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Changing face-to-face communication

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Preface

The final words of this thesis, which are written in this preface, gave cause for reflection. When I look at the manuscript, I sometimes feel like a cognitive scientist who believes that it all comes from the individual mind. However, these moments of inward esteem are brief. Quickly, I return to the social-constructivist camp that states that knowledge and insight emerge from interactions with others. With this in mind, it is more than appropriate to acknowledge my collaboration with various people.

First of all, I would like to thank Henk Sol for his patience, guidance and support. This thesis would not have been finished if I did not have Henk on the background who kept me on track. I am also grateful to him for his constructive feedback. Thanks also to Albert Boonstra, Gellof Kanselaar and Alexander Verbraeck for their valuable comments during the final stage of the PhD project.

The research that I describe in this thesis has been carried out within the context of two European projects. I learned a lot from the people who participated in these projects, intellectually as well as culturally. For this I would like express my gratitude to Reuma de Groot, Baruch Schwatz, Raul Drachman, Josef Börding, Angi Voss, Ahmet Ocakli, Marije van Amelsvoort, Jerry Andriessen, Michiel Klønhammer, Noam Knoller, Annie Corbel, Gregory Dyke, Steven Collins, Jean-Jacques Girardot, Kristine Lund, Michael Baker, Grégory Six, Francois-Xavier Bernard, Steven Collins, Charles Crook, Claire O'Malley, Giulia Gelmini, Marie Buda, Delfina Malandrino, Beatrice Ligorio, Ilaria Manno, Luca Tateo, Rosario De Chiara, Giuseppina Palmieri, Raffaella Grieco, Riccardo Prinzi, Furio Belgiorno, Ugo Erra, Shaaron Ainsworth, Vittorio Scarano and Maarten Overdijk.

I would like to thank Vittorio and Shaaron for their feedback on the design documents that lay at the basis of chapter 6. I am greatly indebted to Vittorio and his fantastic team who developed CoFFEE, the award winning software whose genesis I discuss in this thesis. I also like to thank Astrid Broeker with whom I carried out the study that is described in chapter 9. Her enthusiasm and persistence as a teacher and researcher made that study to a success. I would also like to express my thanks to Dirk and Anja who gave me a place to work en provided me with necessary facilities for editing and printing.

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Furthermore, I would like to thank my colleagues at the department of Educational Sciences of the Utrecht University and my colleagues at the Systems engineering group of Delft University of Technology. They were the essential elements of a fine working environment.

I had the pleasure to work with Maarten, from whom I learned a lot. Our discussions were of vital importance for the work that I describe in this thesis. As Maarten already mentioned in his thesis, together we have achieved a lot. I am glad to say that it was not only the destination but also the travel that made our collaboration a wonderful experience.

A PhD project is not only a matter of the mind. I would not have come this far without the support from those who know me well. In the thesis, I typify that kind of support as social-emotional communication that has to do with recognizing the uniqueness and value of the people around you. This support can be expressed in many ways like a simple word, a smile, a pat on the back or a glance of recognition. Various people close to me gave me that kind of support. It is impossible to express in a few sentences what that meant for me. I just hope that these people – some of them were already mentioned before – will recognize themselves in the final words of this preface. To them I express my gratitude and appreciation.

Wouter van Diggelen
Rijswijk, February 2011

