

**Short comment for the
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Human Language Technology Research Institute
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The University of Texas at Dallas**

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It is always a little daunting to have to speak after my two bosses, President Dr. Franklyn Jenifer and Provost Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, have spoken. However, since the organizers Prof Sanda Harabagiu and Dr. Dan Moldavan insisted that I should also say a few words (probably to kill time), I shall do so.

I am very excited, as the Vice President for Research of UTD, to see that there is now a fledging and fast growing research area called "natural language" at UTD. It is certainly a great honor to be here today with some of the world experts in this field. If I am not completely mistaken (which I can easily be since I am a theoretical nuclear physicist), this is, at least one part of it, a cutting edge research area in the interface of artificial intelligence and computer science.

It was really a challenge for me to prepare this short comment. I do not like to say empty words, and since I know very little about the technical aspects of the field, empty words are all I can muster here.

In digging through my memories, I recall that while I do not know anything about the field, I have had the great honor of knowing two giants in this area.

Some fifteen years ago, when I was chairing the Franklin Institute Committee on Arts and the Sciences in Philadelphia, two members of the committee were Professor Aravind K. Joshi, the Henry Salvatori Professor of Computer and Cognitive Science and the late Professor Saul Gorn.

I remembered Professor Joshi is a man of few words (maybe he takes artificial intelligence more literally) and Saul was a gregarious fellow. Saul and I really hit it off well and I was profoundly saddened when he passed away in 1992. I remembered we always sat next to each other in the meetings and had many extensive discussions during the breaks. From these interactions, I gradually know that Saul was, as the website for the Moore School of Electrical Engineering write about him,

"...one of the nation's leading philosophers of the computer movement and a prophet who foresaw the impact the computer would have on contemporary life. His approach was on how the computer could be used. He was not so much interested in the

mechanics of it as the possible applications of it," said his wife, Frances Schlesinger Gorn...."

Saul was very high on Professor Joshi. Joshi is indeed a giant in the field you are about to discuss here at the University of Texas at Dallas today, the field of natural language. I had the great pleasure to hear Joshi's giving seminars twice in Philadelphia. Both times I was impressed by the depth of the issues of natural language. In his talks, he peeled off layers and layers of the onion skin that is human language through information and computational technologies. From those two talks, I learned to have great respect for the field.

Later on, when I worked in SAIC, the term "natural language" always seemed to find its way into conversation. I was told that many of the SAIC folks who contracted with the National Security Agency are experts in NL. Unfortunately, it was an area where if they told me what they were doing, they would have to kill me! Nevertheless, it did teach me that this is not only an area of great intellectual value, but it also has a multitude of real life applications!

Computer and information science (CIS) has certainly come a very long way in the past quarter of a century. I remember when I started my career, computer scientists in my naïve mind were mathematicians who were more interested in numerical analysis. These were folks who did not want to tackle the really hard problems like topology and differential geometry. Well, that was a wrong perception. CIS is now in the forefront of intellectual development, with profound and wide applications. Today, medical sciences cannot progress without CIS, nor can homeland security. I am sure that natural language sits somewhere in there.

Again, congratulations to the organizers in assembling such a great group of researchers in UTD.