my leaving school.

Most of all, I thank my family for their role in my education. I thank my parents for teaching me the value of education at a young age and instilling in me a desire for higher education, and my brother, Zining, for his help of all kinds when I studied in the states.

Finally, I cannot thank enough my beloved wife Yan for her consistent support, encouragement and love throughout the past six years.

This dissertation work was partly sponsored by NSF STIMULATE grant.

*Dedicate to: Yan Zhang*